



St. Thomas Law News

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St. Thomas Law Alumnae Recently Elected as Judges



Maria Ruhl



Kristy Nunez



Elena Sosa-Bruzon

St. Thomas develops and nurtures leaders for life; this was apparent when three St. Thomas Law graduates were elected recently as judges. **Maria Ruhl**, a 2005 graduate, was elected in Manatee County, Twelfth Judicial Circuit of Florida. **Kristy Nunez**, a 2006 graduate, and **Elena Sosa-Bruzon**, a 2004 graduate, were elected to Miami-Dade County Court, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida.

St. Thomas Law: Gateway to Great Legal Careers

Shameeqa Buxton (2L) completed a Summer Internship with Judge Migna Sanchez-Llorens, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida Circuit Criminal Division in Miami.

Jessica Chavez (3L) completed a Summer Internship as a Certified Legal Intern with DCF Children Legal Services, in Miami.

Luis Garcia, a 2018 graduate, accepted an Assistant State Attorney position with the Office of the State Attorney, 17th Judicial Circuit, in Fort Lauderdale.

Jessica Vega, a 2018 graduate, accepted an Assistant Public Defender position with the Office of the Public Defender, in West Palm Beach. ❖

Voters believe St. Thomas Law graduates are leaders who have the courage and compassion to make a difference. Earlier in the year, Phoebe Francois, a 1994 graduate, and Tarlika Navarro, a 2010 graduate, were elected to the Circuit Court in Broward County, 17th Judicial Circuit of Florida.

Campus Events

- October 2: Breezeway Chatter, Cordero Breezeway @ 12:00 p.m.
- October 3: Law School Preview Day, Admission Office @ 2:45 p.m.
- October 3 & 4: Prayer Meeting, Room 109-A @ 12:00 p.m.



October 6: Mock LSAT Exam, Cordero Breezeway
@ 8:00 a.m.

October 8: Palermo Mentorship Program,
Moot Courtroom @ 8:00 a.m.

Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, and the “Excused” Absence

There seems to be a misunderstanding of the attendance policy at STU law. As required by the ABA, STU law has an attendance policy that mandates that students have actual class hours (time spent in class) tied to the credit hours earned in the class. The ABA also requires that the law school have a policy to see to it that students attend class.

In accordance with the mandate of the ABA, STU law adopted a policy whereby students must attend at least 80 percent of the class hours in a term in each class. That is, a student cannot miss more than 20 percent of the class hours in each term associated with a class in order to earn credits in that class. The 20 percent allowance for attendance breaks down as follows for the regular fall and spring terms.

For a class that meets 3 times per week, a student may miss no more than 8 classes.

For a class that meets 2 times per week, a student may miss no more than 5 classes.

For a class that meets 1 time per week, a student may miss no more than 2 classes.

(The allowable absences in the summer are fewer due to the fact that the classes meet for only 7 weeks).

Once the student has exceeded these absences, he or she has missed more than 20 percent of the class hours associated with the class. Except as provided below, the STU law rule then requires that the student be given an Administrative F. So, in essence, all of these allowable absences are “excused.” However, once a student has met these limits, he or she has missed more than 20 percent of the classes, and any subsequent absence will cause the student to have missed more than 20 percent of the class hours. The administration does not have the authority to “excuse” additional absences (i.e., to somehow treat the student as present in a class he or she missed).

Simply put, there is **no such thing as an “excused” absence**. The need to miss classes is already built into the allowance of missing 20 percent of the classes. If you get sick, have a family emergency, or car problems, you may miss a class. The attendance policy takes into account that such events occur. The school will take no negative action as a result of an occasional absence. From the Administration’s standpoint, no action is taken, unless you exceed the 20 percent limitation, and once you do, you have simply missed too many class hours to be deemed to have successfully participated in the class. Note, however, that each professor can have his or her own more strict attendance policy, and how he or she addresses the issue of absences that are less than 20 percent of the classes is within his or her discretion.

That being said, there are a few factors you may need to keep in mind. If you encounter a health or family emergency (not of your own making), and you know it will cause you to miss class(es) in the future, sometimes (with the Professor’s permission) we can tape the class and allow you to view the tape. The viewing of the taped version of the class can be treated as being present on the date the class was taped. But this “remedy” is available only in exceptional circumstances, only if the absence has not yet occurred, and only if the professor will allow you to view the class in this manner. Obviously, viewing a tape is not the same as being engaged and present for the class. The other exception is that we do not count students as absent on days they miss due to observance of

particular religious holidays. There are notifications sent out in advance of these dates, and students must comply with the reporting requirements for those days to not count in the absence total. Last, if a student misses class(es) due to some extraordinary circumstances beyond his or her control (e.g., health issues, family emergency, etc.) then he or she may be allowed to withdraw from the class (or all his or her classes), rather than receive an Administrative F. If this situation confronts a student, he or she needs to contact the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the earliest time possible.

So, what should you do? Do not think of the 20 percent absences permitted as classes that can be missed. Each student should make every effort to be in every class. That way, if you do have an emergency that necessitates missing a class, you have absences in the bank. If you get sick, get a flat tire, have to attend a funeral, want to attend your cousin's wedding, etc., you can miss a class and have no consequence.

