


SAMFORD UNIVERSITY / 2024 / ALUMNI MAGAZINE

# CUMBERLAND LAWYER





A photograph of three young adults, two women and one man, standing in a library or law school setting. The man in the center is wearing a blue checkered suit and a light blue tie, looking towards the right. The woman on the left is wearing a dark blazer over a patterned blouse, looking towards the man. The woman on the right is wearing a dark blazer, looking up and smiling. The background shows bookshelves and a lamp.

**On the Cover:** First-generation law students are breaking barriers. Read more on page 7.



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We hope you find this publication informative. If there are stories and topics you would like to see in future issues, please let us know. This is your publication, and we want your feedback at [cumberlandlawyer@samford.edu](mailto:cumberlandlawyer@samford.edu).

# DEAN'S MESSAGE

**It has been an exciting year at Cumberland School of Law. We have new faces in the building with several new faculty and staff joining our community. We launched several new clinics that are transforming our experiential learning opportunities. Our advocacy program had another banner year, including sweeping regionals of the National Trial Competition and the American Association of Justice Student Trial Advocacy Competition, sending teams to the national rounds of both competitions for the first time ever in the same year. We launched a new advocacy-based international study abroad program in Edinburgh, Scotland. And we saw our *U.S. News & World Report* national ranking climb by the highest margin of any law school in the country.**

Cumberland School of Law is in the business of changing lives—not just of our students but of our community. One of the most exciting developments over the last year has been the enthusiasm of alumni and students for our new Cumberland Connection Law School Immersion Program. The goal of this initiative is to inspire first-generation students who have overcome significant obstacles or are from backgrounds underrepresented in the profession to pursue a legal career. Maybe these students do not have anyone in their

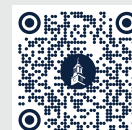
family who practices law. Maybe they do not even know a single lawyer. Maybe they know a little about law but not a lot. Through the generous support of our donors, the \$1 million we have raised in only nine months will allow us to bring these students to campus next summer to experience a week of law school. Students will work through a problem-set with our advocacy students, take classes related to that problem, listen to inspiring speakers tell their stories about their journey to the practice of law, and receive training on how to successfully apply to and prepare for law school. The program will allow our school to pave pathways of opportunity, offering a chance for students to change the trajectory of their lives through the pursuit of a legal career.

However, \$1 million is only the beginning. To implement the program fully and effectively we need an endowment of \$2-3 million. As you can see in this issue of *Cumberland Lawyer* magazine, our first-generation students are seizing every opportunity they can to be successful—they are true inspirations. So, the stage is set, and we will continue to fundraise for this important initiative so we can welcome even more students into our law school and, ultimately, into the legal profession.

We are excited about what's to come during this academic year, are grateful for the successes of the past year, and will continue to strive for greatness. Thanks to all of you who support Cumberland School of Law, giving so generously to make our law school a better place so that we may continue to shape the lives of tomorrow's lawyers.



**Blake Hudson**  
Dean



**Scan the QR code to learn more about our new Cumberland Connection Law School Immersion Program.**



# Seizing Opportunity

## A FIRST-GEN JOURNEY THROUGH CUMBERLAND SCHOOL OF LAW

Rolanda Tina Turner, JD '24, a first-generation law student, thrived at Cumberland School of Law. Throughout her law school journey, she embraced challenges and opportunities, growing academically and personally, and dedicating herself to pro bono work and the promotion of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

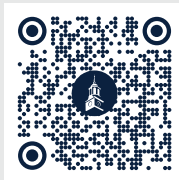
### ***Her numerous accolades and involvement include:***

- American Bar Association
- Alabama State Bar
- National Mediation Team
- Cumberland Society of the Arts
- Cumberland Health & Wellness Society
- Career Development Advisory Board
- Center for Children, Law and Ethics
- Recipient of the Daniel Austin Brewer Professionalism Award
- Birmingham Bar Association's Students Today Lawyers Tomorrow
- Alabama State Bar Law Student Pro Bono Award
- Phi Alpha Delta Diversity Leadership Coin
- Article published in *The Legal Pad*, the magazine of the National Black Law Student Association titled "Equity in Healthcare: Educating and Empowering the Black Community for a Healthier Tomorrow"
- Ms. JD's "Limitless List"



"I have been blessed with amazing opportunities, friendships, mentorships, scholarships and so much more. When I reflect on my experience, there is nothing I would change. I hope to return to Cumberland School of Law one day and impact someone's life in the same way that professors, deans, administrative staff, alumni and others have impacted mine. I am excited to utilize all the lessons I've learned, both inside and outside the classroom, to tackle problems in my community, my state and hopefully one day, my country."

- Rolanda Tina Turner, JD '24



Scan the QR code to read the complete feature.



## A CAMPAIGN FOR CUMBERLAND SCHOOL OF LAW

**For Cumberland School of Law** to achieve financial stability in critical program areas during the next five years, we must raise at least \$10 million. Launched in 2023, the 5 in Five Campaign aims to raise \$2 million in each of the initiatives. The corpus of these endowments will endure, and the expendable revenue generated each year will support programs that dramatically impact our students, community and the legal profession.

## 1 ADVOCACY AND COMPETITION PROGRAMS

Cumberland School of Law is consistently ranked as a top 10 school for advocacy, but we want to be #1. Our ability to compete, retain coaches, expand into other substantive legal areas, and fully support our advocacy students currently trails rival schools. To improve our national stature in the advocacy education realm and rise to the top, our students need more resources to fully develop their advocacy skills.

## 2 CLINICAL PROGRAMS

Clinics offer our students invaluable opportunities to receive practical legal experience and to serve our community, each a hallmark of a Cumberland School of Law education. We provide legal assistance to veterans and criminal defendants and plan to expand clinical opportunities into the areas of medical-legal partnerships, environmental/rural law, transactional law, among others. Unlike most law schools, Cumberland does not have a permanent source of funding for our clinics, which is crucial to expanding these important opportunities for our students and our community.

## 3 CIVIL RIGHTS CENTER

Birmingham is the birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement. As an important fixture of our community, Cumberland School of Law has an opportunity to fill a void in the Southeast by being the premier locus of discussion and action on civil rights issues. Funding for a Civil Rights Center will allow the law school to offer educational opportunities that celebrate Birmingham's rich civil rights history and confront emerging civil rights issues. A new center will inspire action on important civil rights matters while positively impacting our students, community and the national conversation on civil rights.

## 4 CUMBERLAND CONNECTION PROGRAM

To stay competitive on the national stage of legal education, Cumberland School of Law must expand its applicant pool. It can do so by creating pathways of opportunity for first-generation and underrepresented groups—whether from the family farm or the urban inner city. Funding for a Cumberland Connection Program will allow the law school to develop a formal pipeline that brings undergraduate students from these backgrounds to campus during the summer, provides them with mock law school class experiences and LSAT preparation resources and introduces them to Cumberland School of Law's academic programming. By expanding our reach, we can diversify our student body and offer the opportunity to enter the practice of law to students who may not yet see it as a possibility.

## 5 LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCES LAW CENTER

Alabama is rich in forest, water and other critical natural resources. Yet, no law school in the state has a program aimed at addressing important policy issues related to these resources. Funding for a Land Use and Natural Resources Law Center will allow Cumberland School of Law's faculty and students to address important environmental issues ranging from water quality to real estate development to the forest industry to coastal hazards. A state like Alabama with abundant natural resources should have a center aimed at engaging in legal and policy work on these important issues.



*Thanks to you, we're making progress toward our goal. Use the QR code to support these initiatives today.*

### CAMPAIGN STATUS

#### ADVOCACY AND COMPETITION PROGRAMS

**\$68,000**

#### CLINICAL PROGRAMS

**\$516,000**

#### CIVIL RIGHTS CENTER

**\$2,500**

#### CUMBERLAND CONNECTION PROGRAM

**\$1,037,000**

#### LAND USE AND NATURAL RESOURCES LAW CENTER

**\$212,000**

**\$2 M GOAL**

# Breaking Barriers

## A FOCUS ON FIRST-GENERATION LAW STUDENTS

By Morgan Black

Families undergoing sacrifices. Breaking generational barriers. These common themes are something that many, if not all, first-generation lawyers find familiar. We are honored that so many trailblazing students choose Cumberland School of Law, and seize every opportunity presented to them, on their way to pursuing legal careers. Here are just a few of their stories.

