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Drexel's School of Law Receives Unprecedented $50 Million Gift from Thomas R. Kline

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Dean Roger Dennis, Thomas R. Kline and President John A. Fry (L-R) in Drexel University's Main Building. Photo credit: Ben Knisley.

Drexel University's School of Law (http://www.drexel.edu/law) will be named the Thomas R. Kline School of Law in honor of a landmark $50 million gift that will transform legal education at Drexel for generations to come, Drexel **President John A. Fry** announced today.

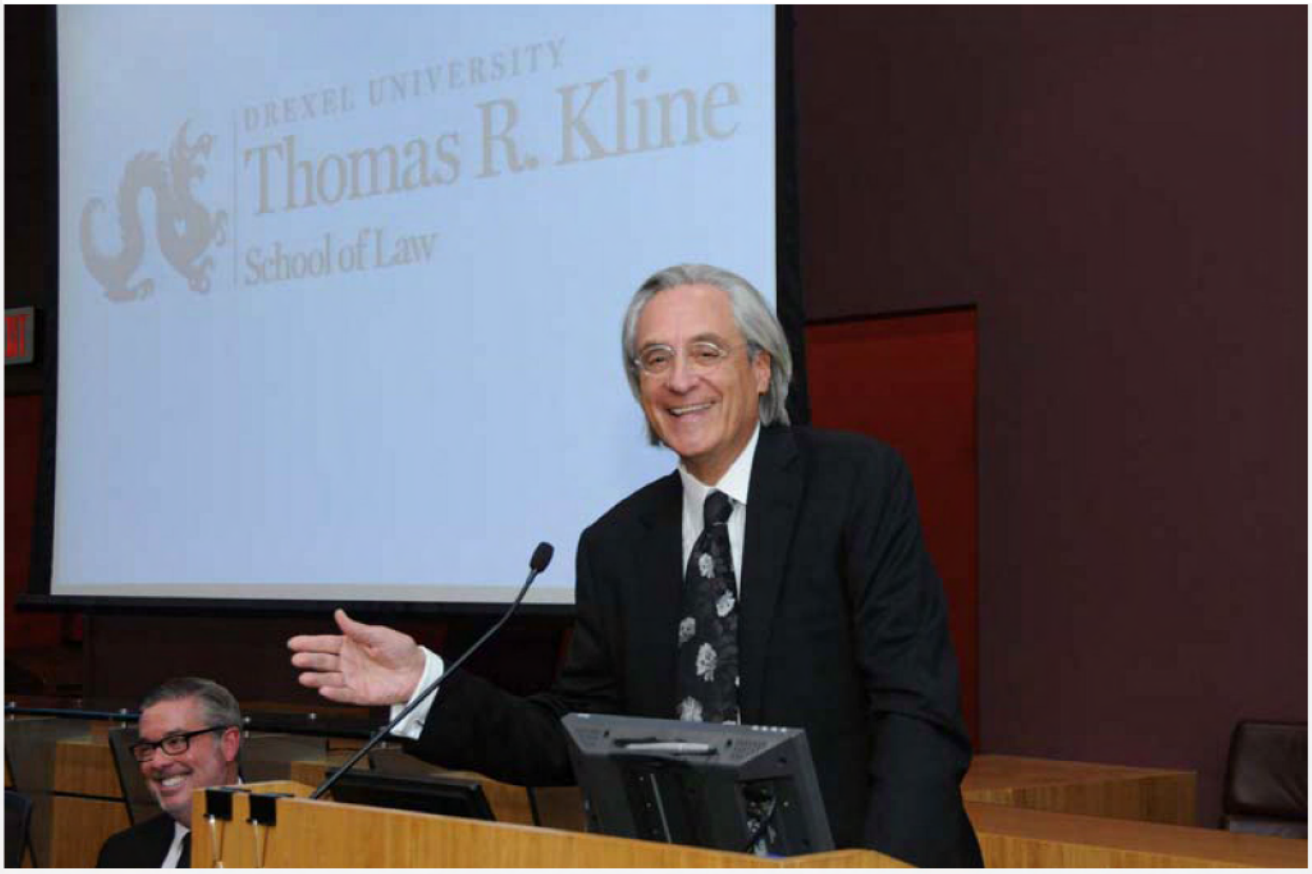
The commitment by Kline, one of the nation's most respected and influential trial lawyers and a champion of the elevation of trial advocacy training for law students, marks the largest single gift in the University's history.

