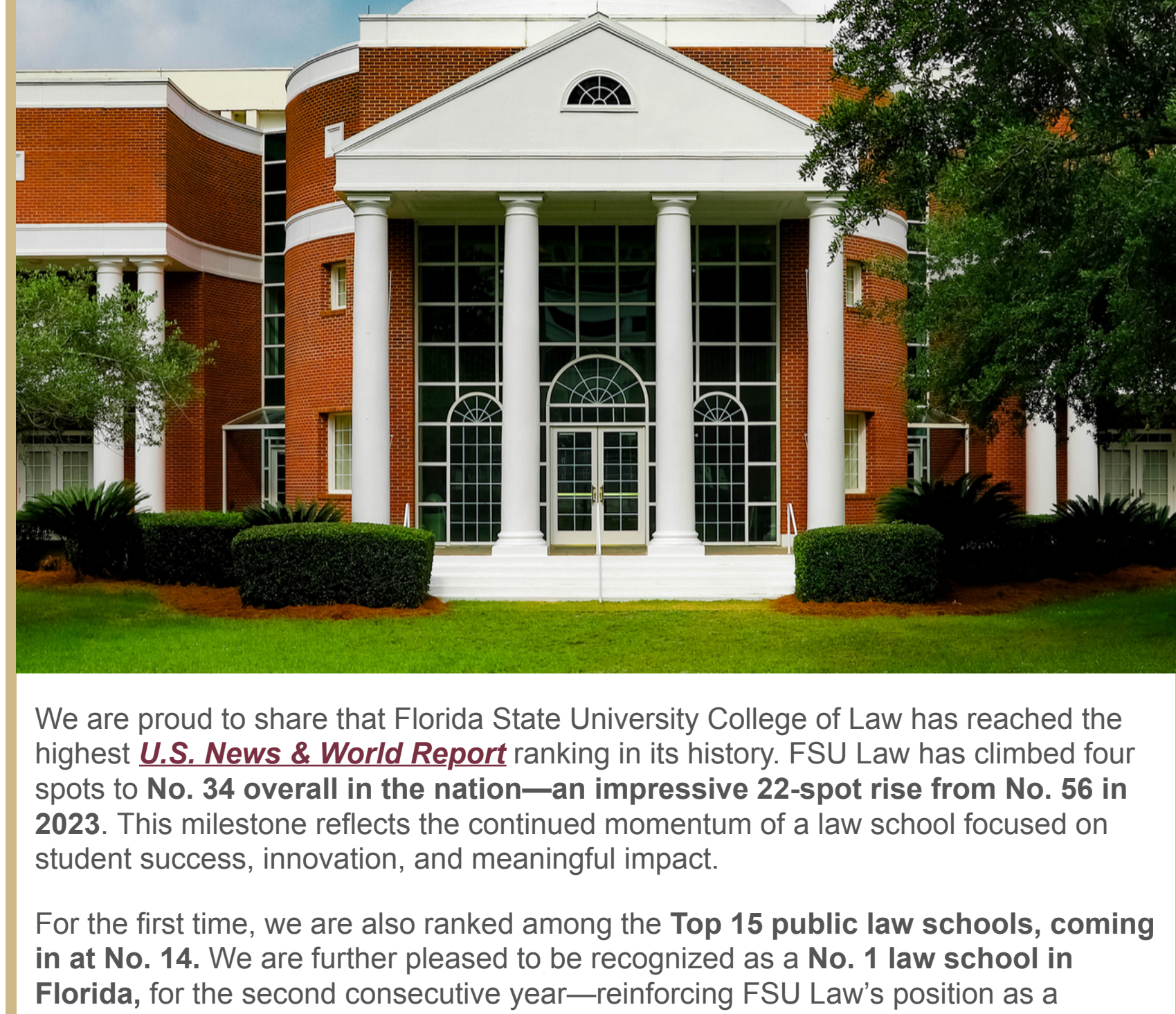


[Get Involved](#) | [Submit a Class Note](#) | [Join FSU Law Connect](#) | [Make a Gift](#)

From the Dean



We are proud to share that Florida State University College of Law has reached the highest *U.S. News & World Report* ranking in its history. FSU Law has climbed four spots to **No. 34 overall in the nation—an impressive 22-spot rise from No. 56 in 2023**. This milestone reflects the continued momentum of a law school focused on student success, innovation, and meaningful impact.