### JOHN KOO

- *President, Student Bar Association*
- *Associate Justice, Moot Court Board*
- *Member, Career Development Advisory Board*

John Koo has always been interested in law, but his career path wasn't sealed until a transformative conversation with his late grandfather who lived through the occupation of imperial Japan and the devastating effects of the Korean War.

Koo said, "Although he was poor, he learned to read and write with whatever he could find and was admitted into one of the top universities in the country with a scholarship. He finished top of his class and inched closer to his dream of attending law school, but he never got to go. He gave up that dream to support his family, ultimately becoming a loved teacher, professor and government official. He told me that he always wondered what he could have been if he had gone to law school, and what he could have done if he had that opportunity. That is when I decided to finish what he started and to continue his legacy. I couldn't think of a bigger honor."

As a first-generation law student, Koo said, "The Cumberland community is a family, something I think is rare in law schools



across the country. We celebrate others' success as our own and help each other grow. We cherish the idea that everyone has their strengths and their weaknesses, and every individual can bring value to the group. This school-wide mentality allows me to present the best versions of myself to potential employers and to learn in a comfortable and nurturing environment."



## ELIZABETH MOJICA

- *Treasurer, Cumberland Public Interest and Community Service*
- *Admission Ambassador*
- *Student Board Member, Hispanic National Bar Association Region VII*

As a former high school Spanish teacher and an alumni board member for Teach for America Alabama, access to high-quality education is something very important and personal to first-generation law student Elizabeth Mojica. A continuous learner, Mojica takes pride in asking questions and actively engaging in conversations she could have never dreamed having.

At Cumberland School of Law, Mojica is grateful for the faculty and staff who set the stage for the expectations and challenges that law school brings. She said, "They guide me in everything from how to study and organize materials to how to manage stress and disappointment when things don't turn out exactly how I expect them to. As knowledgeable as they are, they never make me feel 'less than' for not grasping topics. I have relied on all the



incredible people and the many resources Cumberland offers to pursue every legal interest I have in some capacity."

Mojica hopes to inspire other first-generation law students to pursue a legal career by following the example that the faculty and staff at Cumberland School of Law have set for her.

## MCKENZY SMITH

- *Executive Articles Editor, Cumberland Law Review*
- *President, Cumberland Chapter of the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association*
- *Jere F. White Jr. Fellow*

Mckenzy Smith was first inspired to pursue a legal career during her middle school involvement in the YMCA Youth and Government program. It was during those formative years that she discovered her passion for the law, advocacy and public service. She said, "The experience of crafting arguments, understanding the intricacies of legislation, and standing up for what I believe ignited a commitment to pursue a career in law."

For Smith, being a first-generation law student signifies a monumental achievement and the breaking of generational barriers. It involves navigating the challenges and complexities of the legal field and highlights the importance of family sacrifices, allowing her to play the role of "trailblazer" in her family.



In reflecting on her Cumberland School of Law experience, she said, "Cumberland places a high value on first-generation law students, offering a supportive environment that acknowledges and celebrates our unique challenges and achievements and provides a solid foundation for starting a legal career. The presence of many fellow first-generation law students fosters a sense of community and shared purpose, making Cumberland an ideal place to develop the skills and connections essential for a successful legal career."



## E.J. TURNER

- *President, Black Law Students Association*
- *Member, Inaugural Study Abroad program in Edinburgh, Scotland*
- *Member, National Trial Team, 2024-25*

When E.J. Turner was in the 10th grade, he had the chance to shadow an assistant city attorney at the Birmingham Municipal Court, unveiling a path that would allow him to become an advocate for the people and the community he loves. At Cumberland School of Law, he is seeking every opportunity to prepare himself to become the best advocate he can be.

Turner, who aspires to seek a career in economic development, government and property law, said, "Being a first-generation law student means a lot to me. I recognize that getting to this point cannot only be attributed to my own merit but to the hard work and sacrifices of those who came before me—folks like my grandmother who worked domestic jobs to support her family, or my mother and father who sacrificed significant portions of their life to make sure I obtained the type of education I needed to make it to law school."

For future first-generation lawyers, Turner advises, "If you can see it, you can believe it. I plan to succeed professionally and academically so those who come behind me will know that if someone like me can do it, they can do it too!"

## FIRST-GENERATION LAWYER

# Sean Modjarrad

*Sean Modjarrad, JD '00, MAcc '00, MBA '00, is the managing shareholder and founder of MAS Law in Dallas, Texas. After attending the University of North Texas for his undergraduate degree, Modjarrad received his Juris Doctor, Master of Accountancy and Master of Business Administration from Samford University. He has dedicated his life to fighting for justice and providing a voice for the voiceless. Here he reflects on his legal education and career as a first-generation lawyer.*

### What does it mean to you to be a first-generation lawyer?

**SM:** Being a lawyer holds deep personal meaning for me. As an immigrant, it symbolizes breaking new barriers within society, defying set cultural expectations and achieving goals. We migrated to the United States for the hope of a better future, and after attaining a bachelor's degree, two master's degrees and a Juris Doctor, it is clear that with the right support and path nothing is impossible.

### Is there a moment in your life that inspired you to pursue a legal career?

**SM:** It is truly the injustices I witnessed growing up within an immigrant family. As a child, I learned very quickly that those with nothing often have the most difficulty creating something. My father, for instance, a hardworking and intelligent restaurateur, struggled with negotiating lease agreements and contracts due to a lack of legal knowledge. This wasn't because he didn't understand the issues, but because he didn't know how to navigate the legal complexities, and the cost of legal services was often prohibitive. Watching him grapple with these challenges highlighted the profound impact that proper legal guidance can have on individuals and small business owners. It made me realize how crucial it is to be an advocate for justice and to help those who might





otherwise be left without proper representation or support. This experience ignited my passion for the legal profession and my commitment to making a meaningful difference in people's lives.

### **How did Cumberland School of Law help shape you for your career?**

**SM:** Cumberland played a crucial role in shaping and preparing me for my legal career. The curriculum combined with practical experiences, such as trial competitions and writing for the journal, provided me with a strong foundation in legal principles and real-world applications.

Additionally, the supportive folks at the law school helped instill in me the values, skills and, most importantly, the confidence necessary to succeed in the legal field. Cumberland doesn't just teach theory; it imbues the ability to think through real problems and practice in a practical and procedural way, fundamental tools necessary to become a successful attorney.

### **How do you hope to inspire future generations to pursue a legal career?**

**SM:** I hope to inspire future generations to pursue a legal career by sharing my journey and the challenges I overcame as a first-generation immigrant. By mentoring and providing guidance, I want to show them that their background does not define what they can become. It's your commitment to your dream and your determination to see it through that truly matter.

I believe in the power and the importance of diversity within the legal profession. It brings unique perspectives and enriches the legal field, making it more equitable and just. I aim to be a role model and mentor who encourages others from all backgrounds to follow their passion for law, knowing that their unique voices and experiences can, in turn, provide inspiration for generations to come.

### **What can future Cumberland lawyers do while in law school to prepare for a rewarding career?**

**SM:** Future Cumberland lawyers can prepare by actively participating in trial competitions to gain practical, hands-on skills. These competitions provided me with invaluable opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to real-life scenarios, sharpening essential skills such as research, writing and oral advocacy. Really, it's about getting outside of the classroom any way you can and putting to practice what you've been taught. For example, I had the confidence and the know-how to try my first case (bench trial) within only a week of being licensed as a lawyer.

Additionally, future lawyers need to clearly understand the difference between the profession of law and the business of law, and they need to know how to maneuver in each arena. Those days that we relied on just being a lawyer are gone, as these days, lawyers need to have a clear understanding and grasp of the business world as well.

