

MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

# MERCER LAWYER



As we build upon our

**LEGACY OF SUCCESS,**

one thing is clear: we're only getting started.

# MERCER LAWYER

2023

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Dear Alumni and Friends,

The year 2023 marks the 150th anniversary of our founding. Mercer University School of Law, which is the second oldest law school in the state of Georgia, was founded because lawyers were recognized as playing important roles in ensuring access to legal services and providing valuable services to the community. When the Law School was founded in 1873, we could not imagine what would happen in the next 150 years. Much has changed. What remains constant is the need for lawyers who have the knowledge, skills, and values to advance the goals of clients and to promote justice. For 150 years, Mercer University School of Law has remained true to its legacy of preparing practice-ready graduates while adapting to the needs of students and to the demands of the legal profession.

We celebrated 2023 by gathering, celebrating, and recognizing what it means to be a Mercer lawyer. We began 2023 with a historic win in advocacy as the Mercer Law Team won the National Moot Court Competition. In February, we resumed our Annual Alumni Dinner in Atlanta with almost 300 attending. In April, we expanded our support of students with the creation of the Counselor's Cupboard, a food pantry for students experiencing food insecurity. With May comes final exams and commencement. Our Class of 2023, which began their J.D. studies in the midst of an unprecedented global pandemic, were inspired by commencement speaker Tomieka Daniel, deputy director of Georgia Legal Services. The summer provided time for planning and preparation. In fall 2023, we welcomed the highest credentialed entering class in over a decade. As part of our mission of service, the first-year students participated in a community service project at the Brookdale Resource Center. In September, our advocacy program earned third place at the invitation only Summit Cup Moot Court Competition. A unique feature of this competition is the inclusion of laypersons as jurors. At this competition, Mercer Law Team member William Sizemore earned the Juror's Choice Advocate. The following week, we hosted the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. The court, who last visited Georgia in 2010, held oral arguments at each of the five law schools in Georgia. Students were delighted to have the opportunity to watch the oral arguments and listen to remarks from the judges. The 2023 law review symposium confronted the challenges and proposed solutions to the practice of law in light of technological advancements and changes to society. On Friday, October 13, we held our special 150th Anniversary Celebration at the Grand Opera House in Macon, Georgia. The keynote remarks were made by the Honorable Michael Boggs, Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court. Joining Chief Justice Boggs were Governor Deal, SBA President Caitlin Verillo, and Class of 2023 graduate Isiah Chavis. November brought a season of appreciation as we held "thank a donor day" where law students wrote notes of appreciation to those who have helped them on their law school journey. When final exams begin in December, the students have the opportunity to bring together a semester worth of learning.

To ensure that Mercer Law continues its legacy, we have launched a special law-school-focused campaign called 150 for All. This campaign will focus on supporting Access for All, Success for All, and Facilities for All. At Mercer Law, we are proud of our legacy. As we look toward 2024, we know that we're only getting started!

Best wishes,



Karen J. Sneddon  
Dean and Professor of Law



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Karen J. Sneddon was appointed dean of Mercer University School of Law in May 2023 after serving as interim dean since October 2021. Prior, she served as professor of law and associate dean for faculty research and development. As a professor of law, she teaches, writes, and speaks in the areas of legal writing, wills,

and real estate transactions. Before joining the Mercer Law faculty in 2006, Dean Sneddon was a Forrester Fellow at Tulane University School of Law and an associate at a New York City law firm. She graduated *summa cum laude* from Louisiana State University and *summa cum laude* from Tulane University School of Law.

Leah Yetter



### Powers appointed as first assistant dean of advocacy

In her new role, Katie Powers, '09, will focus on enhancing the Mercer Advocacy Council program to ensure students have meaningful learning experiences and informed professional journeys for decades to come.

Since 2021, Powers has served Mercer Law School as director of advocacy programs, actively collaborating with faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the Law School to promote student learning experiences in classrooms and in competitions. Under her guidance, the law advocacy teams achieved more success in competition than ever before. Mercer Law won the Allstar Mock Trial National Tournament and the National Moot Court Tournament. For the first time, Mercer Law took home two national championships in the American Bar Association's practical skills competitions – Client Counseling and Negotiations. The wins in moot court, client counseling, and negotiations also marked the first time the Law School has won either of the national contests.

Leah Yetter



### Kundawala in new position as associate dean for academic affairs

As associate dean for academic affairs, Dean Ishaq Kundawala leads and manages in the areas of accreditation, assessment, and curriculum. As the Southeastern Bankruptcy Law Institute and W. Homer Drake, Jr. Endowed Chair in Bankruptcy Law, Kundawala has led efforts to connect the Law School community with the bankruptcy bench and bar. He also developed an innovative consumer bankruptcy externship program that launched in spring 2023. This program provides law students with an opportunity to provide start-to-finish chapter 7 bankruptcy representation to community members. Law students work under the supervision of attorneys to provide these services to those who could not otherwise access the legal system. Kundawala joined Mercer Law School in 2021 as a tenured professor of law. Prior to Mercer, he taught for 13 years at Nova Southeastern University's Shepard Broad College of Law.

Maggie Reimer



### Gerwig is the new director of experiential education

As director of experiential education, Professor Sarah Gerwig will continue the work of previous director Professor Tim Floyd in promoting the Law School's goal to prepare students to be practice-ready lawyers.

Students in all three years participate in mock trial, moot court, and other lawyering competitions sponsored by Mercer Advocacy Council. Beginning as early as the summer after their first year, Mercer students can join externship or clinical courses in which they receive academic credit for experiential public service work in areas of law ranging from civil rights to consumer bankruptcy to advocacy on behalf of survivors of domestic violence. This is all in addition to the widespread and meaningful volunteerism and pro bono work Mercer students engage in with nonprofit and governmental partners.

Gerwig has previously served as the associate dean for academic affairs. She founded the nationally recognized Habeas Project, which she brought to the law school in 2006, and which provides pro bono representation in post-conviction cases across Georgia. She also directs Mercer's unique Introduction to Client Counseling program.

## Family Day in September was held on campus for the first time since 2019

For the first time since the pandemic, Mercer Law School hosted Family Day on campus, Friday, September 29, 2023. The event welcomed about 300 individuals, including more than 100 students.

Visitors took tours of the Law School, met faculty and staff, attended a mock class, watched opening statements by upper class

students, and commemorated their visit in a photo booth in the library. Lunch served in the student lounge was enjoyed by guests in classrooms, on the porch, and on the front lawn.

Dean Karen J. Sneddon said, "It was wonderful to bring Family Day back to campus. The new and redesigned event was well attended and our guests seemed to enjoy themselves."

Lauren Andrews, a 3L who commutes from Sandersville, attended with her four children, husband, mother, and father. Not only did Lauren volunteer during the mock class, her children also volunteered. Lauren said, "Since I started at Mercer Law two years ago, my children have had countless questions about what 'lawyer school' is like. It was wonderful for them to finally have a chance to not only tour the building but experience the classroom environment and view an opening argument. I think the day sparked the interest of some potential future lawyers. My nine-year-old daughter did not hesitate to speak up during Dean Sneddon's class and she even conducted our own mock trial on the drive home! I'm grateful to Mercer Law for hosting such a fun, interactive event. It was a special day for my entire family that we will remember for years to come."

Maggie Reimer







## Watkins appointed to Georgia Court of Appeals

Governor Brian Kemp appointed Cherokee Judicial Circuit Superior Court Judge Jeffrey A. Watkins, '92, to the Georgia Court of Appeals. Watkins joins the intermediate appellate court following the death of Judge Clyde L. Reese, '96, in December of 2022.

Watkins has spent the last four years serving as a superior court judge in Bartow and Gordon counties after being appointed to the Cherokee Judicial Circuit Superior Court bench by Kemp in 2019. Prior, as the founding shareholder of Jeffrey A. Watkins P.C. in Cartersville, he specialized in business law, civil and commercial litigation, and real estate and probate law.

In addition to being a founding member of White, Choate, Watkins & Mroczko, Watkins has spent time as a senior associate at Moore, Ingram, Johnson & Steele in Marietta.

## U.S. Attorney Leary announces new leadership team members to the Middle District of Georgia



Assistant U.S. Attorney Elizabeth "Beth" Howard, '12, is the new senior litigation counsel for the U.S. Attorney's Office criminal division. Howard joined the Middle District of Georgia U.S. Attorney's office as a criminal prosecutor in 2014 where she has prosecuted a broad range of crimes to include complex white-collar fraud and public corruption, child exploitation, human trafficking, violent crime, and wiretap prosecutions. Among other duties, she currently serves as the office's financial fraud coordinator, and she previously coordinated the office's law clerk program.

Prior, Howard worked as an assistant solicitor general in Macon, focusing on domestic violence prosecutions. She earned her undergraduate (2008) and law degrees from Mercer University. While in law school, she twice worked as a law clerk for the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Middle District. Born and raised in Florida, Howard has resided in the Middle District of Georgia for 18 years.



U.S. Attorney Bowen Reichert Shoemaker, '11, is the first female to serve as a non-interim civil chief in the Office's history. Shoemaker joined the Middle District of Georgia U.S. Attorney's Office in 2018. Since then, she has specialized in high-exposure tort claims and cases brought under the False Claims Act on behalf of the citizens. Prior to joining the office, Civil Chief Shoemaker was a trial attorney for an Atlanta law firm handling multi-district litigation and complex commercial cases. Born and raised in Georgia, she graduated *magna cum laude* from both the University of Georgia and the Mercer University School of Law, and clerked for the Honorable Hugh Lawson, U.S. District Judge. Shoemaker is highly involved in the Macon community, currently serving on the boards of trustees for Historic Macon, Macon Arts Alliance, and Stratford Academy, and as a member of the Macon Rotary Club. She has also served as an adjunct professor at Mercer Law. In 2021, she was named a "40 Under 40" by the UGA Alumni Association.

## Lipp, '23, earns the George Waldo Woodruff Award of Excellence



The George Waldo Woodruff Award of Excellence is Mercer Law School's most prestigious student award. Given to the graduating student who had the highest grade point average at the end of the first five semesters, the award honors George Waldo Woodruff, distinguished businessman, proponent of education, and friend of Mercer University School of Law.

As an undergraduate, Jordan Shane Lipp, '23, was a Mercer University Presidential Scholar who earned his degree in three years at the Stetson-Hatcher School of Business. Graduating *summa cum laude* with a 4.0 GPA, he performed undergraduate research as part of the University Honors Program and served as chief editor of *The Bear Market*, a quarterly academic journal.

A Woodruff Scholar, Lipp served as a member of the Law Review and as president of Christian Legal Society. Following graduation, he began serving as a term clerk for The Honorable Michael P. Boggs, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia. After his clerkship, Lipp plans to join King & Spalding LLP in Atlanta.

## National top advocate award is a first for Mercer Law

*"Mercer Law will always have a special place in my heart - specifically Mercer Advocacy Council (MAC). Being a member of MAC is being part of an elite group of people trained to be precise and relentless. Studying for the bar taught me that anyone can learn the law, but it takes a special kind of person to be a lawyer."*



Maryann Bates

In April, Isiah Chavis, '23, earned the honor of Top Advocate at the National Trial Competition (NTC) in San Antonio, Texas. The award recognizes the individual who performs best throughout the NTC championship tournament, as determined by members of the American College of Trial Lawyers - one of the most prestigious organizations in the practice of law. The NTC Championship hosts only the top-performing schools in the nation, presumably with the top advocates. Advancing to the semifinals, Mercer's team was named one of the top four teams in the country.

Chavis said, "Each team had at least two advocates competing. Mercer Law paired me with the amazing John Flowers, '23. I would be remiss if I did not mention that Alexandra Bradley, Kate Daly, and Rebekah Hardin were just as important as John and I to our success at the NTC championship tournament."

After joining MAC in his second year at Mercer Law, Chavis competed in five competitions. His other awards include Outstanding Advocate and All-Star Bracket National Champion.