For the first time, we are also ranked among the **Top 15 public law schools, coming in at No. 14**. We are further pleased to be recognized as a **No. 1 law school in Florida**, for the second consecutive year—reinforcing FSU Law's position as a premier destination for legal education in the state and beyond.

For years, FSU Law has been on an upward trajectory, and this ranking reflects the strength of our students, the excellence of our faculty, and our commitment to preparing graduates who are ready to lead in a rapidly evolving legal profession.

The College also earned national recognition across multiple specialties, ranking in the Top 25 among public universities in five areas: **environmental law (No. 13), contracts/commercial law (No. 16), tax law (No. 20), constitutional law (No. 18), and international law (No. 23)**. These distinctions highlight the depth of our academic programs and the breadth of opportunities available to students.

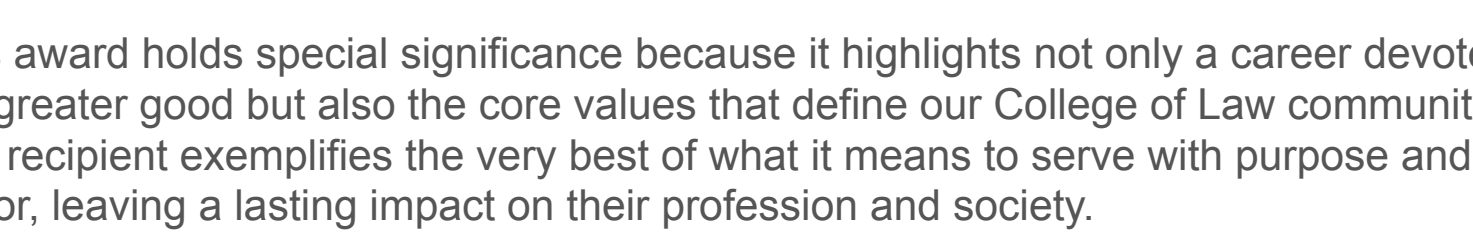
These achievements—along with being named the nation's **No. 1 Best Value law school by *preLaw* magazine in 2025**—would not be possible without the support of our alumni and the dedication of our entire College of Law community.

[Click here](#) to read the press release.

[Click here](#) to read the article from *Florida Politics*.

Erin O'Connor
Dean Erin O'Connor

Call for Nominations



As we continue to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our alumni throughout the year, we are proud to announce that nominations are open for the **2026 Exemplary Public Service Career Award**. This prestigious honor recognizes an FSU College of Law graduate who has dedicated their career to public service and demonstrated exceptional character, integrity, humility, professionalism, and a steadfast commitment to ethics.

This award holds special significance because it highlights not only a career devoted to the greater good but also the core values that define our College of Law community. The recipient exemplifies the very best of what it means to serve with purpose and honor, leaving a lasting impact on their profession and society.

The individual selected will join an esteemed group of past winners:

- 2018 – Kristine “Kris” Knabb (78)
- 2019 – Debby Kearney (81)
- 2020 – Nancy Daniels (77)
- 2021 – Alan Abramowitz (89) & Judge Steve Lofman (87)
- 2022 – Susan Maher (84)
- 2023 – Howard “Rex” Dimmig (78)
- 2024 – Helaine Blum (78) & Judge Emerson Thompson (73)
- 2025 – Pat Gleason (76)

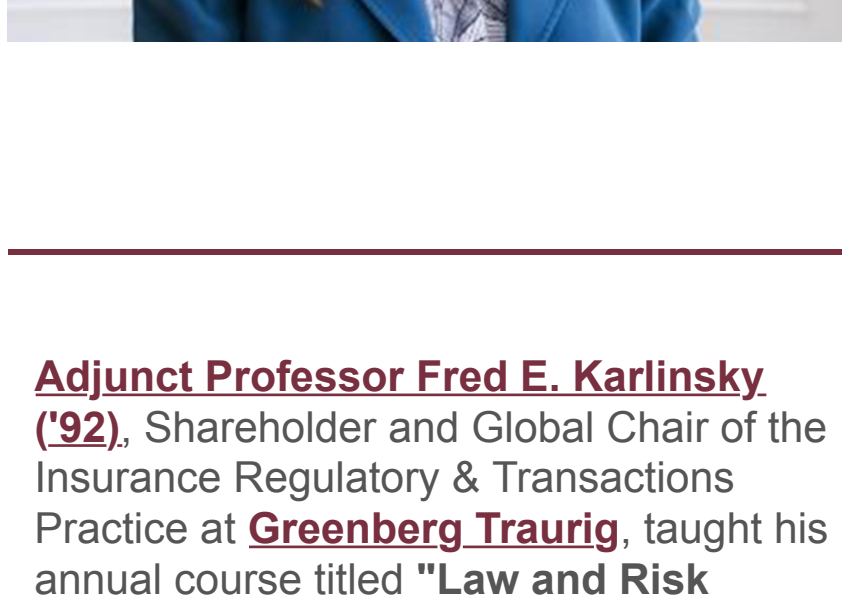
The award recipient will be recognized during a special ceremony, and a painted portrait will be permanently displayed at the College of Law to honor their significant contributions to public service.