Ultimately, what's important is keeping one simple thing in mind: focus on doing a great job for every client. Accomplish this by maintaining a commitment to ethics, professionalism, and client advocacy, and you will ensure long-term success in the legal profession.





## And the Beat Goes On // *Continued Advocacy Success*

**Cumberland School of Law consistently excels in regional and national legal skills competitions, maintaining a remarkable performance record. Renowned as one of the nation's most accomplished law schools for trial advocacy, Cumberland is now joining the national ranks for training in the Alternative Dispute Resolution and Moot Court spaces. The 2023-24 results include:**



### **TRIAL**

- **National Trial Competition Regional Champions, two team sweep, advanced to nationals**
- **American Association of Justice Regional Champions, two team sweep and one team advanced to national elite 8**
- **Online National Championship, three teams in top 13 and one team in the semifinals**
- **Trials and Tribulations Trial Competition, quarterfinalists and semifinalists**
- **The Verdict Trial Competition, 3rd place**
- **National Civil Trial Competition, national runner-up**
- **Participation in the Top Gun National Mock Trial Competition**



#### RANKINGS:

**2<sup>nd</sup>**

**in the national  
Gavel Rankings**  
(overall since 2019)

**4<sup>th</sup>**

**in the nation for  
Trial Competition  
Performance Rankings**  
(overall since 2016)

**6<sup>th</sup>**

**in the nation for  
Trial Advocacy**  
U.S. News & World Report (2024)

**8<sup>th</sup>**

**Competition Champions**  
American Bar Association  
(ADR and Moot Court)

#### HOSTED:

*2024 American Association of Justice's  
Student Trial Advocacy Competition Regional*

*2024 National Trial Competition Region 8*

*2024 American Bar Association Mediation  
Regional Competition*

*2024 American Bar Association Negotiation  
Regional Competition*

#### MOOT COURT

- American Bar Association National Appellate Advocacy Regional, won all three oral arguments

#### ADR

- American Bar Association Negotiation Competition, advanced to nationals



The success of Cumberland School of Law in trial competitions is a testament to its commitment to excellence. Under the dedicated guidance of their coaches, students showcase exceptional skill while epitomizing the institution's ethos of producing practice-ready lawyers.

Sara Williams, JD '06, visiting director of advocacy programs, said, "Our coaches and students continue to prove that Cumberland School of Law is one of the greatest programs in the country for practical legal education. I am immensely proud of them, not only for their performance, but for their display of integrity and grace throughout competition."

# MAKING A GLOBAL IMPACT FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

By Morgan Black

David Smolin, Harwell G. Davis Professor of Constitutional Law, is an internationally sought-after expert on children's and human rights. As the director of Cumberland's Center for Children, Law and Ethics, his work has impact across the state, country and globe.

## Smolin's recent activities include:

- Served as co-editor of "Facing the Past: Policies and Practices for Responses to Illegal Intercountry Adoptions" with Elvira Loibl, Maastricht University Faculty of Law in the Netherlands; authored 65-page introduction.
- Served as a co-author of "Surrogacy, Intermediaries, and the Sale of Children," with Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children, in Research Handbook on Surrogacy and the Law.
- Authored "Beyond Apologies: Children, Mothers, Religious Liberty, and the Mission of the Catholic Church" for the Cumberland Law Review.
- Authored "Kids are not Cakes: A Children's Rights Perspective on *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*" for the Cumberland Law Review.
- Assisted the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors (PCPM). PCPM members are appointed by Pope Francis and focus on preventing and responding to sexual abuse in Catholic contexts (including clerical abuse). Smolin presented to the members in September 2023, and two of his papers are published on the PCPM website. Three students received credit for assisting with the research.



- Serves as a special adviser for Child Identity Protection (CHIP), a Swiss child rights non-governmental agency. In this role, he interacts with some of the top children's rights experts in the world.
- Served as independent expert for the Hague Conference on Private International Law, International Social Service, and as a member Children's of Alabama's Ethics Committee.
- Presented at the University of Alabama School of Law's Symposium on Youth Incarceration and Juvenile Justice in Alabama in February 2023.
- Presented to the International Conference on "The 'manufactured child,'" co-sponsored by the University of Geneva Center for the Rights of the Child in December 2023.
- Presented to the Gujarat National Law University, Centre for Law and Society 3rd International Conference on Social Work, Law and Human Rights in March 2024.
- Moderated a CLE on the topic of child trafficking which the Center for Children, Law and Ethics co-sponsored in March 2024.

## Tracking Global Reach

Some of Smolin's work is published on his Bepress website. His work has had more than 94,000 full text downloads, including more than 70,000 downloads to 156 countries outside of the U.S.



# New Faculty Casebooks Feature Updates on the Second Amendment and Federal Taxation

By Joelle Youngblood

**Two Cumberland School of Law professors leveraged their expertise to co-author new legal casebooks updating topics in their respective fields.**

Starnes Professor of Law Brannon P. Denning co-authored *To Trust the People with Arms: The Supreme Court and the Second Amendment*. Beginning with the nation's founding and the original right to bear arms concept, the book explores history through an interdisciplinary lens integrating politics and law to illustrate the roles that gun rights have played in American history, culture and law.

Alyssa A. DiRusso, the Whelan W. and Rosalie T. Palmer Professor of Law, co-authored *Federal Taxation of Wealth Transfers: Cases and Problems, Fifth Edition*. The book focuses on the federal estate tax and the federal gift tax, while also introducing the federal generation-skipping transfer tax. The edition features new cases, administrative rulings and studies and existing cases and text were edited or deleted to highlight essential themes. Additionally, the book provides a new introduction to gratuitous transfers, a detailed analysis of defined value clauses and a new section on taxation of nonprofit organizations.

The scholarly contributions of Denning and DiRusso highlight Cumberland School of Law faculty excellence and interdisciplinary exploration. Their work enhances understanding within their respective fields and reflects Cumberland's dedication to rigorous academic pursuits.



**Denning is also the author of *American Constitutional Law: Powers and Liberties*, seventh edition, which was published in spring 2023.**



**DiRusso is also a co-author of *Wills, Trusts & Estates in Focus*, of which a second edition is expected to be published in 2025.**

# BALANCE IN COPYRIGHT LAW

By Tim McFarlin

Copyright is a lot of fun, but it's also serious business. How is it fun? Students love to learn—and I love to teach—how the law applies to art like music and movies. How's it serious? As Yochai Benkler observed, “It is about the future of the freedom to be as social beings with each other and the way information, knowledge, and culture will be produced.” In sum, if we don't protect art by requiring consent for its use, we risk getting less of it, and we risk alienating its creators. But if we overprotect it, we risk the same.

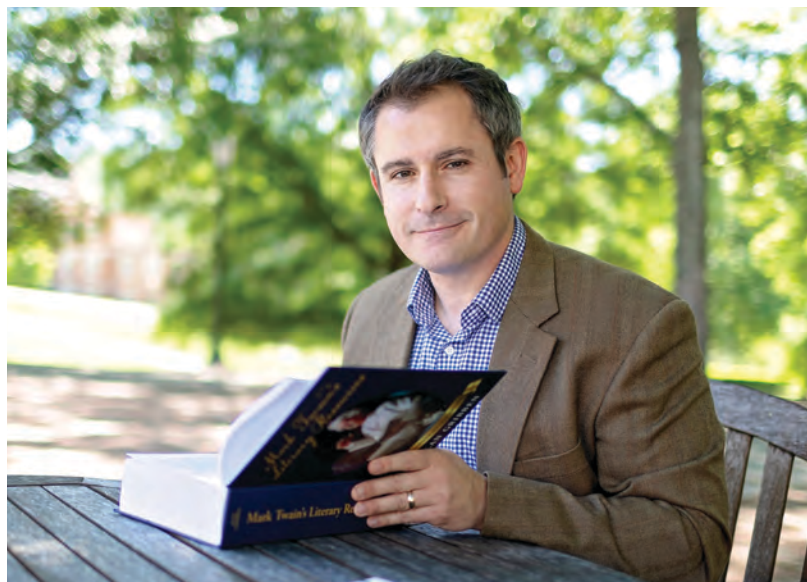
This may seem paradoxical, but it's not. It's balance. And balance is at the heart of not just copyright, but the law in general. Too little law, and we invite injustice. Too much, we stifle freedom. And in the case of copyright, what's at risk is a particularly vital freedom: speech.

