



St. Thomas Law News

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New Law School Adjunct Professors

This academic year, St. Thomas Law has added four new adjunct professors to our roster, and each professor bring unique experience to the table, which we hope our student will benefit from. For the next four newsletters, we will feature one of the professors.

This week we are featuring State Senator **José Javier Rodríguez**. Adjunct Professor Rodríguez is teaching Florida Constitutional Law on Mondays and Wednesdays.

In addition to serving in the Florida Legislature, Senator José Javier Rodríguez is a trial attorney. In 2018, he joined Sugarman & Susskind as partner, where he has a diverse litigation practice and represents employees, labor unions, and employee benefit funds. Prior to 2018, Senator Rodríguez represented individuals in complex litigation related to

business and commercial disputes, dangerous and defective products, financial misconduct, employment, and personal injury matters as a trial attorney with Kelley Uustal. He began his legal career in 2006 with Florida Legal Services where, until 2011, Senator Rodríguez litigated individual, complex, and representative actions on behalf of low-wage workers, tenants, homeowner associations, small businesses, and neighborhood-based organizations. From 2008-2010, Senator Rodríguez also taught as an Adjunct Clinical Professor with the Carlos A. Costa Immigration and Human Rights Clinic at Florida International University's College of Law.

Senator Rodríguez has served in the Florida Legislature since 2012 when he was elected to serve District 112 in the Florida House (Miami, Coral Gables, Key Biscayne). Since 2016, he has served District 37 in the Florida Legislature, representing many of Miami-Dade County's residents in the

St. Thomas Law: Gateway to Great Legal Careers

Adrianna Barranco (2L) completed a Summer Internship with Judge Ernest A. Kollra, Jr., Seventeenth Judicial Circuit of Florida in Broward County.

Jason Remy (3L) accepted a paid Law Clerk position with EPGD Business Law in Miami, specializing in Business and Corporation Law.

Brenda Emerson, a 2018 graduate, accepted an Associate position with Agnant and Lambdin, LLC, in Plantation, specializing in Construction Law.

Nicholas Passantino, a 2018 graduate, accepted an Associate position with Callahan & Fusco, LLC, in Fort Lauderdale, specializing in Commercial Litigation.❖

Florida Legislature. He has received numerous awards and recognitions for his work.

Senator Rodríguez received a degree in International Relations from Brown University and his J.D. degree from Harvard Law School. Prior to attending law school, Senator Rodríguez served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Senegal from 2000-2003, first as a business advising volunteer and then as an advisor to Senegal's Ministry of Labor. Along with his wife and two young sons, he lives in the City of Miami. ❖

Campus Events

- August 30: U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission, L & L, Room 104 @ 12:00 p.m.
- August 30: Organizational Fair, Cordero Breezeway @ 11:00 a.m.
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- September 3: Labor Day Holiday (No School)
- September 5: Breezeway Chatter, Cordero Breezeway @ 12:00 p.m.
- September 5 & 6: Clinical Program Informational Session, Moot Courtroom @ 12:00 p.m.



St. Thomas Law's Tax Clinic Recipient of Civil Legal Clinic Grant

The Florida Bar Foundation has awarded \$220,946 in grants to fund three law school civil legal clinics through a new grant program.

"Clinics are a great way for law students to be involved in community-based civil legal assistance," said Kate York, the Foundation's grants program officer. "Law school clinics benefit both students and their clients; students get real-world experience advocating for and representing clients, and low-income community members receive free legal assistance."

The Foundation's board approved the grants in June. Funded clinics will involve law students in the provision of community-based civil legal assistance with a focus on economic development in impoverished local communities. Clinics are required to provide an in-depth educational experience in representing the poor in civil matters and to encourage law students to pursue public interest careers or make a commitment to *pro bono* representation of the poor.

The recipients of the Civil Legal Clinic grant are Florida State University College of Law, University of Florida Levin College, and St. Thomas University School of Law's Tax Clinic.

The Tax Clinic received a \$50,000 grant. The clinic, run by second- and third-year students, serves low-income taxpayers and provides legal representation before the Internal Revenue Service and the U.S. Tax Court. Student representatives participate in public outreach, including community education presentations, particularly for those who speak English as a second language. The clinic also offers tax preparation services. ❖

