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FSU LAW FOCUS

August 7, 2026

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From the Dean

The national search for the next Dean of Florida State University's College of Law has advanced to the campus interview stage. Beginning on August 13, finalists will visit campus for formal interviews.

We invite the campus community to attend in-person open forums with the finalists. These sessions provide an opportunity to engage directly with candidates and contribute valuable feedback as part of the university's broader review process. Each forum is scheduled for approximately 29 hours prior to the start of on-campus interviews. At that time, candidate materials and a feedback survey will be available on the search website.

Your insight and involvement are vital to this important decision. To ensure broad participation, a hybrid format is available, but in-person attendance is strongly encouraged. A Zoom option will also be provided on the Dean Search website for those who require remote participation. Specific forum locations and times, along with participation details can be found on the Dean Search website.

For questions, please contact Amy Espinosa at amy.espinosa@fsu.edu.

Erin O'Connor
Dean Erin O'Connor

FSU Law Faculty Spotlight: David Landau

David Landau, Associate Dean for International Programs and Tobias Simon Eminent Scholar, brings extensive experience teaching Comparative Constitutional Law to the FSU College of Law, where he teaches courses in which students are designed, interpreted, and implemented around the world.

His scholarship examines democratic resilience, constitutional design, judicial institutions, and the role constitutions play in protecting democracy and fulfilling ambitious social and environmental commitments. With a focus on Latin America, his work draws on comparative law and constitutional law, applying lessons across jurisdictions to better understand democratic governance.

Professor Landau continues to shape contemporary constitutional scholarship through several forthcoming and recent publications. His forthcoming article, "Constitutional Design and Democratic Resilience" in the *Law Review* titled "**Judging Emergencies**" argues that courts in the US should take a different approach to adjudicating emergency powers used by presidents, based on lessons from Latin American constitutional jurisprudence. titled "**Utopian Constitutionalism**" contends that constitutional designers need to be cognizant of the ability to make the rights and other aspirations in constitutions a reality. His chapter in the *Oxford Handbook* on **Independent Accountability Institutions and the Protection of Democracy in the United States"** in the *Illinois Law Review* argues for the importance of independent institutions in the United States and the Supreme Court's paradoxical undermining of those checks.

In addition, he has co-authored and published one of the few textbooks in Comparative Constitutional Law: An Oxford University Press book titled **"Comparative Constitutional Law and Politics,"** provides people with a comprehensive understanding of constitutional law. He is also working on this work, he is currently co-authoring a new book, **"The Resilient Constitution,"** which examines how constitutions can be designed to better withstand democratic crises and protect fundamental rights. Landau explores constitutional design, democratic resilience, and the role of independent institutions in safeguarding democracy.

An active participant in the global constitutional law community, Professor Landau regularly presents his research at leading international conferences and universities. Recent and upcoming presentations include Harvard Law School, Brooklyn Law School, Georgetown University, Universidad de los Andes School of Law in Colombia, the World Congress of Constitutional Law in Mexico, the Constitutional Studies Institute in Río de Janeiro, and the IACL Annual Meeting in Dublin and Brescia. In September, he will address the Convention of the Colombian Constitutional Court, which has previously cited Professor Landau's work.

FSU Law Faculty Scholarship Workshop Recap

The pursuit of legal scholarship is strengthened through thoughtful feedback and collegial intellectual exchange. Continuing that tradition, Florida State University College of Law hosted its **Faculty Scholarship Workshop Series**, where Professors Nadia Banteka, Ann Bray, Ann Cammett, Charnese Franklin, Jessie James, Tanvir Law, Jake Linford, Jonathan Lipson, Ann Murphy, Celia Roberts-Burch, Mark Seidenfeld, and Henry Wang presented their scholarship works for discussion and critique by fellow faculty members.

FSU Law Faculty News

Michael Morley, Sheila M. Bair Professor of Law and Faculty Director of the Election Law Center, was featured in The Morning Show of NewsNY. Titled "**Trump focuses on proof of citizenship, but other voting restrictions remain a midterm,**" the article examines the current administration's pursuit of more restricted changes through executive actions and federal agencies.

Click here to read the article.

Additionally, Professor Morley was interviewed on The Morning Show of NewsNY titled "**Digging into the implications after President Trump nominates two Republican nominees to the FEC**" where Professor Morley addresses the dismissal of members of the federal election commission, which has raised legal and political questions about congressional oversight versus the agency's independence, ability to oversee and support U.S. elections ahead of the 2026 midterms.

Click here to read the article.

Jacob Elder, James Edmund and Margaret Elizabeth Hennessy Chair of Law, recently hosted the Honorable Justice Adam S. Tanenbaum of the Florida Supreme Court for the Federalist Society Tallahassee Lawyer Chapter regarding "The Future of Federalism and Dormant Commerce Clause". Justice Tanenbaum was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court by Governor DeSantis and the First District Court of Appeal since 2019.

Henry Zhufan Wang, Maxwell Ladd Professor of Law, recently was welcomed as a speaker at Durham Law School in the United Kingdom. Titled "Navigating a Global Career and Publishing: A Conversation with Professor Henry Wang."

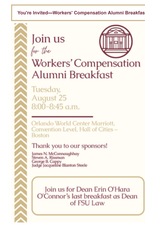
His talk was specifically structured around three general topics: the method of success for international scholars with an American legal audience, the specific challenges of being a non-native speaker, and the whole whole journey of building a fulfilling academic career in the United States.

