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### From the Dean

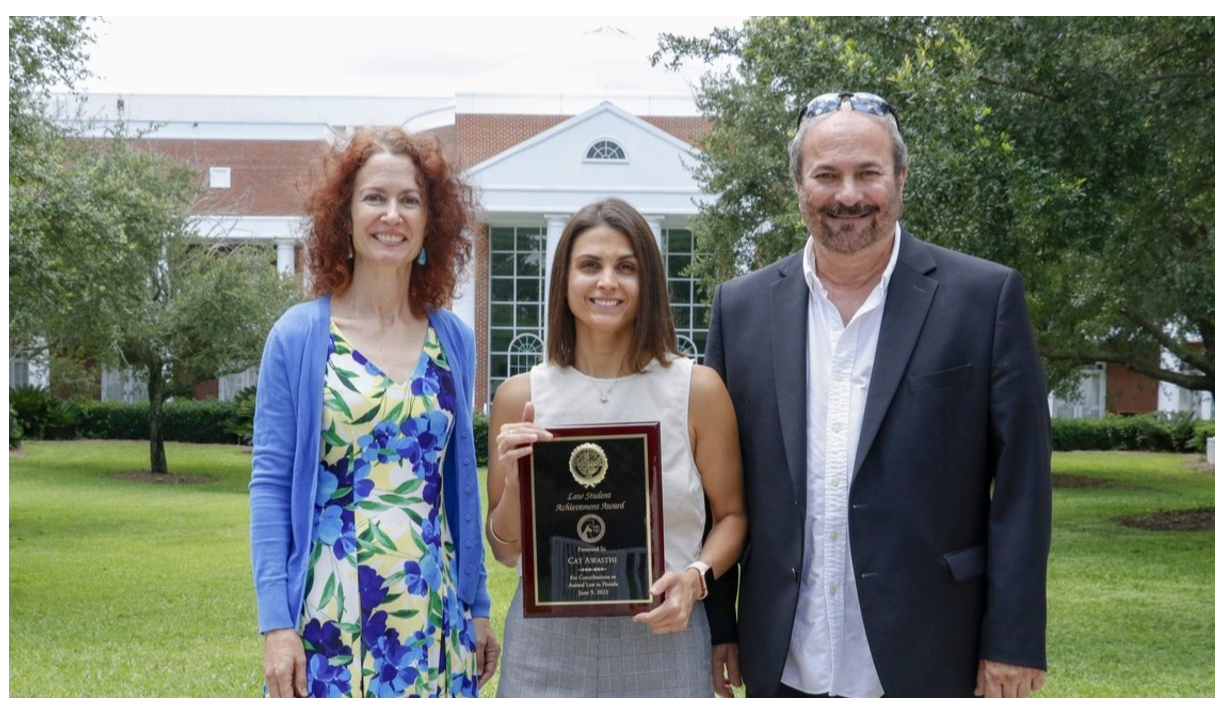


FSU Law Class of 2024

This week, we began the fall 2021 semester and welcomed students back to campus for fully in-person classes. We were especially excited to have our new 1L class join us. This is an impressive group of 158 students, boasting a median LSAT score of 163 and a median GPA of 3.82—both of which are records at FSU Law! In addition, this class is setting a record with the highest percentage of female students in an incoming class at 59.5%. The group is extremely diverse—students range in age from 19-61, 39% identify as ethnically/racially diverse, and 29% are non-Florida residents. The class of 2024 has a combined 637 years of work experience and majored in 43 different subjects at 58 undergraduate schools. Additionally, 6% of the class has already earned a graduate or professional degree. When I welcomed the class at orientation last week, I urged them to embrace the differences within their group and encouraged them to learn from the many points of view that they would encounter during their classes. It was a joy to meet them and teach them last week, and we are looking forward to watching them flourish at FSU Law!