Now, our nation's founders did not find copyright and free speech incompatible. In fact, our first Congress, led by James Madison, passed the first federal Copyright Act, as authorized by Article I of the U.S. Constitution, while also passing the First Amendment,

## RECENT MCFARLIN ARTICLES

- “*Infringing Uses, Not Works*” is forthcoming in the *South Carolina Law Review*.
- “*A Copyright Restored: Mark Twain, Mary Ann Cord, and How to Right a Longstanding Wrong*” has been published in the *Wisconsin Law Review*.
- “*A Copyright Ignored: Mark Twain, Mary Ann Cord, and the Meaning of Authorship*” has been published in the *Journal of the Copyright Society of the USA*.
- “*Identity Appropriation and Wealth Transfer: Twain, Cord, and the Post-Mortem Right of Publicity*,” with Alyssa DiRusso, has been published in the *American College of Trust and Estate Counsel Law Journal*.

All are freely available to read on McFarlin's Social Science Research Network page at [papers.ssrn.com](https://papers.ssrn.com).



which states that “Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech.”

But in doing so the founders issued us an implicit challenge, one which remains vital today: Can we the people—through our Congress, president, and courts—effectively ensure everyone's right to express themselves freely on the one hand, while on the other hand outlawing certain expression because it was copied from someone else?

We gladly take on this challenge at Cumberland School of Law. In class we vigorously study and debate copyright's proper subjects and scope, knowing that lawyers must continually research the past, illuminate the present, and influence the future of the law. In our writing we explore how copyright intersects with artificial intelligence, how it recognizes authors that history has ignored, and how it distinguishes between when art may be used only with consent versus when it may be fairly used without it. And in representing clients, our graduates help people understand how to utilize copyright to their advantage while simultaneously avoiding its pitfalls.

Balance in copyright—the true paradox is that it can never be perfectly realized, yet we must never stop trying. And we'll keep having fun in the process!



Started by the late Judge John Carroll, JD '74, and now supervised by attorney and clinical instructor in residence Kevin Patton, the C-VETS clinic has served more than 600 veterans since its launch in fall 2020.



# CUMBERLAND CLINICS

## *Expanding Experiential Opportunities for Students*

*By Emily Bonds Davey*

### **Cumberland School of Law**

is actively expanding the number of clinics available to students. Clinics provide invaluable opportunities for students to represent real clients and develop practice-ready skills, such as client interviewing and counseling. In addition, clinics often serve underrepresented populations who may not otherwise have legal representation.

Before 2024, four clinics were available: the Cumberland Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic (C-VETS), which represents veterans in the counties surrounding Birmingham in a variety of legal matters; the Cumberland Innocence Clinic, which investigates claims of actual innocence by incarcerated individuals; the Capital Defense Clinic,

which is embedded at the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office and handles capital cases; and the Criminal Appeals Clinic, also embedded at the Jefferson County Public Defender's Office where students assist in criminal appeals.

In January 2024, two new clinics were added to Cumberland School of Law's repertoire: the Cumberland Parole Clinic and the Cooney Contracts and Risk Management Clinic. The Parole Clinic is a partnership with Redemption Earned, an Alabama nonprofit that aims to assist worthy prisoners seeking parole or work release. Through this partnership, students can see firsthand the post-conviction parole process with the goal of arguing a case

before the Alabama Parole Board. Beginning this fall, the Cumberland Parole Clinic will be led by Ashleigh Woodham, JD '15.

The Cooney Contracts and Risk Management Clinic began with a gift from Samford alumnus Gary Cooney '74, former vice chairman of McGriff, Seibels and Williams Inc. The clinic teaches students the legal implications of construction, insurance and surety contracts through representation of the clients of McGriff Insurance Services LLC, one of the top 10 insurance brokers in the world. The clinic is led by clinical instructor in residence, Eric Getty, senior vice president of McGriff.

# Corky Strickland Retires, Reflects on Decades of Legal Education and Memories Made at Cumberland School of Law

*By Morgan Black*

**Cumberland School of Law empowers students—as well as its faculty—to pursue their passions.**

In 1988, Henry C. "Corky" Strickland moved from the courtroom to the classroom, intent upon studying evolving legal issues and analyzing how the law should address them. That year he joined the Cumberland School of Law faculty, altering the course of his career.



Across his 36 years on the faculty, Strickland served in many roles—including associate dean and dean—and witnessed transformative shifts in legal education. Some changes were positive, some not so much. "While changes often do not seem dramatic as they are happening, they can appear seismic when we look back over decades," Strickland said.

The integration of technology in the classroom proved monumental, he said, "like the use of laptops in class and on exams, legal research moving almost entirely online, and the new opportunities and challenges created by artificial intelligence." One not-so-obvious change was the progression from chalkboards—"yes, the kind with real, dusty chalk back in the 1980s"—to dry-erase whiteboards, projectors, PowerPoint slides and learning management systems.

Strickland lauded the transition from focusing exclusively on legal doctrine and theory to adding an emphasis on a practical, experiential education. "Cumberland, of course, was always ahead of its time providing instruction and practice in trial advocacy and other essential lawyer skills," he said. "Over the past few decades, all law schools have increased attention to these skills. Doctrine and theory remain critically important, but law schools now understand the need to marry doctrine with practical training."

Concerning to Strickland are society's deteriorating support for the rule of law, as well as the increased debt load of law students. "If our country is to survive as a democratic republic, we must rebuild an understanding and appreciation for our historic processes and institutions. Law schools, and indeed all lawyers, must lead that crucial effort."

In reflecting on his time at Cumberland, Strickland remembered special moments, including the students who composed his first class in August 1988 and his wife Anne's graduation in 1992. He also fondly remembers playing in the Student Bar Association's three-on-three basketball tournaments during the 1990s, and students volunteering to write classroom lessons on the chalkboard when an







Strickland with his wife, Anne, and their two dogs, Baxter and Piper.

ankle injury hobbled Strickland in 2003. He also fondly recalled traveling with national negotiation teams and enjoying many Rascal Day picnics on sun-splashed spring days.

Cumberland recently earned a top-10 ranking from *Princeton Review* in its Best Quality of Life category, a recognition Strickland can appreciate. "Cumberland is a special place to study law, in part because of the collegial, caring culture of the Cumberland community and the relationships it fosters. Cumberland students care about and support each other in a way that creates lifelong friendships, and faculty and staff are supportive and are passionate about preparing students for meaningful careers," he said.

The enthusiasm and generosity shown by alumni supports Cumberland's emphasis on mentoring young lawyers. "While we

all recognize the important roles that supreme court justices, elected officials, and even law professors and deans play, Cumberland recognizes the absolutely pivotal role of engaged, ethical, and caring lawyers who work to advance the interests of their clients," Strickland said. "They are the cornerstone of our system."

In May 2024, he and Anne kicked off retirement with a trip to France, Austria and northern Italy. While looking forward to spending more quality time with their children and grandchildren, Strickland plans to remain connected to legal education. He will continue serving as a member of the American Arbitration Association's National Panel of Arbitrators and Mediators and hopes to teach periodically as an adjunct or visiting law professor.

## MORE FACULTY ACTIVITIES



**Chinelo Diké-Minor**

In June 2024, associate professor Chinelo Diké-Minor received a Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General's Award for Excellence Fighting Fraud, Waste and Abuse. She was honored for her work on *U.S. v. Murphy* and related cases during her time as an assistant U.S. attorney prior to joining the Cumberland School of Law faculty. Diké-Minor received the same award in 2022 for her work on other cases.

