



## COLLEGE OF LAW

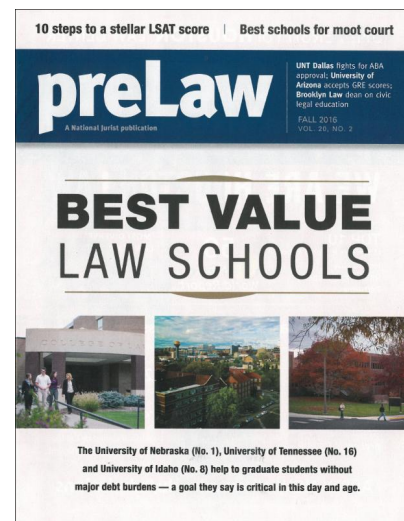
# FSU LAW FOCUS

October 28, 2016

### From the Dean

We are very proud of the many rankings that highlight the quality of our program. Recently, *The National Jurist* ranked Florida State the ninth best value law school in the nation – an increase of four spots over last year! The ranking weighs important student outcomes – bar passage rate and employment rate – against tuition, cost of living and indebtedness. According to *The National Jurist*, the rankings are “designed to find the law schools where graduates have excellent chances of passing the bar and getting a legal job without taking on a ton of debt.” This is the eighth year in a row that FSU has been ranked among the nation’s top 15 best value law schools. Our best value status is possible only because of the extensive involvement and support of our impressively engaged alumni. Thanks to all of you who mentor students, teach classes, provide jobs, fund scholarships and give generously to student programs!

- Dean Erin O'Connor



## 50-Year Anniversary: 1970



In 1970, FSU Law gained full accreditation during the general assembly meeting of the American Association of Law Schools. Judge Zebedee W. Wright also became the first African American to graduate from the FSU College of Law that year.

Although eight other African Americans entered law school with Judge Wright in 1968, he was the first to graduate in December 1970. Judge Wright returned to Fort Lauderdale to begin his career in law, and for the next 11 years, he worked in a general practice firm, primarily in the area of criminal law. In December of 1982, he became the first African American appointed to a county court judgeship in Broward County. He retired from the bench in 2003. The FSU Law Alumni Board, which leads the College of Law's Alumni Association, was also formed in 1970. Every graduate of FSU Law is automatically a member of the College of Law Alumni Association. [Visit the alumni page on our website](#) to find ways to connect with your fellow alums.

Photo above: FSU Law alumni (L-R) Larry White ('75), Walter Kelly ('74), Judge Wright ('71) and Judge Emerson Thompson ('73) at the FSU Black Law Students Association's 2012 induction ceremony, where Judge Wright was the featured speaker.

## Alum Profile: 2016 Alumni Award Winners



The College of Law honored the 2016 alumni award winners during October's Homecoming festivities. The Honorable Stephanie Williams Ray ('95) received our Distinguished Alum Award, which recognizes a graduate who is distinguished professionally and who has rendered outstanding service to the community as well as to the FSU College of Law. Judge Ray, who serves on Florida's First District Court of Appeal, teaches Florida Constitutional Law as an adjunct professor, is a coach for the FSU Law Moot Court Team, and generously gives her time to many other law school programs and initiatives. She is a past president of the law school's Alumni Association and is a current member of the board's judicial section.

Alum F. Philip Blank ('75) received the Alumni Association Service Award, which recognizes a Florida State University law school graduate who has rendered distinguished service to the College of Law over an extended period of time. Blank, who is of counsel at GrayRobinson in Tallahassee and founding shareholder of F. Philip Blank, P.A., has helped FSU Law in many ways and is particularly supportive of the law school's student chapter of the Cuban American Bar Association. Blank is a current member of the College of Law's Board of Visitors and is a major donor to the law school. He and his wife, Rita, created the Blank-Miller Scholarship.

Professor Emeritus David Powell received the Class of '66 Award, which honors a non-Florida State University College of Law graduate who has rendered distinguished service to our law school and to the community. Powell joined the FSU College of Law faculty in 1973 and taught Property, Estate and Gift Tax, Gratuitous Transfers and Estate Planning. He has been an enormously popular professor who received numerous teaching awards before retiring from the full-time faculty in 2009. Powell still teaches Gratuitous Transfers at the College of Law.

Photo above: Award recipients (L-R) Blank, Williams and Powell

## Student Profile: 3L Lolita Fernandez

Lolita Y. Fernandez is a third-year student interested in practicing criminal, family or personal injury law, with a focus on litigation. Born in Caracas, Venezuela, Fernandez grew up in Pembroke Pines, Florida. She earned a bachelor's degree in microbiology and cellular science and a master's degree in public health epidemiology from UF. Fernandez's impressive resume includes many co-curricular and extracurricular activities. She currently serves as president of the FSU Mock Trial Team and earned first place in the 2015 Florida National Trial Advocacy Tournament. She is a member of the *Florida State University Law Review* and past-president of the Women's Law Symposium. She also served as the student representative for the College of Law's Dean Search Committee. She serves as president of The Florida Bar YLD Law Students Division and is the board of directors law student liaison for both the Tallahassee Bar Association Young Lawyers Section and Legal Aid Foundation Tallahassee. Fernandez has clerked for the Miami-Dade Office of the State Attorney, the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida and Hopping Green & Sams, P.A. Last summer she worked as a certified legal intern in the juvenile division of the Second Circuit Public Defender's Office. She currently clerks for Akbar Law Firm, P.A. If you are interested in hiring Fernandez for a job after graduation, please [click here to visit her LinkedIn profile](#).



*“I went to law school so I can help, motivate and be an agent of change.”*

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