Thank you for helping us recognize and celebrate the outstanding service and dedication of our alumni.

[Nominate](#)

Nominations are due by April 30.

FSU Law Faculty News



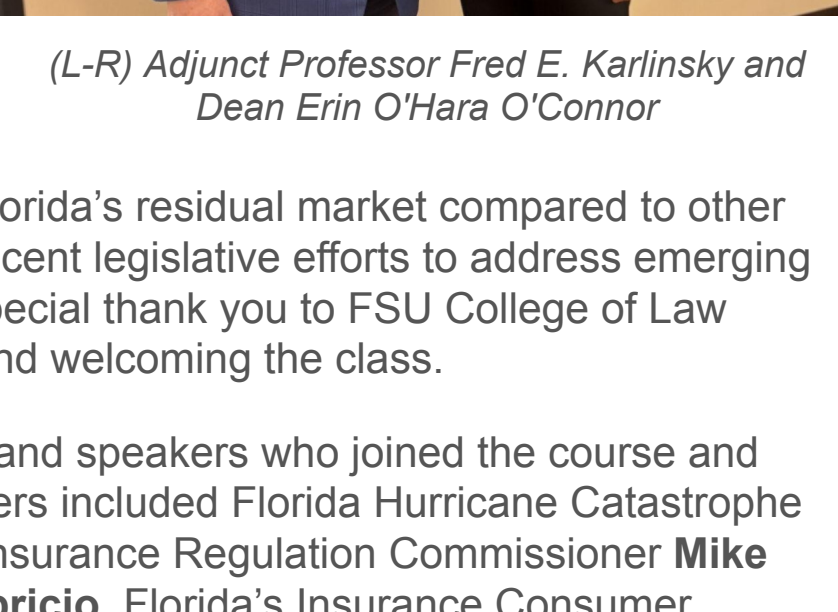
Professor Rima Nathan, Director of the Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic, was recently quoted in a *Miami Herald* article titled “System to protect Florida seniors operates without oversight.”

The article examines concerns that Florida’s system for protecting vulnerable seniors often operates with little oversight, allowing state workers to remove older adults from their homes without court involvement or due process.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

Adjunct Professor Fred E. Karlinsky (’92), Shareholder and Global Chair of the Insurance Regulatory & Transactions Practice at **Greenberg Traurig**, taught his annual course titled “**Law and Risk Management**.”

Approximately thirty 2L and 3L law students and graduate business students joined the four-day spring recess course focused on insurance regulation and compliance, risk, the operation of insurance companies in Florida, and challenges unique to Florida insurance companies.