Plan so that you can avoid missing classes. Do not schedule doctor's appointments, social events, extended vacations, etc. that will cause you to miss class(es). These are absences, and they count. If you "schedule" an absence and then get sick or need to attend to some serious business, you have already used an absence that would have been available for that purpose. If you get called for jury duty, and it will cause you to miss class(es), you can request a letter from the office of the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs that we routinely send to the court. This usually acts to allow you to defer the jury duty.

Remember that although you can check your absences as recorded online by using WebAdvisor, you should not rely on the information there. That information is current only if the professor has turned in all of his or her attendance sheets and the Registrar has input all the attendance sheets turned in by the professor. Each student should know whether he or she missed a class and how many classes in total.

Given that each student can miss up to 20 percent of the classes in any class, most "excess" absences can (and should) be avoided. The entire attendance policy is set out in the student handbook. If you have further questions, see Assistant Dean for Student Affairs John F. Hernandez. ❖

Carlton Fields Law Student Mentoring Reception



On Thursday, September 20, 2018, **Sherea Randle**, Public Sector Career Counselor and four St. Thomas Law students: **Kevin Chung** (2L), **Layla Nguyen** (2L), **Isabel Gonzalez** (2L), and **Na'imah Lafferty** (3L) attended the Law Student Mentoring Reception hosted by Carlton Fields Miami office. The reception was a networking event for law students to meet local attorneys, judges, and legal professionals in order to find a mentor. The students had a wonderful time networking with several legal professionals – namely, Kevin Chung, met Assistant State Attorney David Chee with the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, and Attorney Chee was willing to mentor Kevin. ❖

Dade County Bar Association's Breakfast with Judge Lindsey

Assistant Dean **Lourdes Fernández** attended the Dade County Bar Association's Breakfast with Judge Lindsey event hosted by the law firm of Gray Robinson in downtown Miami. Judge Lindsey spoke about "life" as an appellate judge at Florida's Third District Court of Appeal, encouraged the law students in attendance to do an internship before graduating, and answered questions from practitioners. The breakfast was very well attended, and St. Thomas Law was represented by **Morgan**

Levine (2L), who is currently interning for Judge Lindsey; **Sherea Randle**, Public Sector Career Counselor; and Assistant Dean Fernández. ❖

U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development Lunch & Learn

On September 18, 2018, St. Thomas Law Office for Career Development hosted the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development for a Lunch and Learn with 13 students in attendance. Gail A. Dotson, Esq., is Chief Counsel and Dunia Capdevila, Esq., is an Attorney Advisor both working in the Miami Field Office with HUD. The attorneys shared their legal experiences working with HUD as well as internship opportunities, employment opportunities, and the benefits of working with this unique branch of the federal government. ❖

Equal Justice Works Lunch and Learn

On September 13, 2018, St. Thomas Law, Office for Career Development collaborated with the Public Interest Law Society to host a Lunch and Learn on Careers in Public Interest with Equal Justice Works Representative Claire Cusella, and more than 15 students were in attendance. Claire Cusella is the Law School Engagement & Advocacy and Program Manager with Equal Justice Works. She discussed various fellowship, employment, and internship opportunities in public interests that are available to the students through the Equal Justice Works Organization. In addition, she also informed the students about the annual Equal Justice Works Conference and Career Fair scheduled for October 26 & 27 in Arlington, Virginia, where more than 200 public interest employers will be present to interview students or conduct informal informational table talks throughout the conference. She provided application, interview, and table talk tips for students to prepare for the conference. ❖

Student Achievements

Brittney Blumengold (3L) completed a Summer Internship with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office.

Elysa Galloway (3L) completed a Summer Internship position with the Office of the State Attorney, 17th Judicial Circuit, in Fort Lauderdale.

Christian Merida (2L) completed a Summer Internship with Judge Daryl E. Trawick, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, Circuit Civil Division in Miami.

Rolando Martinez (2L) completed a Summer Internship with Judge William Thomas, Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, Circuit Civil Division in Miami. ❖

Alumni(ae) News

Alexander Bucelo, a 2017 graduate, accepted an Associate position with Cole, Scott & Kissane, P.A., in Miami, in its Litigation Department, specializing in Insurance Defense.

Anthony Ghanem, a 2018 graduate, was accepted into the LL.M. in Taxation program at Boston University.

Serena Salva, a 2018 graduate, accepted an Associate position with Segarra Law Firm in Coral Gables, specializing in Family Law.

Yisroel Silverman, a 2018 graduate, accepted an of Counsel position with The Firm Law Group in Miami Lakes, specializing in Civil Litigation. ❖

Faculty Announcements

Professor **Siegfried Wiessner** published the following: *The Rule of Law: Prolegomena*, Zeitschrift für deutsches und amerikanisches Recht [German-American Law Review] 82 (June 2018); *Human Rights and Cultural Identity: The Case of Indigenous Peoples*, Diritti Umani e Diritto Internazionale [Human Rights and International Law, Italy] 333 (May-August 2018); *El Estado y los pueblos indígenas: La importancia histórica de la Resolución No. 5/2012 de la ILA (Asociación de Derecho Internacional)*, 51 Ars Juris. Revista del Instituto Panamericano de Jurisprudencia [Mexico] 209 (2016 [2018]).

Professor Wiessner also participated as U.S. member in the deliberations of the International Law Association's Committee on the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples at the ILA's 78th Biennial Meeting in Sydney, Australia. ❖



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