

From the Dean

Congratulations to Associate Dean for Student Advancement Nancy Benavides, who has been named by The Florida Bar's Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism and Standing Committee on Professionalism as the 2019 Law Faculty/Administrator Professionalism Award winner. The honor is bestowed annually on "a faculty member or administrator of one of Florida's law schools who through teaching, scholarship and service to the profession, best supports or exemplifies the mission of the Standing Committee on Professionalism." Among the many reasons Nancy is so deserving of this award is her successful leadership of our Summer for Undergraduates Program and her efforts to help other schools create similar law school diversity programs, her engagement in numerous legal organizations and committees that seek to increase professionalism, and her development of our robust Raising the Bar Professionalism+ Program that is enriching the student experience and preparing our students to be successful professionals. Below are excerpts from some of the letters submitted with the award nomination prepared by Dean Emeritus Don Weidner. Many thanks to Sean T. Desmond ('00), Melanie S. Griffin ('06), Wayne Hogan ('72), Judge Stephanie W. Ray ('95) and David Varet ('12) for their letters in support of Nancy's nomination. Their words provide a glimpse into the many reasons Nancy is being honored with the award.



- Dean Erin O'Connor

"I have known Dean Benavides for over 15 years, and I can attest to her demonstrated commitment to promoting the ideals of character, competence, commitment and civility in the legal profession...She has spent countless hours developing and implementing innovative programs at the law school that prioritize professionalism as an essential component of legal education and practice. These programs instill the ideals of professionalism in the next generation of lawyers as expectations of the profession, not simply aspirational goals."

- Judge Stephanie W. Ray ('95)

"What makes her so honorable and worthy of the honor at hand is what her goodness has sown – countless lawyers who espouse all the traits of professionalism." - David Varet ('12)

Faculty and Alum Profile: Nikki Clark ('77)

Judge Nikki Clark is an adjunct professor teaching Effective Communication for Litigators. She retired as judge on the First District Court of Appeal in March 2015. Clark was the first African American circuit judge and the first woman circuit judge to serve on the Second Judicial Circuit bench. She was also the first Black woman to sit on the First District Court of Appeal, to which she was appointed in 2009. As a circuit judge from 1993 to 2009, Clark, along with Second Circuit and fellow FSU Law alum Judge Terry Lewis ('76), presided over the contentious 2000 general election recount in *Bush v. Gore*. Prior to becoming a judge, Clark was an attorney with Legal Services of North Florida and held several state government positions, including assistant Florida attorney general, legislative and policy development director for the Florida Department of Environmental Regulation and chief cabinet aide for the Office of the Florida Governor. Clark currently runs Clark Mediation Services, LLC and has instructed many continuing legal education courses. Yesterday, Clark was on campus to share her experiences during a lunch discussion hosted by the FSU Law Nontraditional Students Association and Black Law Students Association. Clark holds a bachelor's degree from Wayne State University and earned her J.D. from FSU Law in 1977.



"I am excited to interact weekly with with such bright future lawyers. I am proud to be a part of FSU Law's continuing tradition of excellence."

The Importance of Mentoring



(L-R) Melanie S. Griffin ('06) and mentee Ciara Willis

One of the most powerful ways our alumni are helping future and young lawyers is through mentoring. FSU Law graduate Melanie S. Griffin ('06), who serves on our Board of Visitors, is an extremely ardent advocate for mentoring. She has mentored hundreds of FSU Law students during the past decade and often returns to the law school to talk to students about the mentor/mentee relationship, among other professionalism topics. Griffin's [The Business Case for Mentoring article](#) is available on her Spread Your Sunshine website and includes information on forming a positive mentoring relationship. Griffin's mentoring activities also include forming relationships with hundreds of law students and lawyers from other law schools. One of them, Bush Ross attorney Ciara Willis (FSU B.S. '13), has been Griffin's mentee since 2014, when Griffin spoke on a panel at Stetson University College of Law. Willis describes the mentoring relationship as naturally evolving over time. "Melanie has shaped my professional and personal growth in profound ways, and the advice she has given me could easily fill a novel," said Willis, who currently serves on The Florida Bar Young Lawyers Division Board of Governors and is in a run-off election in Tampa for the YLD board. "Some of the biggest things I've learned from Melanie are how to be a great lawyer, managing time and priorities, and not to dwell on things. More importantly, having a great mentor who believes in your ability to succeed is extremely invaluable and I'm very grateful to have Melanie as a mentor." If you are interested in mentoring our students through our Raising the Bar Professionalism+ Program, please [email Associate Dean Nancy Benavides](#).

Student Profile: 3L Sophie Luchin

Desired Practice Location: Orlando or Jacksonville; would like to stay in Florida
Expected Graduation: May 2019
Specialization: Immigration law



Sophie Luchin was born in Toulouse, France and her family immigrated to Miami when she was seven years old. She earned a dual bachelor's degree in social sciences and political science from the University of Central Florida and minored in sociology and diplomacy with a certificate in women's studies. At FSU Law, Luchin has pursued her passion for immigration law and won Book Awards for the highest grade in the Immigration Law, International Human Rights, and Immigration and Farmworker Project courses. During the fall semester of her 1L year, Luchin began volunteering at the FSU Center for the Advancement of Human Rights (CAHR). She was offered a part-time position the following year, and continues to work there, preparing petitions, motions and other legal documents relating to adjustments of status, T visas, asylum and refugee visas, U visas and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). She also prepares clinic intake forms, conducts interviews, translates documents and drafts affidavits. Since the fall of her 2L year, Luchin has also been a teaching assistant for Professor Terry Coonan, who also serves as executive director of CAHR. Last fall, Luchin was a certified legal intern for the FSU Immigration and Farmworker Project, where she conducted legal research, drafted orders for motions and observed court proceedings. Last summer, Luchin interned in London for FSU Law alum Mark Ellis ('84), the director of the International Bar Association. She researched and drafted memos on current international law issues and their impact on human rights. During the fall of her 2L year, Luchin participated in the Public Interest Law Center, where she prepared and filed legal documents related to dissolution of marriage and custody agreements. The summer after her 1L year, she interned at the Legal Aid Service of Broward County's immigration unit. She completed forms for those eligible to naturalize or obtain relief under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Temporary Protected Status and VAWA; communicated with federal, state and international agencies to gather personal records and reports; and conducted client interviews to determine eligibility for relief under U.S. immigration law. Luchin also attended the Alternative Spring Break Program, where she spent five days assisting migrant farm workers with legal issues. During her undergraduate studies, Luchin was a paralegal for Jones & Associates, an immigration firm in Orlando specializing in artist and entertainment visas. She continues to work for them remotely, primarily doing research. Luchin is president of the student organization Advocates for Immigration and Refugee Rights and a volunteer with the Asylum Seeker Advocacy Project. She is a student advocate for the Big Bend Coalition Against Human Trafficking and a member of the Women's Law Symposium. She is fluent in French and Spanish, and conversational in Bulgarian. If you are interested in hiring Luchin after graduation, [visit her LinkedIn profile](#).

"In the future, I hope I can have a positive impact on people living in vulnerable communities so I can be a better advocate for their cause. I also hope to become more specialized in the practice of immigration law."



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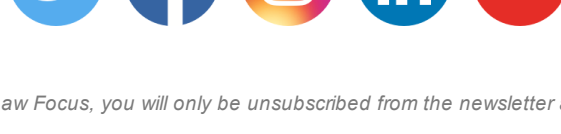
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