

MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

MERCER LAWYER

COMMITTED **TO SERVE**

HOW MERCER LAWYERS SERVED
THEIR COMMUNITIES DURING A
GLOBAL PANDEMIC, **P. 8**



SCENE FROM MACON

Colton McRae, '22, Akash Patel, '22, Douglas Comin, '22, and Katherine Twomey, '23, enjoy the newly renovated Poplar Park in downtown Macon. Featuring colorful tables and chairs, benches and even a ping pong table, Poplar Park meets the increased demand for usable outdoor space since the pandemic. The perfect spot to picnic, grab a bite to eat at one of 57 downtown restaurants and eateries all within walking distance of Poplar Park.

MERCER LAWYER 2021

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TOP: COURTESY OF BROOKE PEAK | BOTTOM: CHRISTOPHER IAN SMITH
OPPOSITE: CHRISTOPHER IAN SMITH

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FROM THE DEAN

Dear Alumni and Friends,

For likely the first time in the 148-year history of Mercer Law School, we both started and ended an academic year with Commencement.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Commencement was rescheduled to August, only two days before we welcomed our new first-year students during Orientation. We then celebrated our class of 2021 on May 15, the day after the last final was submitted. Those celebrations bookended a truly remarkable year!

After concluding the 2020 academic year with online learning and remote final examinations, we were thrilled to return to the classroom at least partially in-person for the fall semester in August 2020. Classes took on a new look with a mask mandate and socially distanced seating plans in all classrooms. Many of our courses this school year were taught using a hybrid format, meeting online on certain days and in-person other days.

While life at the Law School certainly looked and felt much different than years past, one thing remained the same: the commitment of our faculty to teaching, and the willingness of our students and alumni to give back and be of service to the community and the profession.

Despite the upheaval over the past 16 months, the culture of service and giving back at Mercer Law School has been stronger than ever. Our students, alumni, faculty and staff rallied together to raise the most money in Mercer Law School history for Legal Food Frenzy – providing nearly 52,000 meals for the Middle Georgia Food Bank. Our recent graduates designated their class gift of \$20.21 each to the Michael Sabbath Student Support Fund to directly support fellow students in times of need. Law School alumni and friends made a strong showing during Mercer's Week of Giving, giving more than \$34,000 to support our school.

This commitment to service is ingrained in the student experience at Mercer Law School and continues long after graduation. In our cover story, you will read how Mercer Lawyers have given their time, resources and talents to support their local communities and neighbors throughout the pandemic, whether through meals, computers, flights or cupcakes. It is moments like these when the Mercer Law School community puts its values into action – and shows that we care.

Whether you have benched moot court practice virtually, mentored our students on Zoom, donated during Week of Giving, returned to serve on a panel, hired our students or provided for a scholarship fund, thank you for giving back to Mercer Law School over the past year. Your involvement and financial support are crucial to our continued success as we provide the kind of a quality legal education that genuinely prepares our students for practice.

What you do every day makes me proud to be a Mercer Lawyer.

Sincerely yours,



Cathy Cox, '86
Dean and Professor of Law



CHRISTOPHER J. SMITH

We celebrated graduates from the Class of 2021, including Emily Newberry (pictured), during the May 15 ceremony.

Mercer Law Review Symposium

On Oct. 16, 2020, Mercer Law School virtually hosted the *Mercer Law Review* Symposium and 21st Annual Georgia Symposium on Professionalism and Ethics, titled “Ethics, Professionalism, and the Role of the Attorney General of the United States: Lessons from History.”

“There is no more pressing issue for the legal profession than to ensure that the rule of law survives the political tumult of the age we live in,” says Patrick E. Longan, W.A. Bootle Chair in Ethics and Professionalism and faculty liaison for the event. “The attorney general has a crucial role to play in this endeavor, and our hope is to bring to light some lessons from history that will help future attorneys general protect the norms and traditions of the Department of Justice, for the benefit of all of us, regardless of political preferences.”