2018 ABA Annual Conference

William McRea (3L) and **Christian Lee Gonzalez** (3L) attended this year's American Bar Association's Annual Conference in Chicago as Law Student Division voting delegates, representing our school as its current SBA President and ABA Senior Representative respectively. From August 1st through the 7th, they attended a variety of committee and caucus meetings as well as panels on topics ranging from the current immigration crisis at our border to judicial and criminal reform. The annual conference was opened by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's powerful speech on the importance of the rule of law in our nation. As Law Student Division delegates, William and Christian voted on resolutions proposed by the Law Student Division at its annual assembly as well as debated them on the floor. The resolutions included, among others, a recommendation so that law schools increase their online courses during 1L year to 30% as well as the recommendation of a system of voluntary and temporary relinquishment of lawfully owned weapons by those who, aware of a state of depression or at risk of suicide, should choose to participate in it for their own safety and that of others. Our students also networked and established connections with students in and out of Florida, and they met the departing and incoming chairs of the Florida ABA Caucus and the outgoing ABA President Hilarie Bass. ❖

Southeastern Minority Job Fair

This Summer, **Jikky Thankachan** (2L), **Jonathan Kernizan** (2L), and **Nathacha Bien-Aime** (3L) attended the 2018 Southeastern Minority Job Fair ("SEMJF") in Marietta, Georgia. The SEMJF provides legal employers throughout the United States an opportunity to interview second- and third-year law students, as well as recent graduates, from more than 50 ABA-approved law schools located in 14 states. Private Sector Career Counselor **Laura Varela** also attended to support and encourage the students through the interview process and fair events. ❖

Directors Roundtable

On July 26, 2018, the Directors Roundtable, a civic group that organizes the preeminent worldwide programming for Directors and their advisors including General Counsel, held a Special Event at the Telemundo Center in Miami. Ana Siegel, General Counsel of NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises, was honored for her accomplishments and achievements. Ms. Siegel led a panel discussion on the key issues facing in-house counsel, including governance, multinational employment practices, and intellectual property. St. Thomas Law alumni(ae) who are part of the Legal Department team at Telemundo are **Janet Diaz-Pujol** '05, Special Counsel, and **Erika Estrada Boden** '06, Vice President of Business & Legal Affairs. ❖

2018 National Association for Women Lawyers Annual Meeting

On July 18-19, 2018, **Zareen Zaidi** (2L) attended the National Association for Women Lawyers (NAWL) Annual Meeting & Awards Luncheon at the Grand Hyatt New York with a full scholarship. Zareen was the *only* law student awarded the Selma Moidel Smith Law Student Writing Competition Scholarship. For over a century, the National Association of Women Lawyers has been empowering women in the legal profession and has acted as the voice of women in the law. ❖

Student Achievements

Andrew Bratslavsky (2L) accepted a Summer Internship with Meister Law in Miami, specializing in

Admiralty and Maritime Law.

Morgan Levine (2L) accepted an offer to extend her Summer Internship into the fall with the Honorable Norma S. Lindsey, Third District Court of Appeal.

Stephanie Roman (2L) accepted a part-time Summer Law Clerk position with Perez & Rodriguez, P.A., in Coral Gables and a part-time Summer Internship with Judge Altfield, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida in Miami. ❖

Alumni(ae) News

Isabela da Rocha, a 2018 graduate, was accepted into the LL.M. in Intercultural Human Rights program at St. Thomas Law.

Jason Fagnano, a 2011 graduate, an Associate at Domnick Cunningham & Whalen, has been elected to the Board of the Young Lawyers Section of the [Florida Justice Association \(FJA\)](#). FJA is statewide plaintiff bar association dedicated to strengthening and upholding Florida's civil justice system and protecting the rights of Florida's citizens and consumers. The FJA Young Lawyers Section is actively involved in the FJA's goals of protecting the civil justice system.

Jason Fagnano is a plaintiff trial attorney with a practice focused primarily on representing victims of catastrophic personal injury, nursing home abuse, and medical malpractice. In addition to his recent election, he also serves as a Board Member for Palm Beach County Justice Association Young Lawyers Division.

Nicholas Sher, a 2018 graduate, was accepted into the LL.M. in Taxation program at Boston University. ❖

Faculty Announcements

Professor **Lauren Gilbert** appeared on the Tempest Tossed podcast to discuss her and the law students' experience working at the Karnes *pro bono* project this summer. To hear the podcast, click on the link <http://tempesttossed.libsyn.com/>

Adjunct Professor **Anthony Musto** achieved board certification in Juvenile Law, the second field in which he has obtained such a distinction. There are only 133 Florida lawyers certified in this area (approximately 1/8 of 1 percent of the Bar membership). He also was reappointed to the American Bar Association Commission on Youth at Risk.

Professor **Michael Vastine** has commenced his term as President of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), South Florida Chapter. He recently served on the due process track planning committee for AILA's national conference in San Francisco, California, where he led the panel *Whether a Noncitizen has been Admitted, Admissions that Matter, and Other Conundrums* and the interactive roundtable session: *Ask the Removal Defense Expert Roundtable: Crim-Imm*. ❖



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