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FSU LAW FOCUS

October 30, 2026

From the Dean

FSU LAW MOOT COURT

FINAL FOUR

2026

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Next **Wednesday, November 4**, I invite you to join us at the **Florida Supreme Court** for a special milestone: the **40th anniversary of FSU Law's Moot Court Final Four Competition**.

Beginning at 3:30 p.m., **2Lx Nathaniel Birdsong, Warren Robison, Serena Saul, and Madison Smith will present oral arguments before the justices**, followed by a reception in our D'Alemberte Rotunda. A livestream of the competition is available for those who cannot attend in person.

Since 1986, Final Four has given our students the extraordinary opportunity to argue before Florida's highest court. This distinctive FSU Law tradition illustrates the benefits of studying law in Florida's capital, with the Court directly across the street from our campus.

As we celebrate this showcase event, we are deeply grateful to the Florida Supreme Court for welcoming our students and sustaining this tradition, and to the Justices for generously sharing their time, insight, and thoughtful questions. Their participation makes Final Four an exceptional learning experience for our advocates and everyone who attends.

I also thank **Professor Courtney Brewer**, Moot Court faculty advisor, and Assistant Dean for Academic Success **Laura Dennis**, the Associate faculty advisor for Moot Court, and recognize **Professor Emeritus Nat Stern** , whose more than three decades as faculty advisor helped generations of Moot Court team members become skilled, confident advocates. Their mentorship, alongside the support of our alumni, coaches, and alumni, makes these opportunities possible.

Please join us to congratulate our finalists and celebrate 40 years of Final Four. We look forward to seeing you there!

Thank you to our sponsors, Shutts & Bowen LLP.

Click here to learn more.

Watch The Livestream

Erin O'Connor

Dean Erin O'Connor

FSU Law News



FSU College of Law is celebrating **25 years of international collaboration** with Shanghai University of International Business and Economics (SUIBE), a partnership that has helped students develop practical skills in international trade and business law.

The partnership began in 2001, when then-Dean Donald J. Weidner and Professor Taiyin Lee traveled to Shanghai to establish an agreement with SUIBE, then known as the Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade. Together, FSU Law and SUIBE developed a computer-based simulation that gives students hands-on experience negotiating, drafting, and executing international trade contracts.

The program expanded in 2013 to include students and faculty from National Chengchi University (NCCU) in Taipei, Taiwan, further strengthening the partnership's international reach and providing opportunities for students to learn alongside peers from different countries.





FSU College of Law has earned an **A+ for business law** on **The National Jurist's preLaw magazine's 2026 Business Law Honor Roll**. The recognition highlights the breadth of the college's business law offerings and its commitment to connecting legal study with practical experience.

Through the Business Law Clinic, Business Law Certificate Program, business externships, and joint J.D./MBA pathway, students can develop the legal knowledge and practical experience needed to advise entrepreneurs and companies.

Coursework builds skills in areas such as contract drafting, financial statement analysis, and regulatory compliance.

View the Business Law Honor Roll.



FSU Law's First Amendment Clinic filed a petition for a writ of certiorari on October 14, asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case of former Chicago firefighter **Sam Ineichen**, who was terminated for his off-duty speech.

3L students **Francesca Tavano** and **Mason Kay** drafted the petition under the supervision of Denise Harle, Clinical Professor and Director of the First Amendment Clinic; Shawna Kelly, Clinical Supervising Attorney; and Jacob Reed, Clinical Legal Fellow. The experience gave the students an opportunity to develop their legal research, writing, and appellate advocacy skills while representing a client seeking review by the nation's highest court.

FSU Law Faculty News



Michael Morley, Sheila M. McDevitt Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Election Law Center, was recently featured in coverage of federal election litigation by **Votebeat**, **Newsweek**, and **NewsNAX**.

In Votebeat, Morley discussed the Justice Department's lawsuit against California over alleged noncitizen voters. He also joined NewsNAX anchor Bruce Hamilton on The Bruce Hamilton Show to discuss the department's attempt to seek to block certification of Alaska's Senate election. Newsweek also featured his analysis of the Alaska lawsuit.



Henry Zhuhao Wang, Mason Ladd Distinguished Professor, and **Medlock & Mechanic** student with third-year law student **Gina Cernone**. The article is forthcoming in Volume 32 of the *Harvard Negotiation Law Review* in 2027.

Their collaboration highlights the opportunities FSU Law students have to work alongside faculty and contribute to legal scholarship.



Mark Schlakman, senior program director at FSU's Center for the Administration of Criminal Assets (CACJ), recently wrote a Tallahassee Democrat opinion article, **"Hidden' Costs of Florida's Death Penalty."**

Schlakman calls on Florida's next governor and legislative leaders to examine the fiscal implications of the state's death penalty process and promote greater transparency and accountability.

He draws on his experience as assistant general counsel to Gov. Lawton Chiles and his work with an American Bar Association team that developed a comprehensive assessment of Florida's death penalty system.

Click here to read the opinion piece.

FSU Law Event Recap



On October 22, FSU College of Law and the **First Amendment Foundation** co-hosted **"Free Speech in the Age of AI,"** bringing together legal scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to explore some of these questions. Held as part of **FSU Discovery Days**, the symposium explored how existing legal protections apply to government uses of rapidly evolving technology.

Three panels addressed facial recognition technology used to monitor protests and public demonstrations, access to public records involving government AI systems, and legal remedies when automated decisions infringe on constitutional rights. Participants included faculty from FSU and other universities, along with representatives from the **Freedom of the Press Foundation** and the **Florida Center for Government Accountability**.

Read the Florida Bar's preview of the symposium.

Watch the recordings: Part 1 | Part 2

FSU Law Student News



FSU Law's National Lawyers Guild student chapter hosted Jeremy Matlow, Tallahassee city commissioner and mayoral candidate, for a Q&A session on his policy goals and vision for the city. The discussion gave students an opportunity to hear directly from a local candidate, ask questions, and explore the policy issues facing Tallahassee.



FSU Law and the Human Trafficking and Policy Law Society hosted a **Criminal Law Panel**, giving students an opportunity to hear from professionals working in prosecution, advocacy, and human rights.

Panelists included **Khari James**, FSU Law adjunct professor and Director of Operations for the Global Center on Sexual Exploitation Law Center; **Tracy Curtis, M.A., CDVP**, founder of EmpowerED; and **Vania Aguilar, Ed.D.**, program director at FSU's Center for the Advancement of Human Rights.

The speakers shared perspectives from their professional experience, helping students explore career paths and the roles attorneys and advocates play in addressing human trafficking and supporting survivors.



The Federalist Society for Law and Public Policy Studies recently hosted **"Bound by Law or Bound by the Supreme Court."** The event welcomed panelists Florida Supreme Court Justice **Adam Tanner**, Second District Court of Appeal Judge **Lanca Neff**, and Sixth District Court of Appeal Judge **Joshua Mize** to discuss how a state supreme court's obligation to follow U.S. Supreme Court decisions may differ from the obligations of intermediate appellate courts, which must follow rulings of the courts above them.

The discussion also considered the constitutional principles that define the relationship among the branches of government. The topics prompted discussion of the judiciary's role and the proper balance of constitutional authority.

FSU Law Social Spotlight



Our students continue to demonstrate what it means to use their education to make a difference. During the 2025-26 academic year, FSU Law students completed more than **8,000 hours of pro bono service.**

Their dedication carries forward the legacy of Sandy D'Alemberte, whose life and work exemplified the importance of public service and giving back to the community.



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