Hailing from Louisiana, Chavis earned his bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Louisiana at Monroe in 2020. After graduating from Mercer Law, he accepted a position with The Champion Firm in Marietta (Darl Champion, '07), which practices plaintiffs' personal injury cases ranging from simple car accidents to 1983 Claims to medical malpractice. Chavis says he cannot imagine a better way to start his career. "I don't have as much of a preference for what I practice as I do with how I practice. I want to be a great trial lawyer, and it doesn't matter if I'm trying personal injury cases or criminal cases."

Not only is Chavis the first in his family to become a lawyer, he is also the first to complete a bachelor's degree in four years, and the only one to earn a graduate degree.

Chavis credits Assistant Dean of Advocacy Katie Powers for teaching the rules of evidence in detail, the practical application of abstract civil and criminal procedure concepts, and the art of cross examination. "Dean Powers trains lawyers. Not actors, but actual lawyers. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to have learned under her and to be part of the most elite advocacy organization in the country."

## WELCOME NEW SENIOR STAFF

**Jeff Bloom**, director of advocacy, will help oversee Mercer's advocacy programs and work with Mercer Advocacy Council members to prepare for mock trial, moot court, negotiations, and arbitration competitions. A graduate of the University of Miami School of Law, Bloom previously practiced in Washington D.C., and comes to Mercer Law from the University of Illinois College of Law where he was an integral member of the advocacy program and worked with a number of competition teams. Bloom teaches trial advocacy and advanced evidence classes with an emphasis on expert witnesses and scientific/medical evidence. He will also lead Mercer's advocacy programming in civil litigation.



**Mary Ann Howard**, director of communications and marketing, came to the Law School in February 2023 after serving Wesleyan College for 15 years as director of communications. For more than 20 years, she owned and operated Howard Advertising. Howard is a marketing and public relations professional with proven success in a career spanning higher education, retail advertising, entrepreneurship, digital media, database marketing, and magazine design, writing, and editing.



**Jill Kinsella**, associate vice president for university advancement, joined the senior staff of Mercer Law School in February 2023 after leading the Mercer University Alumni Association for the previous 11 years. Kinsella is a 1985 graduate of Mercer's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences with a concentration in communication and journalism. She brings several decades' worth of experience in nonprofit and corporate communication, marketing, project management, event planning, fundraising, development, and higher education leadership. Kinsella has served on Mercer's Corporate Relations Council and University Assessment Council.





## STUDENTS GIVE BACK

### BLSA CHAPTER OF THE YEAR (BLSA)

In February 2023, Mercer Black Law Students Association (BLSA) was the recipient of the 2022 – 2023 Small Chapter of the Year Award for the Sophisticated Southern Region of National Black Law Students Association. Mercer BLSA has won Chapter of the Year the last three years.

Additionally, Porcia Lockett, '23, last year's BLSA president, was the recipient of the Sub-Region 1 Servant's Heart Scholarship which is awarded to the regional member with the highest number of community service hours. Porcia recorded 96 hours. BLSA has a mission to give back to the community. Initiatives have included Annual Back 2 School Drive, Thanksgiving Turkey Drive, Christmas Angel Tree, and many more.



Leah Yetter

### STUDENT BAR ASSOCIATION (SBA)

As part of our larger purpose to support students and their well-being, Mercer Law School and SBA implemented Counselor's Cupboard, a 24/7 food pantry program to address food insecurity among law students. Located in room 125 on the first floor of the Law School, the pantry's purpose is to give students access to healthy food when they need it most. The Law School Office of Student Affairs manages the pantry by accepting food donations, tracking inventory, and restocking shelves. The grab-and-go pantry is based on an honor system – take what you need when you need it and give back when you can. To maintain anonymity, users are not tracked, but the busiest times are at the end of the month, the end of the term, and during exams.

The idea for the pantry began in 2022 when Director of Admissions and Financial Aid Antonio Squire recognized that with increasing food, fuel, and other costs, students sometimes have to make tough choices. "Food insecurity combined with other stressors can create barriers to student success. It's an issue that goes under-recognized and under-studied in higher education. We know that with the pandemic and subsequent inflation, an increasing number of students experience food insecurity."

Donations of prepackaged and unexpired goods can come to the Deans' Suite or be dropped off in the bins in the Cupboard. Pet food (individual cans and small bags), personal care items (deodorant, toothpaste, soap...), and school supplies are also welcome.

The Law School thanks the committed team that includes 2022-2023 SBA President Katherine Twomey, Antonio Squire and Marilyn Sutton from the Office of Admissions, Jeannie Zipperer from the Office of Student Affairs, and Najiva Timothee from the Deans' Suite for the a motivation and devotion dedicated to this worthy project.



### ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN LAW STUDENTS (AWLS)

The 6th Annual Miracle Gala hosted by AWLS in March 2023 raised more than \$8,000 to benefit the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy (GCCA). More than 100 guests enjoyed dinner with live and silent auctions at Hotel 45. Overall, annual donations topped \$10,000 to GCCA who champions the needs of sexually and severely physically abused children through prevention, intervention, therapy, and collaboration.

This yearly event will be hosted again in Spring 2024. Please watch for more information on the website and in the bi-monthly Mercer Law newsletter.

### BANKRUPTCY INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The newly launched Consumer Bankruptcy Externship Program, which offers assistance to the community where there is a lack of access to justice, was contacted by more than 30 people looking for help in filing Chapter 7 lawsuits. During the spring 2023 semester, fifteen clients were accepted and eight cases were filed by students, totaling more than \$30,000 of legal work that the program gave back to the community.

According to Ishaq Kundawala, associate dean for academic affairs and program director, Mercer Law School is the only law school in Georgia that offers students the opportunity to represent clients from start to finish in Chapter 7 cases, and one of only a handful in the country.

Devon Holloway, '23, said his main takeaway was "being able to better relate to people and understand the inner-workings of bankruptcy law. It was helpful to see actual attorneys in practice and how they handle different situations. It's made me a much more insightful and prepared attorney."



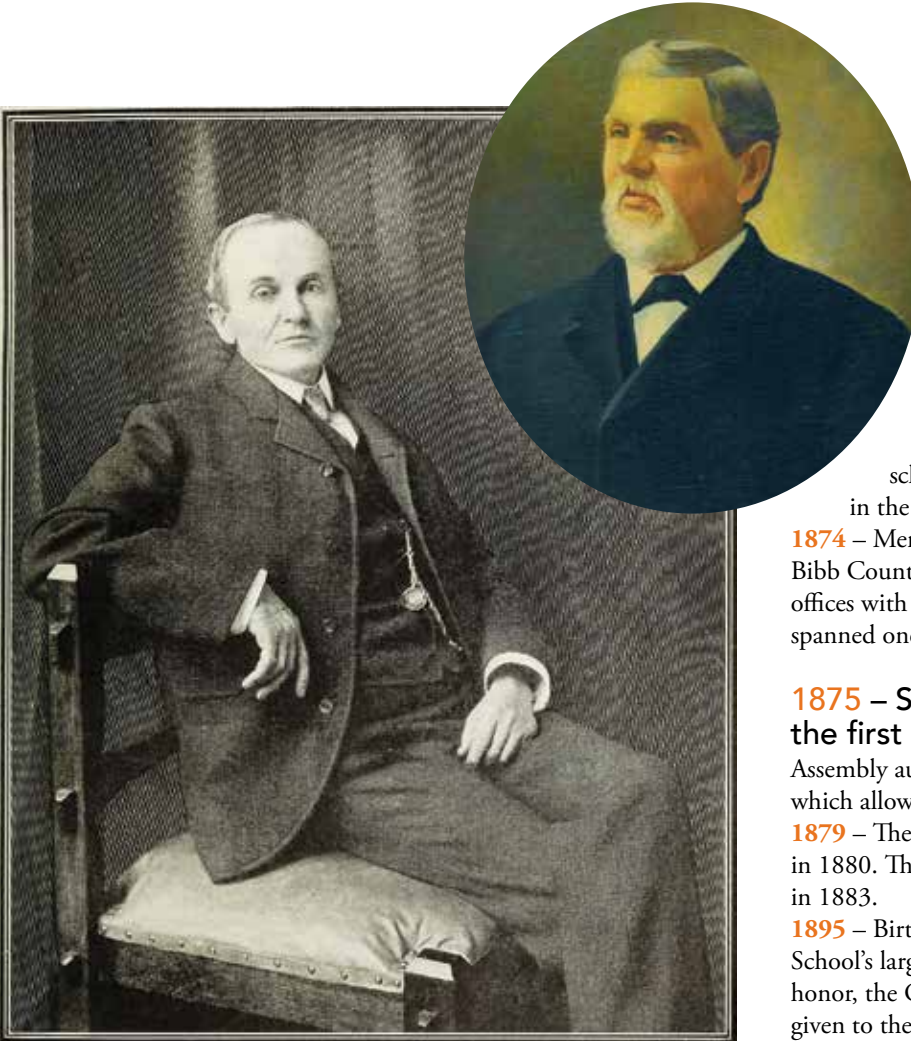
# TESTAMENT TO A LEGACY

## MERCER LAW SCHOOL'S 150-YEAR JOURNEY

Throughout our 150-year legacy, Mercer Law School has experienced new beginnings time and time again, but has always remained steadfast in educating our students to meet the legal needs of the future with confidence, character, creativity, and humanity.

This timeline is just a snapshot of Mercer Law School over a period of years from Reconstruction and the Gilded Age to the rise of America as an international power at the turn of the twentieth century, through booms and depressions and two world wars, and into an age of technologies and human sensitivities in a new century unimaginable 150 years ago.

*Mercer Lawyer is grateful to Neil Skene for his research and for sharing his paper "The Path to Coleman Hill: Mercer Law School's 150-year Journey." Much of the information found on the next few pages was gathered from his paper.*



Above: Walter B. Hill

Top: Clifford Anderson

**1833** - Mercer founded in Penfield, Georgia.

**1871** - Mercer moves to campus donated by City of Macon.

**1873** - Mercer University School of Law was founded by the co-founder and third president of the Georgia Bar Association (1883) Walter B. Hill, along with Superior Court Judge Carlton B. Cole, and Clifford Anderson, Macon's leading lawyer at the time. Mercer Law School was Georgia's second law school (UGA 1859) and today is one of the oldest in the United States.

**1874** - Mercer Law School's first classes were held at the Bibb County courthouse in the fall and in professors' law offices with 16 students enrolled. The course of study only spanned one year and tuition totaled \$80.

**1875** - Seven diplomas were awarded to the first graduating class. The Georgia General Assembly authorized Mercer Law School to grant law degrees which allowed admission to the Bar without an exam.

**1879** - The Law School had one graduate in 1879 and one in 1880. There were no graduates in 1881 or 1882, then five in 1883.

**1895** - Birth of George Waldo Woodruff, Mercer Law School's largest benefactor in its first 150 years. Today, in his honor, the George Waldo Woodruff Award of Excellence is given to the graduate having the highest cumulative academic average.





Bibb County Courthouse



Anderson Mansion



Hay House



Willingham Chapel



George Waldo Woodruff



Kathyne Pierce Weekley

Mercer Law School's first classes were held at the Bibb County courthouse. After years of meeting in various professors' homes and administration building basements, classes were held in a ground-floor room of what is known today as the Hay House. Ryals Hall, dedicated in 1930, was the Law School's first permanent home on campus. In 1977, Mercer University purchased the Insurance Company of North America building sitting atop Coleman Hill where the Law School is housed today – 1.5 miles from Mercer University's main campus.



Carl A. Vinson, Class of 1902, converses with President Nixon at Mercer Law School's 100th anniversary celebration in 1973.

**1899** – Continuing the tradition of professors teaching in their own homes, Judge William H. Felton holds his classes in the ground floor of what is known today as the Hay House.

**1901** – Walter F. George, for whom the Law School was named in 1948, graduated. George served as a justice of the Georgia Supreme Court from 1917-22, as a United States Senator from Georgia from 1922-1957, and as president pro tempore from 1955-1957.