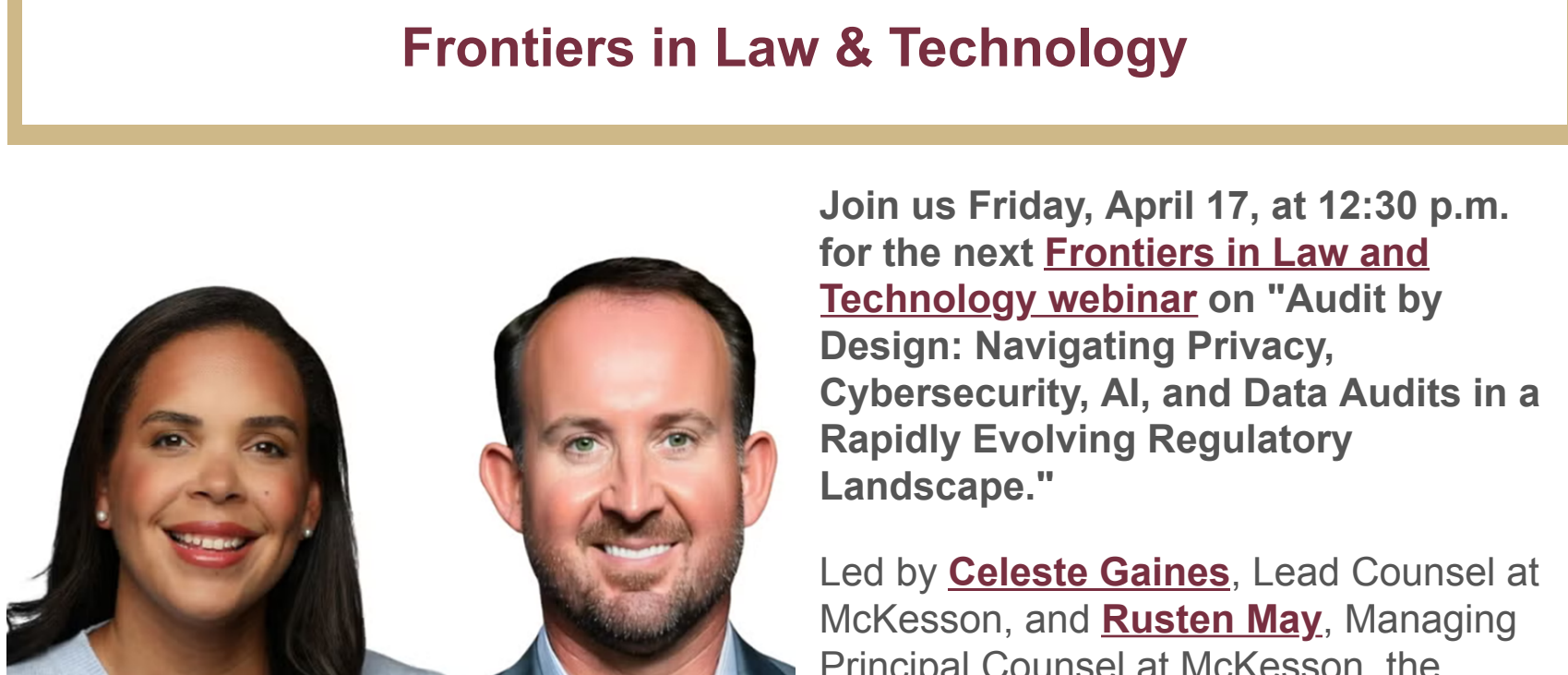


(L-R) Adjunct Professor Fred E. Karlinsky and Dean Erin O'Hara O'Connor

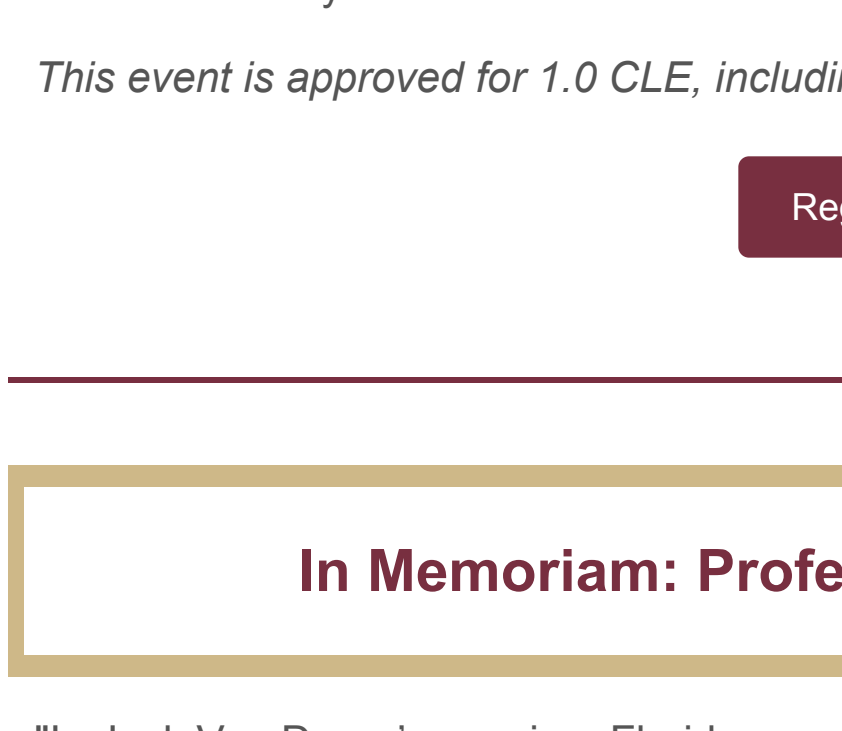
The course also explored the workings of Florida’s residual market compared to other states, the role of trade associations, and recent legislative efforts to address emerging challenges in the insurance landscape. A special thank you to FSU College of Law Dean Erin O’Hara O’Connor for joining us and welcoming the class.