The principal speakers, noted scholars in the field, included:

- Dr. Nancy V. Baker, professor emeritus of political science at New Mexico State University
- William R. Casto, the Paul Whitfield Horn Distinguished Professor, 1983, at Texas Tech University School of Law
- Lonnie T. Brown, Jr., the A. Gus Cleveland Distinguished Chair of Legal Ethics and Professionalism and Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Georgia School of Law
- Patrick E. Longan, the W.A. Bootle Chair in Ethics and Professionalism at Mercer University School of Law
- James P. Fleissner, professor of law at Mercer University School of Law

Distinguished guests and commentators included **Richard A. (Doc) Schneider, '81**, partner, King & Spalding; Rod J. Rosenstein, partner, King & Spalding, and former deputy attorney general of the United States; and The Honorable William S. Duffey, Jr., United States District Judge (retired) for the Northern District of Georgia.



JEFF TAYLOR/SHUTTERSTOCK



Mercer Law School Wins 2021 Legal Food Frenzy Competition

Mercer Law School successfully claimed the Attorney General's Cup and regained its title as champion of the tenth annual Legal Food Frenzy, a competition to help feed the hungry in Georgia. This is the seventh time overall that Mercer has won the title.

Mercer came out on top of the friendly, yet competitive, two-week contest against the state's other law schools by raising \$12,985.50, providing the equivalent of 51,942 meals for hungry kids, seniors and families through the Middle Georgia Community Food Bank. Five law schools competed this year and collectively raised \$37,143 for Georgia's food banks.

“The Mercer Law community is amazing, and I witnessed that firsthand during the Legal Food Frenzy competition,” says **Ellen-Marie Bell, '21**, Student Bar Association Legal Food Frenzy chair. “I get emotional thinking about how significant of an impact we had in simply two short weeks.”

Advocacy Round Up

MERCER ADVOCACY UPDATE

During the 2020-2021 academic year, Mercer competed in numerous competitions in both the Fall and Spring semesters. All competitions were held virtually due to the pandemic, which brought both challenges and opportunities. We are grateful to our guest judges, alumni coaches and students who contributed to a successful year! Our accomplishments include:

- Second in the nation ABA Client Counseling Competition
- Moot Court teams advanced in every competition entered
- Advanced to the quarter final round of the National Mock Trial Competition
- ABA Regional Mock Trial quarterfinalist, for both teams, including top five brief
- Strong showing at the ABA Regional Negotiations Competition and the William and Mary Competition

We look forward to building on these advocacy successes because at Mercer Law School, we make champions.

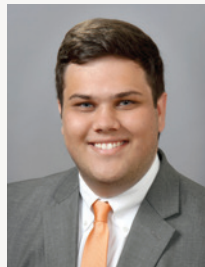
MERCER LAW TEAM PLACES SECOND IN NATIONAL CLIENT COUNSELING COMPETITION

Brennan Collins, '22, and **Malory-Anne Oliver, '22**, placed second in the American Bar Association National Client Counseling Competition on March 20. A total of 106 teams competed in this national competition, reinforcing Mercer Law's strong finish as the runner-up team.

Collins and Oliver represented Mercer Law School and advanced to the national finals after placing first in the ABA Regional Client Counseling Competition in February.

The competition replicates the necessary skills for attorneys to interview, counsel and support a client through a legal issue. Utilizing role-based client interviews, competitors respond to client needs while building an attorney-client relationship. The entire competition was hosted virtually due to the pandemic.

The team was coached by alumna coach, **Zandra Hall, '15**. "For a 2L team that had never competed before, they were in second place going into the finals, surpassing law schools that have actually won nationals before or were in the finals just last year," says Hall. "I am so proud of this team and their work ethic. They represented Mercer Law School extremely well, and being their coach was an honor."



COLLINS



OLIVER

ROGER IDENBEN



LAUREN E. WALDIN

NBLSA THURGOOD MARSHALL MOOT COURT REGIONAL COMPETITION SWEEP

Students **Dontez Mars, '21**, and **Amari Wilson, '22**, placed first in the National Black Law Student Association's (NBLSA) Thurgood Marshall Moot Court Regional Competition on Jan. 30.

Two teams represented Mercer Law School, and both advanced to the regional finals. Mars and Wilson also received the award for Best Petitioner's Brief in the entire competition. **J. Chad Capers, '22**, and **Sedaries Mathis, '22**, were runners-up, reinforcing Mercer Law's strong showing at this historic competition, which was formerly the Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition.