**1902** – Carl A. Vinson graduated from the Law School. Vinson was the first member of the United States House of Representatives to serve for more than 50 years (1914-65), and was the longtime chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

**1910** – A room in the rear of Willingham Chapel became a law school classroom. The graduating class numbered 53.

**1911** – Mercer Law School's course of study was increased to two years.



**1918** – Classes resumed after a hiatus during World War I.

**1919** – Kathryn Pierce (Weekley), the first woman to enroll at Mercer Law School, graduated.

**1920** – The course of study was increased to three years.

**1922** – The Law School earned membership in the Association of American Law Schools.

**1923** – Mercer Law School celebrated its 50th anniversary.

**1925** – The Law School was accredited by the American Bar Association and began requiring two years of undergraduate college education for admission. Judge William A. Bootle graduated and later served as U.S. District Judge of The United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia. He is noted for helping oversee desegregation in the Southern United States.

**1929** – The stock market crashed and a worldwide depression began.

**1930** – Thanks to 424 donors, a new \$50,000 law school building was dedicated on the Mercer University campus. In 1946 it was named Ryals Hall in honor of Thomas E. Ryals who, in 1929, donated a quarter of the anticipated cost of the building.

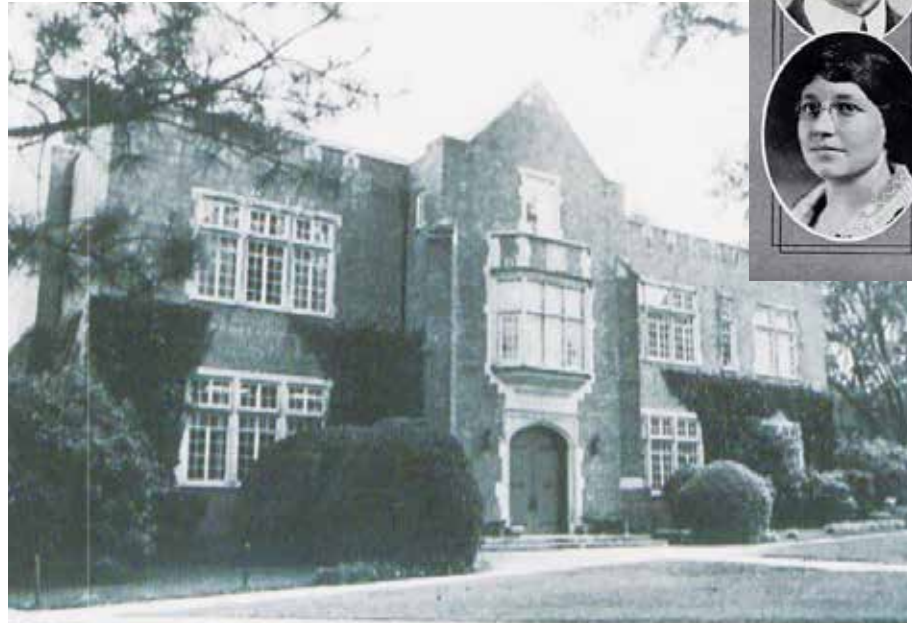
**1932** – The Law School's enrollment was 45 students in a building designed for 125 students.

**1942** – The Law School closed its doors for three years due to World War II and the Navy took temporary control of the building.

**1945** – After the war, the School reopened with only eight students,



1913 junior class



Ryals Hall

one of whom was Griffin Boyette Bell, '48, later the 72nd Attorney General of the United States (1977-1979) serving under President Jimmy Carter. In 2019, the Law School's first-floor courtroom was named for Bell and for longtime trustee Frank Jones, '50, both of whom were appointed president of the prestigious American College of Trial Lawyers during their distinguished careers.

**1948** – The Law School was named for Senator Walter F. George (Class of 1901) and total enrollment capped at 150. Many would-be students were turned away.

**1949** – Mercer Law Review became Georgia's first law review.



Joline Bateman

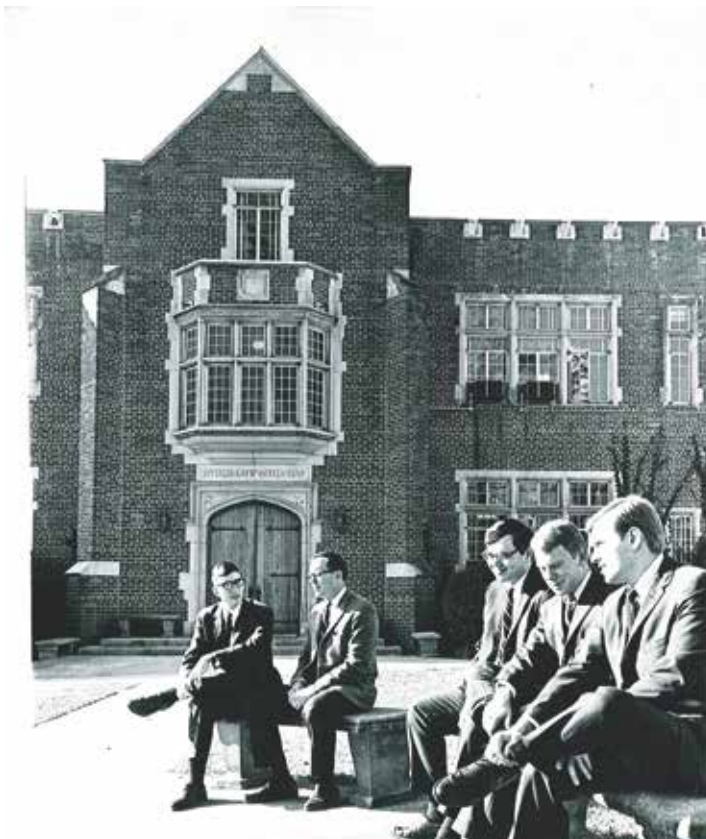


Mary Alice Buckner



Lydia Sartain





**1951** – Patricia Beauchamp (O’Neal), who was the first woman since World War II to enroll at the Law School, graduated. She served as book review editor of the Law Review.

**1959** – Joline Bateman Williams, ’60, was the first woman editor-in-chief of the Mercer Law Review.

**1964** – Leah Farb Chanin, ’54, the second woman to graduate from Mercer Law after World War II, became the first woman on the faculty when Dean James C. Quarles hired her in 1964.

**1972** – Jerry Boykin was the Law School’s first Black student graduate.

**1973** – In May, Mary Alice Buckner became the first Black woman to graduate from the Law School. In November, the School of Law celebrated its centennial anniversary.

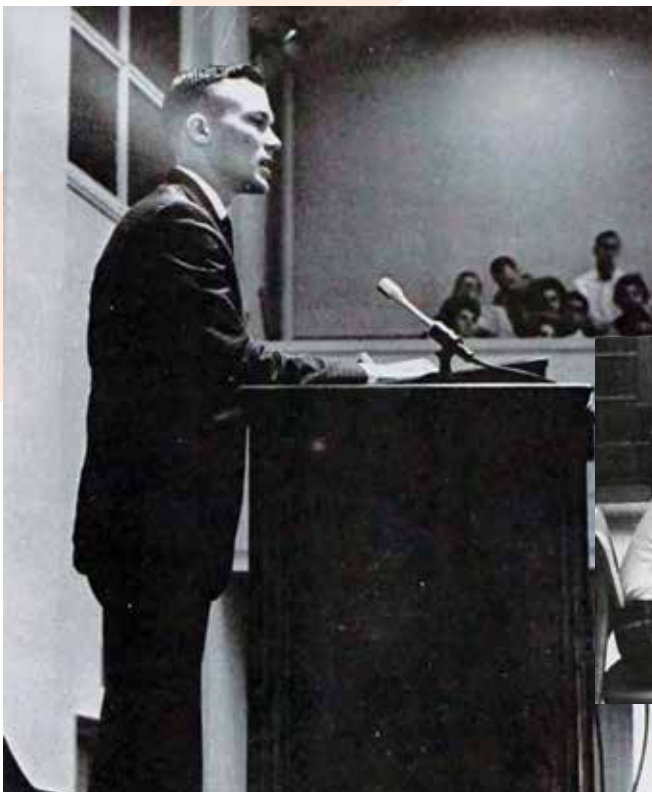
**1973** - President Richard M. Nixon visited campus and announced that the nation’s third nuclear aircraft carrier would be named the Carl Vinson.

A speech by Carl A. Vinson, ’02, (whose 90th birthday also was celebrated) claimed that in its first 100 years,

Leah Farb Chanin, ’54, was the first female professor at the Law School, served as director of the Law Library, and as interim dean, 1986-1987.



Left, Nathan Deal, ’66, as a first-year student in 1964.



Perrin Nicholson and Donna Bergh, from the last class to finish at Ryals Hall, 1977.



Dedication of the new Law School, 1979.



the Law School produced 6 governors of Georgia, 2 governors of Alabama, 1 governor of Texas, 1 governor-general of Puerto Rico, 4 U.S. Senators, 11 Congressmen, 2 judges of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, 5 federal district judges, 7 Georgia Supreme Court judges, 5 Georgia Court of Appeals judges, and 26 Georgia Superior Court judges.

**1977 – Mercer University purchased the Insurance Company of North America (INA) building**

sitting atop Coleman Hill where the Law School is housed today – 1.5 miles from Mercer University's main campus. The building, a large-scale replica of Philadelphia's Independence Hall, has four stories which include a partial floor used by the law library archives collection. The building's 15 columns along the front represent the 15 states in the Union when INA was founded in 1792. The names of the states are carved in the bases of the columns. President Jimmy Carter appointed Griffin Bell, '48, attorney general of the United States.

**1978 –** Mercer Law's chapter of BLSA (Black Law Students Association) was founded.

**1979 – On May 4, the new Law School was dedicated.**

**1983 –** Lydia Sartain, '84, became the first woman president of the Student Bar Association.

**1986 –** Leah Farb Chanin, '54, became the first woman to serve as interim dean, 1986-1987.





Established in 1978, the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) is one of the largest and most active organizations on Mercer Law School's campus today.



Griffin Boyette Bell, '48, was the 72nd attorney general of the United States, having served under President Jimmy Carter. Previously, he was a U.S. circuit judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.



1975 Mercer Law Review



President Nixon and Secretary of the Navy John Warner present to Carl Vinson a model of the nuclear carrier to be named after him. Presidential advisor Melvin Laird is on the right.





Evett Simmons



Cathy Cox



Nathan Deal



Daisy Floyd

**1988** – Professor Anthony Baldwin became the first Black faculty member at Mercer Law.

**1990** – Mercer Law initiated the Woodruff Curriculum (named in honor of George Waldo Woodruff), an innovative plan that reinforces the School's commitment to small classes and a practitioner-oriented approach to education. Within the plan, third-year students begin working as colleagues to practice effective client consultation, negotiating, trial practice, and other law-practice skills that are rarely such a concentrated focus in law schools. Legal writing (Mercer Law's program has been a model for law schools across America) plays a central role in the Woodruff Curriculum.

**1991** – The Woodruff merit scholarship program was introduced. Today it provides full tuition plus a \$5,000 annual stipend.

**1996** – The Law School won the Gambrell Award for the Woodruff Curriculum.

**1999** – Cathy Cox, '86, was the first woman to serve as Georgia's Secretary of State (1999-2007). She became dean of the law school in 2017.

**2000** – Evett Simmons, '82, became the first Mercer Lawyer to serve as the President (58th) of the National Bar Association. The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse (built in 1905) in downtown Macon was named for William A. Bootle, '25. It serves as headquarters for the Middle District of Georgia.



Maryann Bates

Members of the 2022-2023 Advocacy Team



**2004** – Daisy Hurst Floyd became the Law School’s first woman to serve as dean (other than Leah Chanin’s interim role, 1986-1987). Floyd served as dean twice – 2004-2010 and 2014-2017.

**2012** – Nathan Deal, ’66, was elected governor of Georgia (2011-2019). Women had become half of the Law School’s student enrollment.

