

From the Dean



Last week, **FSU College of Law, the Stoops Center for Law and Business**, and the **Institute of Law, Technology & Innovation** welcomed leaders in government, law, technology, and academia from across the university for **AI Day in the Capital**, hosted at the College of Law.

This inaugural event explored the rapidly evolving landscape of artificial intelligence and its implications for public institutions, civic infrastructure, and ethical governance. Guided by researchers, practitioners, and innovators at the forefront of this work, participants engaged in thoughtful dialogue about how emerging technologies are shaping the future of law, policy, and society.

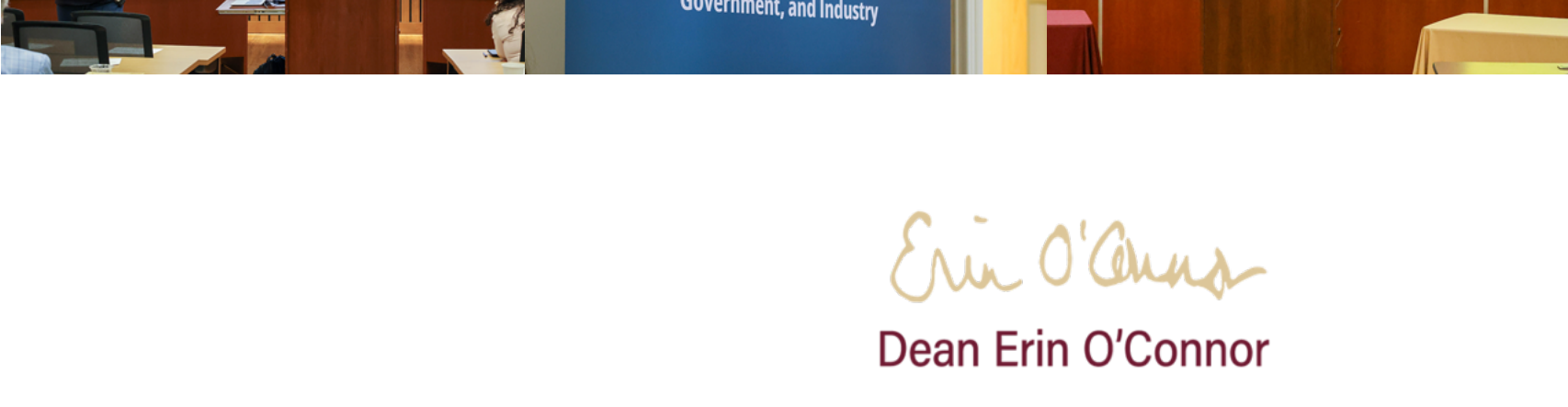
We are grateful to our outstanding presenters and speakers, and to our generous sponsor, Amazon, for helping make this event possible.

It is exciting to bring this forward-thinking work within reach of our students. Events like AI Day in the Capital not only spark curiosity and creativity but also demonstrate how responsible innovation can advance the public good. By convening leaders across disciplines, we are preparing our students to engage thoughtfully and ethically with the technologies that will define their careers.

[See photos from the event.](#)

[Read the FSU News article.](#)

[Watch the video.](#)



Erin O'Connor
Dean Erin O'Connor



(L-R) Professor Michael Morley, FSU University President Richard McCullough, Senator Don Gaetz, FSU College of Law Dean Erin O'Connor, and Executive Director of the Election Law Center Maureen Wagner Vinson

On Monday, the **Election Law Center** hosted a discussion with Florida Senator **Don Gaetz**, moderated by **Michael Morley**, the Sheila M. McDevitt Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Election Law Center. **FSU President Richard McCullough** joined the program to introduce Senator Gaetz and welcome participants.

The discussion, titled ***Inside Florida Election Law: 'How Election Law Really Gets Made in Tallahassee'***, offered students and faculty an inside look at the legislative process behind Florida's election laws, with Senator Gaetz sharing perspectives from his distinguished career in public service and engaging in thoughtful dialogue about how policy is shaped in practice.

The program concluded with an engaging Q&A, giving students the opportunity to ask thoughtful questions and gain firsthand perspectives from an experienced state leader. We are grateful to Senator Gaetz for taking the time to share his experience and insights with our community.