The competition replicates appellate oral argument proceedings, with the top three teams from six regional competitions advancing to compete in the national competition. Unlike previous years, the entire competition was hosted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Participating in a completely virtual event was challenging, but my teammates and I worked hard to make sure our performance was as seamless as possible even with all the challenges that come with technology," says Wilson. "Our coaches did an amazing job preparing us for this competition, and it paid off tremendously. I'm so proud of us!"

The two teams were coached by **Patrick Hitt, '21**, Mercer Law Director of Advocacy Programs **Katie Powers, '09**, and Mercer Law alumna Judge **Brenda Youmas, '88**.

"The competition was fierce from other law schools throughout the Southern Region, but our fabulous students were up to the task," says Powers. "I am incredibly proud that all of their hard work and dedication to preparation paid off."

Both teams were national quarterfinalists.

MERCER LAW HOSTS TWO HUGH LAWSON MOOT COURT COMPETITIONS IN ACADEMIC YEAR



CHRISTOPHER JAMES SMITH

2020

On Sept. 25, 2020, Mercer Law School hosted the rescheduled 2020 annual Hugh Lawson Moot Court Competition. **Elliza Guta, '22**, was the winner of the competition.

The 2020 Lawson Competition finalists selected were Guta and **Akash Patel, '22**. Guta represented the Petitioner, and Patel represented the Respondent.

The Lawson Competition is a long-standing

intraschool competition exclusively for first-year law students. Traditionally held each spring, the Lawson competition was postponed in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Judge Stephen Dillard of the Georgia Court of Appeals, Judge Paige Whitaker of the Fulton County Superior Court, and **Katie Powers, '09** benched the final round of the competition.



2021

On April 16, Mercer Law School hosted the 2021 annual Hugh Lawson Moot Court Competition. **Zachary Mullinax, '23**, was the winner of the competition.

The 2021 Lawson Competition finalists selected were Mullinax and **Bianca Carthern, '23**. Mullinax represented the Petitioner, and Carthern represented the Respondent.

Judge Trea Pipkin of the Georgia Court of Appeals, Fulton County Superior Court Judge **Rachel R. Krause, '01**, and Bibb County Magistrate Judge **Brenda Youmas, '88**, benched the final round of the competition.

"This competition has a history of producing winning moot court students and practice-ready lawyers," says Powers. "All of our students excelled in their arguments and benefited from a fantastic bench by our guest judges."

"Our student competitors worked hard to make it to the final round," says Dean Cathy Cox, '86. "We are grateful for our esteemed guest judges who provided valuable feedback that will help our students continue honing their skills in moot court competitions."

The competition exposes students to moot court practice and procedure before they try out for Mercer's nationally recognized moot court teams. The student who argues most effectively receives \$500 and has their name engraved on the King and Spalding Cup.

2021 INTRASTATE BEST ORALIST

Douglas Comin, '22, received the Best Oralist prize in the Intrastate Moot Court Competition in March. This was the first time Mercer Law had won Best Oralist in the Intrastate Competition since 2007. Our team of Comin, **Ashley Ferguson, '22**, and **Akash Patel, '22**, made it to the semi-finals in the competition with our fellow Georgia law schools.



ROGER DENDEN

ABA Legal Education Police Practices Consortium

Mercer Law School joins more than 50 law schools in the American Bar Association (ABA) Legal Education Police Practices Consortium, which aims to contribute to the national effort examining and addressing legal issues in policing and public safety, including conduct, oversight and the evolving nature of police work.

The Consortium will leverage the ABA's expertise and that of participating ABA accredited law schools to collaborate on projects to develop and implement better police practices and promote racial equity in the criminal justice system throughout the United States.

In Spring 2021, Mercer offered a Police Practices Seminar taught by Pam Wilkins, associate professor of law. Students wrote substantial research papers on topics such as including the federal 1033 program (through which police departments receive military equipment), interactions between law enforcement and those with mental illnesses, the expansion of legal training for police officers and technology and policing. The class included a guest speaker from the Atlanta Citizen Review Board as well as both readings and documentaries from a variety of perspectives.

Billie Jo Kaufman Named Law Library Director

Billie Jo Kaufman joins Mercer Law School as director of the Furman Smith Law Library and professor of law. Kaufman had served as interim director and visiting professor of law since July 2019.