We are grateful to the many special guests and speakers who joined the course and shared their expertise with students. Speakers included Florida Hurricane Catastrophe Fund COO **Gina Wilson**, Florida Office of Insurance Regulation Commissioner **Mike Yaworsky**, Florida Representative **Tom Fabricio**, Florida’s Insurance Consumer Advocate **Tasha Carter**, Florida Insurance Council President **Cecil Pearce**, Deputy Chief Judge **David Langham**, FCCL Insurance Group Director **Tom Koval**, Insurance Information Institute CIO **Patrick Schmid**, and several attorneys from Greenberg Traurig, LLP, among many others.

Following the course, a reception was held at the Advocacy Center, where students, faculty, and industry leaders continued the conversation in person. More than 40 guests attended, creating a valuable opportunity for networking and informal discussion.



Frontiers in Law & Technology



Join us Friday, April 17, at 12:30 p.m. for the next **Frontiers in Law and Technology webinar** on “**Audit by Design: Navigating Privacy, Cybersecurity, AI, and Data Audits in a Rapidly Evolving Regulatory Landscape**.”

Led by **Celeste Gaines**, Lead Counsel at McKesson, and **Rustin May**, Managing Principal Counsel at McKesson, the webinar will discuss how regulators are expanding audit expectations across privacy, cybersecurity, AI, and data governance, and audit readiness can no longer be siloed.

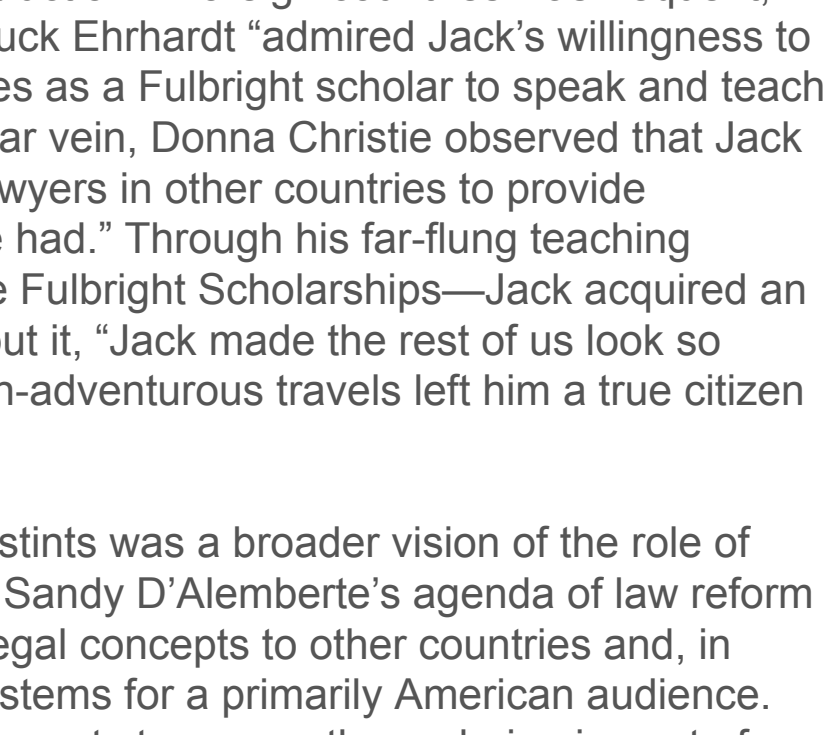
The session will provide a practical, cross-disciplinary framework for understanding audit obligations, from mature privacy and cybersecurity regimes to emerging AI and national security-driven data transfer rules.

This event is approved for 1.0 CLE, including Technology Credit, by the Florida Bar.

