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From the Dean

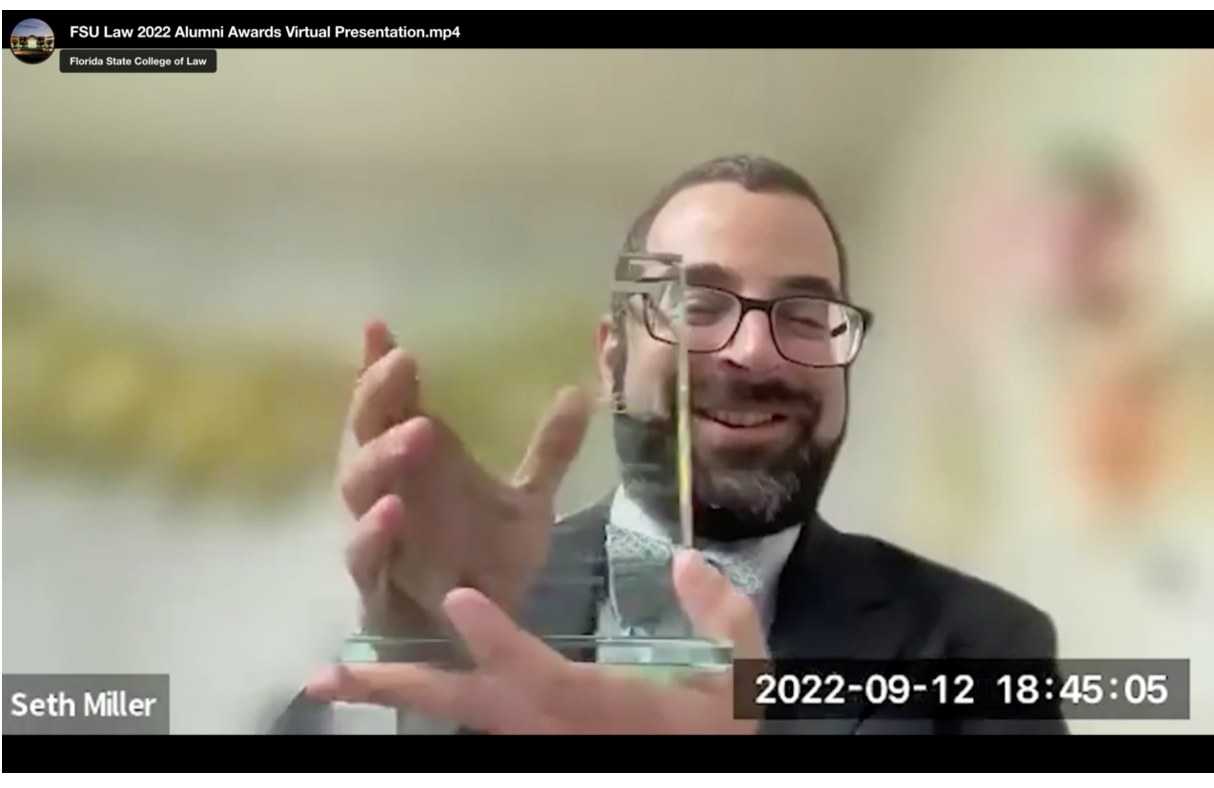


(L-R): Harris Van Pate, Caroline Dike, Thomas Eisman, Brooke Soloway, Kortney Lightfoot, Austin Lunde, Dean Nancy Benavides, Kayla Neal, Andrew Herman, and A.J. Smart

On May 2, Legal Services of North Florida and Legal Aid Foundation of Tallahassee co-hosted the 2023 Law Day Celebration, during which our extraordinary students were recognized for their pro bono work. Kortney Lightfoot ('23), who graduated from FSU Law in December 2022, received the 2023 Blaise N. Gamba Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award for performing more than 1,000 hours of pro bono service as a law student! She completed her pro bono work with the Innocence Project of Florida and with the Public Defender's Office of the Second Judicial Circuit, where she now works as an assistant public defender. The Blaise N. Gamba Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award is presented annually to a graduating 3L who has demonstrated extraordinary commitment to pro bono service. Additionally, eight graduating FSU Law students—Caroline Dike, Thomas Eisman, Andrew Herman, Austin Lunde, Kayla Neal, Harris Van Pate, A.J. Smart, and Brooke Soloway—were recognized for completing more than 100 hours of pro bono service during law school! Forty percent of the class of 2023 completed 40 or more hours of pro bono work. We are very proud of these students for their hard work and commitment to service.

Erin O'Connor
Dean Erin O'Connor

2023 Everyday Hero Award Nominations Sought



Alumnus Seth Miller ('04) received the 2022 Everyday Hero Award during a virtual ceremony.

FSU Law is seeking nominations for its 2023 Everyday Hero Award and needs alumni assistance. The award recognizes a Florida State University law school graduate who is an early- to mid-career public servant and who enthusiastically uses their legal training to make a more just and equitable society. It is meant to honor a public servant whose dedication to the profession may otherwise be underappreciated. If you know someone deserving of this honor, please use our [online form](#) to nominate them by Friday, June 2, 2023. Nominations should include the nominee's name and a letter of recommendation describing why the nominee should receive the award. You may also send additional documentation that supports your nomination. We look forward to recognizing the award winner during a special Zoom ceremony and at this fall's 2023 Homecoming festivities.

Alum Profile: Maja A. Hartzell ('20)

Maja A. Hartzell recently joined the Nashville, Tennessee office of Bass, Berry & Sims as an associate. Hartzell represents employers in employment law matters, including cases involving discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Her experience includes defending clients against claims arising under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and state whistleblowing statutes, along with the prosecution and defense of claims alleging breaches of restrictive covenants. Hartzell also counsels employers in employment policies and practices to ensure compliance with developments in employment law. From March 2020 to December 2022, Hartzell was an associate at Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, P.C. in Tampa, where she handled labor and employment cases. Before completing her law degree at FSU Law in 2020, Hartzell received her master's degree from Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland in American Studies in 2014. While a law student, Hartzell completed externships at the Florida Commission on Human Relations, Public Employees Relations Commission, and an in-house legal department for a large corporation in Orlando. During her second year of law school, Maja was recognized by The Florida Bar Labor and Employment Law Section as one of the 2018-2019 Outstanding Labor and Employment Law Students. Hartzell has dual citizenship in the U.S. and Poland.



"I discovered employment law in the summer after my first year of law school, and from that point forward focused all my attention on exploring various aspects of labor and employment law. I cannot picture myself practicing any other type of law. I love being on the defense side of the employment litigation, and I have been extremely fortunate to start my career with Ogletree Deakins in Tampa, and to now work for one of the most prominent firms in Tennessee."

Profile: Celebrating 2023 Grad David Akintonde

Recent FSU Law graduate David Akintonde has accepted a position as an associate in the Orlando office of Wicker, Smith, O'Hara, McCoy & Ford, P.A.! During law school, Akintonde served as president of the Student Bar Association and competed on the FSU Law Trial Team and Black Law Students Association Trial Team. He served as vice chair of the Law School Council, 3L representative for The Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division, and as a member of the Raising the Bar Professionalism+ Program's Student Advisory Board. He was also a member of the William H. Stafford American Inn of Court. Akintonde received an Academic Leadership Award and earned a book award for the Race Law & Policy course. He also received the Sean Pittman Scholarship. During FSU Law's May 7 graduation ceremony, Akintonde received the Raising the Bar Award for consistently exemplifying the ideals of professionalism within the law school community. We wish Akintonde all the best in his new role and look forward to celebrating his future accomplishments!



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