

## Richard Chapman Weldon

The Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University has long been known for its emphasis on public service to society. It's called the "Weldon Tradition," an expectation that graduates will work to improve the communities in which they practice as lawyers, and the broader systems under which they live — social, economic, legal or otherwise.

Its namesake, Richard Chapman Weldon (1849–1925), is one of the most important figures in the history of Dalhousie's law school, serving as its first dean from 1883 to 1914. The twice-married father of 12 was also the first full-time professor of law in post-Confederation Canada and a member of parliament once considered a potential future prime minister

Born in Sussex Parish, N.B., Weldon was raised with seven siblings on a farm. A man of gentle temperament, he was thought to be the most brilliant student in his class. At 17, he graduated with a BA from Mount Allison Wesleyan College in Sackville, then became a popular school teacher known for his engaging personality and high expectations for his students. Weldon returned to Mount Allison to teach and earn his MA in Economics in 1870, then attended Yale College in New Haven, Conn. As one of the youngest doctoral candidates there, he studied constitutional and international law, graduating with a doctorate in Political Science at age 23.

The modern legal education we know today was decidedly in its infancy in the 1880s. Traditionally, lawyers were trained through apprenticeships, as was the practice in England at the time. The Dalhousie model, however, was pioneering, seeking to combine intellectual and practical training within a university context. As Dal's first dean of law, Weldon's curriculum included courses in international law, constitutional history and conflict of laws. With the encouragement of Nova Scotia's bench and bar, Dalhousie's model became the standard for legal education in Canada.

A versatile teacher who taught almost every subject, Weldon had a majestic, magnetic effect on his students, many of whom would later become key Canadian decision- and policy-makers. So important was his role in the school that rather than step down when he was elected as an MP, the academic year was altered to run from September to February to accommodate his time in Ottawa.

Little wonder, then, that when Dalhousie opened its new law building in 1966, it was named after its founding dean (who died in Dartmouth, N.S., in 1925 at the age of 76). On the law school's centenary in 1983, the school established the Weldon Award for Unselfish Public Service, honouring outstanding accomplishment by a graduate.

The award is a fitting tribute to a man who, 100 years earlier, as the school opened its doors, pledged his support for students seeking to make a difference in the world through public service. "We aim to help [them] to act with fidelity and wisdom," said Weldon — helping spark a tradition that continues to define the Schulich School of Law through to this day.

## Eligibility

The Weldon Award for Unselfish Public Service recognizes an alumnus or alumna that has made outstanding contributions to the community and the legal profession in line with the Weldon Tradition. *Public Service* refers not only to a high level of commitment and professional service to the profession, but also to the broader community, cultural community, local community or Dalhousie community. Public Service may be local, provincial, national or global in nature and impact. It does not include service to the legal community alone, purely political service or longevity of service to the bench.

## Requirements

- Both the **nominee and the nominator** must be an alumnus/alumna of the Schulich School of Law.
- The nomination package must contain the nominee's **CV** and at least **one letter of reference** outlining the candidate's public service as defined above.
- Recipients of the Bertha Wilson Honour Society Award and honorary degree recipients from Dalhousie University **are** eligible to be nominated for the Weldon Award for Unselfish Public Service.
- The candidate **can** be nominated posthumously.
- Self-nominations will **not** be accepted.
- Nominations are considered for **one year**. To be considered for a subsequent year, a new nomination package must be submitted.

### **Weldon Award for Unselfish Public Service Selection Process**

1. A call for nominations will be sent out via email in January to all Law School alumni, posted on the Law School's website and shared on social media channels.
2. The selection committee will consist of the president of the Dal Law Alumni Association (DLAA), all of the branch presidents, the Dean, and Associate Dean, Academic of the Schulich School of Law.
3. The selection committee will receive electronic copies of each nomination. A conference call will be held to review the nominees and a vote will be taken to select the winner. In the event of a tie, the Dean of Law will sit out for a revote. Prior to a revote, there will be a 10 minute discussion for panel members to further review the nominees.
4. The award will be presented annually at the Law Alumni Reunion Dinner and the recipient given a framed medal and certificate.
5. Appropriate publicity will be placed in Hearsay, Dalhousie and Schulich School of Law communications vehicles (website and social media), and the local media.