

---

May 4, 2026

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I am writing to express my interest in serving as the next Dean of the Florida State University College of Law. FSU Law has a remarkable track record of success with a stand-out faculty, a dedicated community of staff and alumni, and strong outcomes for students in terms of job placement and bar passage. It is amazing that Florida State does all of this at an affordable price that offers exceptional value. I would be excited to have the opportunity to work with FSU Law's faculty, staff, students, and alumni to build on these strengths and advance the law school's academic reputation, financial sustainability, and institutional impact.

I see three core priorities for your next dean. First, the dean needs to work with the law school community to deepen the strengths that have led to FSU Law's success and to identify opportunities to take FSU Law's reputation and impact to the next level in the years to come. Second, the dean must expand fundraising in order to retain and recruit exceptional faculty and staff and to expand the law school's reach and influence. Third, the dean must strengthen financial sustainability by expanding non-JD revenue streams while enhancing your already robust student outcomes.

Building on your strengths should be the starting point for your incoming dean. A crucial part of the job will be retaining and empowering the exceptional faculty and staff who have taken FSU Law to new heights. FSU Law's US News ranking of 34 reflects the strengths and dedication of the faculty and staff. Faculty teaching and scholarship are at the core of that success as you have done an excellent job of recruiting and retaining top talent.

Strengthening the school's commitment to scholarship and elevating the faculty's visibility and reputation are key to taking the law school to the next level as the leading law school in Florida. Your peer reputation rankings have improved in recent years, which is a tribute to your exceptional faculty, but your peer reputation has consistently lagged your overall ranking. Part of the challenge appears to be the visibility of your specialty programs which are ranked well below your overall ranking. See <https://taxprofblog.aals.org/2026/04/22/2026-27-u-s-news-omnibus-specialty-rankings/>. I would want to work with the faculty to ensure they have the funding and flexibility to attend the leading conferences in their fields to heighten their profiles. As importantly, we need to think strategically about how to bring the academic world to Tallahassee and the state of Florida and how to develop the funding, vision, and staff support to elevate the academic program's impact and prominence.

A related challenge is the need to burnish FSU Law's reputation with the judiciary and the bar and to open up stronger job opportunities for your students in the process. FSU Law has done an exceptional job of placing its graduates in full-time jobs and equivalents. But the law school is lagging its in-state rival and other peer schools when it comes to BigLaw and federal clerkship

---

placements. There is a strong correlation between BigLaw and federal clerkship placement rates and the US News assessment score for this category. More importantly for FSU Law students, BigLaw and federal clerkship opportunities are stepping stones to advance their career impact and key to elevating the overall profile of FSU Law.

Part of the challenge is that you are very good at your mission of training Florida lawyers as the overwhelming majority of your graduates start their careers in Florida. It would be valuable to work on encouraging students to consider federal clerkship and BigLaw job opportunities in other parts of the country, so that they can come back to practice in Florida later in their careers with a broader set of networks and practice experience. The law school should consider engaging FSU Law grads (and FSU undergrads who went on to law school elsewhere) to open up doors in BigLaw and integrating leading practitioners and federal judges into conferences and the broader academic life of the law school.

FSU Law's (and the university's) strong brand open up opportunities for expanded fundraising, which is key for having the means to recruit and retain faculty, to keep the JD degree affordable, and to expand the law school's reach and profile. Faculty and staff thought leadership in a broad range of fields creates opportunities to pitch individual and institutional donors to invest in the law school's centers and initiatives. Equally important is the opportunity to engage Florida State University's large alumni base both in Florida and nationwide. Strengthening alumni engagement—both horizontally among peers and vertically across generations—can deepen fundraising while expanding networking and professional opportunities for FSU Law students.