Denise Hardy, Clinical Professor and Director of the First Amendment Clinic, and Rima Ali, Clinical Professor and Director of the Claude Pepper Elder Law Clinic, were selected to present at the Association of Law Schools in Boston. **Hardy's presentation is titled "Authenticity and Collective Care within Clinical Legal Pedagogy."** Association of American Law Schools

Professor Nathan presented on Nonviolent Communication (NVC): *Cultivating Belonging, Authenticity, and Collective Care within Clinical Legal Pedagogy*, and Ali presented *Cultivating Belonging, Authenticity, and Agreement: Intellectual Diversity as a Component of Well-Being in Legal Education.*

Click here for event details.

You're Invited—Workers' Compensation Alumni Breakfast



Join us for FSU Law's **Workers' Compensation Alumni Breakfast** on **August 25, 2026**, at the Orlando World Center Marriott, Convention Level, Hall of Cities – Boston. This will be Dean Erin O'Hara O'Connor's last breakfast as Dean of FSU Law.

We recognize and thank our generous sponsors for this event.

Please RSVP by Tuesday, August 18, 2026, to alumni@law.fsu.edu or **850.644.7200**.

Oxford Program Recap

The study of law is enriched by an appreciation of its history, traditions, and enduring institutions. As our Summer Program in Law at Oxford concludes, we reflect on the transformative experience that creates home the students who immersed themselves in one of the world's most storied centers of legal learning. During their time in England, students explored the Bodleian Law Library, where Sir William Blackstone, the eighteenth-century law lord, enjoyed a glass cruise along the River Thames, and visited the statue of Sir William Blackstone, whose writings continue to influence Anglo-American jurisprudence.

Through our longstanding Oxford program, students engage directly with judges, barristers, and scholars who shape British jurisprudence, returning with a deeper understanding of the profession they are preparing to enter and the legacy they will one day help carry forward. This year's program was co-led by Professor Henry Wang and Professor Courtney Brown.

In Memoriam: Patricia "Trish" Thomas (76)

The **Honorable Judge Patricia "Trish" Thomas (76)**, (Ret.) passed away July 12, 2026. Born in Tallahassee, she lived and grew up in Florida and graduated from Clearwater High School and Florida State University, where she excelled in education. After receiving her BS degree, she went on to earn a J.D. degree from Florida State College of Law in 1976. Judge Thomas also served on FSU Law's Alumni Board.

Upon graduating, she clerked for Second District Court of Appeals **Judge Stephen Grimes** in Lakeland, Florida. Later, she was recruited by Charles Mason in Tampa as a junior partner in his law firm. In 1979, she moved to Lakeland to open her own law firm, Thomas & Thomas, where she became a partner in the law firm of **Bradshaw, Murphy & Vitter**. She was elected to the Citrus County School Board in 1990.

In 1993, she was appointed to the circuit court bench to replace retiring **Judge William F. Edwards**. A year later, Judge Thomas became the first female judge in the Fifth Judicial Circuit. She served Marion, Lake, Sumter, Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Sumter, and Marion counties. She was re-elected every six years after that.

She retired in 2018, culminating 25 years on the bench. She is survived by her son Robert (Lea) Vitter of Tarra Pellice, Italy, and their children Gabriella, Ella, and Robert; her son Jeffrey and his children Brittany Vitter Donahue of Lahti, Lakes, and her sons Noah and Andrew; her loving companion, Mark Mitchell. She is also survived by her sisters Deborah Butler (David Fiff) and Stefanie Butler, both of Atlanta, Georgia.

Alumni Profile: Floyd R. Self (86)

Floyd R. Self (86) recently completed his term as the President of the Energy Bar Association (EBA), an international association of energy lawyers and professionals with over 1,000 members. Self's term as EBA President reflects both his longstanding energy and utility law practice and his work in Tennessee, Georgia, and Arkansas public utility commissions and his service as president of the Florida Bar leader for numerous nonprofits in Tallahassee, as well as with regional and national organizations.

Self is a partner in the Tallahassee office of Bergen Singerman, LLP, and Board Certified as a Federal Government and Administrative Practice attorney.

"I am grateful for the career and personal opportunities that I have enjoyed since graduating. I have had the privilege of practicing with outstanding attorney guills on the combination of the academic and practical training FSU Law provided to me as a student. In particular, my law school professors and my first employer, Ausley & McMullen, Tallahassee, provided me invaluable insights that continue to benefit my practice. Along the way, I have enjoyed being part of a great network of FSU Law graduates who have become clients, mentors, and friends."

FSU Law Alumni News

The Florida State University College of Law's International Human Rights Advocacy Clinic Research Assistant and alumna, Jessica Fatherstone, recently published her first publication, "Women, Life, Freedom: Research Paper on Palestinian Women's Right to Self-Determination, NAT'L LAW GUILD REV. 1 (2026)." Jessica was awarded the Grade Level and the Highest Grade in the International Human Rights of Women Spring 2025 Course.

FSU Law Social Spotlight

The Green is more than just a place to study, gather, and connect—it's also home to some incredible wildlife. Our recent Instagram post showcased a few of the campus's most memorable natural visitors.

Don't miss more moments like these—follow FSU Law on social media to stay connected with campus life, student accomplishments, special events, and everything happening around the College of Law.

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

Alumni can earn a 60-Year Commemorative Coin by Donating $250+ **AND** joining and engaging on FSU Law Connect, **OR** attending an alumni event, **OR** completing a CLE course **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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