Diké-Minor's article "Be Careful What You Wish For: An Overreliance on Telemedicine Could Harm Health Equity" was published by Loyola University Chicago's *Annals of Health Law and Life Sciences* as part of its 17th Annual Health Law Symposium issue. Other recent articles include: "The Devil Made Me Do It: An Argument for Expanding the Anti-Kickback Statute to Cover Private Payers" (*Connecticut Law Review*) and "The Untold Story of the United States' Anti-Kickback Laws" (*Rutgers Journal of Law and Public Policy*).



**Will Dorton**

Will Dorton joined the Cumberland School of Law faculty as an assistant professor this summer. A graduate of the University of Kentucky J. David Rosenberg College of Law, Dorton teaches courses on business organizations, securities regulation and contracts.



**Blake Hudson**

Dean Blake Hudson participated in the *Georgia Law Review* symposium "Evolving Landscapes: American Land Use Law & Resiliency." His article, "Resilient Forest Management and Climate Change" was subsequently published in Volume 58 of the *Georgia Law Review*. The article addresses the impacts of climate change on the ability of forests to re-establish after catastrophic events and proposes policy solutions to create more resilient forests.



**Alicia Gilbert**

Alicia Gilbert joined the faculty as a visiting assistant professor of law this summer and will teach contracts and health law courses. A graduate of the University of Alabama School of Law, Gilbert's research focuses on how regulations and business practices impact the provision of health care.



**Tracey Roberts**

Professor Tracey Roberts presented "The ESG Case for the Carbon Tax" at the Law and Society Association meeting in Denver, Colorado, in June 2024. In the spring she submitted "Creation Care, Environmental Stewardship and Taxation," following an invitation to contribute a chapter to an edited volume of Christian theological perspectives on tax law, tentatively titled "Render Unto Caesar."



Roberts, and her *Tax Law and the Environment* co-author, University of Oregon professor Roberta Mann, have been invited to contribute an article for publication in 2025 in the *National Tax Journal*, a peer reviewed tax journal sponsored by the National Tax Association and published by the University of Chicago Press.



**Maryam Stevenson**

Maryam Stevenson has been at Cumberland School of Law in a visiting role since 2022 and was promoted to assistant professor this summer. Stevenson, a graduate of the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, teaches courses on administrative law, torts, professional responsibilities, immigration law, mental health law, and food and drug law.



**Matt Woodham**

Matt Woodham, JD '15, associate professor and assistant director of advocacy programs, wrote the annual update for the *Trial Handbook for Alabama Lawyers, Third Edition* (Alabama Practice Series), which was released in January 2024. The edition includes an update to Woodham's 2022 chapter that reflects changes in the Alabama Presumptive Sentencing Guidelines, as well as changes to the State's Correctional Incentive Time rules.

Woodham shared his knowledge on Alabama's grand jury secrecy law for an article published by al.com on Dec. 1, 2023, in which he discusses the 48-year-old law that looms over two cases in Mobile and Atmore, Alabama. Additionally, Woodham spoke to the media about the application of Aniyah's Law in a case about an officer-involved shooting, which was published by Yahoo News on Jan. 13, 2024.

## New Staff at Cumberland School of Law

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### **April Allen**

Director of Operations

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### **Angela Blocker**

Administrative Assistant, Career Development and Clinics, Externships and Public Interest

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### **Grace Hancock**

Law Library Assistant II, Technology Services, Lucille Stewart Beeson Law Library

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### **Gracie Lloyd**

Law Library Assistant, Circulation Desk, Lucille Stewart Beeson Law Library

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### **Cameron Pannell**

Administrative Assistant, Office of the Registrar

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### **Allie Saunders**

Admission Counselor

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### **Becky Stroud**

Director of Alumni Engagement

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Learn more about our faculty and staff at  
**[samford.edu/law/directory](https://samford.edu/law/directory)**.

# COMPLIANCE ALERT

## *Higher Education After Affirmative Action*

By Steven Boydston

**In June 2023**, the U.S. Supreme Court (“the Court”) struck down the race-based admissions policies of Harvard College and the University of North Carolina in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President & Fellows of Harvard College*, 143 S. Ct. 2141 (2023) (“SFFA”). For 45 years prior, the Court had allowed an applicant’s race to be considered as one of many factors to achieve a diverse student body. The Court held that Harvard and UNC’s consideration of an applicant’s race violated the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause, which applies to public institutions. The Court further found Title VI requires all institutions—public and private—that receive federal funding must comply with the same requirements imposed by the Equal Protection Clause, making them coextensive in this matter. This decision caused confusion among many college applicants for admissions and scholarships, triggered changes to many admissions policies, and sparked additional debate about the role of affirmative action and diversity initiatives in American society.

### APPLICANT CONCERNS

Many students are now concerned that mentioning race in their application or essays will hurt their chances of admission. The Court’s opinion, however, stated that universities may still consider, “an applicant’s discussion of how race affected his or her life, be it through discrimination, inspiration, or otherwise.” But also, the “touchstone of an individual’s identity must be with respect to challenges bested, skills built, or lessons learned,” not the color of their skin. If a student discusses race in their essay, the essay should be evaluated based on how the student responded to challenges or adversity, not on their inherent traits.

### INSTITUTIONAL COMPLIANCE

At the undergraduate level, SFFA will most seriously impact “highly selective” institutions (e.g., Ivy League and top-tier public universities) which often cap their incoming class enrollment. In today’s higher education landscape, most colleges and universities are competing to get students in their door and do not factor race into their admissions decisions. However, graduate programs across the country with caps on enrollment for the incoming class (e.g., law, medicine, and engineering) will also be affected if they have taken race into account in their past admissions decisions.

To comply with SFFA, institutions should take a truly holistic look at their applicant pool. Intentionally recruiting first-generation students, Pell Grant recipients, and students from underserved schools, for example, can yield diversity in many areas. Those are permissible criteria to consider. By increasing their proportions of those student groups, an institution would not only grow its racial diversity, but socio-economic and regional diversity as well.

### WHAT ABOUT SCHOLARSHIPS?

Using race as a criterion in scholarships is unsettled and guidance varies. SFFA specifically addresses the use of race in the admissions process. The Court’s opinion that race does not meet the compelling interest needed to be a permissible criterion in admissions implies, however, that the Court would apply the same standard to scholarships and financial aid. Whether or not to remove race-conscious criteria from scholarship requirements is up to each institution based on their risk tolerance, as they could end up defending the decision in court for *Students for Fair Admissions’* next big case.



**“Last year,** at age 35, I became one of the 10 youngest university general counsels in the country according to my professional association. I believe my LLM in higher education law and compliance from Cumberland School of Law gave me a depth of knowledge to effectively ‘punch above my weight’ in higher education law. I knew if I wanted to set myself apart in such a competitive field, I would need to have something that showed I was committed to this industry and to working toward being an expert in it. The hiring committee was intrigued that Cumberland School of Law offering a LLM in higher education law and compliance, and I believe it has played a role in my career advancement.”

**—Steven Boydston, JD '17, LLM '22,**  
*General Counsel, University of Montevallo*



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# *A Summer of Firsts in Scotland*

*By Kerry McInerney*

**For more than 15 years, Cumberland School of Law students have enjoyed summer studies at Cambridge University. As a complement to this long-running program, Cumberland launched a new advocacy-themed program in June 2024 at the University of Edinburgh. It emphasizes persuasion as an essential advocacy skill across multiple settings, from courtroom to conference room to living room. Sara Williams, JD '06, and Matt Woodham, JD '15, were among the Edinburgh faculty, the first time Cumberland's advocacy directors participated in a program abroad.**



The vision for expanding international offerings is credited to associate dean Jill Evans. "Students who participate in our summer abroad programs return home with a broadened scope of legal understanding," she said. "Our new study abroad opportunity in Scotland builds a persuasive advocacy component into our elite advocacy program and pairs a CLE at the end designed to give practicing attorneys as well as students a focused series of workshops and presentations to hone their persuasive advocacy skills."

Then, when Blake Hudson became dean in 2022, his priorities included expanding opportunities for first-generation law students. Both visions found reality in Scotland.