FUNDATHON SPRING 2026



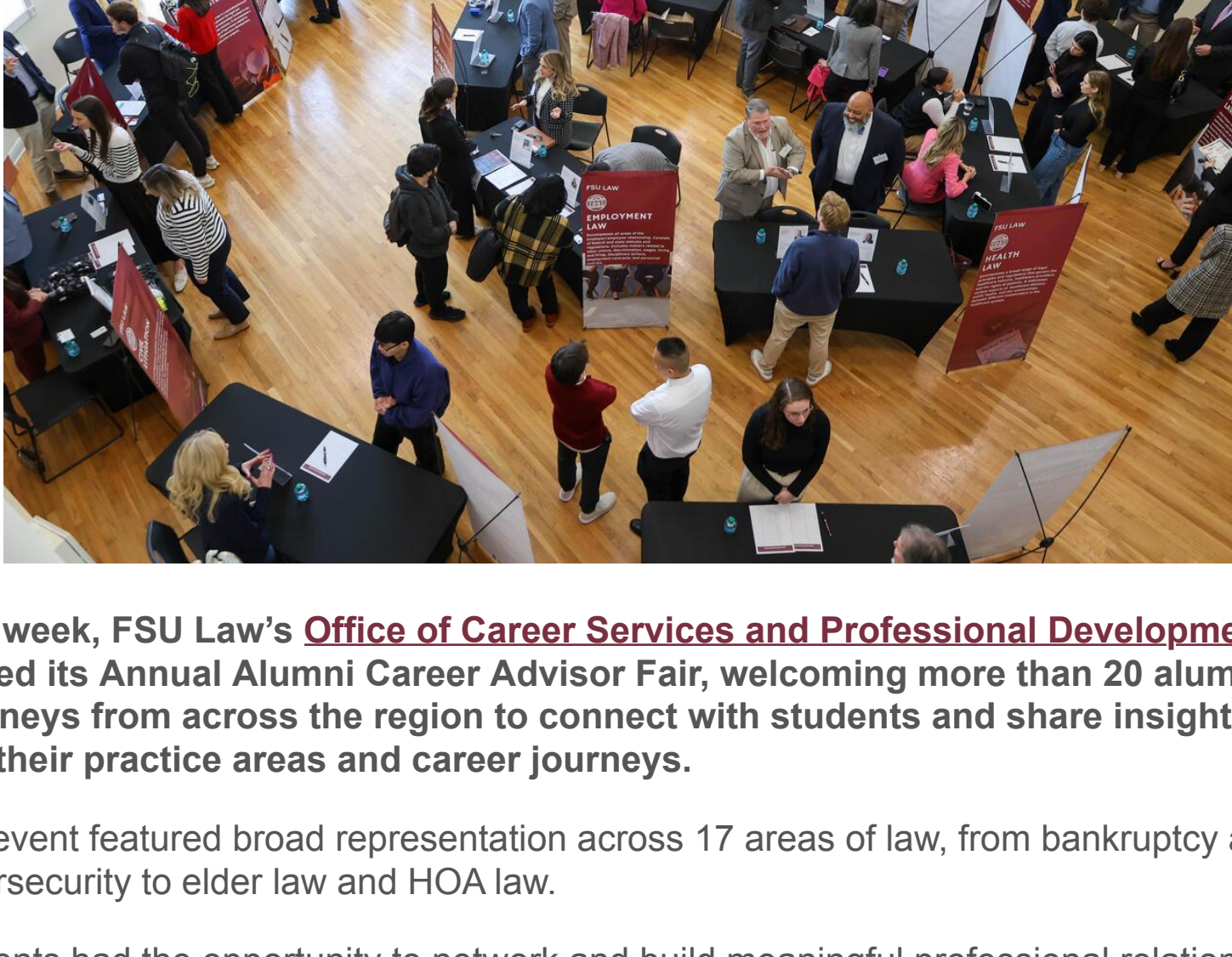
FSU Law's Spring Fundathon begins on February 9. Law students will connect with alumni by phone and email to share opportunities to support the College of Law. Gifts can support the law school's new annual giving initiative – **Innovative Leadership Campaign: The Future of Law Starts Here**, which helps develop graduates who lead with integrity, innovation, and adaptability.

If you haven't yet contributed, please consider doing so. Your gift supports leadership development opportunities, professional readiness through experiential learning, access to experts and mentors, and programs that give students a competitive edge.

You can donate when you receive a call or email from one of our students, or you can [make your gift online today](#).