Kaufman served as associate dean for library and information resources at American University Washington College of Law since 2004. She also teaches and specializes in advanced legal research, cyberlaw, criminal procedure, legal research and writing and law librarianship. Before she received her J.D. from Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law, she earned her M.S. and M.Ed. degrees from Indiana University Bloomington.

"Joining Mercer Law as its library director is a real privilege," says Kaufman. "The law school community cares so much about student engagement and teaching, and students have special opportunities because faculty and staff make connections for them. From the moment I stepped foot on campus, I've met students, faculty, staff and graduates who want to make a difference in their city, county, state and the world. Most importantly, Mercer Law is making a difference — not only in my life, but many, many others."



COURTESY OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

NEW SENIOR STAFF

Katie Powers, '09, joins Mercer Law School as director of advocacy programs. She serves as Mercer Law's advocacy programs coach, working with the Mercer Advocacy Council and advocacy programs, such as moot court, mock trial and negotiations teams to prepare for competitions. She also teaches trial practice and advanced evidence courses. Powers previously served as a Superior Court Judge in the Clayton Judicial Circuit and as a State Court Judge in Clayton County. She worked for seven years in the Clayton County District Attorney's office as the senior assistant district attorney, the deputy chief assistant district attorney and the executive assistant district attorney.

Lauren Childs, '14, joins Mercer Law School as director of career services. Childs practiced in Macon for six years, most recently at Adams, Jordan & Herrington, P.C. Her practice focused on personal injury and governmental matters. She is a member of State Bar of Georgia, Macon Bar Association, Macon Young Lawyers Division, and the William Augustus Bootle Inn of Court. Active within the community, Childs is a member of the Junior League of Macon, Inc., a local nonprofit focused on promoting literacy and school readiness, where she has served on its board of directors since 2019. Lauren and her husband, **Wes Childs, '14**, live in Macon with their twin daughters.



COURTESY OF KATIE POWERS



CHRISTOPHER IAN SMITH

New Associate Deans Named

Beginning June 1, **Pam Wilkins** moved into the role of associate dean for academic affairs, and **Karen Sneddon** fills the associate dean for faculty research and development on July 1.

"I look forward to working with both Professors Wilkins and Sneddon to strengthen our academic programs and enhance our scholarly work and awareness of our faculty," says Dean Cathy Cox. "These professors have been instrumental in meeting the challenges brought on by the pandemic, and I am excited to see how they continue their commitment to students and excellence in legal education in these roles."



LAUREN E. MAULON

WILKINS



AMY WOODCOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

SNEDDON

Faculty Retirements and Updates

This year, we say goodbye to faculty members who have retired or are continuing their careers at other law schools. These faculty members have contributed a combined 95 years of educating Mercer Law School students.

"Their records of teaching, scholarship and service to the students of Mercer are truly incredible," says Dean Cathy Cox. "We will never be able to sufficiently thank them for such dedication and commitment, and lifetimes of challenging our students to become exemplary lawyers."

STEPHEN SALDIVIA JONES



Ted Blumoff has taught at Mercer Law School for 36 years, having first joined the Mercer Law faculty in 1985 as a visiting assistant professor. He became an assistant professor in 1986 and earned the rank of full professor of law in 1990. He began his academic legal career writing about constitutional law and law and religion, with his most recent expertise in the jurisprudence of criminal law. He taught courses such as Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Federal Courts, and Bioethics and the Law throughout his tenure at Mercer Law. In April, the Mercer University Board of Trustees voted to name Blumoff "Professor Emeritus" upon his retirement. His retirement is effective June 30, 2021.

STEPHEN SALDIVIA JONES



Jeremy Kidd has taught at Mercer Law School for nine years. He began teaching at Mercer Law School as an assistant professor in 2012 and was promoted to associate professor in 2015. His classes focused on business law areas such as Contracts I and II, Business Associations, Law and Economics, Payment Systems, and Mergers and Acquisitions. His primary research focus is on how special interests use the various mechanisms of government to achieve their private ends. He started an economics and law book club that was popular among students. He has accepted a position at Drake University Law School in Des Moines, Iowa.