"As someone with public speaking anxiety, participating in this program was out of my comfort zone," said Sydney Moore, a third-year first-generation law student. "But it pushed me to discover a talent and deeper passion for advocacy that I did not know existed within myself. Our professors truly put their all into showing us how advocacy really is an art form; in a beautiful, welcoming country with their own longstanding traditions of legal advocacy. If you have the privilege of being a student at Cumberland, and choose not to participate in this opportunity, you are doing a major disservice to yourself and your future legal career."

This experience allowed Cumberland students to immerse themselves in Scotland's culture. Students explored sites of historical significance including the Edinburgh Castle, Scottish Parliament, Stirling Castle and the Signet Library, the original law library in Edinburgh and still working library for advocates representing the British Crown.



The Cambridge and Edinburgh cohorts united for an excursion to Brussels, Belgium, exploring governmental operations of the European Union. The tour was led by Loreta Raulinaityte, JD '98, coordinator of the Parliamentary Dimension of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and Head of Unit for Translation and Interpretation for the Lithuanian government.

"The life-changing opportunity to study abroad in Scotland and forge connections with another culture and other Cumberland students is something I will carry with me forever," said second-year student Autumngrace Page. "Scotland proved to be unforgettable in allowing me to be exposed to another culture. It also invited me into the way the law operates elsewhere and how it differs from the American legal system I am so accustomed to."

The Edinburgh program concluded with The Art of Advocacy, the law school's first continuing legal education conference for practicing attorneys from the U.S. and U.K. It featured experiential sessions devoted to persuasive advocacy, rather than traditional lectures. The slate of presenters included long-time Cumberland advocacy and trial team director, Judge Jim Roberts, JD '94, Judge Kevin Newsom '94, general counsel of the South Carolina Bar, Jill Rothstein, LLM '22, and principal at Beasley Allen law firm Dee Miles, JD '89.

## *The Art of Advocacy* drew rave reviews.

### **Attendees said:**

*"Best CLE I've attended in at least 20 years."*

*"What is the date for next year so I can go ahead and put it on my calendar?"*

*"I'm definitely coming back."*

*"Same cost to go to other popular programs at this time of year, but this one blew those other conferences out of the water. I'd much rather be here and can't wait to return."*

*"How can I (and my firm) help next year?"*

**SAVE THE DATE** *for the second annual  
Art of Advocacy international CLE:  
June 29-July 1, 2025.*



# 2024

## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI OF THE YEAR

Each year, we are honored to recognize our accomplished alumni through our Distinguished Alumni Awards. Our 2024 award recipients are:

**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR:**

**JEFF FRIEDMAN, JD '85**

*Given to an alumnus/na who has distinguished himself/herself in the practice of law, service to the community and leadership in the profession*

**YOUNG ALUMNA OF THE YEAR:**

**JESSICA THOMAS, JD '09**

*Given to an alumnus/na who graduated within the past 15 years and who has distinguished himself/herself in the practice of law, service to the community and leadership in the profession*

**VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR:**

**JULIE MCMAKIN, JD '09**

*Given to an alumnus/na who has demonstrated exceptional loyalty and commitment to Cumberland School of Law through volunteer service to the school*

**FRIEND OF CUMBERLAND:**

**LAURA MONTGOMERY LEE**

*Given to a friend, although not a graduate, who has contributed time and resources to enhance the quality of the law school and the educational experience of the students*



## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

### JEFF FRIEDMAN, JD '85

Jeff Friedman is the founding partner of Friedman, Dazzio & Zulanas in Birmingham, Alabama. Admitted to practice in all Alabama state and federal courts, the United States 11th Circuit Appeals, and the United States Supreme Court, Friedman has litigated in more than 30 Alabama counties and has been admitted, on a pro hac vice basis, to litigate in the states of West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Georgia, Texas and Oklahoma.

Friedman is a fellow of the American Board of Trial Advocates and holds an AV rating by Martindale-Hubbell which is the highest rating for an attorney bestowed by that organization. He is also a member of the Judge J.E. Horton American Inn of Court, the Alabama State Bar and the Birmingham Bar Association.

For the past 20 years, Friedman has represented a number of cities, counties and municipal agencies to help them recover funding

for clean air and safe drinking water. To Friedman, his greatest professional honors are not tied to individual accomplishments, but the growth and good reputation of his firm.

Among many accomplishments, just a few celebrations of his success include being nominated for Public Justice's Prestigious 2024 Trial Lawyer of the Year Award for his work in serving as lead trial counsel in the case of *Adkisson v. Jacobs Engineering Group* and serving as lead counsel in the landmark decision in the Tennessee Valley Authority environmental litigation, 2012 WL 3647704. Additionally, he has had multiple judgments listed in the *National Law Journal's* list of top cases and reported in Law 360 and other legal publications.

A longtime advocate for Cumberland School of Law, Friedman said, "Since I was first invited to serve on the Dean's Advisory Board



by Judge John Carroll, it has been one of the most enjoyable and rewarding opportunities of my career. It has provided me with a way to serve the law school and stay connected to Cumberland. It is exciting to see the success that has been made in the past and thrilling to witness the plans for the future of the school under Dean Blake Hudson."

## YOUNG ALUMNA OF THE YEAR

### JESSICA THOMAS, JD '09



As the senior vice president and chief diversity officer for Dollar Tree, a Fortune 150 retailer, Jessica Thomas began her trailblazing career while a student at Cumberland School of Law. She was the second Black president of Cumberland's Student Bar Association, a member of the *American Journal of Trial Advocacy*, a Judge Abraham Caruthers fellow, a member of the Career Services Advisory Board, and a member of the selection committee for the Harvey S. Jackson excellence in teaching award. And it was at Cumberland where she developed her love of litigation through participation in the trial advocacy program.

She began her legal career in private practice working at Bradley Arant and Ogletree Deakins law firms and continued her servant leadership journey. She has served as a fellow for the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity and the board of directors for Nashville Public Television, Mount Zion Baptist Church, and Twin Cities Diversity in Practice. She was awarded the Athena Young Professional Leadership Award, Nashville's Top 30 Under 30, and selection in the Nashville Emerging Leaders Class and the Nashville Bar Foundation Leadership Forum. She also serves on the Cumberland School of Law Advisory Board.

Prior to joining Dollar Tree in 2023 as vice president of Labor & Employment, Thomas served as in-house counsel for companies such as Target, Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Inc., and Remington Outdoor Company.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

### JULIE MCMAKIN, JD '09

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Julie McMakin practices criminal law as a deputy district attorney for the Jefferson County District Attorney's Office, Birmingham Division. As a supervisor in the office, McMakin maintains a trial docket consisting of homicide and sexual assault cases while also overseeing the DDAs assigned to the Circuit Court Courtroom. In addition, she is the office's representative on Birmingham's Violent Crimes Task Force and a member of the interview committee.

When not in court, McMakin spends much of her free time volunteering at Cumberland School of Law. For the past three years, she has served as an adjunct professor teaching Advanced Criminal Trial Practice for students who have an interest in criminal litigation. Her former students can be found

working as prosecutors and criminal defense attorneys throughout the U.S. Additionally, she helps prepare first-year students for on-campus interviews. She has also volunteered her time to participate in panel discussions for the first-year Criminal Law classes.

Most of her spare time, however, is spent as a coach for the National Trial Team. She was a member of the team as a student and found it to be an invaluable experience, so she jumped at the chance to be involved with the program when asked. She dedicates nights and weekends coaching her team in preparation for competitions. McMakin's teams have successfully competed at the Summit Cup in Colorado, the Syracuse National Trial Competition in New York, and at



the regional and national levels of the American Association of Justice (AAJ) National Trial Competition. Notably, in 2022, her AAJ teams finished 2nd and 5th in the nation.



## FRIEND OF CUMBERLAND

### LAURA MONTGOMERY LEE

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Laura Montgomery Lee is a domestic relations attorney and the managing partner of Crittenden Partners PC. She regularly volunteers her time at Cumberland School of Law, participating in mentor programs, mock interviews, panel discussions and speaking to students about the practice of law.