Thank you for your continued support of FSU Law!

Alumni Career Advisor Fair

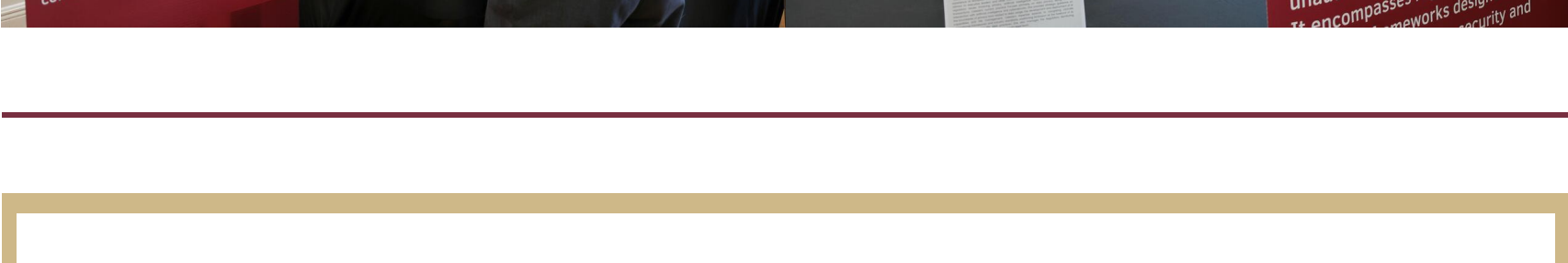


This week, FSU Law's **Office of Career Services and Professional Development** hosted its Annual Alumni Career Advisor Fair, welcoming more than 20 alumni attorneys from across the region to connect with students and share insights into their practice areas and career journeys.

The event featured broad representation across 17 areas of law, from bankruptcy and cybersecurity to elder law and HOA law.

Students had the opportunity to network and build meaningful professional relationships to support their career goals. We are grateful to our alumni who generously volunteered their time and expertise to invest in the next generation of legal leaders.

[Click here](#) to view more photos from the event.



FSU Law Events



Last week, FSU College of Law hosted a lecture by renowned Lincoln scholar Professor **Allen Guelzo** from the University of Florida's Hamilton School for Classical and Civic Education.

Presented in partnership with the **Institute for Governance & Civics** and sponsored by the **Florida Supreme Court Historical Society**, the program explored Abraham Lincoln's statesmanship, his commitment to the rule of law, and how his experience as a practicing attorney shaped his leadership. The discussion also examined the continuing relevance of Lincoln's example to today's civic and constitutional challenges.

The event concluded with a moderated Q&A, during which students and faculty posed thoughtful questions and engaged directly with Professor Guelzo on the enduring lessons of Lincoln's legacy.



FSU College of Law is pleased to welcome Edward Ball Chair Distinguished Speaker **Professor Hong Zhao**, an international economic law scholar at Peking University, for a lecture on U.S.–China economic and trade relations

The event will take place on February 9 in the D'Almeida Rotunda and will begin with lunch at noon. Professor Zhao previously served as Chair of the World Trade Organization Appellate Body—the highest authority for resolving global trade disputes—until its operations were suspended in 2020.

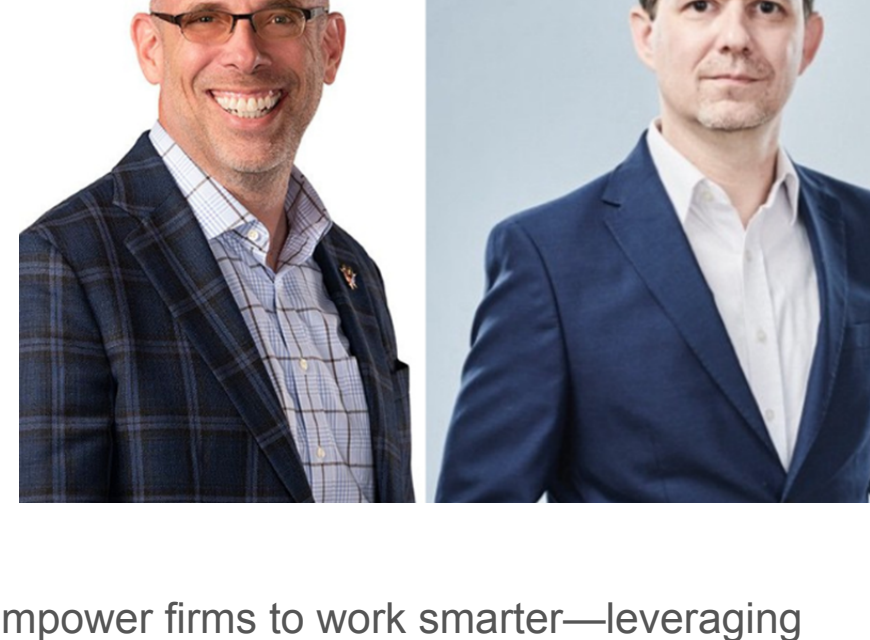
She has also served as China's representative in Geneva for intellectual property and trade matters and held senior legal positions within China's Ministry of Commerce and Anti-Monopoly Bureau. The program will conclude with a Q&A, offering students and faculty the opportunity to engage directly with Professor Zhao.