ROGER DEWDEN



Shand Watson has taught at Mercer Law School for 50 years. He joined the faculty as an assistant professor in 1971, became an associate professor in 1974 and a full professor of law in 1977. His courses taught include Criminal Law, International Human Rights, International Law, Jurisprudence, and Maritime Law. His primary interest is in the Jurisprudence of International Law and his main publication in this field is his book entitled *Theory and Reality in the International Protection of Human Rights*. In April, the Mercer University Board of Trustees voted to name Watson "Professor Emeritus" upon his retirement. His retirement is effective June 30, 2021.



LAUREN E. MAULDIN

BLSA Honored as 2020-21 Regional Chapter of the Year

Mercer Law School's Black Law Students Association (BLSA) was named 2020-2021 Chapter of the Year at the virtual 50th Southern Regional Convention of the National Black Law Students Association in January. BLSA President **J. Chad Capers, '22**, accepted the award.

"This year, Mercer BLSA had two goals," says Capers: "Don't let this pandemic stop us from having a fantastic year, and to show the region that we are Chapter of the Year. We did both!"

"We are proud of the commitment of our BLSA students over the past year," says Dean Cathy Cox. "This recognition reinforces their hard work to continue student engagement while overcoming pandemic challenges."



LAUREN E. MAULDIN

'GIVING *with* OPEN HEARTS'

Mercer Law School grads set example of service to others during the COVID-19 pandemic

By Renee Corwine

Student scholarships. Angel flights. Food for healthcare workers. Plasma donations. School lunches. Legal services. Vaccine education. Elder care. The list of ways Mercer Law School alumni have given back to their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic is as varied as the individuals themselves.

Their unifying factor? As Mercer Lawyers, the commitment to service started when they were students, and has remained an integral part of their careers today.

“One of the best lessons Mercer Law School instilled in us was the expectation of giving back to our communities,” says Brooke Peak, ’04. “I believe this is part of the culture at Mercer Law School and what sets our school apart from others. When we saw the alumni staying so actively involved in the school and in their communities, it set the bar high for us to follow in their footsteps.”

In March 2020, Peak asked her partners at Butler Wooten & Peak LLP if the law firm could send some meals to healthcare workers on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic in each of the cities in which the firm has offices. The idea came with a caveat — that the restaurants providing the food were locally owned.



COURTESY OF BROOKE PEAK

ABOVE: Brooke Peak, '04, had the idea to provide meals from local restaurants to frontline healthcare workers through her law firm, Butler Wooten & Peak LLP as a way to give back during the pandemic.

RIGHT: After forming the non-profit BWP Cares, more than 27,000 meals have been delivered to healthcare workers and first responders in Atlanta, Columbus, Savannah, Macon and LaGrange.

OPPOSITE: COURTESY OF BROOKE PEAK AND LATOYA BELL

“The idea was twofold: we would be able to provide a meal to frontline workers as well as provide financial support to struggling restaurants, many of which were having a hard time keeping their doors open and employees paid during the pandemic,” Peak says.

With that idea, the nonprofit group BWP Cares was formed. To date, more than \$115,000 has been donated to the group and more than 27,000 meals have been delivered to healthcare workers and first responders.

“We have provided meals to heroes in Atlanta, Columbus, Savannah, Macon and LaGrange,” Peak says. “We organized a successful blood drive for the American Red Cross and collected over 200 pints of blood. I can’t tell you how good it makes me feel to see the smiles on the frontline workers’ faces when they realize their communities love and support them.”

Frontline workers haven’t been the only ones to benefit from the kindness of Mercer alumni. During the pandemic, the Houston County Bar Association chose to pay off the delinquent lunch debt of more than 200 students with a donation of \$1,500.

When stay-at-home mandates were issued, the bar association was left with a few thousand dollars that, in a normal year, would have gone to provide food and refreshments for its meetings. That’s when they learned about the opportunity to help students in Houston County.



COURTESY OF BROOKE PEAK

“When a student doesn’t have lunch money, or has forgotten to pay their lunch fees, at the end of the year there’s a gigantic tab left on the school district. If a child is delinquent in paying, the next year they won’t get a hot lunch like other students,” says LaToya Bell, J.D. ’12, LL.M, ’13, Houston County Bar Association president. “We wanted to make sure all our students are taken care of and get a hot lunch like everyone else, and so we paid off the majority of the debt.”

