Five Washburn Law professors have been honored for their excellence in teaching by alumni and supporters who have endowed positions that provide funding for professional development and research.

David Pierce, ’77, and William Rich are first-time holders of five-year endowed chairs, while James Concannon and Amy Deen Westbrook are first-time holders of five-year endowed professorships. Linda Henry Elrod, ’72, was reaffirmed as holder of an endowed professorship.

“These endowments recognize the outstanding work of our professors in their teaching and in their overall contributions to Washburn Law and the legal community,” Dean Thomas Romig said. Endowed positions provide funds that are available to the professors to enhance their instructional programs, to fund research projects, and to advance their overall scholarly work.

“To be a top law school we must have the best talent. Endowed faculty professorships and chairs make it possible to recruit and retain talented academicians,” Romig added. “Washburn Law is extremely grateful to the donors and their commitment to the future of our law school.”

David Pierce, Norman R. Pozez Chair in Business and Transactional Law

Professor Pierce has been named the Norman R. Pozez Chair in Business and Transactional Law endowed by Norman R. Pozez, who graduated from Washburn Law in 1980. It is awarded to a faculty member who has made extraordinary contributions to the law school primarily in the area of teaching and who is a traditional academic and/or an individual with prominence in the chosen field of study, with preference given to a professor in the area of Business and Transactional Law. Pierce has been the energy behind Washburn Law’s oil and gas program, teaching many of the core courses since its inception in 1989. He has continued to elevate the program through his publications and his work with the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation, where he served as president and from which he recently received the Clyde O. Martz Teaching Award. He previously served as the director of the Business and Transactional Law Center and now serves as director of the Oil and Gas Law Center. Before joining academia, Pierce worked in-house for Shell Oil Company in Houston, Texas, as of-counsel for the Gable & Galtwals law firm in Tulsa, Okla., and for the Shughart Thomson & Kilroy law firm in Kansas City, Mo. He earned a master of laws from the University of Utah College of Law and is a Washburn Law graduate.

Bill Rich, James R. Ahrens Chair in Torts and Constitutional Law

Professor Rich has been named the James R. Ahrens Chair in Torts and Constitutional Law endowed by the law firm of Michaud, Cordry, Michaud, Hutton and Hutton, named in honor of former Washburn Law professor James R. Ahrens. Rich, who has served as acting dean and interim dean during his tenure at Washburn Law, teaches Constitutional Law, Constitutional Litigation, Civil Liberties, and Jurisprudence. For several years he worked with Washburn Law Clinic students representing inmates in constitutional challenges to Kansas prison conditions. Before joining the Washburn Law faculty, he was a law clerk for Chief Justice Donald Wright of the California Supreme Court and he served as a staff attorney at the Legal Aid Society of Wichita. Rich’s publications address a wide range of constitutional law topics, including federalism, sovereign immunity, prison conditions, and race relations. He received a law degree from the University of California at Berkeley, Boalt Hall School of Law.
Linda Henry Elrod, Richard S. Righter Distinguished Professor of Law

Professor Elrod has been reaffirmed as the Richard S. Righter Distinguished Professor of Law, which was created by a gift from the Richard S. Righter Trust and is awarded to a faculty member who has made extraordinary contributions to the law school primarily in the areas of teaching, scholarship, and service. Righter became a partner in the Kansas City law firm of Lathrop, Crane, Sawyer, Woodson & Righter, which evolved into Lathrop, Woodson, Righter, Blackwell & Parker. Today, the firm is Lathrop & Gage.

Elrod is the director of the Children and Family Law Center and has brought national and international attention to the Center through her scholarship and expertise in the field. She frequently is sought after by the media to offer legal analysis on children and family law issues and by organizations as a continuing legal education speaker. She served as a Fulbright senior specialist at Dublin Institute of Technology in 2011. She is past chair of the American Bar Association Family Law Section; served as co-chair of the ABA Child Custody and Adoption Pro Bono Advisory Board; and has been editor of the American Bar Association Family Law Quarterly since 1992. Elrod graduated from Washburn University School of Law in 1972.

James Concannon, Senator Robert J. Dole Distinguished Professor of Law

Professor Concannon was named the Senator Robert J. Dole Distinguished Professor of Law, an endowed fund established by a gift from Senator Robert J. Dole, who graduated from Washburn Law in 1952. The professorship is awarded to a faculty member considered to be an excellent teacher, who may be a traditional academic or an individual with prominence in the field of law — Concannon has achieved both. His leadership as dean shepherded Washburn Law for more than a decade from 1988 to 2001. His career-long service and dedication to the legal community, in particular the courts, was recognized in December 2012 by the Kansas Supreme Court, which presented him with its Justice Award. After receiving a law degree from the University of Kansas School of Law, Concannon served as a law clerk in the Office of the Kansas Attorney General and the Office of the Kansas Insurance Commissioner and as a research attorney for Justice Alex Fromme of the Kansas Supreme Court. He joined the Washburn Law faculty in 1972.

Amy Deen Westbrook, Kurt M. Sager Memorial Distinguished Professor of International and Commercial Law

Professor Westbrook has been named the Kurt M. Sager Memorial Distinguished Professor of International and Commercial Law, which was established by Stan, ’57, and Shirley Sager in memory of their son Kurt Sager, ’76, who died in 1998 at the age of 44. It is awarded to a faculty member considered to be an excellent teacher, who may be a traditional academic or an individual with prominence in the field of law, with preference given to a professor in the area of International or Commercial Law.

Westbrook’s teaching and research focus on financial, international, and transactional subjects. She has worked for the Commission of the European Communities in Brussels, Belgium, and as an associate at Cleary, Gottlieb, Steen & Hamilton in Washington, D.C. In her previous position at the State University of New York at Buffalo Law School, Westbrook taught courses on international finance, securities regulation, international trade, the North American Free Trade Agreement, acquisition transactions, and transactional practice. She also served as the director of the University of Buffalo New York City Program in International Finance and Law. She teaches Business Associations, Financial Institution Regulation, International Business Transactions, and Securities Regulation. Westbrook is the director of the Business and Transactional Law Center at Washburn Law. She received a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1992.