

From the Dean



(L-R) Duffy and Lemley

For the third weekend in a row, our Moot Court Team has won first place in a national moot court competition—their fourth championship of the 2020-21 season! On March 13, the team won the 2021 UCLA School of Law Cybersecurity Moot Court Competition, which took place virtually.

Thirty-two law school teams participated in the competition, including teams from Duke University, Boston University, Emory University, Fordham University and the University of Illinois. Florida State competed against George Washington University in the final round. Judges for the final round were the Honorable James G. Carr, senior judge and former chief judge for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio; Judge Stanley Boone, magistrate judge for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California; and Tracy Wilkinson, acting United States attorney for the Central District of California.

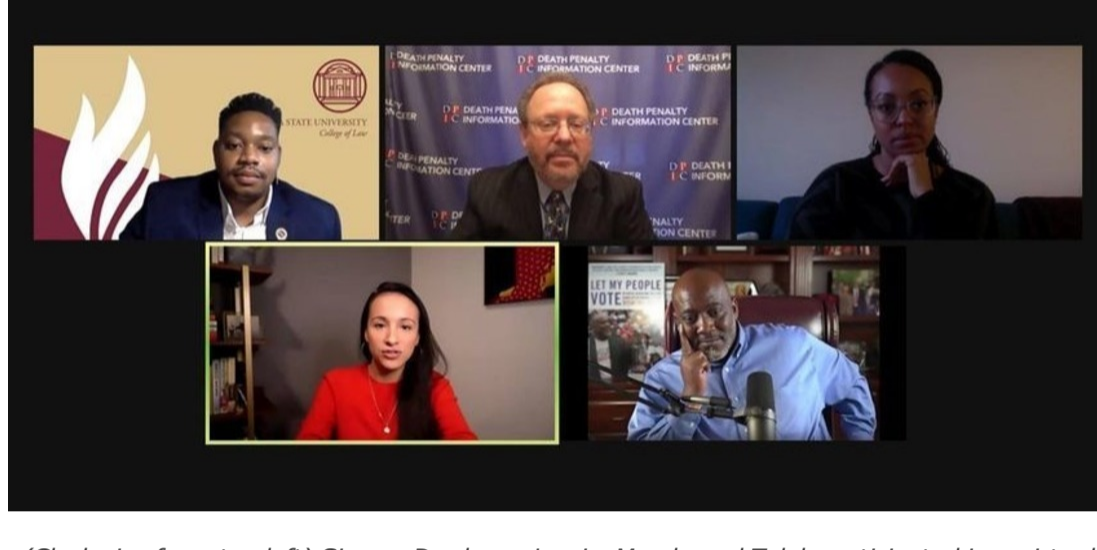
Winning team members are third-year law students Rachel Duffy and Genevieve Lemley. The team was coached by FSU Law alumnus Sam Steinberg ('13), assistant appellate defender at the Office of the State Appellate Defender in Chicago.

We are extremely proud of Rachel and Genevieve, as well as the amazing season our Moot Court students are having, bringing home a national championship for three consecutive weeks! I continue to be impressed with how well they and their coaches have adapted to the challenges of COVID-19 and competing in the virtual space.

On March 6, the Moot Court Team won the 2021 Charleston School of Law National Moot Court Competition, which featured a constitutional law problem. On February 27, they won the 2021 National Moot Court Competition in Child Welfare & Adoption Law. The team also won first place in the 2020 Appellate Lawyers Association National Moot Court Competition in November.

-Dean Erin O'Connor

BLSA Hosts Expert Panel on Incarceration



(Clockwise from top left) Simon, Dunham, Lewis, Meade and Tylek participated in a virtual panel for BLSA's ongoing series on racial justice.

On March 4, the Black Law Students Association hosted an “Understanding Mass Incarceration: Modern Criminal Justice Reform Movement” panel, another installment in their racial justice panel series. Panelists included Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center; Nicole Lewis, staff writer for The Marshall Project; Desmond Meade, executive director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition; and Bianca Tylek, executive director of Worth Rises. The panel was moderated by third-year FSU law student Rashad Simon, a member of the Big Bend AFTER Reentry Coalition board of directors.