**2013** – Mercer Law School’s lobby was named for Life Trustee (six terms) Robert L. (Bob) Steed, CLA ’58, LAW ’61, LL.D. ’79.

**2014** – The Law School won the Gambrell Award for the “Inside the Legal Profession” component of the Legal Profession course.

**2015** – Mercer Law initiated a Semester-In-Atlanta program which allows third-year students to take part or all of their credit hours for the spring semester on Mercer’s Atlanta campus while engaging in experiential learning through externships in metro Atlanta.

**2022** – Women accounted for 62% of enrollment and minority students 22%. In 2022, the chief justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, the president of the Georgia Bar, and the president of Georgia Young Lawyers were all Mercer Law graduates. Mercer Law Advocacy Teams won two national championships in the American Bar’s practical skills competitions, earning the ranks of third nationally and the highest-ranked Georgia law school in the 2022-2023 Gavel Rankings for mock trial programs. The Domestic Violence Clinic, the Low-Income Tax Clinic, Corporate Counsel Externship Program, and the Consumer Bankruptcy Externship, the first of its kind among Georgia law schools, were launched.



**2023** – Mercer Law School celebrates 150 years. Karen J. Sneddon is appointed as the 24th (and fourth woman) dean.



New York City Bar Association

Mercer University School of Law students achieved more success in competition during the last academic year than ever before, taking home four national championships in 13 months. Shown: National Moot Court Championship team.

# PATRICK MINCEY, '08



## Taking on high-profile criminal finance cases across the world

By Andrea Honaker

A love of public speaking and language and a deep-rooted family legacy led Patrick Mincey to study law. A fourth-generation Mercer Law School graduate, he now represents clients across the world in high-profile criminal finance cases.

Mercerians and lawyers can be found on both sides of Mincey's family tree, starting with his great-grandfather who graduated in 1907. His grandfather Rollo Jackson Mincey and great uncle David L. Mincey both earned undergraduate degrees at Mercer, with the latter going on to Mercer Law School and practicing law for more than 60 years and the former having a career as a physician.

David L. Mincey II earned undergraduate and law degrees at Mercer and remains in private practice in Roberta today. His son, David Mincey III (Patrick Mincey's second cousin), is also a Mercer Law graduate and is currently a Superior Court judge in Bibb County.

"This grander narrative about lawyers scattered throughout the family was influential," Patrick Mincey said. "What I knew from early days of middle school was rhetoric and oratory. I was deeply drawn to public speaking and the opportunity to communicate on the public stage. It was a natural progression to be drawn to the courtroom from that."

Growing up, Mincey was fascinated by the great orators of history and got involved early in competitive public debate. The most influential event on his future career was the O.J. Simpson trial, in which the former football player was accused of killing his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman. A middle- and high-schooler at the time, Mincey “lived and breathed” for the proceedings and was captivated by the cross-examination of defense attorney F. Lee Bailey.

“That’s when I really started studying other lawyers,” Mincey said. “To this day, I am a student of other lawyers, other great investigators and lawyers for cases that represent something bigger than just their clients.”

Later, as he double-majored in English and French at Davidson College, his love of language solidified that law school was the next step. At Mercer, he competed in moot court competitions, got involved in clerkships and externships, and gained hands-on practical experience. He helped with death penalty work and was a judicial extern for Tilman E. Self III, who was Superior Court judge for Bibb County at the time and now serves as U.S. District Court Judge for the Middle District of Georgia.

“If that doesn’t wake you up to the opportunities that this profession allows for, I don’t know what does,” Mincey said. “Mercer Law’s greatest gift to me was the chance to be out of the classroom, in the courtroom and in the jailhouses.”

Right out of law school in 2008, Mincey joined a law firm in his hometown of Pinehurst, North Carolina, and gained invaluable experience. For five years, he traveled the state doing pure criminal defense — murders, assaults, robberies and drug crimes — and was in the courtroom five days a week.

“Not only was I getting to watch and work alongside some of the best criminal defense lawyers in the state of North Carolina, I was also given enormous responsibility and trust,” he said. “That meant something to me. It meant the world to me. It immediately brought meaning to everything that this profession allows for.”

After Mincey got married in 2012, he joined the firm in Wilmington, North Carolina, that he’s still with today. Cranfill Sumner LLP has 75 lawyers and 28 practice groups across three locations in North Carolina. Mincey built and leads the firm’s international white collar practice group, which has a team of eight lawyers who focus on criminal financial fraud and other regulatory conflicts. He also serves as chair of the firm’s new administrative, regulatory, and government law group.

“What I always longed for was to build a white collar practice,” he said. Cranfill Sumner LLP “gave me extraordinary independence. I had this blank canvas in front of me, and I’m very proud that January was 10 years into my

tenure here. We’ve had remarkable growth. My practice involves litigation throughout the United States, and I appear in federal courts across the country. We are involved in investigations covering six continents.”

Mincey’s group tackles complex and far-reaching cases that involve public corruption, tax conspiracies, disputes within regulated industries and alleged fraud amounting to hundreds of millions and billions of dollars. Mincey is particularly interested in cases involving securities and money laundering and representing clients who are whistleblowers.

“The most meaningful representations that I have had in my career have involved representing whistleblowers,” he said. “Criminal defense work is extremely valuable because of the stakes. You are the last line of defense where a client’s liberty is at stake. These are people coming forward, speaking truth to power, and without exception in my experience, they are entirely alone. You’re jettisoning yourself with that individual out onto an ice floe. It’s a surprisingly easy thing to do because you’re inspired by their courage.”

Two cases Mincey’s group have been involved in were referred to the Securities and Exchange Commission Office of the Whistleblower Program. One deals with allegations of \$2 billion in money laundering to offshore financial institutions by high-level Venezuelan government officials. The other involves an investigation into Trump Media & Technology Group and fraud allegations related to its \$1.3 billion public merger.

Representing clients in these kinds of cases is a monumental responsibility, but that’s what Mincey loves most about this work.

“That kind of responsibility is what makes this profession worth getting up for and going hard at it early every morning. You’ve got someone’s life or livelihood in the balance. The commitment that you individually make to that person or to that business is going to have a real impact,” he said.

The variety that each day on the job offers also keeps him coming back for more.

“I’m proud of the fact that I never have two days of work in a row that are the same,” Mincey said. “Every case I take is different from the last. My clients are individuals and businesses doing really interesting things. I love getting to learn about a new industry, a new business that they’ve built, and there is nothing routine about it. I’ve managed to create a practice that remains interesting and fascinating every day.”

In the future, Mincey hopes to grow his practice group and help develop young, committed lawyers who want to be challenged by complex cases.

“It’s really been a pleasure to work with lawyers coming up behind me who viscerally understand that awesome responsibility that we take on,” Mincey said. “I can see it fueling them and it helps inspire me.”



# CAROL TERRY, '93

## Chicken Salad Chick's first general counsel

By Kai Shotwell



**M**ercer Law alumna Carol Terry began serving as Chicken Salad Chick's first general counsel at the end of November 2022, making her the first legal person to join the restaurant chain's team. Chicken Salad Chick, a fast-casual chicken salad restaurant, has about 230 locations across 19 U.S. states.

Terry, who earned her law degree in 1993, joined the company as a member of the executive team. Specifically, she is a legal generalist, which means she deals with topics ranging from employee matters to trademarks as well as other subjects related to advising a business.

"When I was at Mercer, I was very drawn to the commercial- and code-based classes," Terry said. "I've always wanted to take on more of a commercial practice, and I think learning the code classes and the tax classes from the professors there really gave me the tools to be able to hit the ground running once I got out of law school."

One professor who impacted her was the late Professor Reynold Kosek, who taught Terry's first contract law class. One of the main takeaways from his class was to always "know the reason for the rule, so you can understand the application for the rule," Terry recalled.

She used this knowledge and her other relevant law experience with her clients.

"I was in a litigation practice for roughly eight years before going in-house with General Electric," she said.

As an attorney for General Electric, Terry gained business collaboration skills by working as an individual contributor who negotiated large multi-million dollar contracts at an international level. She went on to become a manager of an international team of attorneys and was later promoted to the general counsel of a \$2 billion business division within General Electric.

Terry said Mercer Law has created a useful network of professionals for alumni and that knowing other alumni based in Atlanta has given her the opportunity to succeed.

# HABEAS PROJECT

## Clinic secures major victory for client

By Andrea Honaker

A man serving a 50-year prison sentence will have another chance to prove his innocence thanks to Mercer Law School's Habeas Project. Under the guidance of former program director Brian Kammer, Class of 2023 graduate Taylor Rinberger argued the case in front of the Georgia Supreme Court on March 29, explaining how key evidence had not been presented in the original trial. The court agreed in its opinion, released May 16.

The Habeas Project, established by Mercer Law Professor Sarah Gerwig in 2006, allows third-year law students to work on cases under close faculty supervision with clients in need. The clinic focuses on habeas corpus proceedings, through which a prisoner can present evidence that may not have been shown during trial, such as evidence of innocence or poor lawyering. The Habeas Project is the only program in Georgia that takes on noncapital, post-conviction cases on a pro bono basis, bridging a gap in legal assistance in the state.

The recent case was referred to Mercer Law School by the Georgia Supreme Court. The client was convicted in 2017 and filed a habeas corpus action a couple years later, saying his lawyers had failed to present key evidence that could have proven his innocence, Kammer said. The habeas court judge ruled in his favor, but then the state appealed, bringing the case to Mercer and before the Georgia Supreme Court.

"The basis of the case is ineffective assistance of counsel," said Rinberger, who works as an assistant public defender in the Dublin Judicial Circuit. "(The client's) trial counsel did not share a very important detail in discrediting the main witness against him. We were showing the court that it was constitutionally ineffective, and he should have had the opportunity to discredit this witness that sent him to prison."

Kammer and Rinberger conducted extensive research on the case, met with the client several times in prison, and wrote several drafts of the brief before submitting it to the Court. They talked through several strategies for arguing the case, and Rinberger had three practice, or "moot," sessions with lawyers before going before the Supreme Court.

"It's a huge deal," Kammer said. "This client had been sentenced to 50 years. He had proclaimed his innocence throughout this whole ordeal. The State knew it had this exculpatory evidence but didn't bring it out. The trial attorneys also didn't bring it out. It was a real breakdown in the trial system. It was a pretty egregious failure in terms of the court, district attorney and defense."



Kammer said the client was ecstatic and felt vindicated by the ruling. He will get a new trial, and this evidence of innocence will play a major part in it.

"It was one thing to get the win from the habeas court. When, learning the State had appealed, it was deflating (for the client). But knowing that he had attorneys and incredibly competent law students on his side really buoyed his confidence," Kammer said. "I think this case has shown the benefit of clinical programs in the law school setting, not just to underserved communities who benefit from the assistance but also to the students who gain an invaluable real-world experience."



# 150 FOR ALL

## The Campaign for Mercer Law

For more than 150 years, Mercer Law has been preparing students to practice law with purpose. Preparing tomorrow's legal professionals for successful careers and meaningful lives takes commitment from all of us. **150 for All** is an opportunity for the entire Mercer Law community to join forces to ensure future generations of lawyers flourish in every area of their lives. Your gift will help us provide scholarships, support innovative programs, and enhance our campus facilities.

At the heart of our vision lie three pivotal goals:

- **Access For All**, ensuring that anyone, regardless of their background or financial status, has the opportunity to gain entry into our distinguished halls;
- **Success For All**, upholding a commitment that goes beyond just academics, encompassing holistic development;
- **Facilities For All**, underscoring our dedication to adapting to the ever-evolving needs of legal education and the demands of the profession.

The campaign we've embarked upon is ambitious, and we believe that strengthened by our historical feats and guided by these three priorities, the future holds even greater accomplishments for Mercer Law. Indeed, we are just beginning our most exciting chapter.

There's never been a better time to be a part of Mercer Law. As we achieve, we reach for new, exceptional results. The years ahead are the most promising yet as we build on the accomplishments of the past 150 years.