[Register](#)

In Memoriam: Professor Jack Van Doren

“In Jack Van Doren’s passing, Florida State University College of Law lost a prominent member of the school’s founding generation. By word and example, Jack was an early champion of the importance of faculty scholarship, thus helping to lay the foundation for today’s nationally esteemed scholarly productivity. Indeed, Jack’s devotion to scholarship never ceased. As late as 2023, Jack published an article comparing Colombian and American constitutionalism.



As Jack’s former students can attest, he relished teaching as well as writing. He enjoyed not only his place at the front of the classroom but also his interactions with individual students. Indeed, one of the principal pleasures that Jack derived from teaching abroad was the opportunity his classes afforded to develop relationships with his students. Additionally, as fascinated as Jack was with the philosophical side of law, he understood that jurisprudence must ultimately be anchored in individuals’ actual engagement with the legal system. Accordingly, he periodically took time away from academic pursuits to practice law and used his experiences to illustrate legal concepts in class.

As recognized by Jack’s colleagues, his instruction in foreign countries was frequent, impressive, and impactful. For example, Chuck Ehrhardt “admired Jack’s willingness to travel to some of the world’s remote countries as a Fulbright scholar to speak and teach about the American legal system.” In a similar vein, Donna Christie observed that Jack “often reached out to students and young lawyers in other countries to provide opportunities they would not otherwise have had.” Through his far-flung teaching missions—which were not limited to his nine Fulbright Scholarships—Jack acquired an almost mythical persona. As Don Weidner put it, “Jack made the rest of us look so terribly middle-class and suburban. His often-adventurous travels left him a true citizen of the world.”

Underlying Jack’s many individual teaching stints was a broader vision of the role of legal academics abroad. He fully embraced Sandy D’Alemberte’s agenda of law reform in other nations. Jack sought to bring U.S. legal concepts to other countries and, in turn, often wrote articles about their legal systems for a primarily American audience. Moreover, he supported institutional arrangements to ensure the enduring impact of America’s approaches to law reform abroad. Perhaps most notably, Jack helped to establish an LLM program in environmental law at Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia.

Jack’s travels also had a resonant human dimension. He collected friends from around the world and often gave them his support. For example, he and his wife, Sonia Crockett, opened their home to several immigrants from Romania. In another instance, they extended this same hospitality to individuals whom they had met in Cambodia.

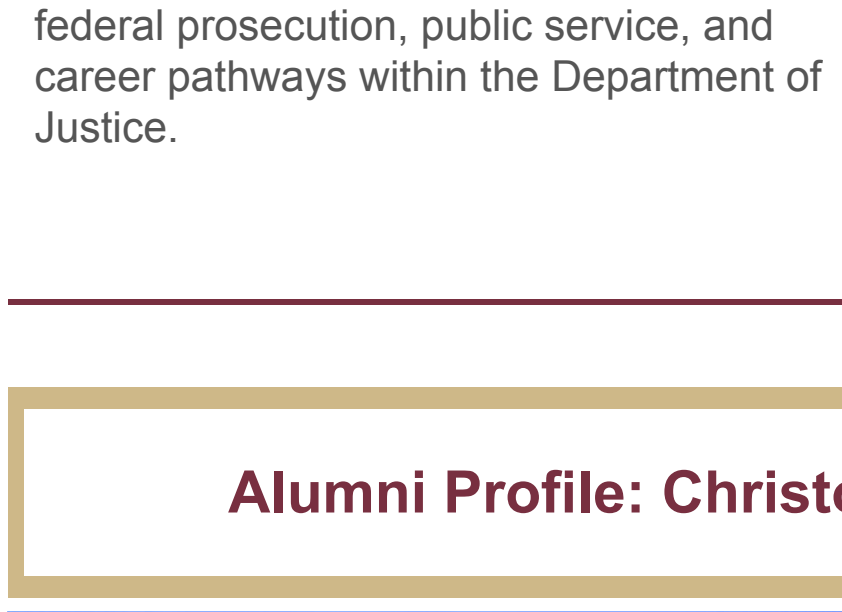
Jack was almost as renowned for his physical as for his intellectual prowess. He adhered to a rigorous exercise regimen, which served him well during his often-arduous travels. A fierce but genial competitor, Jack frequently played squash with colleagues and handball with alumni.

Jack adored his wife, Sonia, who practiced volunteer her time and her acumen in family law cases to this day. As was well known among his friends, Jack never needed prodding to acknowledge his boundless good fortune in finding Sonia. Jack was also enormously proud of his son, Jade, an extraordinarily innovative and successful entrepreneur in California.”