*Erin O'Connor*  
Dean Erin O'Connor

### Awasthi Wins Outstanding Law Student Award



(L-R): Professor Tricia Matthews ('93), 3L Catherine Awasthi, and alumna Ralph DeMeo ('85)

Congratulations to third-year student Catherine Awasthi, who recently received The Florida Bar Animal Law Section's Outstanding Law Student Award! The award recognizes law students at Florida law schools who have made significant contributions to animal welfare and education. Awasthi was selected after serving as president of FSU Law's Student Animal Legal Defense Fund chapter from May 2020-May 2021, during which she organized a pet food and supplies drive that resulted in the collection of 250 pounds of pet food for the Leon County Humane Society. Awasthi also worked with Pets Ad Litem and the Animal Legal Defense Fund to complete 50 pro bono hours on a pending animal law case. In addition, she served as a teaching assistant and helped with course content creation for a new Animal Law Legislation, Litigation, and Policy class at FSU Law. Earlier this month, FSU Law alumna Ralph DeMeo ('85) presented Awasthi with the award on campus.

### Alum Profile: Sarah A. Pape ('06)

[Sarah A. Pape](#) is a shareholder at Zimmerman Kiser Sutcliffe P.A. in Orlando, where she has worked since clerking for the firm as a second-year law student. Pape is a member of the firm's Banking, Lending & Structured Finance and Real Estate Practice Groups. She represents banks, financial institutions, and other lenders in all types of lending transactions—both real estate and asset based. Pape is experienced representing banks, lenders, and community development corporations in all varieties of SBA loan transactions. In 2020, she became an "SBA Designated Attorney," allowing her to close SBA 504 loans for community development corporations and lenders under an expedited closing procedure. In addition, Pape assists financial services clients with regulatory and compliance issues. Pape also serves on Zimmerman Kiser Sutcliffe's marketing and executive committees.



*"One of my favorite things about the type of law I practice is the collaborative nature of it. I have the honor of working collaboratively with my clients, my clients' customers, and the other attorneys working on a deal to reach a common goal. I enjoy fitting the puzzle pieces together and finding creative solutions to address legal issues and conflicts. It is a great privilege to work at ZKS, where collaboration and civility are encouraged and practiced on a daily basis."*

### Student Profile: 3L Alejandra Gancedo

**Desired Practice Location:** South Florida  
**Specialty:** International law  
**Expected Graduation:** Spring 2022  
**Field of Law Sought:** Insurance defense but also interested in immigration law

Originally from Miami, Florida, Alejandra Gancedo earned her bachelor's degree from Florida State University, where she double majored in political science and English literature. She is currently pursuing the International Law Certificate from FSU Law and will become a double 'Nole when she graduates next spring. This summer, Gancedo held a summer associate position with Kelley Kronenberg in Miami, where she gained experience in various practice areas, including construction defect, first party property, and workers' compensation. She also observed hearings, depositions, and mediations and assisted supervising attorneys with drafting motions and affirmative defenses, responses to discovery requests, creating timelines, writing initial case briefs, and conducting research on both statutes and cases regarding insurance legal issues. She will continue to work with Kelley Kronenberg as a law clerk this school year. From August 2020 to January 2021, Gancedo worked as a public interest law intern in the Immigrant and Farmworker Project, a clinic offered by FSU Law's Public Interest Law Center. There, she was directly involved in immigration cases, including asylum, u-visa, and special immigrant juvenile status cases. She communicated extensively with clients and conducted preliminary client interviews, all in Spanish. In addition, she conducted research on U.S. immigration laws and ensured citizenship status was properly applied for via USCIS forms. The summer before her 2L year, Gancedo completed a judicial externship with Chief Magistrate Judge John O'Sullivan at the U.S. District Court for The Southern District of Florida in Miami. In this role, she observed a variety of hearings, including settlement conferences and criminal duty hearings. She also researched various legal issues and drafted a report and recommendation on a motion for a bill of costs, which was later ordered.



At FSU Law, Gancedo is president of the Cuban American Bar Association, where she also previously served as secretary and as a 1L representative. In addition, she is a student ambassador for the Admissions Office, has served as a teaching assistant for the FSU Law J.M. Program, and is a member of the Journal of Transnational Law and Policy. If you are interested in connecting with or hiring Gancedo after graduation, visit her [LinkedIn profile](#).

*"I am both a team player and leader who celebrates the successes of others! It is important to uplift fellow students, co-workers, and legal professionals, as it will facilitate a positive culture in the legal field."*

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