Lee credits a lot of her success to the wonderful mentors she had throughout the years. Lee, a graduate of the University of Alabama School of Law, notes that law school may have taught her the foundation

of the law, but her mentors taught her how to practice law. "I was fortunate to have trial advocacy coaches, professors, employers and other members of the Birmingham legal community who were always willing to offer advice and provide guidance. Not only do I feel a need to pay it forward, but I also find that engaging with law school students teaches me something as well. I am thankful that Cumberland gives me the opportunity to interact with smart, thoughtful adults who have a fresh outlook on the practice of law."



# Young Alumni Begin Careers Through Prestigious Judicial Clerkships

By Morgan Black

Judicial clerkships provide unique opportunities for new lawyers to see litigation from the judge's side of the bench. Many young Cumberland School of Law alumni, including several members of the class of 2024, have begun their legal careers by serving as law clerks for federal and state court judges.

- **Austin Foss, JD '24, Associate Justice Sarah Stewart, Supreme Court of Alabama**
- **Lauren Lester, JD '24, Associate Justice Greg Cook, Supreme Court of Alabama**
- **Taylor Neill, JD '24, Judge Austin Huffaker, U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama**
- **Courtney Pomeroy, JD '24, Magistrate Judge Gray Borden, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama**
- **Kynsley Rae Blasingame, JD '24, District Judge Madeline Haikala, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama (2025-26)**
- **Katie Philyaw, JD '24, Senior District Judge Curtis L. Collier, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee**
- **Haleigh Chambliss, JD '23, District Judge Anna Manasco, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama (just completed a clerkship with Supreme Court of Alabama Associate Justice Greg Cook)**
- **Abigail White, JD '23, clerked for Associate Justice Greg Cook of the Supreme Court of Alabama during the 2023-24 term**
- **Pierce Ostwalt, JD '22, Associate Justice Shawn LaGrua, Supreme Court of Georgia (just completed a two-year clerkship with Magistrate Judge Katherine Nelson of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Alabama)**

Courtney Pomeroy, who was editor-in-chief of the *Cumberland Law Review*, commented on her clerkship opportunity: "When I learned about judicial clerkships during my first year, I knew they were something I wanted to pursue.

Accordingly, I spent the summer after my first year externing in the Northern District of Alabama, thanks to the help of several of my professors at Cumberland School of Law. My externships only bolstered my desire to apply for a position with the Honorable Gray M.

Borden, for whom I'll spend the next two years clerking. It is not lost on me that this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and I am grateful to Cumberland School of Law for getting me here."



In spring 2024, Taylor Neill was one of 36 law students nationwide to participate in the Judicial Clerkship Opinion Writing Conference held at Catholic University's Columbus School of Law in Washington, D.C.



## TED AND VENITA MANN SUPPORT CUMBERLAND SCHOOL OF LAW THROUGH PLANNED GIVING

*By Morgan Black*



**Ted Mann, JD '85, a first-generation lawyer, came to law school with very few financial resources, and was supported by various scholarships and student loans provided to him. As a proud graduate, he and his wife, Venita, have decided to support the law school by adding Cumberland School of Law into their will.**

Planned gifts come in many forms as living donors arrange to leave assets to Cumberland School of Law. While the most common form is a simple bequest through a will, donors can also make planned gifts through charitable gift annuities, retirement plans and life insurance, trusts, gifts of property and retained life estates. These options often have more flexibility and benefit the donor.

In 2018, the Manns purchased a life insurance policy that will help fund a needs-based scholarship for future law students. Upon his death, the benefits of this insurance policy will be paid to Cumberland to establish this scholarship for students who are faced with extraordinary financial challenges.

Mann said, "I believe that I am making an investment in present and future law students, many of them who shared my experience. By setting aside a few dollars every day, I can make a considerable investment in the lives of future Cumberland students in financial

need of completing their legal education. I have never viewed good stewardship through the lens of dollars and cents. Investment in people and programs to benefit students is my long-range goal. We all leave this planet at some point. If upon my death I can benefit a financially struggling law student, what better legacy can be left?"

Donors who choose to leave a planned gift to Cumberland School of Law will become members of Samford University's 1841 Society, formerly known as the DeVotie Society. To learn more about the planned giving process and how your family can leave a legacy at Cumberland School of Law, contact Anne Marovich, senior development officer, at [amarovic@samford.edu](mailto:amarovic@samford.edu) or 205-726-2443.

**Ted Mann's firm, Mann & Potter, is one of the inaugural donors of the Cumberland Connection Law School Immersion Program.**





# WAYS TO FUEL SUCCESS

There are numerous ways to give and fuel Cumberland School of Law's success while often receiving tax savings and other benefits.



## CASH

Giving by check, credit card or other means of cash.



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## REAL ESTATE

Donating real property to Cumberland School of Law outright or into an income producing trust.



## LIFE INSURANCE

Donate a policy to Cumberland School of Law or name Cumberland School of Law as a beneficiary.



## BEQUEST

Naming Cumberland School of Law as a beneficiary in your will or revocable trust.

"Cumberland provided me with knowledge, skills and dear friends who have been invaluable to me on my path. I give back because I want to help ensure that future Cumberland students have access to the same opportunities I did." —Patrick Bobo, JD '08



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# Alumni News & Notes

From our newest alumni to the most seasoned, read what Cumberland lawyers are doing in Alabama, across the nation and around the globe.

## 1970s

**Jimmy Rane, JD '71**, was inducted into the Alabama Business Hall of Fame in November 2023 and received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2024 Business Alabama Awards.

**Judge Mike Bolin, JD '73**, retired justice of the Supreme Court of Alabama, was sworn in as a Jefferson County commissioner in Birmingham, Alabama.

**Judge Julian Mann, JD '74**, is the chair of the judicial division of the American Bar Association.

**Trippy McGuire, JD '78**, has published his second book, *Splendors from Our Past: The Shepard Mansion, The Shepard Family and the Ghost Town of Poley, Alabama*.

**Doug Jones, JD '79**, delivered the 2024 commencement address and received an honorary degree from Hamilton College in Clinton, New York.

## 1980s



**Judge Karon O. Bowdre, JD '80**, assumed senior inactive status on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Alabama after 22 years of service on the federal bench. Also, she was elected chair of the Samford University Board of Trustees.

**Wendy Brooks Crew, JD '83**, is the incoming president of the U.S. chapter of the International Academy of Family Lawyers.

**Judge J. Frank Porter, JD '85**, is the chief judge of the 20th Judicial Circuit Court of Florida, which encompasses Florida's

Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Hendry and Glades counties.

**Nita Gail Denton, JD '86**, was appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis to the 19th Circuit for the Florida Judicial Nominating Commission.

**Waylon Graham, JD '86**, was appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis to the 14th Judicial Circuit Court of Florida Judicial Nominating Commission.



**The Honorable Evan Jenkins, JD '87**, former West Virginia Supreme Court justice, is the general counsel at Ramaco Resources Inc.



Sadler McKeen, JD '24, with a composite photo of his great grandfather, Vernon Belcher, JD '39



Trevor Gibbons, JD '24, with his father, John Gibbons, JD '89





Katie Arrington, JD '24, with her uncle, Gene Naylor, JD '85



Edward Gaal, JD '24, with his father, Richard Gaal, JD '97

in Lexington, Kentucky. Jenkins provided the address at Cumberland School of Law's spring 2024 commencement.

**Dennis Ross, JD '87**, has published his autobiography, *Reaching Across the Aisle: Reflections on My Experiences in Politics*.

**Judge James Ross, JD '87**, was named president of the Tennessee General Sessions Judges Conference.

**Jane Opitz Shuler, JD '87**, received the Order of the Palmetto upon her retirement as chief legal counsel for the South Carolina House of Representatives Ethics Committee. The Order of the Palmetto, the state's highest civilian honor, is presented in recognition of a lifetime of extraordinary achievement, service and contributions on a national or statewide scale.

**Judge Bill Thompson, JD '88**, the longest serving judge in the history of the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals, retired from his position as presiding judge.