Join us as we aspire to greater heights. Together we will offer the Mercer Law experience to a new generation of young legal professionals; we will continue to inspire the best in students, faculty, staff, and alumni; and we will continue to share our time, knowledge, and resources with communities close to home and around the world.





## ACCESS FOR ALL

Help us ensure that talented individuals have a pathway to law school. We seek to expand our community outreach and pathway programs. We also seek to increase the number of available scholarships and to expand our student support with additional funds for summer stipends, bar study awards, and student emergency funds.



## SUCCESS FOR ALL

At Mercer Law, we don't want students to just survive law school. We want them to thrive. Help us extend experiential learning activities that include litigation-based and transactional-based opportunities. Financial support enables us to expand the curriculum to reflect technological advancement and the demands of practice. Your support also enables us to enhance leadership skills.



## FACILITIES FOR ALL

The historic building on Coleman Hill is a wonderful place to study and learn. Help us respect and update the space to foster collaborative learning. We will be renovating our law school library, classrooms, and study rooms to ensure that students can gather, work together, and learn from each other.



## YOUR GIFT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- MERIT- & NEED-BASED SCHOLARSHIPS
- STUDENT EMERGENCY FUNDS
- SUMMER STIPENDS
- EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
- LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE
- MENTORSHIPS
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- MODERN LIBRARY
- ADAPTABLE CLASSROOMS
- STUDY ROOMS
- UP-TO-DATE TECHNOLOGY
- BAR STUDY AWARDS







# Heck yeah, Rose!

By Mary Ann Howard

Meet Rose. A two-year-old, 120-pound bullmastiff, certified therapy dog, and regular visitor at Mercer Law School. Students, faculty, and staff have grown to expect weekly visits from Rose, and additional visits at especially stressful times such as exam week or during competitions. Rose greets her visitors with an air of calmness and confidence that suggest a deep understanding of human emotion and need. With sad eyes and squishy wrinkles, her face, on a head comparable in size to that of a small adult woman, gives nothing away, but her slow swinging tail tells the story...this gentle giant loves people.

Dubbed the “gamekeeper’s night dog,” bullmastiffs were bred to be big, swift, and brave enough to pursue and pin a man prowling the grounds in the dead of night. A breeding of mastiffs and bulldogs, the modern-day bullmastiff is a dependable and warm family companion given to an affectionate nature that makes them great therapy dogs when trained properly.

Professor Harold Heck, ’14 got Rose when she was two months old. “I have always had an affection for bully breeds and over the last 30 years have had bulldogs, boxers, and Boston terriers. I had seen bullmastiffs at a dog show years before and loved them, but I knew that due to their size, training would be essential from the start. Rose was meant to just be a pet and I had never seriously trained a dog before, but working from home during the pandemic gave me the time I needed with a new puppy during those crucial first few months of life.”

Rose and Heck are a therapy dog team. Therapy dogs are dogs who go with their owners to volunteer in settings such as schools, hospitals, and nursing homes. Heck has done all of Rose’s training himself, beginning the day he brought her home from the breeder. They still train every day whether it is reinforcing the basics or learning something new.

Rose provides stress relief and joy to the people she meets. 2L student Jasmine Smith says Rose and Heck are “very special and always show up at the right time!” Other students agree that spending a little time with Rose makes their day better. Chloe Bonds (2L) says it’s a treat and a privilege to see Rose on campus. Researchers have shown that just a few minutes of interaction with a dog or cat can significantly reduce a person’s stress hormones. “We completed our certification as a therapy dog team in July of 2022. Rose’s first visit was the bar exam in Dallas (Texas where we were living) the same month. I saw how much of a calming effect she had on students and staff during those two days and knew that having her as a regular presence at the Law School would provide a great deal of stress relief.”

Maintaining almost constant eye contact with Heck, Rose waits for his command, words of praise, or a treat from the snack sack on his belt. The team goes wherever they are invited, regularly volunteering at a juvenile prison, a hospice center, and nursing homes. Additionally, they have visited police stations,

middles schools, hospitals, and a summer camp for disadvantaged youth. Heck and another therapy dog owner started a program with the Georgia Department of Corrections called “Thera-Paws.” They provide weekly visits with the juveniles in the Burruss Correctional Training Center in Forsyth, GA. The program provides juveniles the opportunity to spend an hour with the dogs, and the team often puts on demonstrations. Currently the juveniles are helping teach Rose new tricks and she is halfway to earning her next trick dog title.

On sunny days, an intensely focused Rose cruises onto campus in her very cool sidecar that is attached to Heck’s motorcycle. His motorcycle is a Ural Gear Up. The sidecar was not designed for dogs, so Heck removed the bottom portion of the seat and added a padding to the floor for Rose. She wears a harness and has a double-sided leash that straps to her back and chest.

“Drivers are always just amazed and thrilled when they see

**Therapy dogs are not service dogs or emotional support animals. They are companions that can ease anxiety, depression, phobias, and loneliness.**

us traveling. We get a lot of staring, thumbs up, and honking if we are moving, and a lot of pictures if we are stopped at an intersection.”

Heck came to Macon in July of 2011 to attend Mercer Law. He says that after a fair amount of research, he found the Law School was well matched to what he was looking for: a strong reputation for producing practice-ready attorneys, a great legal writing program, students that were supportive and welcoming, and a solid bar passage rate. He had been working in academic success and bar prep for six years when the position at Mercer opened. He started working at the Law School in August of 2022. Today he teaches legal process to first-year law students, which focuses on learning legal analysis, and bar preparation to third-year students. He also teaches a variety of workshops. Heck earned his MBA from Boise State University and his bachelor’s degree from Washington State University. His wife Casey works at Mercer School of Medicine as a pre-clinical academic associate. They also have a ten-year-old Boston terrier named Frank. Despite the 85-pound weight difference, Rose and Frank love playing together. You can follow Rose on social media at therapydogrose.



# Willie and Tessa Sizemore

3L TWINS KEEP EACH OTHER ON THEIR TOES



Maggie Reimer

Tessa and Willie Sizemore grew up in and around the courthouse in Leesburg, Georgia. Their father is a lawyer who owned a general practice before being appointed to the bench as a Superior Court judge in the Southwestern Judicial Circuit in 2005.

The twins claim to be quite competitive and agree that it's been a good thing for the law school environment. Tessa said, "Law school can be intimidating and exhausting, and it is nice to be going through it with someone who knows me really well. It has been such a unique experience, and one that I will always cherish."

#### *Why did you choose Mercer Law?*

**Willie:** Tessa and I knew Mercer was for us after touring in April of 2021. COVID-19 protocol was still very much a thing, and Mercer was one of the only institutions that allowed us to complete an in-person tour. We could tell immediately the community was right for us.

**Tessa:** Mercer also has a wonderful alumni network across all of Georgia, including the more rural areas of the State, which was important to me. I knew that Mercer would prepare me to be a lawyer in Georgia while giving me lasting friendships through the Mercer Law community.

#### *How would you characterize your Mercer Law experience?*

**Willie:** I would describe my time at Mercer Law as a season of growth. I have been challenged like never before, and I have been lucky to befriend some of my best and brightest peers—three of whom will be groomsmen in my wedding in August of 2024. I am humbled by the blessing these past two years have been.

**Tessa:** I would say my experience at Mercer Law has been challenging, yet extremely rewarding. While there have been late nights and early mornings, I have enjoyed my time here and cannot believe it's almost over. My professors, advisors, and coaches have truly invested in me, and I am grateful for their mentorship. Most of all, I am thankful for all my classmates and for the friendships that I know will last for many years to come.

#### *What are your extracurricular activities/leadership positions, groups, etc.?*

**Tessa:** I am involved in Mercer Advocacy Council on the moot court and mock trial teams, and I am a member of the Law Review. I am also on the executive board of the Rural Law Students Association and work as a peer and group mentor.

**Willie:** I am a member of the mock trial team and vice president of the Rural Law Students Association. Tessa and I competed at the Summit Cup this year as mock trial co-counsel. (The team placed third in the country at the by-invitation-only competition and Willie secured the Jurors' Choice Advocate award.) The last time we were co-counsel on a mock trial team was during our junior year in high school. Dad was our coach.

#### *What kind of law are you interested in practicing/do you plan on working together after graduation?*

**Tessa:** I will be clerking in Macon for two years after I graduate, and I am unsure exactly what I will do after that. I have always seen myself in some type of litigation. Willie, my dad, and I have daydreamed about having a law practice together, so we will see what the future holds.

**Willie:** I hope I am able to litigate in some respect and do so with my sister (she would no doubt be the brains of the operation). When I asked recently if she would be interested in opening a practice with me, I was not immediately shot down. I count that as hopeful.

#### *How is it to be in post-graduate school with your twin?*

**Willie:** It has been unique and rewarding. We get to support and challenge one another. I know that when I look back on my law school experience, I will think fondly of the time I got to spend with my sister and our friends above all else.

#### *How do you support each other?*

**Tessa:** Willie and I are different in a lot of ways, which I think helps us support each other. Willie helps me grow in the areas where I am weak, and I try to share what I can as well. For example, Willie is an excellent public speaker, so he was a huge help to me as I prepared for moot court and mock trial competitions last year. That is just one example, but we always try to be a sounding board for one another when one of us needs a fresh perspective.

#### *Do you share housing? If so, what is the dynamic - who does the cooking and who does the cleaning?*

**Willie:** Yes, and Tessa is the best roommate I have ever had. I don't know if the same can be said respectively. I try to pull my weight, but, naturally, I can turn a blind eye more easily to mess around the house. I do, however, make sure the grass is cut, our cars are serviced, and the trash is taken out. I also reluctantly clean the dishes on occasion.

**Tessa:** Willie is extremely handy. He is always willing to hang a picture or make a repair. Of course, neither of us are afraid to say exactly what we think, so fights are inevitable, but it is a great living arrangement.

Tessa and Willie are the youngest of four siblings. Their older sister Cassie lives in Albany, GA, where she works in marketing and spends her free time painting and caring for her seven-year-old daughter. Their brother T.J. is in the Navy, and though he recently moved to San Antonio, he spent most of the last ten years in Japan.

# Walker Lee, '24

**“Falling into the rabbit hole” of legal research in the midst of writing his master’s thesis in criminal justice led Walker Lee to seek a career in the legal field in a non-traditional way.**

*What led you to want to attend law school and have a career in the legal field?*

I was not the person who, for their entire life, planned to attend law school. Rather, the calling came to me over time. I became interested in going to law school while taking a legal issue in criminal justice course for my master’s degree in criminal justice at Valdosta State University. While working on my thesis on perceptions of immigrations, my advisor recommended that I research immigrant laws and tie in legal issues into my thesis. I took an independent research course on federal Indian law which essentially confirmed my interest in the law and to seek a career in the legal field. (Walker also holds a master’s degree in sociology from Valdosta State.)

*What kind of law are you interested in practicing?*

I am very interested in practicing estate planning. I enjoy helping others prepare for the difficult times in life. In the future, I could see myself working in federal Indian law.

*What are your extracurricular activities?*

As a 2L, I served as the American Bar Association (ABA) vice-chair and the academic committee chair. As a 3L, I am the ABA chair. Part of my role is working as a voting member of the executive board of Student Bar Association (SBA) and working on impactful policy recommendations for our students. In addition, I act as a student liaison on the Faculty Academic Committee and as class representative coordinator on the executive board of the Rural Law Student Association, serve as justice on the executive board of the legal fraternity Phi Alpha Delta, and as a student ambassador for the Mercer Law admissions office. Additionally, I am a member of the Mercer Advocacy Council (MAC) mock trial (executive board) and arbitration (board chair) teams. I have enjoyed several competitions and look forward to more competitions in my 3L year.

*Why did you choose Mercer Law?*

I chose Mercer Law for a few reasons. First, during the admission process, Mercer made a point to know me. Second,



Maggie Reimer

Mercer Law is known for its legal writing program and I wanted to learn from the best. Lastly, I chose Mercer for its valued, close-knit community. I knew that because the School offered smaller class sizes, I would have the opportunity to develop closer relationships with other students and professors.