[Register](#)

Join us on February 9 at 12:30 p.m. for the second Frontiers in Law and Technology webinar of the semester, *Smarter, Not Bigger: Innovation for Small- and Medium-Sized Law Firms*.

This session features experts **Phil Rosenthal**, Chief Growth Officer at vLex, and **Joshua Lenon**, Lawyer in Residence at Clio. They will examine how small and medium-sized law firms can thrive through innovation.



Lenon will share strategies and tools that empower firms to work smarter—leveraging technology, data, and process improvements to deliver better client service without necessarily expanding headcount or overhead. This program is ideal for attorneys, firm leaders, and legal professionals interested in practical approaches to building resilient, forward-thinking practices.

This event is approved for 1.0 Florida Bar CLE credit (including technology).

[Register](#)

In Memoriam: Professor Ruth Stone

Earlier this month, the FSU Law community learned with deep sadness of the passing of retired Ruth E. Stone ('76), Wayne and Pat Hogan Professor of Trial Practice. Professor Stone led an extraordinary career of mentorship and service that shaped generations of students and strengthened the College of Law for more than two decades.

A graduate of FSU Law with honors, Professor Stone returned to her alma mater in 1996 with a profound commitment to public service and legal education.



She went on to lead the Family Law Clinic for more than 22 years, building one of the College's most impactful experiential programs. Working closely with Professor Paolo Annino, she helped secure more than \$100,000 in grants from The Florida Bar Foundation to support the Children's Advocacy Center at FSU—expanding access to justice for vulnerable families while providing students with meaningful, hands-on training.

Through her clinic, Professor Stone combined rigorous advocacy with compassion, instilling in students both technical excellence and a deep sense of professional responsibility. Many alumni, particularly women graduates, credit her mentorship with preparing them to become confident, resilient, and effective litigators.

In addition to her clinical leadership, Professor Stone served for many years as a faculty advisor to FSU Law's Mock Trial Team, guiding students through countless competitions and fostering a culture of preparation, teamwork, and professionalism.

Her dedication to ethical practice and public service earned widespread recognition. She received the Florida Bar's Faculty Professionalism Award in 2004, served as President of Tallahassee Women Lawyers in 2003, and was honored in 2005 with the Clinical Legal Education Association's Award for Excellence in a Public Interest Project. In recognition of her lasting impact, she became the first clinical professor at FSU Law to be appointed to a named professorship, and in 2012, she was named the Pat and Wayne Hogan Professor of Trial Practice.

Before joining the FSU Law faculty, Professor Stone practiced with Florida Legal Services in Pensacola, served as an assistant state attorney in the juvenile division of the First Judicial Circuit, and worked as managing attorney for the Gadsden Region of the Legal Services Corporation of Alabama—experiences that deeply informed her commitment to justice and advocacy.

Professor Stone retired in June 2024 and was honored by colleagues, students, and alumni at a celebratory retirement luncheon recognizing her remarkable career. Through her teaching, mentorship, and tireless advocacy, Professor Stone helped define what it means to serve with integrity and purpose. She will be deeply missed.

"After the Advocacy Center brought us 5 courtrooms, Ruth also organized—from soup to nuts—national trial advocacy competitions to showcase our students, faculty, and alumni to students and faculty from around the country."

- Dean Emeritus Don Weidner

"Ruth was important in our Public Interest Law Center, as well as playing a significant role in the success of our mock trial team."

- Professor Emeritus Charles "Chuck" W. Ehrhardt