When defining mass incarceration and discussing the disproportional effects on the Black community, Meade described the need to change the underlying narrative that some people are less valuable than others. “And that narrative does two things that I think are so important in all of our conversations, that we’ve got to keep in the back of our minds—that narrative first of all desensitizes folks to the plight of others and the other thing it does is dehumanizes the subject of the narrative,” said Meade. “That’s the same narrative that you’ve seen throughout the history of this country.”

In a later discussion about the detriment of solitary confinement, Dunham called it a terrible combination of helplessness, hopelessness and complete isolation. “This is not the way that human beings are designed to thrive, to exist, and so we see all kinds of impacts from cognitive issues, to stress, to overall, incarcerated people tend to have more chronic health issues,” added Lewis. “These are not coincidences; these are features of the system itself. The impact is huge. It is in some cases irreversible.”

The panel also discussed public perception, the power of language, the abuse of private profits, victims’ needs and the future of the criminal justice system. A recording of the entire conversation is available [online](#).

Alum Profile: Anthony James “Jim” Spalla (’70)

Jim Spalla has spent approximately half of his legal career in the private sector and presently practices at A.J. Jim Spalla, P.A. in Tallahassee, where he represents private and public clients in the areas of eminent domain, transportation law, outdoor advertising law and lobbying. He is also a Florida certified circuit court mediator. Spalla spent approximately the other half of his legal career with state government, most recently as the director of the Florida Department of Transportation, Office of Right of Way, as a committee staff director for the Florida Senate, and in the past as an attorney and general counsel for the Florida Department of Transportation. He has served on many voluntary bar and community organizations, most notably on the board of the Tallahassee Bar Association, as chair of the Second Circuit Judicial Nominating Commission, as chair of The Florida Bar’s Government Lawyers and Eminent Domain Committees and as chair of the Outdoor Advertising Committee of the national transportation organization known as AASHTO. He remains engaged with FSU Law and serves on the Alumni Association Board of Directors, where he currently chairs the Awards Committee.



“Pay it forward by giving back to your alma mater and to those individuals and other institutions that helped you along life’s way.”

Student Profile: 3L Luc C. Mazzini, II

Desired Practice Location: Most interested in South Florida (Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach area), but open to Orlando and Tampa

Expected Graduation: Spring 2021

Field of Law Sought: Enjoys litigation; especially interested in civil litigation



Luc Mazzini is from Naples, Florida. He earned a bachelor’s degree in advertising with a minor in psychology from FSU and will become a double ‘Nole when he graduates from FSU Law in April 2021. Mazzini is currently working as a certified legal intern at the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office. He handles a full range of misdemeanor cases on behalf of the State of Florida and actively participates in each step of the criminal process, including docket soundings, witness interviewing, arraignments, pre-trial discovery, plea negotiations and motion hearings. During his 2L summer, Mazzini worked as a summer law clerk at Denton, Jackson, Martin & Fontela, P.A., where he conducted legal research and drafted various motions in cases involving medical malpractice, employment law, premises liability and general insurance defense. During the spring semester of his 2L year, Mazzini externed for the Honorable Ronald W. Flury (’93), of Florida’s Second Judicial Circuit. There, he researched, drafted bench memoranda and orders in both criminal and civil cases, assisted in all courtroom proceedings, and reviewed pleadings, motions, briefs and other legal documents. During the summer after his 1L year, Mazzini was an intellectual property intern for the Tampa office of GrayRobinson, P.A., where he served as a logistical engineer for a high-profile patent infringement trial in the U.S. District Court for the District of Delaware. He researched issues as they arose during trial, provided recommendations on trial strategy and assisted with expert witness preparation.

During law school, Mazzini was actively involved in the FSU Law Trial Team and the Phi Alpha Delta Mock Trial Team. Between the two teams, he has participated in six national competitions—four as an advocate and two as a coach. As an advocate, Mazzini placed as a finalist and semifinalist. One of the teams he coached won first place in their competition and the other team won the title of “Best Defense Team.” Mazzini was a board member on the FSU Law School Council from 2019-2020 and has served as a member of the Business Law Society; Intellectual Property Law Society; Entertainment, Arts and Sports Law Society; and the Student Bar Association. If you are interested in connecting with or hiring Mazzini after graduation, [visit his LinkedIn profile](#).

“I pride myself on my work ethic, my attention to detail and my prior willingness to go the extra mile. I am confident that my prior legal experiences, passion for litigation and overall background will enable me to make a valuable, immediate contribution to my future employer.”

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