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From the Dean



Today is the last day of exams, and we are reflecting on the year as we prepare for Sunday's graduation ceremony. This semester was especially enriching, with scholars from around the nation visiting FSU Law to discuss timely issues in areas including business law, human rights, environmental law, and international law. The law school and our student organizations also hosted numerous attorneys and judges, many of whom are alumni. They shared their advice and wisdom with students to help educate them on substantive areas of practice, a wide variety of professional opportunities, and how to achieve success in the legal job market. Thanks to our hard-working Student Advancement team, we also made time to promote the importance of wellness while in law school with weekly events including a healthy cooking class, yoga taught by a 3L, and a vision board session. I am thankful to be a part of such a dynamic community and grateful for everyone who helps make FSU Law such a special place to work and learn.

Erin O'Connor

Dean Erin O'Connor



Academic Programs Office Creates New Academic Support Fellows Program

In the fall of 2022, the FSU Law Academic Programs Office introduced its inaugural class of academic support fellows. Program fellows are academically successful 2L and 3L students who possess strong interpersonal skills, patience, maturity, and a desire to assist their peers in learning core academic skills and strategies. Fellows lead small-group workshops to help equip students with key tools to increase their academic success. Workshop topics include note taking, exam preparation, case briefing, study schedules, and time management. In addition to the workshops, fellows are available through weekly office hours for individual appointments. The student-centered program was created by Assistant Dean for Academic Programs Karusha Y. Sharpe ('01) (pictured), and the following students served as fellows during the 2022-2023 academic year:



- Ella Biggins
- Baleigh Brown (academic skills researcher/student assistant)
- Joey Catalano
- Cristen Chandler
- Carly Dick
- Alan Gonzalez
- Victoria Heuston
- Olivia Ingram
- Luke Johnston
- Aziza Mohamadhossen
- Rebecca Neuffer
- Taylor O'Brien
- Carson Oakley
- Jenelly Perez
- Jaiden Pokoski
- Lauren Reed
- Dylan Rhoades
- Mackie Taranto

Alum Profile: Ralph A. DeMeo ('85)

Ralph A. DeMeo is a shareholder at Guilday Law in Tallahassee, where he practices primarily in the areas of environmental, land use, administrative, and animal law. He is one of the state's leading environmental and animal law attorneys. DeMeo also teaches animal law as an adjunct professor at FSU Law and law-related courses at Tallahassee Community College, and has taught environmental law and policy courses at Florida A&M University. In addition, he serves as chief executive officer of Pets Ad Litem, Inc. (PAL), a charity dedicated to humane education and advocacy. DeMeo is very engaged in professional legal activities—he is a registered lobbyist for The Florida Bar (TFB) Animal Law Section (ALS) and former chair and current member of the ALS Executive Council (EC), former chair of TFB Environmental and Land Use Law Section (ELULS) EC, former chair of TFB Journal and News Editorial Board (JrI/News), and former member of TFB Administrative Law Section EC. He also is a frequent lecturer and author of over 30 law-related articles. He has received numerous honors for his work and service, including from ELULS, ALS, and JrI/News. He is recognized as a leading national and Florida lawyer by rating services Martindale-Hubbel, Chambers USA, Florida SuperLawyers, Best Lawyers, and Who's Who Lawyers. DeMeo also remains very engaged with FSU Law students, especially through his teaching, PAL, and Florida Bar activities.



“It is both a privilege and pleasure to serve as an adjunct professor of animal law at my law school alma mater. I am very impressed with the quality and dedication of the students and faculty at FSU Law. I see a positive future for our graduates and—through them—hope for a better world!”

Student Profile: 3L Mark Allen “A.J.” Smart Jr.

Desired Practice Location: Waycross, Georgia area

Expected Graduation: May 2023

Field of Law Sought: Criminal law; interested in both prosecution and defense

A.J. Smart is from Waycross, Georgia, and attended Valdosta State University for his undergraduate studies, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. He will graduate from FSU Law on Sunday. Since May 2022, Smart has served as a teaching assistant in the College of Law's Juris Master Program. He was a teaching assistant for the course Conducting Workplace Investigations in the summer of 2022 and spring of 2023, and for Vendors and Other Third-Party Risk Management in the fall of 2022. For each of the courses, Smart read and evaluated students' work and suggested grades to the professors, as well as communicated with the students and helped them navigate the course. During the summer of 2022, Smart volunteered as a legal intern at the Waycross, Georgia Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office. There, he performed legal research, assisted with trial preparation, drafted court documents, interviewed clients, helped clients complete court forms, and observed criminal proceedings. During the summer of 2021, Smart worked remotely as a legal intern for Judge Ralph Van Pelt, of the Lookout Mountain Circuit. He was placed in this position through the Georgia Latino Law Foundation's Summer 2021 virtual internship program. As an intern, Smart observed various criminal proceedings and discussed what he observed, as well as other legal matters, with the judge. He also performed legal research and composed a research memorandum about the pandemic's effect on the right to a speedy trial.



Smart will sit for the Georgia Bar Exam in February 2024 and intends to practice in Georgia for the foreseeable future. Smart is a first-generation law student and first-generation college student. He wants potential employers to know that he would like to be involved in education at some point in the future, possibly as an adjunct professor in addition to his work as an attorney, as he greatly values education and learning excellence. If you are interested in connecting with or hiring Smart after graduation, visit his [LinkedIn profile](#) or email him at mas20jo@fsu.edu.

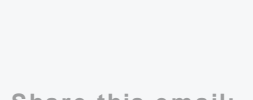
“My education and experiences before and during law school have given me all the tools necessary to become a zealous advocate in criminal law, which I believe to be the most interesting and rewarding area of legal practice. I look forward to serving my community in the most effective ways I can, and I hope to work in public service so I may give back to the country I love.”

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