

From the Dean



2021 Award Winner Judge Steve Leifman ('87)



2021 Award Winner Alan Abramowitz ('89)

If you know someone who has devoted their entire career to public service, we invite you to nominate them for our 2022 Exemplary Public Service Career Award. In addition to recognizing alumni who have dedicated their careers to public service, the award honors people who have demonstrated exceptional character, integrity, leadership, humility, and professionalism, as well as the highest regard for ethics. The award also aims to recognize public servants whose dedication to the profession may otherwise go unnoticed. Additional considerations include:

- Length of the nominee's public service career
- Impact of the nominee's public service career (number of people served, significant legal achievements benefiting a large number of people, etc.)
- Nominee's demonstrated ability to inspire others
- Nominee's genuine concern for others, as displayed in various facets of the nominee's personal and professional life

All previous nominations will be considered for the 2022 award, therefore if you nominated someone in the past, you do not need to nominate them again. Please [submit new nominations online](#) by Friday, May 13, 2022. All nominations should include the nominee's name and an explanation of how they meet the award criteria. You may also send additional documentation, including links to sources of information about the nominee. The award winner will be recognized during a special Zoom ceremony and at this fall's 2022 Homecoming festivities. In addition, a painted portrait of the award recipient will be displayed at the College of Law. Many thanks to nominators for helping us recognize extraordinary public servants.

Erin O'Connor
Dean Erin O'Connor

FSU Trustee Vivian de las Cuevas-Diaz

Vivian de las Cuevas-Diaz is the first Hispanic woman to be appointed to the board of trustees at Florida State University and the only Burning Spear member to be appointed to that role. She also serves on the conference committee for FSU Law's 2022 Real Estate Program. de las Cuevas-Diaz earned her bachelor's degree from Florida State University and her law degree from Tulane University.



As a partner at Holland & Knight in Miami, de las Cuevas-Diaz serves as the firmwide deputy section leader of the Real Estate Section and assists in managing the firm's nationwide Real Estate Practice. Her practice includes the development, acquisition, and disposition of a variety of complex real estate transactions; handling real estate joint ventures; representing landlords and tenants in retail, commercial, hotel, and warehouse leasing agreements; assisting in financial transactions for industrial, multi-family and single-family development, condominiums, and hotels; and guiding institutional lenders toward resolutions for troubled loans and complex workouts. She is consistently named among the top lawyers in real estate, as well as a top influential business woman and a Hispanic woman of distinction.

In addition to her legal practice, de las Cuevas-Diaz is a past president of the Cuban American Bar Association and a member of the Federal Judicial Nominating Commission for the Southern District of Florida. She also volunteers with the Coral Gables Community Foundation, Beacon Council, Commercial Real Estate Women of Miami, and Latin Builders Association.

“It is an honor to serve on the board of trustees, especially given the university’s talented and dynamic alumni base. Having a behind-the-scenes look at FSU’s operations and helping with the important work of telling our wonderful stories gives me joy. My mission on the board is to spread the word about FSU’s greatness.”

Alum Profile: Autumn Beck Blackledge ('01)

Autumn Beck Blackledge opened Autumn Beck Blackledge, PLLC, in Pensacola in 2014. She is a certified collaborative divorce attorney and Florida Supreme Court certified circuit court mediator. Blackledge practices exclusively in the area of family law and recently filed for divorce on behalf of Joe Exotic, of Netflix's "Tiger King." Her firm has been on the Seminole 100 list four years in a row. Before opening the firm, Blackledge was in private practice and represented plaintiffs and defendants in the areas of insurance defense, plaintiff's personal injury, contract disputes, sexual harassment, and other workplace issues. She also was a lobbyist at the Florida Chamber of Commerce. Blackledge has been recognized on the Super Lawyers Rising Stars and Florida Trend Legal Elite lists, among other honors. She is also active in the Pensacola community, serving on the boards of the Sacred Heart Hospital Foundation and Pensacola Little Theater.



Student Profile: 3L Megan Clouden

Desired Practice Location: Denver, Colorado

Expected Graduation: May 2022

Field of Law Sought: Environmental law; especially wildlife and animal law

Megan Clouden grew up in Cumberland, Maryland, but has lived in Florida for about 12 years. Clouden attended Florida State University for undergraduate studies, where she majored in English and philosophy. She will become a double 'Nole when she graduates from FSU Law on May 1. This semester, Clouden worked as a law clerk in the Wildlife and Marine Resources Section of the U.S. Department of Justice. In this position, she assisted with litigation on wildlife laws in federal, district, and appellate courts by conducting legal research, drafting evidentiary response briefs, and reviewing administrative records. She worked on Endangered Species Act cases, Magnuson-Stevens Act cases, and National Environmental Policy Act cases. Clouden has also worked as a law clerk at the Center for Biological Diversity, the Humane Society of the United States, and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. In these roles, she drafted complaints, notices, and motions, participated in standing declarant interviews, and conducted document and record review. She also has ample experience drafting memoranda, communicating with clients, and researching both case law and legislative history.



At FSU Law, Clouden is treasurer of the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund. If you are interested in connecting with or hiring Clouden, visit her [LinkedIn](#) or email her at mkc16b@my.fsu.edu.

“I have truly found my passion working with animals and the environment. My experience in and out of the classroom has given me the practical tools I need to be an effective and diligent advocate for our natural resources.”