



FSU LAW

Focus

May 10,
2024

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From the Dean



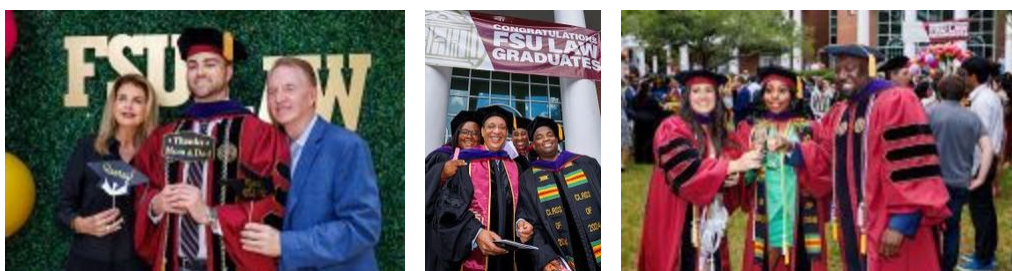
On Sunday, May 5, we celebrated our newest alumni during our spring 2024 commencement ceremony and reception. During the ceremony, we conferred degrees on 170 J.D. graduates, 24 LL.M. graduates, and 76 J.M. graduates. All members of the Class of 2024 should be extremely proud of their hard work and accomplishments during their time at FSU Law. United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida Markenzy Lapointe ('99) gave the commencement address. He offered the graduates advice for their future careers, focusing on resiliency. Lapointe told the graduates, "It's not enough for you to actually reach resiliency for yourself... But when you see someone about to give up on themselves, remind them... of your own failures. Sharing your failures, not only liberates you—yourself, but it reassures as an antidote to their own failures and insecurities."

In addition, we recognized several special members of our community during the ceremony. FSU Law SBA President Vivekka Suppiah presented the Open Door Faculty Award to Professor Justin Sevier for going above and beyond mentoring law students. I had the privilege of presenting the Juris Master Leading the Way Award to graduate Dr. Alexis Perdereaux-Weekes for being an example to his fellow J.M. students. The Raising the Bar Award was presented to J.D. graduate Kevin Griffin for consistently exemplifying the ideals of professionalism within the law school

community, including exhibiting a positive attitude, a devotion to honesty, integrity and good character, a strong work ethic, civility with colleagues, a desire to help others and a sense of humor.

A special thank you to Markenzy Lapointe, FSU President Richard McCullough, Trustee Maximo Alvarez, the FSU Law faculty, and many others for helping to make this celebration inspiring, uplifting, and memorable for our graduates! You can [view a recording of the ceremony](#) online.

Erin O'Connor
Dean Erin O'Connor



A Special Graduate



L-R: Christian Searcy, Salesia Smith-Gordon ('92), Sean Pittman ('94),

On Monday, April 22, 2024, another special FSU Law graduation ceremony took place in South Florida and it was 51 years in the making! Matthew C. Russell ('73), 88, was an attorney, educator, and civic leader in Riviera Beach for decades. Russell graduated from law school in 1973, but due to family obligations, returned immediately to Palm Beach County after completing his exams and never attended his own doctoral hooding ceremony. His family only learned recently that not attending the ceremony was one of his biggest regrets. They contacted alumnus and



Board of Visitors member Sean Pittman ('94) who grew up as an admirer of Russell in Riviera Beach to aid in the family's request of seeing Russell hooded.

After learning that Russell was too ill to travel, Pittman and Dean O'Connor flew to South Florida to conduct a hooding ceremony and present a reissued degree to Russell at the Heron Estates Senior Center in Riviera Beach.

At this past Sunday's graduation ceremony, Dean O'Connor shared that what she had expected to be a small ceremony was actually a large standing-room-only crowd of Russell's many friends, family, colleagues, local dignitaries, and officials. Russell arrived with a police escort, recognizing the years that he spent representing the police department. Everyone in attendance was there to thank and honor Russell for his many years of service and mentorship. As Dean O'Connor told our new graduates, "It was clear that he practiced with hard work, precision, and fierce advocacy... He practiced with fairness, integrity, and the conscious awareness that he was a role model for the attorneys who would come behind him." Dean O'Connor told our new graduates that FSU Law school wishes them similar success in their legal careers.

FSU Law Student Employment Success

#6

BEST LAW SCHOOL FOR RECENT GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

We are pleased to report that in the latest Class of 2023 ABA employment data for all law schools, FSU Law is ranked the nation's 6th best law school for recent graduate employment at 97.3 percent! We also remain 1st in the State of Florida for the second consecutive year. These rankings are based on the percentage of 2023 law school graduates employed 10 months after graduation in full-time, long-term jobs that require bar passage or for which a J.D. degree is an advantage. The Career Services and Professional Development Office led by associate dean Debra Henley works hard to achieve its stated mission objective of advising and professional development to "prepare our students to be knowledgeable, confident, and competitive in the legal market." These rankings would not be possible without the dedication of the career services team and the support of the externship office, student advancement, student success, our faculty, and FSU Law's extensive and supportive alumni network.



We are inviting all alumni and students to [join FSU Law Connect](#), a new platform

exclusively for the FSU Law community. Alumni can keep in touch with the College of Law and other alumni, post jobs, and access career development tools. If you haven't already joined FSU Law Connect, please join today to help us increase engagement and connection.

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