

Supreme Court justice speaks at law school

By Sally Gunter/
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U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas spent Tuesday at the Texas Tech School of Law with faculty and students.

"We all learned a lot from his remarks and question-and-answer sessions with us," said Walter Huffman, law school dean and professor. "He turned into a real fan of Texas Tech Law."

All sessions were closed to the media and anyone not affiliated with the law school. Thomas declined to comment to *The University Daily*.

The lack of media attention is something Brennon Lammers, a second-year law student from Amarillo, appreciates.

"Justice Thomas didn't come here

to promote Justice Thomas," Lammers said. "He felt the student could truly benefit from his life experience."

The lack of space in the law school building prohibited the allowance of any students or faculty other than those related to the law school from attending the sessions, Huffman said.

"I apologize to the university community as a whole for our inability to invite everyone to attend," he said. "It was a physical problem."

Huffman also said if Chancellor Dr. David Smith makes it a priority to address the expansion of the law school, the next time a Supreme Court justice visits the campus everyone will be invited to the event.

A hook to convince Thomas to speak at the law school was his friendship with men's basketball head coach

Bob Knight.

"We really appreciate Coach Knight," Huffman said. "He came to me and asked if we would want to do this."

While attending the Tuesday night basketball game against Baylor was a perk of the trip, Huffman said the main focus for the visit was the law school activities.

Thomas and Knight signed basketballs to be given as special prizes at the National Conference Law Review hosted by the law school, Huffman said.

Huffman said this is helpful in exposing the coasts to the positive reputation of the Tech Law School.

Thomas arrived in Lubbock on Monday night and attended a reception dinner with the Tech administration, members of the Board of Regents,

Tech Law Foundation Board and several federal judges.

Thomas had breakfast with student leaders Tuesday and then began his formal remarks to students. Thomas conducted an hour and a half question-and-answer session during the morning.

Misty King, a first-year law student from Dumas, said the question-and-answer session was interesting and helpful as well as entertaining.

"There were very insightful questions on how he came up with his opinions," she said. "He is a very professional man."

Thomas was a personal man who came off as professional and nice, said Renee Castillo, a first-year law student from Harlingen.

"His main message was to be yourself and be true to your self," she said.

"Don't let others sway what you believe in."

Castillo said she was touched that Knight introduced Thomas.

"It's kind of sweet," she said. "A true friendship between a Supreme Court justice and Coach Knight is something you wouldn't expect."

Faculty had lunch with Thomas where he again answered questions. A reception Tuesday afternoon with students and the Lubbock Bar Association allowed the law students an opportunity to meet personally with Thomas.

"The students couldn't be more excited," Huffman said.

Thomas was born in Pinpoint, Ga., to a poor family. His grandparents raised him and his grandfather was responsible for Thomas' work ethic.

Thomas told stories about growing

up and how he wakes up at 4 a.m. because he can still hear his grandfather telling him to get up because he is not rich, Huffman said.

Thomas was an honor graduate of Holy Cross University and graduated from Yale Law School.

After attempting to get a job in Georgia, Thomas moved to Missouri to work for a law firm. He worked his way up higher-level government jobs until being on the court of appeals in the District of Columbia. He was later appointed to the Supreme Court as the second black justice, Huffman said.

"All the students are standing a little taller I think after hearing what he had to say," he said. "It was a great day for Tech Law, and I believe it will also provide great benefits for us and the university in the future."