Financial sustainability also requires expansion of non-JD revenue streams and improvement in operational effectiveness. Your success in the online Masters of Legal Studies program and other online initiatives provide a strong foundation to build on. I am particularly impressed by the strategic angles you have in place in your online programming in areas such as Employment Law and HR Risk Management, Health Care Regulation, and Legal Risk Management, Contracting, and Compliance, which fill market needs that very few other law schools are addressing in the online space. There is value in applying a business-school strategy within a law-school context: investing in online education and specialized non-JD degrees to diversify revenue while preserving small, high-quality JD classes. The next dean should build on your success by expanding online and non-JD offerings in other areas of comparative advantage to enhance affordability for JD students and deepen the law school's long-term financial resilience.

FSU Law's student outcomes are already impressive and a source of strength for your overall ranking. While the law school has become a market leader in job placement, your next dean should consider how to expand opportunities in Big Law and federal clerkships and how to encourage students to pursue opportunities in south Florida and other parts of the country. The related

---

challenge is the value in working on closing the starting salary gap between FSU graduates and graduates of many of its peer schools as that may be a stumbling gap in student recruitment.

FSU Law's bar passage numbers are strong, but there is scope for significant improvement in first-time bar passage. Integrating bar preparation into the curriculum and providing early, targeted mentoring for at-risk students can materially improve outcomes for students while strengthening rankings performance. While your 75<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> percentile LSAT scores have increased in recent years, you continue to have a low 25<sup>th</sup> percentile LSAT (compared to both your in-state rival and peer schools). Since LSAT scores are highly correlated with bar passage rates, that makes your strong first-time bar passage rates a testament to the dedication of your faculty, staff, and students. But it also opens up the possibility that stronger student recruitment will yield greater benefits in first-time bar passage rates, which will help FSU graduates as well as increase your overall ranking.

My own administrative experience has prepared me well to work with faculty, staff, and alumni to develop strategies that build on your strengths. At GW Law, I have addressed similar challenges. Following the 2023 U.S. News methodology change, GW Law faced a sharp rankings decline driven by placement and bar passage outcomes. As Chair of the Job Placement Committee and later as Associate Dean for Professional Outcomes, I led a comprehensive turnaround.

In the wake of leadership upheaval in the Career Center, I coordinated a faculty-wide outreach effort to support hard-to-place graduates, contributing to an increase in full-credit placement from 89.8% to 97.6% and reducing unemployed graduates to single digits. Working with new career-services leadership, we achieved a 99.3% and 99.8% full-credit placement rate for the Classes of 2024 and 2025, positioning GW for a top-ten placement score nationally and driving a rapid recovery in overall rankings.

I have also led curricular and structural reforms to improve bar passage, including the creation of a new three-credit bar preparation course and the development of early-intervention strategies for at-risk students beginning in the first year. In parallel, I have worked to integrate experiential learning more deeply into the curriculum in anticipation of evolving bar-exam formats and practice demands.

Beyond professional outcomes, I have held multiple leadership roles with significant budgetary and fundraising responsibility. As Faculty Director of the Center for Law, Economics, and Finance, I raised more than \$4.5 million, oversaw an LLM program, and developed executive education and online initiatives that later became institutionalized within the law school. As Faculty Director of the Falk Academy of Management & Entrepreneurship, I integrated entrepreneurship into the curriculum and raised an additional \$5 million. Most recently, as Faculty Director of GW's New York program, I have doubled enrollment and worked closely with development staff to cultivate donors in one of the law school's most important placement and fundraising markets.

---

I have also served on the Faculty Executive Committee, advised the dean on policy and budgeting matters, and acted as a primary ambassador to prospective students and alumni nationwide. Across these roles, I have learned how to lead faculty, manage change, build consensus, and translate vision into durable institutional success.

Thank you for considering my application. FSU Law's exceptional faculty, staff, and alumni ensure that it will remain a great law school under any leadership. I believe, however, that the moment calls for a dean who will build on your strengths, expand fundraising, strengthen financial sustainability, and relentlessly focus on student outcomes. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience and vision align with FSU Law's future. I am attaching my resume and a list of references, and please call me at (202) 994-4645 if you have any questions or require additional materials.

Sincerely yours,

Jeffrey Manns  
Associate Dean & Professor of Law  
George Washington University