"I'm proud that our law school will be forever associated with Tom Kline. His commitment to Drexel will carry great significance for lawyers across America," said Fry. "This milestone reflects the outstanding and tireless work of the law faculty and professional staff, led by Founding Dean Roger Dennis, over the school's eight-year history, and Tom's association with the law school from its founding."

Kline has a distinguished career as a trial lawyer. He has spent more than 35 years representing catastrophically injured persons. He is founding partner, along with Shanin Specter, of the nationally recognized law firm of Kline & Specter. Kline's many groundbreaking cases have contributed to the shaping of the law in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and his many jury verdicts and settlements are well known for resulting in corporate, institutional and governmental changes through the civil justice system, in addition to compensation for his clients.

Kline has consistently been named one of the top lawyers in the state and nation by leading publications. He is recognized as the No. 1 lawyer in Pennsylvania for the past 11 consecutive years by the peer-reviewed *Super Lawyers* survey. He is a past president of the Inner Circle of Advocates, described by *The Washington Post* as "a select group of the nation's 100 most celebrated trial lawyers." Kline is named among the top 500 of all lawyers in America by *Lawdragon*, is listed in *The National Law Journal*'s "Hall of Fame" and recently received a lifetime achievement award from *The Legal Intelligencer*.

Kline served four U.S. senators over two decades and chaired the Federal Judicial Nominating Commission for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania more than a decade. He serves as both a Drexel University trustee and chair of the advisory board for Drexel's law school.



Dedicated to both the short-term and long-term strength of the Kline School of Law, Kline's gift includes the conveyance of the historic Beneficial Saving Fund Society Building at 12th and Chestnut streets to house the Thomas R. Kline Institute of Trial Advocacy of the Kline School of Law.

Drexel's law students and faculty have built exceptional advocacy programs—including national successes in trial team competitions—utilizing, to date, modest resources. Once restored and renovated, this grand Horace Trumbauer-designed bank building located in the heart of Philadelphia's legal community will house state-of-the-art facilities for students to build and hone their advocacy skills. The building will be transformational to the Market East corridor and serve as an anchor to the redeveloping neighborhood.

"We aspire to swiftly establish our law school as a force, especially in the area of trial advocacy, and to gain recognition nationwide," said Kline. "I am especially excited about the establishment of a new trial advocacy institute, unique in American law school education. When complete, the historic Beneficial Bank Building, built in 1916 and unoccupied since 2001, will include a magnificent ceremonial courtroom, other courtrooms, faculty offices and public and student spaces, along with innovative technology. We will build a facility unique in legal education. This magnificent site will become a magnet for the best of faculty and students, and a top tier law school."

The Thomas R. Kline Institute of Trial Advocacy will dramatically change the entire range of the law school's activities. It will advance courtroom simulation for the JD program and co-curricular programming and will enhance faculty interaction with students who undertake advocacy-based co-ops and clinical work. Additionally, it will support the development of post-graduate LLM and continuing legal education trial and appellate advocacy programs. "We also hope to see Pennsylvania appellate courts occasionally hear cases in our historic facility," said Kline.

"This transformative gift from Mr. Kline will enable the law school to reimagine its entire advocacy program, enrich the advocacy curriculum across multiple dimensions, build out new advocacy programs and establish Drexel Law as a national center of excellence for the teaching of advocacy," said Dean Roger Dennis. "We believe a nationally renowned program in advocacy will be extremely beneficial to student recruitment and to employment outcomes for our graduates."

The remainder of the gift will serve the law school's overarching mission to be a center of legal excellence in Pennsylvania and a national leader in experience-based legal education, already a strength of the law school.

About the Thomas R. Kline School of Law

Drexel University's Thomas R. Kline School of Law offers a curriculum and programs built upon the principle that students learn best when hands-on experience is part of their education. One of just two law schools in the nation that offers co-op education, the school enables students to gain meaningful firsthand experience in law firms, the courts, government agencies, public interest organizations and corporations. Through co-op and clinical programs, students have represented clients in criminal matters and argued – and won – cases before federal appellate courts. The law school's faculty includes nationally recognized scholars and seasoned legal practitioners.