

## From the Dean



David L. Markell

1953 - 2021

We are profoundly saddened that FSU Law Professor Emeritus David Markell passed away on March 22 after a heroic battle with cancer. Dave was beloved here for his kindness, generosity, hard work, inspired teaching, scholarly productivity, and service to the law school and broader community. His contributions to the law school during his 18 years on the faculty were immeasurable. He served in numerous leadership positions, including as an associate dean in three capacities. As a scholar, he was nationally recognized as one of the top in his field. During his career, Dave published six books and more than 50 articles and book chapters on topics including climate change, compliance and enforcement, and North American environmental law and policy. One of his books was cited as “the most outstanding work of legal scholarship in the field” of administrative law and earned an annual American Bar Association Section award for scholarship. Dave also was instrumental in connecting us—particularly our environmental law program—with the practicing profession. He engaged often with alumni and other attorneys and judges to spread the word about our programs, professors and students. There is no doubt that Dave’s presence on our faculty was a big reason that our environmental law program has been highly regarded for so long.

Equally admirable was Dave’s tireless commitment to help his current and former students. His high expectations, coupled with his patient and nurturing mentorship, gave countless FSU Law students the confidence and the courage to be the very best lawyers they could be. “Dave was one of the most popular teachers at the law school,” said Dean Emeritus Don Weidner. “Even in extremely difficult courses to teach, like Legislation and Regulation, the students gave him rave reviews. And, though he taught many more students than most faculty, he took the time to integrate role-playing assignments into virtually all his courses.”

In addition to being a revered teacher, Dave helped multiple graduating students secure jobs in the environmental field. Moreover, while serving as the Steven M. Goldstein Professor, Dave regularly reached out to connect with students who were Goldstein scholars so that they would know more about Professor Goldstein and the values that drove his life and career in law. Professor Emeritus Chuck Ehrhardt noted that “Dave admirably filled both the spirit and the intent of the Goldstein professorship by bringing a wide variety of environmental law experts to the school to stimulate student interest in the field.”

Every member of the FSU Law community who worked with Dave felt his kindness and generosity. Dave was welcoming to everyone and genuinely cared about his colleagues, students and our administrative team. He was never too busy to ask how someone’s family was (and to listen with genuine interest to their reply) or to give advice to a student about their professional endeavors. As his colleague Professor Wayne Logan related, “Dave Markell truly embodied what it means to be a dedicated teacher and public-spirited legal scholar. But more than that, Dave was a truly fantastic person.”

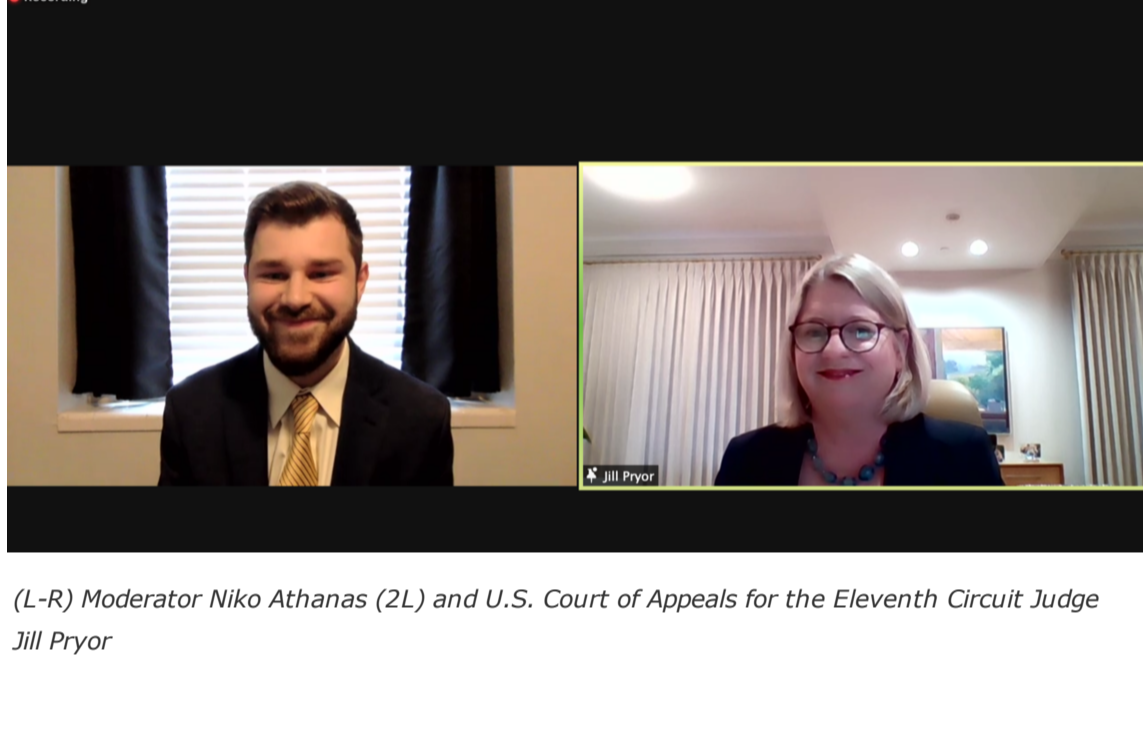
Professor Nat Stern offered, “Dave’s remarkable career speaks for itself. Still, what I’ll always cherish most is the inspiration of his magnificent character. Dave made all of us better by the example of his endless kindness, devotion, dedication, generosity and profound humanity.” Professor Emeritus Donna Christie expressed similar sentiments: “Dave impressed me most by simply being one of the finest people I have ever known. Kind, thoughtful, caring, respectful of students and colleagues—I could make a list of noble characteristics that would fill a page. All of us who knew him are better for it.” And Professor Shi-Ling Hsu focused on Dave’s tremendous sense of commitment: “Dave Markell was an immensely talented individual, but his gifts paled in comparison with his herculean work ethic. Dave worked hard at *everything*, all the time. Instinctively modest, he led by example, but that example was extraordinary.”

