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From the Dean



Don Weidner mingles with guests at a retirement event in his honor.

Last week, we celebrated Don Weidner's retirement from the faculty with an intimate reception at the law school. Faculty colleagues and staff members, along with a small number of alumni, gathered to celebrate Don's remarkable career and to wish him well in retirement. Several guests made remarks during the event, sharing fond memories of working with Don and detailing his positive impact on them and the law school. Many people talked about Don's extraordinary successes as dean of FSU Law. When he stepped down as dean in 2016, his list of accomplishments included leading FSU Law into the top tier of American law schools, transforming the faculty into one of the nation's most well-respected groups of legal scholars, innovatively expanding the College of Law's academic offerings, improving and growing the law school's physical facilities, and creating a culture of philanthropy that rivaled the top private law schools. During the event, we also announced Don's new title, which was unsurprisingly unanimously approved by the faculty—dean and professor emeritus. Congratulations to Don on his much-deserved retirement. We will all miss the wisdom and energy he contributed to the law school on a daily basis.

Erin O'Connor
Dean Erin O'Connor

Alumni Return for Rescheduled Homecoming Events

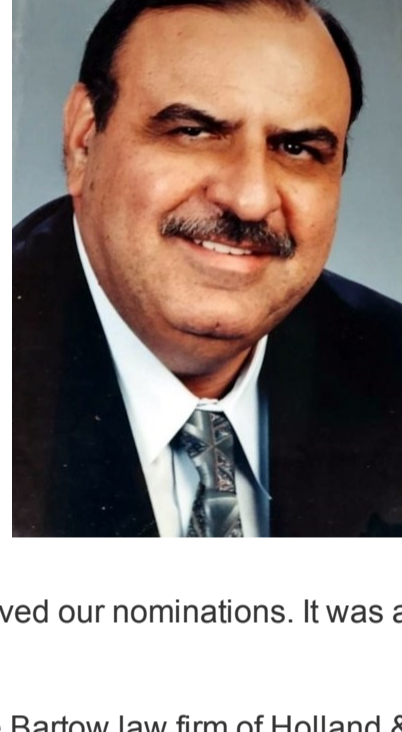


Members of the Class of 1972 gathered to celebrate their 50th anniversary of graduating from law school.

FSU Law welcomed alumni to campus over the weekend for the rescheduled Homecoming 2022 festivities. On Saturday, April 15, the law school hosted a tailgate party on the James Harold Thompson Green prior to the FSU Football Garnet & Gold Spring Showcase. The following morning, members of the Class of 1972 gathered at the law school for a 50-Year Alumni Brunch held in their honor. The brunch was sponsored by alumni F. Palmer Williams, Kirk Brown, George Cappy, Mary Clark, Ken Connor, Pete Dunbar, David Fletcher, David Fonvielle, Judge Bill Gary, Wayne Hogan, Judge Tom Johnson, John Marks, Judge Frank Sheffield, Charles Tunncliffe, and Gary Williams. It was a special opportunity for the members of the Class of 1972 to reconnect, share memories, and celebrate their achievements in life and work.

In Memoriam: Alum Terrence J. "Terry" Russell ('69)

Terry Russell and I met as classmates in the 1966 charter class of the FSU College of Law. We both had grown up in Jacksonville and graduated from the University of Florida, so we had things in common that brought us together. It was obvious from the beginning of law school through our graduation that Terry had a great passion for the law. He was an excellent student and contributed greatly to our class.



Terry and I were nominated for Gold Key at FSU. This nomination put the Gold Key Board in a very difficult dilemma, since they had never had any University of Florida graduates nominated. It was only after a three-hour debate that they finally concluded we were not "bad guys" after all and approved our nominations. It was a milestone for FSU!

Terry went to work for a federal judge, and I joined the Bartow law firm of Holland & Knight. Our paths crossed later as we both began our service in The Florida Bar. We both became members of the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar, and Terry's passion for the law, passion for his law school, and passion for his profession were evident in everything he did. Terry's accomplishments in his service to the bar are almost unprecedented.

Terry was the second FSU law school charter class member to become president of The Florida Bar in 2001-2002. Terry wanted to create the Attorney's Charitable Trust (ACT) funded by the bar's members for its members. The ACT was used for not only 9/11 relief, but also natural disasters over the years.

An advocate for keeping the courthouse doors open to all, Terry worked tirelessly during his term for the passage of the Civil Legal Assistance Act that provided millions of dollars for civil legal services for several years thereafter. Terry, who also served as the president of The Florida Bar Foundation, received the Foundation's Medal of Honor Award for that effort.

