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## 2 law schools open this month in N.C.

Elon to use volunteer mentors; Charlotte to focus on regional needs

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Legal education in North Carolina will take an innovative turn this month with the opening of two urban law schools in Greensboro and Charlotte.

Elon University welcomed 115 students Thursday to its new law school in downtown Greensboro, where civic leaders helped raise millions to renovate and equip a former public library.

Later this month, the Charlotte School of Law will start with 75 to 100 students as the state's first for-profit law school.

The new schools will mean more lawyers and more competition in North Carolina, which for decades has had five law schools -- at Campbell, Duke, N.C. Central, UNC Chapel Hill and Wake Forest.

Elon's program will undoubtedly raise the profile of the university, which already has a rising reputation for its emphasis on active learning and study abroad.

Both new schools have drawn interest from prospective students and faculty. Both charge about \$26,000 a year in tuition. More than 500 students applied for spots in Elon's inaugural class, and more than 300 professors applied for six teaching jobs.

At Charlotte School of Law, Dean Gene Clark says 1,000 applicants sought seats. It is part of a for-profit consortium called InfiLaw System, which operates schools in Jacksonville, Fla., and Scottsdale, Ariz.

Both Elon and Charlotte are urban schools that promise a close connection to the local legal community and an emphasis on students' total experience.

They have assembled impressive advisory boards with legal scholars, former state supreme court justices, former governors and other notables.

Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor will speak at Elon's dedication ceremony Sept. 19.

### Elon: Changing tone

Elon Dean Leary Davis, who was the founding dean at Campbell University's law school in 1975, said he hopes to change the tone from one of intimidation to one of support. "What makes it scary is you don't know about how you're doing," Davis said.

Davis has taken a cue from medical schools, where students have "preceptors" -- doctors who help guide them.

Elon has signed up more than 60 lawyers as preceptors.

The volunteer lawyers will even show up in class for their students' "Paper Chase" moments, when a professor calls on individual students to recite a case. Then the volunteers will critique students' performance.

Each Thursday, local lawyers and judges will mingle with students at afternoon tea.

### Charlotte: Finding jobs

Charlotte School of Law, which opens Aug. 28, will focus on students rather than on professors' publishing and research, Clark said. The goal will be to produce "practice-ready" lawyers.

"We are unashamedly practical in our approach," he added.

The company that owns the Charlotte School of Law boasts that its Florida Coastal School of Law has the best bar passage and career placement rates among 10 Florida law schools.

The school has not yet worked out its specialties but will likely focus on regional needs, such as banking or sports and entertainment law.

Clark insisted that "profit isn't our major goal."

Both schools are shooting for provisional accreditation from the American Bar Association by the time the first class graduates. Combined, they will probably turn out 200 or more graduates each year.

But does North Carolina need hundreds of new lawyers each year?

Davis said there is evidence that North Carolina is importing lawyers from elsewhere. Last summer and this summer, more out-of-state law students took the bar exam here than students who attended law school in North Carolina, according to the N.C. Board of Law Examiners.

Applications for law school dipped slightly in the past year, said Jack Boger, dean of the law school at UNC Chapel Hill.

Still, he said, the state's overall growth and focus on the financial and biotechnology industries will mean more work for attorneys.