*How would you characterize your experience at Mercer?*

Like none other. I am a first-generation college student thus a first-generation law student. The faculty at Mercer is beyond what I have ever seen. So many professors are always in their offices and are ready to help students. Same for the administration. They are always there to help anyone in need. Thanks to Mercer Law, I have gotten jobs at different law firms, have traveled around the country competing in advocacy tournaments, and I have made friends for life. At the end of this year, I will be able to say that Mercer has shaped me into the best attorney I can be.

*Talk about your adjunct professor work.*

In 2017, I started graduate school at Valdosta State and was approached to be a teaching assistant. The more classes I taught the more I enjoyed teaching. Over time, I continued teaching courses in sociology and criminal justice at different schools, in-person, and online. I took a break from teaching my first semester of law school, then in the spring of my 1L year, I started teaching again at Montana State University-Billings. I have continued teaching throughout law school and have loved it. I have taught at three different universities and colleges across the United States. A lot of people ask me how I manage teaching a class or two per semester with the rigors of law school. The answer is simple...time management.



# ASYLUM & HUMAN RIGHTS CLINIC

## Students learn through immigration appeals victory

By Mary Ann Howard



Thanks to a group of law students in Mercer's 2022 Asylum and Human Rights Clinic, a Kurdish man who was persecuted in Turkey won his immigration appeal in February 2023 and recently gained his freedom.

The man's initial petition was denied after a faulty hearing and he was in danger of being deported. Under the close supervision of Professor Scott Titshaw and Adjunct Professor Elena Albamonte, clinic students Miles Voss, Karan Patel, Chris Alviz, Jessica Luna, and Maritza Gonzalez worked in teams with interpreters to interview the client, develop a theory of the appeal, and draft appellate briefs, affidavits, and motions. Voss and Patel graduated in 2022, and Alviz, Luna, and Gonzalez graduated in 2023.

"The case we won was an appeal to the Board of Immigration Appeals of a case that had been initially denied by an immigration judge at the Stewart Detention Center in South Georgia, where our client was being held," Titshaw said. "The client was referred to us by an attorney at the Southeast Immigrant Freedom Initiative of the Southern Poverty Law Center, whom we'd known from prior cases."

The students listened to hours of tape-recorded testimony from the original hearing and made notes of instances where there were recording errors and other due process concerns that they used to demonstrate that the adverse credibility finding should be overturned. They also explained or refuted alleged inconsistencies in the testimony. The Board of Immigration Appeals agreed and

remanded the case to the immigration judge. There was another hearing, during which the respondent appeared pro se. The immigration judge found the persecuted Turkish national to be credible and granted him withholding of removal. After almost two years of detention, he was finally released to live with family members in the United States. Once the brief was completed, it was submitted to the Board of Immigration Appeals where a judge granted the motion for a new trial.

"Our client then had his new trial and won his appeal. He was granted withholding

of removal and was freed from detention, so he is no longer in danger of being deported."

The Mercer Asylum and Human Rights Clinic represents clients seeking relief from removal based on claims of past persecution or torture, or fear of future persecution or torture in their country of nationality. Students learn the refugee and asylum laws through a study of the Immigration and Nationality Act and international human rights treaties. They represent clients on appeal before the Board of Immigration Appeals. In the clinic, students learn advanced legal writing techniques, including appellate strategies, persuasive storytelling, the use of expert reports, and effective argument skills.

Titshaw proposed establishment of the clinic to the Law School faculty in 2019 and taught the first class in the spring of 2020. He had practiced immigration law for 12 years and served as the chapter chair of the Georgia-Alabama chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association before joining the faculty at Mercer.

In 2021, Albamonte taught the course. With about 40 years of experience working on all sides of asylum and Convention Against Torture cases, she has been involved with the clinic since its inception. Albamonte has served as an attorney with the U.S. Departments of State, Justice, and Homeland Security, as an attorney adviser with the Board of Immigration Appeals, as deputy chief counsel with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and as a private immigration attorney representing individuals in the asylum, removal, and appeals processes. In 2022, Titshaw and Albamonte co-taught the course.

# Service-Learning

## 1Ls partner with United Way during orientation

By Mary Ann Howard

Preparing for the practice of law goes beyond what happens in the classroom. It includes becoming an engaged leader in the community. Mercer Law School has a long tradition of producing lawyers who are ready to practice and are committed to serve. This tradition made its way into The Class of 2026's orientation.

Through a service-learning project aligning with Mercer Law's 150th-anniversary celebration, the incoming class of first-year law students (1Ls) joined Law School faculty and staff to take a stand against homelessness in the Middle Georgia community. The project organized by United Way of Central Georgia, Macon-Bibb Government, and Mercer Law provided the group an opportunity to volunteer at the Gardens at Brookdale on August 10. The goal was for the law community to learn about and to support needs in the Middle Georgia community.

**I found true inspiration not only in helping those in need of shelter or resources, but in supporting those who are grinding it out daily, as workers and volunteers.** - Charlie Johnson, '26

As part of The Class of 2026 Orientation Week, this experience provided insights into the center's operations, the challenges faced by individuals experiencing homelessness, and the strides being taken to combat this pressing social issue. The collaboration also aimed to beautify the center's surroundings through a partnership with Keeping Macon-Bibb Beautiful. Students toured the Brookdale Resource Center, learned how Macon-Bibb government and United Way of Central Georgia are addressing homelessness in our neighborhoods through a traditional housing program, and worked in the garden, weeding, harvesting, digging trenches, and composting. Assistant Dean of Student Affairs Jeannie Zipperer said, "Our vision for orientation this year was building community through engagement, participation, and connectivity. The service-learning project at Brookdale was an integral component of realizing our vision and reinforcing the impact our future lawyers can have within their communities through excellence in service."

Almost 40% of the incoming class answered the call to volunteer without hesitation. Charlie Johnson said, "Our service project was a humbling reminder that our true goals

are best served when they are found in service to others. To help those who are so intricately, intimately, and selflessly involved with the service of others has certainly earned my support as well as my respect from this experience." Fellow 1L Brittany Carter said she is proud to attend a university that provides students opportunities to give back to the community and is looking forward to participating in similar events in the future.

Brookdale has made a significant impact on the lives of numerous families and individuals by offering a comprehensive 90-day program that provides transitional housing and essential support services. This year, the garden has contributed more than 1,800 pounds of fresh produce to the center's kitchen, serving as a vital source of nourishment for those experiencing homelessness.

Mercer Law School offers many service opportunities throughout the year. More than 30 student organizations such as Association of Women Law Students (AWLS), Black Law Students Association (BLSA), OUTLaw, and Phi Delta Pi regularly give back to the community through volunteerism and fundraising events. According to Dean Karen J. Sneddon, "Our students, under appropriate supervision, participate in externships and clinics that promote access to legal services. Our student organizations raise funds and directly support a number of organizations in Middle Georgia. This year, we were intentional about incorporating this service-learning event into orientation to promote community engagement from the first day of law school. Students remarked that they came to law school to make a difference. The service-learning event is just one of many ways in which the students will make an impact in the community."

As the first-year class works its way through the first year of law school, many will find purpose beyond book learning by committing time to helping the Middle Georgia community.







Photos by Maggie Reimer and Amanda Greechin



## WELCOME NEW FACULTY



### Kaleb Byars, assistant professor of law

Before joining the Mercer Law School faculty, Byars served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable Thomas A. Varlan, United States District Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee. Subsequently, he served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable Ralph R. Erickson, United States Circuit Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. He teaches contracts and business law courses at the Law School.

Byars earned a J.D. from the University of Tennessee College of Law, where he was the valedictorian of his class and served as editor-in-chief of the Tennessee Law Review. He earned his bachelor of science degree in business administration in economics and finance from the University of Tennessee at Martin.

Byars focuses his scholarship in the areas of white-collar crime, business law, and criminal law. He has published several articles and essays in legal journals and provided commentary in legal magazines and blogs. Most recently, his article entitled *An "Essential" Solution: Reworking the Essential Facilities Doctrine to Address Big Tech's Harm to the Marketplace of Ideas* was published in the Mississippi Law Journal.



### Meagan R. Hurley, '19, assistant professor of law

Hurley joins the Mercer Law faculty teaching criminal law and the Habeas Project after years of practice representing wrongfully convicted persons incarcerated in Georgia and Alabama as a post-conviction defense attorney with the Georgia Innocence Project (GIP). Most recently, she served as GIP's accountability counsel, specializing in litigation and related policy research combatting official misconduct. Prior, she served as the organization's Alabama Fellow, during which time she helped create Alabama's only post-conviction clinic exclusively serving innocent non-capital litigants at Samford University's Cumberland School of Law.

Hurley graduated from Mercer University School of Law cum laude and received numerous awards and accolades, including the Clover Award for Indigent Defense Advocacy and Social Justice Lawyering. She earned her bachelor of arts degree in communication arts from Reinhardt University in 2014, where she graduated cum laude and received the Communication & Media Studies Academic Program Award.

## The Law School welcomes visiting assistant professors of law



Margie Alsbrook is a graduate of the University of Arkansas School of Law (LL.M. and J.D.) and Hendrix College, Conway, Arkansas. Last year, Alsbrook served as a visiting assistant professor of legal research at the University of Arkansas School of Law. Her research interests include food production, land use, artificial intelligence, and legal writing. Recently, she gave a presentation at the 2024 Southeastern Association of Law Schools Annual Conference and presented at the Legal Writing Institute Annual Conference.



Mark Hoch is a graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law (LL.M.), the University of Cincinnati College of Law (J.D.), and the University of Colorado. An expert in legal analytical skills development, Hoch is the former Assistant Dean for Academic Success at Charleston School of Law and has taught Legal Writing at several law schools over a 20+ year career in legal education. His research focuses on innovative learning strategies for law students at every level.

## 2022-2023 FACULTY & STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Dean Karen Sneddon and Professor David Hricik** published *Five Strategies to Enhance Your Legal Writing Skills* and *Write With the Court's Needs in Mind* in the Georgia Bar Journal.

**Professors Tim Floyd and Daisy Floyd** presented at the Association of American Law Schools' Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA, on "Lessons Learned: Teaching the Formation of Professional Identity in the First Year and Beyond."

**Professors Patrick Longan, Daisy Floyd, and Tim Floyd** began the blog *Holloran Center Professional Identity Formation Blog* for the Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership at St. Thomas University School of Law.

**Professor Scott Titshaw** presented at the Global Citizenship Observatory of the Robert Schuman Centre; Danish Institute for Human Rights; and Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion. He also taught two modules for an online course for the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). He gave a presentation in Miami, FL, for the AILA South Florida Chapter.



**Professor Steve Johnson** published the fifth edition of a coursebook on eLangdell Press titled *Wetlands Law: A Course Source*. Other publications include "The Promise and Peril of ChatGPT in Informal Rulemaking," 48 Admin+Reg. L. News 10 (2023); "Deregulation: Too big for one Branch, But Maybe not for Two," 53 Seton Hall L. Rev. 839 (2023); and "Whither the Lofty Goals of the Environmental Laws," 49 Pepp. L. Rev. 285 (2022).



**Professor Tim Floyd** presented at the Association of American Law Schools Clinical Conference in San Francisco, California, on "Re-Imagining Justice: Encouraging Students' Passion for Social Justice in their Emerging Professional Identities," and at Wake Forest University School of Law on "Experiential Education and Lawyer Development."

**Professor David Hricik** gave the keynote at the Rocky Mountain Intellectual Property Conference in Westminster, CO; presented on "Ethics in IP Practice" at the United States Patent & Trademark Office; at the 18th Annual Advanced Patent Law Institute, University of Texas School of Law and George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School; at the IP Inn of Court in Atlanta; at the New Hampshire School of Law Thought Leader Series; and served as a panelist at the American Intellectual Property Law Association Mid-Winter Institute in San Diego, CA.



**Professor Anne Johnson** presented at the 10th Annual AASE Conference on "AASE by the Numbers: An Overview of the 2023 AASE Institutional and Individual Surveys." Johnson received the Manley F. Brown Distinguished Adjunct Professor Award for 2022-2023. She is the first female adjunct professor to earn the award.