- Tribute written by Nat Stern, Professor Emeritus

[Click here](#) to read the tribute by Professor Jack Van Doren’s widow, Sonia Crockett (’80).

Past FSU Law Events



(L-R) Joseph DeBelder, Ann Finnell, Capital Defense Attorney, and Jessica Yeary, Second Circuit Public Defender

The **Career Services Office** was honored to host capital defense attorney **Ann Finnell** for a discussion of her career, including her representation of **Brenton Butler**, whose case was documented in the Academy Award-winning film ***Murder on a Sunday Morning***. The conversation was moderated by **Joseph DeBelder**, Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of Florida.

The screening and Q&A drew an enthusiastic audience of law students and members of the criminal defense community, including representatives from the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, the Public Defender’s Office, the Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel, the Federal Defender’s Office, and the Capital Collateral Regional Counsel.

The **Federal Bar Association at FSU**, with the **Association for Criminal Justice**, co-hosted the event, “**Careers in Federal Justice: U.S. Attorney’s Office Panel**,” which brought together a powerful panel featuring Assistant United States Attorney **Justin Keen (’06)**, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Florida **Jack Heekin**, and Assistant United States Attorney **Marie Moyle**.



(L-R) Assistant United States Attorney Justin Keen (’06), U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Florida Jack Heekin, and Assistant United States Attorney Marie Moyle

The panel’s discussion focused on providing students with information on federal prosecution, public service, and career pathways within the Department of Justice.

Alumni Profile: Christopher Hudtwalcker (’13)



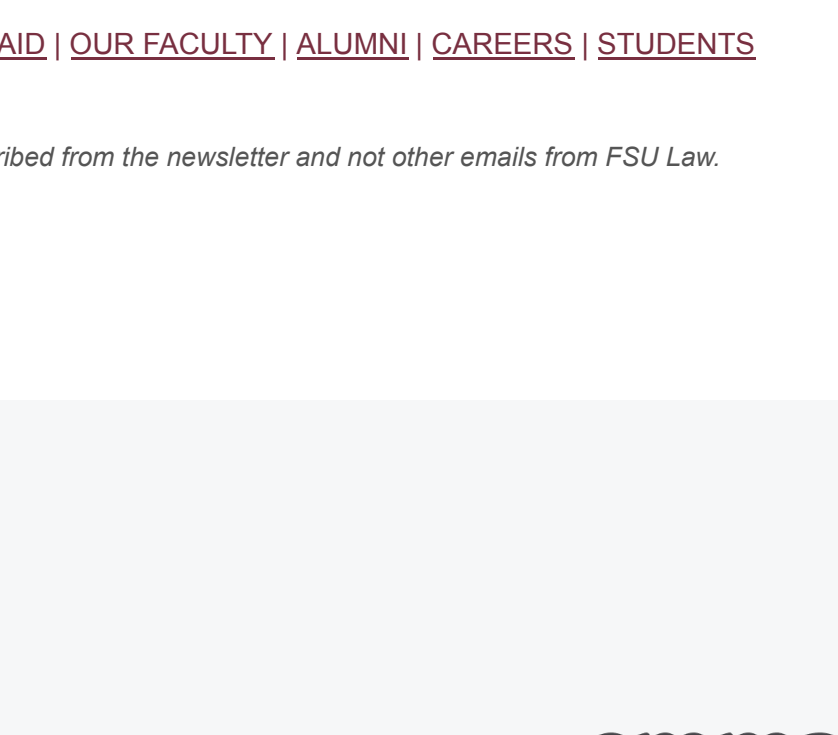
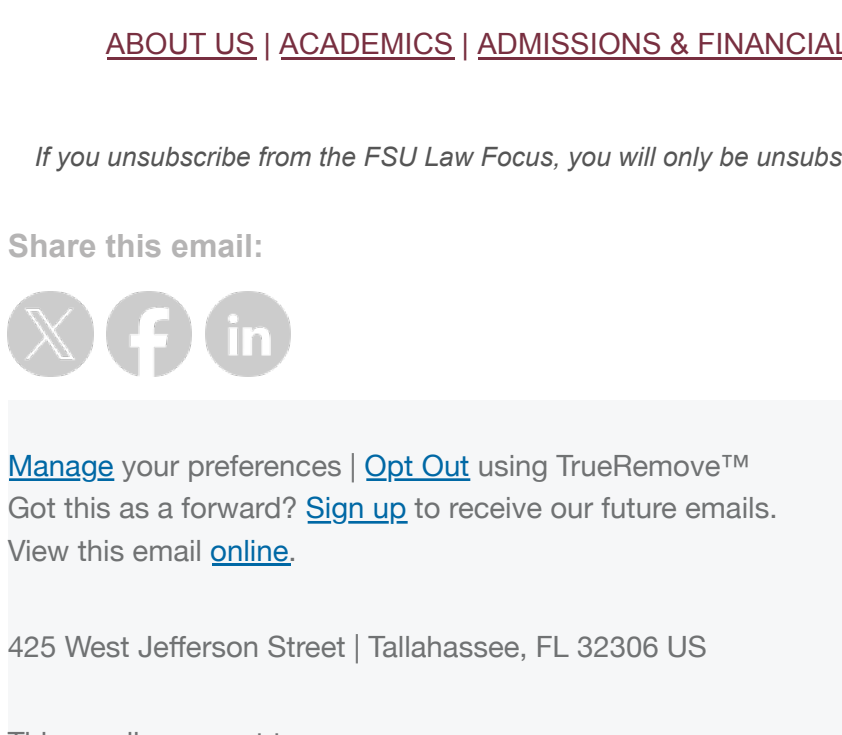
Christopher Hudtwalcker (’13) serves as **Chief of Staff to Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava**, overseeing a county workforce of more than 23,000 employees, a budget exceeding \$13 billion, and the day-to-day execution of one of the most complex and diverse local governments in the country.