Terry is believed to be one of two people to have served as president of both The Florida Bar Foundation and The Florida Bar.

As part of a project to document the history of The Florida Bar, Terry said he wanted to be remembered "first as a solid lawyer, with a strong love of our profession, and as a leader who advanced our ideals of professionalism, compassion for those in need, and public service." Without a doubt, Terry was such a person and should be remembered as he wished to be.

Terry and his wife, Mary Kay, met when they both were attending Bishop Kenney, a Catholic high school in Jacksonville. They married in 1966 and have two children, Christine and Greg.

Terry will be sorely missed not only by his family, friends, colleagues, and those who benefited from his hard work as a member of our profession, but also by the citizens of the state of Florida, many of whom benefited from his tireless service. Rest in peace, my friend, for a life well lived.

- Tribute written by FSU Law alumnus John W. Frost II ('69)

Student Profile: 3L Elliana Mortellaro

Desired Practice Location: Washington, D.C.

Expected Graduation: May 2023

Field of Law Sought: Would love to practice public interest law; open to governmental work, legislative work, and working for NGOs that focus on public interest matters, such as criminal justice reform, human trafficking, immigration, or advocating for groups in the margins.

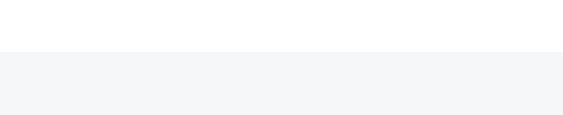


Elliana Mortellaro has moved six times in her life, and she considers several places home: Mesa, Arizona; Longwood, Florida; Bedford, New Hampshire; Cary, North Carolina; Weston, Florida; Sarasota, Florida; and currently Tallahassee, Florida. She graduated summa cum laude with a B.S. in psychology and a minor in social work from Florida State University. Mortellaro has served as a legislative fellow since October 2022. In this role, she conducts research and writes bill analyses for legislative bills that go through the Commerce Committee, the Regulatory Reform and Economic Development Subcommittee, and the Energy, Communications, and Cybersecurity Subcommittee. She has also helped draft bills, worked on amendments, and answered questions from representatives about proposed legislation. During the summer before her 3L year, Mortellaro was a certified legal intern for the Second Judicial Circuit Public Defender's Office. There, Mortellaro advocated for children in the courtroom through preparing for trials and conducting plea hearings, detention review hearings, docket separings, case management, competency reviews, predisposition hearings, and other litigation proceedings. She also drafted motions, conducted legal research, and communicated potential legal decisions to children clients and their parents. During the fall 2021 semester, Mortellaro was a clinical advocate through the FSU Law Public Interest Law Center (PILC) Human Trafficking/Children in Prison Project. As an advocate, Mortellaro assisted with human trafficking victims' cases on emancipation, reunification, and expungement matters; conducted legal research on emancipation, reunification, and children who were given life sentences; co-wrote a complaint to the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement as a call to action to promote accountability of law for goods made by unpaid labor; presented to at-risk children to assist them in finding available resources; helped create a video on the realities of unlawful practices within the seafood industry; and launched a social media page to spread awareness of trafficking in the chocolate and seafood industries. She also participated in the PILC Children's Advocacy Clinic during the summer 2021 semester. In this role, she advocated on cases for permanency, reunification, and power of attorney matters and interviewed clients, connected them to public resources, and provided legal assistance. Mortellaro also was a board member for a local Tallahassee non-profit organization, Neighborly, in 2021 and 2022, and she has volunteered as a guardian ad litem since 2018.

At FSU Law, Mortellaro is a member of the Trial Team and Christian Legal Society, where she currently serves as president. If you are interested in connecting with or hiring Mortellaro after graduation, visit her [LinkedIn profile](#) or email her at ecm16b@fsu.edu.

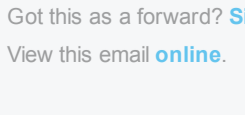
"Law school has taught me so much about being okay with being wrong, listening rather than speaking, and working hard. I have had countless opportunities to meet people in situations I could never begin to understand, and to listen, teach, counsel, and above all, advocate. My time in law school has been invaluable, and wherever I end up, I will draw upon each lesson I have learned with open-mindedness, empathy, hard work, passion for advocacy, and an eagerness to learn and serve."

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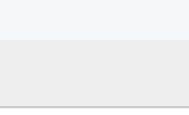
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