**Professor Ishaq Kundawala** moderated a panel at the Business, Bankruptcy, and Tax Law Society; presented at the Middle District of Georgia Bankruptcy Law Institute; and gave the keynote speech at the W. Homer Drake, Jr. Georgia Bankruptcy American Inn of Court. He also presented at the Summer Work Experience in Law Pathways Program; the Junior Internship/Scholarship High School Pathways Program; and the Pathways After Law School for the Georgia Latino Law Foundation. He moderated a lunch & learn panel for the Sports and Entertainment Law Society.



**Professor Patrick Longan** presented at the Litigation Skills Training for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Georgia on "Professionalism, Fast and Slow," and at "Welcome to Chambers: A CLE for Law Clerks," on "Professionalism for Law Clerks," and was a panelist at the Signature Program on Professionalism, on "A Lawyer's Creed and the Aspirational Statement on Professionalism, History, Creation, and Relevance Today," for the Georgia Chief Justice's Commission on Professionalism.

**Professor Billie Jo Kaufman** gave a presentation for the American Association of Law Libraries titled "Conversation on Proposed Revisions to ABA Standards - Chapter 6," in Athens, Georgia. In addition, she gave presentations on "Online Legal Education Workshop - Building Community and Inclusion Using Online Education," and "Tell Librarians What Works for You," and on "Chat GPT for Law Professors, Students, and Life," at the Southeastern Association of Law School's Annual Meeting in Boca Raton, Florida.

**Professor Bonnie Carlson** published an article "Keeping Guns in the Hands of Abusive Partners: Prosecutorial and Judicial Subversion of Federal Firearms Laws," 87 Brook. L. 807 (2022).

**Associate Law Librarian Sharon Bradley** gave a presentation at the Internet Legal Research CLE Program titled "Be a Tech Savvy Lawyer Now," for the Georgia Bar Association.

**Dean Karen Sneddon** co-authored a book, *Gilbert Law Summaries on Trusts*. She also presented at the Office of State Administrative Hearings' Judicial Staff Conference, Savannah, GA, and at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Association of Law Schools. She served as a discussion leader at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Association of Law Schools at Boca Raton, FL, where she also served as a panelist on "Stock Stories and Wills" and moderated "What's In a Job Talk." She presented an AALS Teaching Methods Section webinar and presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Law Schools in San Diego, CA.



Dewey Hayes

### Alumnus creates fund to honor Professor Manley Brown

Each spring, an adjunct faculty member at Mercer Law is chosen to receive the "Manley F. Brown Distinguished Adjunct Professor Award." Historically the award has been a plaque. Recently, alumnus Dewey Hayes, LAW '79, made a gift to fund a cash prize component to accompany the plaque. Hayes did so in honor of the positive impact Professor Brown had on his student experience, adding, "Professor Brown treated students with kindness and respect, and encouraged them with praise." Anyone who wishes to contribute to this new fund may do so online at [law.mercer.edu/givenow](http://law.mercer.edu/givenow) or by contacting Jill Kinsella at [kinsella\\_jh@law.mercer.edu](mailto:kinsella_jh@law.mercer.edu), or 478-301-5689.

# 2023 COMMENCEMENT

**May 13, 2023**

J.D. Graduates: **122**

Honors Graduates: **36**

Number of States Represented: **12**

Legal Writing, Research & Drafting Certificates: **51**

George Waldo Woodruff Award of Excellence:  
**Jordan Shane Lipp**

Commencement Speaker:  
**Tomieka R. Daniel, '02**

Reynold J. Kosek, Jr. Excellence in Teaching Award:  
**Jim Fleissner**







Photos by Leah Yetter and Christopher I. Smith

# ClassNotes

Share your personal and professional news with Mercer Law. Submit Class Notes to [news@law.mercer.edu](mailto:news@law.mercer.edu).  
Class notes reported November 2022 - October 2023.

**1970**

**Wallace H. Wright** won the Georgia legal profession's 23rd Annual Justice Robert Benham Award for Community Service for Judicial District 8. From 1984 until his retirement in 2008, he was the senior partner of the law firm Wallace H. Wright, Attorney, P.C., now known as Wright & Edwards, P.C.

**1973**

**The Honorable Lawrence Lewis Korda** was recognized by the Florida Bar for his 50 years of Bar membership in good standing.

**Albert Henry Mickler** was honored by the Florida Bar as a 50-year member of the Florida Bar.

**The Honorable William Randall Slaughter II** was honored by the Florida Bar for his 50-year membership in good standing.

**1975**

**Michael D. McRae** was re-elected to serve on the board of governors of the State Bar of Georgia in the Tallapoosa Judicial Circuit Post 1 representing Haralson and Polk counties. McRae is with McRae, Smith, Peek, Harman & Monroe LLP in Cedartown.

**1982**

**Dwight Davis** was elected chairman of the board of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources. Davis has served

on the board since 2014. He previously served on both the Federal and State Judicial Nomination Committees. Davis is a retired senior partner at King & Spalding and was an adjunct professor at Mercer Law from 2013 until 2017. He is currently co-managing partner at King Springs Pecans in Hawkinsville.

**1985**

**Leland Malchow** has expanded his offices to Beaufort and North Augusta, South Carolina. The lawyers in his law firm are licensed in Georgia and South Carolina.

**James R. Thompson** received the Housing Court Assistance Center Volunteer of the Year Award given by the Atlanta Volunteer Lawyers Foundation during their annual celebration.

**1986**

**The Honorable Dianne Goetz Yamin** retired after 32 years on the bench as the Probate Judge in Danbury, CT. The New American Dream Foundation granted her the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Greater Danbury Chamber of Commerce Women's Business Council gave her the Heart of Women award. Yamin was elected as the President of the National College of Probate Judges, the only national organization dedicated to the improvement of probate law and probate courts.

**1987**

**Nathan M. Jolles** was the Sole Proprietor Statewide Winner of the 2023 Georgia Legal Food Frenzy, a statewide competition to support food banks in Georgia. Funds raised by Jolles were donated to the Golden Harvest Food Bank. Additionally, he serves on the boards of the Augusta Jewish Museum and Historic Augusta among other professional pursuits.

**1988**

**The Honorable Howard Z. Simms** retired as the Chief Judge from the Macon Judicial Circuit Supreme Court for the State of Georgia, where he served for 13 years. Prior to this tenure, he served as a district attorney for 9 years and as an assistant district attorney for 12 years.

**1989**

**Robert "Jay" Wilkinson** has joined Baker Donelson as counsel in the firm's Chattanooga office bringing with him more than 20 years of experience in bankruptcy, restructuring, and creditors' rights.

**1990**

**John F. Kennedy** was elected unanimously to serve as the president pro tempore of the Georgia State Senate. Kennedy was elected to the Georgia Senate in 2014.

**The Honorable Vincent Crawford** was awarded the

Willie Lovett Award by the Child Protection and Advocacy section of the Georgia State Bar at the annual State Bar Meeting. The award is given to an individual who has demonstrated a professional career and outstanding service to child protection, children's rights, and the advocacy of children. The award is also given to attorneys or judges who exemplify excellence and professionalism in a nonlaw-related community service organization.

**The Honorable Michael P. Boggs**, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia received the J. W. Fanning Award from Leadership Georgia at its Alumni Awards Gala. The Fanning Award is presented annually to a Georgian whose statewide contributions through progressive leadership and service have been broad in scope and rich in achievement.

**J. Jeffery Deery** was selected as a 2023 Florida Super Lawyer. Deery practices business litigation at Winderweedle, Haines, Ward, and Woodman in Orlando, Florida.

**1991**

**Marla Chambliss** is a district attorney in the Pataula Judicial Circuit.

**Jon W. Hedgepeth** was honored in the 2022 edition of Best Lawyers in America as a leading lawyer in the area of family law.



He was also selected as a Super Lawyer for the tenth consecutive year.

**The Honorable Jeffrey A. Watkins** was appointed to the Georgia Court of Appeals by Gov. Brian Kemp. Watkins joins the intermediate appellate court following the death of The Honorable Clyde L. Reese III in December 2022.

**1994**  
**Troy W. Marsh** was elected to the Board of Governors for the State Bar of Georgia. Marsh will serve in the Ogeechee Judicial Circuit, Post 2 seat on the board, representing Effingham, Bulloch, Jenkins, and Screven counties.

**1995**  
**Kim Higginbotham** is serving in the Northern Judicial District, Post 1 seat on the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia. The Northern Judicial Circuit includes Elbert, Franklin, Hard, Madison, and Oglethorpe counties.

**Anna Kent Blackwelder** was named as a General Counsel finalist for the Charlotte Business Journal's Corporate Counsel Awards for 2023. 2023 also marks Blackwelder's 25th anniversary with SGL Carbon.

**1996**  
**David Lee Crosswell**, a proud veteran of the United States Army for more than 20 years, passed away on October 19, 2022, at the age of 51.

**1999**  
**G. Kevin Morris** was appointed by Governor Brian P. Kemp to the Superior Court of the Alcovy Judicial Circuit.

**Austin Gower, Jr.** was appointed by Governor Brian P. Kemp to the Chattahoochee Circuit Public Defender Supervisory Panel.

**The Honorable Bryan C. Ramos** was nominated to serve as the chief judge of the Brookhaven Municipal Court. Ramos began his career as a judicial clerk for the Houston County Judicial Circuit after graduating from Mercer Law. After spending five years at a large Atlanta law firm, he started his private practice, Ramos & Law, in 2005. Ramos & Law is a workers' compensation firm dedicated to Georgia's injured workers. Ramos is the first Filipino American man to serve as a judge in the State of Georgia.

**2000**  
**Kim Mark Minix** is of counsel with Brown & Adams, LLC in Columbus, GA.

**2001**  
**Dr. Trent L. Coggins** has joined the faculty of the Langdale College of Business Administration at Valdosta State University teaching business law, healthcare law, and entrepreneurship. He was also named director of the J. Donald Lee Center for Entrepreneurship which opened in March 2023.

**John Craig Cotton** of Cotton, Forehand & Donohue, P.C. has been elected to serve on the Board of Governors of the State Bar of Georgia in the Cordele Judicial Circuit seat representing Ben Hill, Crisp, Dooley, and Wilcox counties.

**Gina Greenwood** was the keynote speaker at Middle Georgia State University's School of Computing and Department of Information Technology. Her presentation was entitled "IT Professional Tips on Surviving Ransomware Attacks and Other Data Breaches." Greenwood is the chair of Nelson, Mullins Data Privacy, Security & Breach practice group.

**Thomas Alexander Peterson IV** is one of two newly appointed state solicitors general announced July 18 by Gov. Brian Kemp. Peterson currently serves as the city attorney for Lyons and the county attorney for Tattnall County. He has served on the Advisory Committee for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Georgia since 2013.

**2002**  
**Erin Elizabeth Atkins** recently accepted a position as director, Patient Services Counsel for Novartis Pharmaceuticals.

**2003**  
Governor Brian P. Kemp appointed the **Honorable Erica L. Tisinger** to the Superior Court of the Coweta Judicial Circuit. She will fill the vacancy created by the appointment of the Honorable Bill Hamrick to the Georgia State-wide Business Court earlier this year.

**2005**  
**Benjamin Bruce Kenemer** was appointed by Governor Brian P. Kemp to be the district attorney for the Conasauga Judicial Circuit. Kenemer has worked in the District Attorney's Office for the Conasauga Judicial Circuit since 2006.

**Nathan A. White** has joined Taylor English Duma LLP as a partner and is based in its Carolinas office.

**2006**  
**Kristin Starnes Gray** was selected by her peers for the 2024 Best Lawyers in America recognition for Litigation - Labor and Employment. Gray is a partner in FordHarrison LLP's Spartanburg, South Carolina office where she assists employers with their labor and employment law needs, including issues regarding harassment and discrimination claims, employee

leaves of absence, HIPAA compliance, and arbitrating labor grievances.