At the intersection of strategy, politics, and governance, Hudtwalcker translates the Mayor’s vision into real outcomes across economic development, housing, infrastructure, and beyond.

He began his career in politics while in law school as a legislative intern in the Florida House of Representatives. Hudtwalcker later served as Chief Legislative Aide to a state senator, Director of Policy and Legislation for a Miami-Dade County Commissioner, and Director of Innovation for.

“Florida State Law provided me training in the law, legal writing, and advocacy, but also furthered my deep commitment to public service. It’s a great honor to serve the residents of one of the most dynamic communities in the world.”

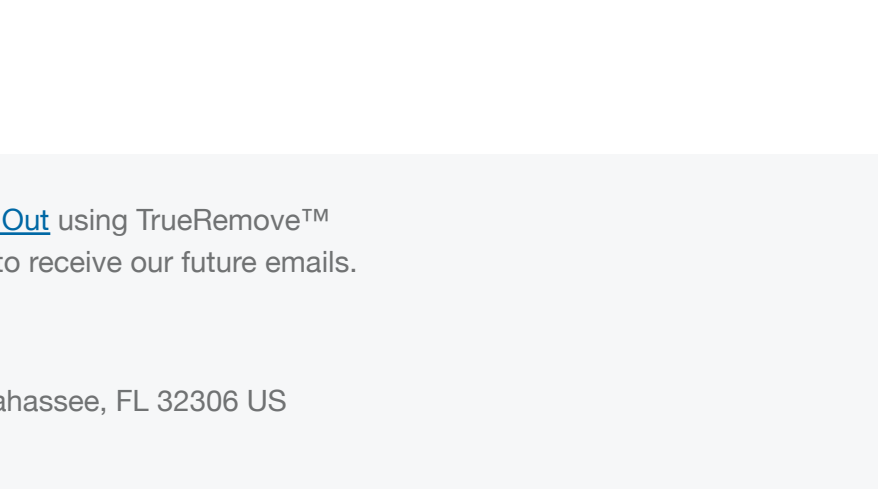
FSU Law Social Spotlight



Last week, the Green was full of wagging tails and happy paws during **Purrfessors & Pupfessors** hosted by the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund!

The event offered students a break from studying and a chance to practice their smiles ahead of commencement.

Follow us for more moments from life at FSU and upcoming events you just won’t want to miss!



FSU College of Law has produced a **60-Year Commemorative Coin** to recognize participation in supporting the law school during its 60th anniversary.

Alumni can earn a 60-Year Commemorative Coin by Donating \$250+ AND joining and engaging on FSU Law Connect. OR attending an in-person Alumni Event. These actions must be taken **between January 1 and December 31, 2026**, to be eligible for the coin.

[Find Details on Eligibility Requirements for FSU Law’s 60-Year Coin.](#)

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