## 1990s

**Sharon Stuart, JD '90**, is the 2024 president of the Birmingham Bar Association.

**Beau Byrd, JD '92**, was elected as a fellow of the American College of Real Estate Lawyers.

**Judge Charlie Crawford, JD '92**, is chief judge for the 18th Judicial Circuit Courts of Florida which encompasses Brevard and Seminole counties.

**Suzanne G. Marsh, JD '92**, joined the International Association of Defense Counsel.

**Frank Coppersmith, JD '94**, has been named to the Future Texas Business Legends' Class of 2024 and received the 2024 Miller Family Future Texas Legend Veteran Award recipient. Coppersmith is the CEO of Smarter Reality, an Inc. 5000 and Austin "Fast 50" software developer that provides award-winning training and simulation software to the Department of Defense using virtual reality and artificial intelligence.



**Bobby Christine, JD '95**, was promoted to the prestigious rank of major general in the U.S. Army National Guard. Christine is the first reserve component officer in the Army's JAG Corps to achieve this rank since the JAG Corps was established in 1775.

**Jeff Dyess, JD '95**, is a member of the Federation of Defense & Corporate Counsel.

**Judge Thomas B. "Britt" Hammond, JD '95**, was reelected to serve on the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia.

**Judge Robert L. Martin, JD '95**, was appointed as the presiding judge for the Odessa Municipal Court in Odessa, Texas.

# Alumni News & Notes

From our newest alumni to the most seasoned, read what Cumberland lawyers are doing in Alabama, across the nation and around the globe.



Hannah Walker, JD '24, with the composite photo of her late mother, Karen Walker, JD '93



Lucas Wolff, JD '24, with his grandfather Cecil Cheves, JD '74, and grandmother Bettye Cheves

**Ted Hodges, JD '96**, is the chief legal officer for Davenport Energy, First Piedmont, in Danville, Virginia.

**Cam Ward, JD '96**, is the director of the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles. He was recently appointed as the chair of the advisory board of the Council of State Governments Justice Center.

**Jennifer Scott, JD '96**, was recently named by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp to the Upper Oconee Regional Water Planning Council.

**Caroline Coker Coursey, JD '99**, is general counsel for IP and new technologies at Technicolor in Culver City, California.

## 2000s

**Jonathan Hooks, JD '00**, served as the 2023-24 president of the Alabama Defense Lawyers Association.

**Thomas Treadwell, JD '00**, is general counsel at Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama in Montgomery, Alabama.

**Fred R. DeLeon Jr., JD '01**, was appointed by Governor Kay Ivey to the Alabama Board of Licensure for Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors.

**Judge Bill Lewis, JD '03**, was appointed by Governor Kay Ivey to the Alabama Court of Civil Appeals. With his appointment, Lewis is the first Black judge to sit on this bench.

**Kathryn Walker "Kat" Lyles, JD '07**, is general counsel at Aethon Energy Operating LLC in Dallas, Texas.

**Robert K. Nichols III, JD '07**, was selected as general counsel for the Texas Department of Banking. A U.S. Air Force veteran before entering banking, Nichols served as a military commissions prosecutor, fighter wing deputy staff judge advocate and member of the Office of General Counsel for the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency.

**Judge Jephson "Jep" Bendinger, JD '09**, was appointed to the Georgia Superior Court by Governor Brian Kemp.

## 2010s

**Judge Roderick J. Evans, JD '10**, was appointed as a municipal judge for the city of Bessemer, Alabama.

**Katie Kimbrell, JD '10**, participated in the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD) Fellows and Pathfinder training programs, aimed at advancing the next generation of legal industry leaders.

**Ashley Peinhardt, JD '10**, is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates.

**Judge A. Danielle Touart, JD '10**, is an Arapahoe County court judge in Centennial, Colorado, by appointment of Governor Jared Polis.

**Jennifer Reynolds Bray, JD '13**, was sworn in as district attorney of the 27th Judicial Circuit of Alabama.

**Samantha-Anne Nadolny, JD '13**, is the 2024-25 chair of the Houston (Texas) Young Lawyers Foundation.



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Porter Simpler, JD '24, with his father Fred Simpler, JD '82

**Lindsey Catlett, JD '18**, is the vice president and senior corporate counsel at Simmons Bank in Little Rock, Arkansas.

## 2020s

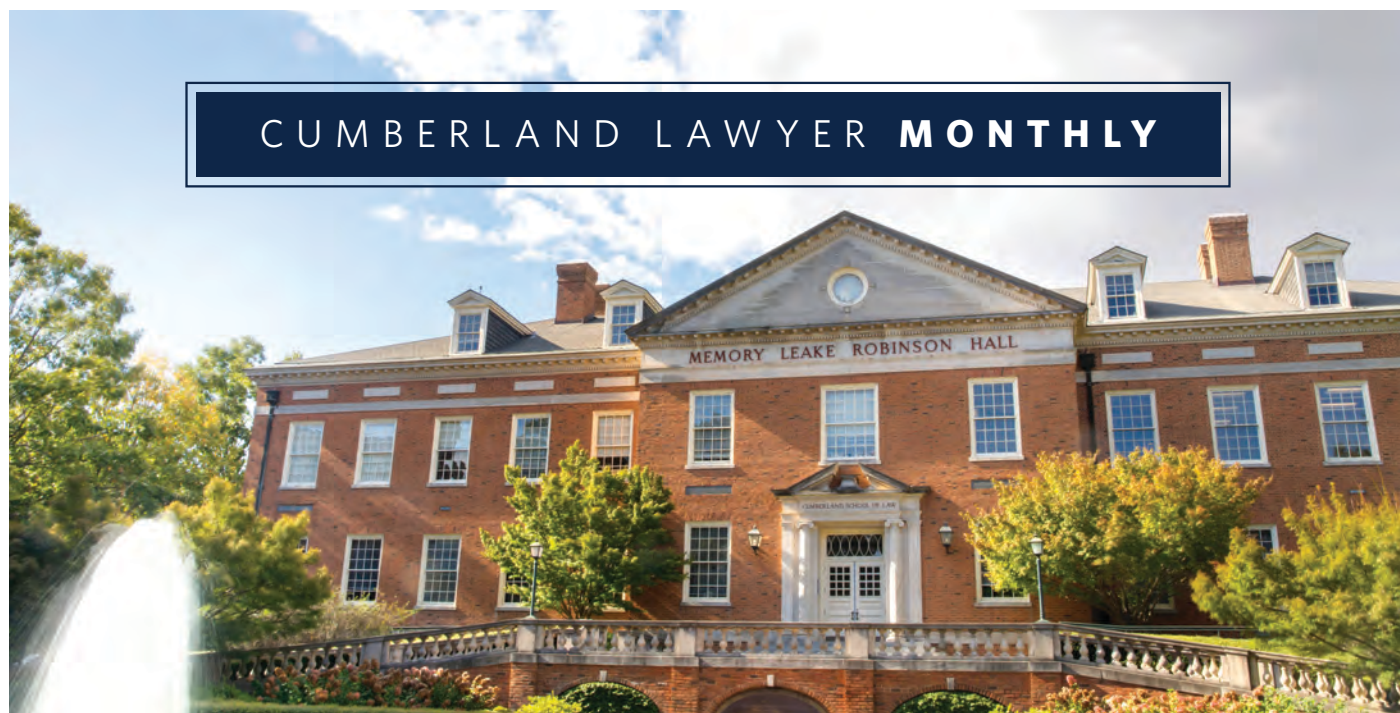
**Rashad Grimes, JD '21**, co-founded FurGo, a tech startup that allows pet owners to request rides for their pets.

**Haley Reese, JD '22**, is a staff attorney at Church World Service in Dallas, Texas.

**Walker McCrary, JD '23**, joined the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the Office of General Counsel Employment and Labor Law practice group in Nashville, Tennessee.

**Chandler Burleson, JD '24**, is a staff attorney for South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem's general counsel's office in Pierre, South Dakota.

## CUMBERLAND LAWYER MONTHLY



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STUDENTS

**15**  
STATES

**43**  
UNDERGRADUATE  
INSTITUTIONS