**KaCee Johnson Lackey** has joined Bryant Miller Olive P.A. in Tallahassee, FL. Johnson Lackey focuses on representing clients in complex real estate matters, including commercial, residential, and governmental development projects.

**Erin Bowles Reynolds** was named partner at Bush Graziano Rice & Platter in Tampa, FL.

**Jeffrey Reynolds** celebrated 15 years with The Ticket Clinic law firm in Tampa, FL. He has been the managing partner for 10 years and recently opened another office in Clearwater, FL.

**2007**  
**Jason W. Blanchard** was selected as one of seven assistant United States attorneys nationally for an executive office for United States Attorneys Director's Awards in the category of "Superior Performance as an Assistant United States Attorney - Civil." The annual Director's Award recognizes "steadfast dedication, exemplary professionalism, commitment to excellence, fidelity to the law, and doing the right thing." The award was presented May 3, 2023, at the Department of Justice headquarters in Washington D.C.

**Robert F. Glass** and **James A. Robson** celebrated the 10-year anniversary of their law firm, Glass & Robson, LLC, on July 1, 2023. Glass & Robson is a law firm specializing in representing victims and their families in serious personal injury and wrongful death cases.

**2008**  
**Charles P. "Chuck" Efststration III** was selected as the majority leader of the Georgia House

of Representatives. Chuck represents House District 104, which includes the Dacula, Lawrenceville, Auburn, Braselton, and Bethlehem areas of Gwinnett County.

**Soo Hong** is a Republican member of the Georgia House of Representatives representing District 103, which is comprised of parts of Gwinnett and Hall Counties. Hong is the first woman of Korean descent to serve in the Georgia House of Representatives.

**Kristin Pollard Kiel** was awarded with the “40 under 40” Nation’s Best Advocates award by the National Bar Association. She was also honored by her alma mater Oakwood University with its inaugural “40 under 40” award.

**Brittany Lavalley** has been named as the deputy executive director for the Tennessee District Attorneys General Conference.

**Matt Matson** is excited to announce the opening of Matson Law Firm in Augusta, GA. Started in 2023, he is running a solo practice devoted to business litigation, personal injury, and criminal defense.

**Patrick M. Mincey** was selected as the chair of the Administrative, Regulatory, and Government Law Practice at Cranfill Sumner LLP, where he also serves as Chair of the firm’s White Collar, Government Investigations, and Special Matters Practice Group. In 2022, Mincey was listed among Legal Elite in Criminal Law and Litigation by Business North Carolina magazine and named to the North Carolina Super Lawyers list.

## 2009

**Billy Joe Nelson, Jr.** was elected District Attorney of the Atlantic Judicial Circuit on November 8, 2022, and took office on January 1, 2023. The Atlantic Judicial Circuit is comprised of six counties including Bryan, Evans, Liberty, Long, McIntosh, and Tattnall. Mr. Nelson previously served as an assistant district attorney in the Atlantic Judicial Circuit for 11 years and served as solicitor general of Long County for five years following his appointment by Gov. Nathan Deal in 2017. He resides in Hinesville with his wife, Kathryn Brock Nelson, and his three children.

## 2010

**Meredith Williams Chilausky** joined Campbell Law in Raleigh, NC, as assistant director of academic support in September. She will also help launch a Bar Success program for all Campbell Law graduates and alumni.

**Wesley C. Turner** joined the Atlanta office of Arnall Golden Gregory LLP as a partner in the firm’s real estate practice and a member of the retail, industrial, and warehouse industry teams.

**Emmanuel Donate** earned his Ph.D. in astrophysics in 2019 from the University of Georgia.

## 2011

**Garon Muller** was elected president of the Augusta Bar Association for the 2023 year.

**Andrew “Andy” Smith III** was sworn in as a Magistrate Court judge in Cherokee County.

## 2012

**Janene Browder** has joined Primerica, Inc. as an assistant general counsel.

**Ron E. Daniels** has completed his term as the 76th president of the Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia. He previously served as secretary, treasurer, and president-elect of the YLD.

**The Honorable Danielle L. Brewer** was appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis as the judge on the Twelfth Judicial Circuit Court. Brewer has served as a judge on the DeSoto County Court since her appointment by Governor Rick Scott in 2016. Previously, she served as an associate attorney at Swaine & Harris, P.A. for four years. She received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Florida. Brewer fills the judicial vacancy created by the retirement of Judge Debra J. Riva.

## 2013

**Kenneth D. Hall** has joined MendenFreiman LLP as counsel in its business law and tax planning practice areas. Prior to joining MendenFreiman, Hall was a partner at Moore Ingram Johnson & Steele LLP.

**Brittany Pullen Smith** and **Andrew “Andy” Smith III** welcomed their second child Madeline Kay Smith.

## 2014

**Jake Carroll** was elevated to partner at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP. He and his wife Jenna Lasseter Carroll welcomed their second son, Caden Carroll, in March 2023.

**Ken Wilson** was named principal at Beasley Allen’s Atlanta office. Wilson practices in the Toxic Torts Section and is working with the GA attorney general on Georgia’s opioid litigation.

**Adam M. Miller** was elected to shareholder at GrayRobinson in Orlando, FL. Miller focuses his practice on property insurance defense, personal injury defense, and litigation.

**Joe Cusack** was named deputy director and general counsel at the GA Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission where he specializes regulating and advising political campaigns, candidates for public office, and lobbyists.

**Steven Chambliss Ouzts** was appointed attorney - advisor (instructor) for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers in Glynco, GA, on June 20, 2023.

## 2016

**Virginia C. Josey** was installed as secretary of the Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia at the Annual Meeting in Savannah. Josey is also an adjunct professor at Mercer University School of Law where she teaches advanced litigation drafting.

**Jacob “Jake” Wallace** was named partner at Goggans, Stutzman, Hudson, Wilson, and Mize LLP in Columbus, GA. Wallace practices real estate and finance law representing builders, homebuyers, homeowners, and lenders.

**Jessica Canedo Wallace** and **D. Jake Wallace** welcomed a baby girl into their family. Olivia Kate was born November 30, 2022.

**Michelle Urbani Wallace** was named the 2023 Woman of Achievement by the Atlanta Bar Association. Michelle was



awarded the distinction for her significant contributions in furthering the interests of women in the profession and in Metro Atlanta, and for her significant professional achievements. Michelle was sworn in as the Chair of the Women in the Profession Section of the Atlanta Bar Association. Michelle is the founding attorney and owner of Advantage Law Firm in Atlanta where she lives with her husband Colter, daughter Giuliana, and two dogs Mia and Luna.

#### 2017

**Cindy Delgado** was appointed as the solicitor general of Emanuel County, Georgia. Delgado is a general practitioner for J. Kendall Gross, P.C. with a predominate focus on criminal defense and family law.

#### 2018

**Kelsey Kicklighter** joined Kicklighter Law in October 2022 as an associate attorney working with her father Claude M. "Mickey" Kickligher, Jr. and fellow Mercer Law alumni Brian J. Fussell.

**Meghan Vickers Heckman** became a partner at Kirbo & Heckman, Attorneys at Law, LLC in Bainbridge, GA. In June 2023, Heckman and her husband Jimmy welcomed their first child, a son named Robin Jordan Heckman.

**Siena B. Gaddy** was installed as co-editor of The YLD Review, the newsletter of the Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia. Additionally, she received the YLD's Award of Achievement for Outstanding Service to the Profession. Gaddy is a judicial law clerk for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Georgia and an adjunct professor at Mercer Law.

**Leah C. Mayo** was named Outstanding Young Alumna for her undergraduate institution, Presbyterian College. Leah is the assistant district attorney in Rome, GA, and is admitted to practice in all Superior courts in the State of Georgia, the Georgia Court of Appeals, and the Supreme Court of Georgia.

**Alex Myers** was sworn in as Chief Magistrate Judge of Dawson County on April 27, 2023.

**Diantha Ellis** was recently promoted to professor of business administration at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC). The rank of full professor is the highest faculty rank at the college, requiring the faculty member to have a terminal degree in the teaching discipline, and is awarded to faculty who show clear and convincing evidence of exemplary achievement in their schools. Ellis teaches economics and business law in the Stafford School of Business at ABAC.

#### 2019

**Meagan Hurley** has joined Mercer Law School as an assistant professor and the director of the Habeas Project. Hurley earned her license to practice law in South Carolina in 2022 in addition to marrying classmate **Addison Gantt** last October.

**Charles H. "Chas" Mann** was named to the National Trial Lawyers Top 40 Under 40. After graduation, he worked as a staff attorney for Judge Howard McClain of the Alapaha Judicial Circuit and joined Ben F. Windham, P.C. in 2020. Mann focuses on real estate and personal injury litigation.

**Conley J. Scott** is general attorney with the Office of Chief Counsel - IRS, SB/SE Division.

**Clayton T. Kendrick** opened The Kendrick Law Firm in January 2023.

**Caitlin W. Harris** has been selected to serve on the board of the Community Foundation of West Georgia.

**Georgios Tarasidis** joined Ruane Attorneys at Law, headquartered in Shelton, CT, and one of the largest statewide criminal defense firms in Connecticut. Tarasidis is responsible for handling all criminal cases represented by the firm at several courthouses across the state.

#### 2020

**Ariel Newman** was selected by the American Association of Law Libraries to serve on the editorial board for their publication Spectrum. The editorial board helps shape, solicit, and curate content for the magazine. Ariel is the student services and reference librarian at University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law.

**Victoria R. Nease** has joined the Litigation Group at HunterMaclean in the Savannah office. Nease's practice focuses on admiralty and maritime law, general litigation, medical malpractice, and product liability.

#### 2022

**Bubba Dunn** has joined Hall, Booth, Smith, PC. as an associate in the Brunswick office. Dunn will focus his practice on medical malpractice matters.

## IN MEMORY

**Joseph J. Lipton, '58**, of Columbia, SC, on May 16.

**James Bortree Balsiger, '64**, of Vero Beach, FL, on July 17.

**Russell F. Armstrong, '65**, of Ormond Beach, FL, on June 7.

**John Weston Peach, '65**, of Jasper, FL, on February 8.

**Robert Franklin Hershner Jr., '69**, of Macon, on January 8.

**William Harold Pinson Jr., '72**, of Savannah, on March 20.

**Stanley Harold Pollock, '73**, of Dunwoody, on February 5.

**Charles Clifford Carter, '75**, of Columbus, on February 7.

**Ralph E. Burns Jr., '80**, of Charlotte, NC, on Dec. 19, 2022.

**Harold Wilson Whiteman Jr., '80**, of Atlanta, on February 15.

**Robert Colliersmith, '80**, of Marietta, on November 21, 2022.

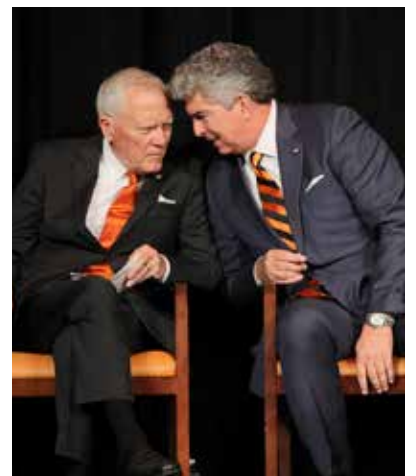
**Samuel Fielding Greneker, '97**, of Valdosta, on July 5.

**Andy Morris Cohen, '07**, of Atlanta, on June 15, 2022.

MERCER UNIVERSITY  
1873 - 2023  
**150**  
YEARS  
SCHOOL OF LAW

*150th Anniversary Celebration*  
Friday, October 13, 2023

Keynote Speaker  
The Honorable Michael P. Boggs, '90  
Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court  
Introduced by  
Governor Nathan Deal CLAS '64, LAW '66





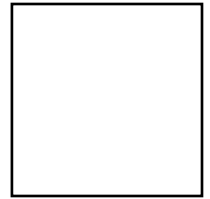






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