Although Dave retired from teaching in 2020, he was still actively engaged with many of us, and we will all miss him terribly. As summed up by Professor Erin Ryan, who currently serves as associate dean for environmental programs, “the world is smaller, and sadder, without him.”

Our thoughts are with Dave’s family and friends during this difficult time.

-Dean Erin O’Connor

## FSU Law Hosts Federal Judge Jill Pryor



(L-R) Moderator Niko Athanas (2L) and U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit Judge Jill Pryor

On Wednesday, March 31, the College of Law and the Student Federal Bar Association hosted the Honorable Jill Pryor, of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. The discussion was moderated by second-year law student Niko Athanas, who interned for Judge Pryor during the summer of 2020.

During a virtual presentation, Judge Pryor commented on what motivated her to become a judge and how her experience as a litigator shapes her judicial perspective. She also gave tips for effective oral arguments (and some oral argument pet peeves) and discussed the characteristics she looks for in law clerks. When asked what kind of opportunities she would advise students to seek out before applying for a judicial clerkship, Judge Pryor said there was no one formula. Personally, she looks for passion and follow-through—“showing dedication and determination in pursuing something that keenly interests you.”

“That could be a legal issue that you pursue on a journal, it could be a clinical program that you’re passionate about, it could be moot court,” Judge Pryor said. “To me, there’s not a lot of value in joining a bunch of things in law school that you’re really not interested in. What you should do is go deep in the things you are interested in—and it actually doesn’t have to be in the law school, it could be something in the community, some kind of public service.”

Judge Pryor was nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals by President Barack Obama and was confirmed September 8, 2014. Previously, Judge Pryor was a partner at Bondurant, Mixson & Elmore, LLP, in Atlanta, where she specialized in complex business and commercial litigation, both at trial and on appeal. After law school, she clerked for Judge James Larry Edmondson, of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. Judge Pryor holds a law degree from Yale Law School.

## Alum Profile: Conti Moore Smith ('07)

[Conti Moore Smith](#) is managing partner at Conti Moore Law, PLLC in Orlando, where she practices exclusively in the area of family law. Smith opened the firm in 2012. She previously practiced at Marquis & Aurbach in Las Vegas, where she litigated matters in the areas of business law, personal injury law, family law, landlord/tenant law and employment discrimination. Smith recently was quoted in a [New York Times article](#) about navigating child custody issues during the pandemic. Among Smith’s many honors was being recognized by the National Bar Association and Impact as one of the “Nation’s Best Advocates: 40 Lawyers Under 40” in 2010. In 2008, she was honored by the Clark County Bar Association and the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada with the Lined Award for Most Pro Bono Hours in the county. She remains engaged with the College of Law and currently serves as president-elect of the school’s Black Alumni Network.



## Student Profile: 3L Rachel Maxwell

**Desired Practice Location:** Tallahassee or surrounding areas

**Expected Graduation:** Spring 2021

**Field of Law Sought:** Criminal litigation



Originally from Benton, Louisiana, Rachel Maxwell earned a bachelor’s degree in communication with a concentration in journalism and a minor in marketing from FSU Law in April 2021. Maxwell is currently working as a certified legal intern with the Public Defender’s Office of Florida’s Second Judicial Circuit. She handles cases and represents clients in county court and assists attorneys in the office with their cases. This includes negotiating with the State Attorney’s Office, researching, drafting and arguing motions, and communicating with clients. From April of 2020 until December 2020, Maxwell clerked at Eraclides Gelman, where she assisted with workers’ compensation defense cases by completing medical record analysis and case law research, drafting motions, drafting and executing subpoenas, and helping with case management. During the fall semester of her 3L year, Maxwell also externed with the Innocence Project of Florida. She reviewed and analyzed criminal case files to determine the merits of innocence claims and possible avenues for post-conviction relief. Additionally, she drafted memos outlining the procedural and factual background of cases and made recommendations regarding the acceptance of clients. During her 1L summer and through the spring semester of her 2L year, Maxwell clerked at McConnaughay, Coonrod, Pope, Weaver & Stern, P.A. There, she assisted with workers’ compensation and civil liability defense cases. She completed medical record analysis, case law research and initial file analysis. She also created educational handouts for client presentations and attended depositions, mediations and other proceedings.

Maxwell is the treasurer of the FSU Law Trial Team. As a Trial Team member, she was named a Finalist Advocate at the 2021 Texas Young Lawyers Association National Trial Competition and Semi-Finalist Advocate and Most Professional Advocate at the 2020 Summit Cup National Trial Competition. Maxwell also serves as treasurer of the Phi Delta Phi Honor Society. If you are interested in connecting with or hiring Maxwell after graduation, [visit her LinkedIn profile](#).

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