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Dean Blake Morant shakes hands with Mayor Allen Joines during the November opening of the Wake Forest University Community Law & Business Clinic. The clinic is located in the heart of downtown Winston-Salem.



### Firsts

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"The acceptance of women had not been full fledged," she related. "The male counterparts were a little hesitant (to work with female officers)."

Being African American also posed a problem for her, said Norris, who retired from the department last year and now serves as chief of police at Winston-Salem State University, her alma mater.

"Sometimes I got criticized for doing my job by arresting people who looked like me, and sometimes I got criticized for being too soft and not arresting people who looked like me," she declared. "It was kind of hard to please either side."

As chief, Norris says she was constantly bombarded with questions of race from both black and white officers. Consistency, she found, was the remedy to most concerns about racial bias.

Of the three, Blake Morant, dean of Wake Forest School of Law, has the distinction of breaking the glass ceiling most recently. Morant, the first African American dean to lead the School of Law, came to the private, prominent university less than two years ago.

Although 2008 may seem to some a rather late date to be an African American first, Morant counters that many law schools have similar employment records.

"It's a situation not uncommon in legal education in a lot of schools," he said. "Minorities are still a small percentage of the entire (legal) academy."

While he admitted he was proud to be the first African American to hold such a post at the prestigious institution, Morant says he hasn't had much time to stop and think about it.



Pat Norris greets guests at an awards banquet last year.

File Photo



Blake Morant

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"The expectations of a law school dean ... are varied and very complicated and diverse and demanding; it takes a great deal of talent and skill," he remarked. "Because of all the demands (of the job), the race becomes just one factor."

Morant concedes that there are those who may not want to see a black person in his position, yet he is a firm believer that his work will speak for itself in most instances.

"One of the things I've learned is the alumni base always wants the school to succeed," he stated. "I feel that if I'm successful (in my job), then the issue of my ethnicity becomes a more minor one."



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