COURTESY OF LATOYA BELL



LEFT: LaToya Bell, J.D. '12, LL.M '13, president of the Houston County Bar Association from 2020-2021. Throughout the pandemic, the Houston County Bar donated money to pay off delinquent school lunch debt and offered a free wills clinic for first responders, healthcare workers, firefighters and police.

BELOW: The Houston County Bar Association presented their \$1500 donation to the Houston County School District to pay off the majority of student lunch debt.

Like Peak, Bell says her awareness of the importance of community service started during her time at the Law School.

“When I was at Mercer, I was the community service chair for the student bar association. Mercer always fostered that community aspect of not only being part of a larger community, but helping the community as well,” Bell says. “A lot of the time, we get caught up in our careers and taking care of business, and we don’t look around to see who we can help. Mercer always made us pause to see who we can help with the skills that we have in place or with things we needed to learn. That has translated into my career as a public defender with the Houston County Public Defender’s office.”

Using the skills already at their disposal, the Houston County Bar Association — along with many other Mercer Law grads around the state — offered a free wills clinic for first responders, healthcare workers, firefighters and police.

“For anyone in that category we prepared simple wills for them free of charge. If something were to happen, they’d be covered and their families would have peace of mind knowing their affairs are in order,” says Bell.

But first responders and school children haven’t been the only ones in need. When the pandemic struck, the services of many governmental agencies came to a halt. Courthouses were closed and legal systems were at a standstill.

Paul Painter III, ’07, founded Bowen Painter Trial Lawyers in Savannah, along with partner W. Andrew Bowen, ’98. In discussing all the potential issues that could arise from a shuttered legal system, Painter offered to chair the State Bar of



COURTESY OF LATOYA BELL

Georgia COVID-19 Pandemic Committee to Assist Legal Services that would help sort through the needs of lawyers and others working in the legal system.

“We put it out to the Bar that if members had an issue, or needed help, they should raise it with us. Our goal was to triage the issues, which we believed there could be thousands of,” Paul Painter III, ’07, says. “I created a matrix that would rank things according to severity of harm, like loss of freedom and financial harm, and looked at the frequency of problems. I looked for recurring issues and issues that we needed to address right away.”

Painter soon realized the committee couldn't solve all the problems that cropped up, but they could help direct people with problems to experts in their areas of need.

"We can't solve all these problems, and we don't need to get in the way," he says. "We just need issues being heard and put in the hands of people who can help. We utilized people within the committee, and reached out and liaised with local bar associations. Or, if it was an issue with a practice area, like needing a notary, we'd source someone in the community who works in the fiduciary law section."

The committee hasn't yet disbanded, as Painter says the impact of COVID-19 shutdowns continues to be felt in the legal community. It may not have been meals for first responders, but Painter and his colleagues used their skills and knowledge to make a positive impact where they could.

"It was a time where everyone was affected by COVID-19, and I felt like those of us on the committee, if we could solve problems that needed to be solved, we could help people in an impactful way, and it would be a rewarding endeavor," he says.

Through the example of lawyers such as Painter, Bell and Peak, the rewards of community service will continue to resonate with the next class of Mercer Law graduates — and even with the next generation.

"This initiative has by far been one of the most rewarding things I have been a part of in my life," Peak says about BWP Cares. "When I first had the idea, I knew it was going to be big, but I'm not sure if I knew exactly what a huge impact it would end up having on so many involved. When we were able, my four children would take an active part in the meal deliveries. I know they have treasured it as much as I have, and I hope it will have a lasting impact on their lives."

Students in the Mercer Law class of 2021 continued to follow in the footsteps of alumni who came before them. Making donations of \$20.21 to the Michael Sabbath Student Support Fund, students decided to help the next class of lawyers. Established by Pete Robinson, '80, to honor professor Michael Sabbath, the expendable fund provides financial resources for law students who have a change of circumstances that causes financial distress and potentially affects their ability to remain enrolled.

The Sabbath Support Fund helped students directly during the pandemic: disbursements were related to job loss during COVID-19 and the fund helped with living, technology and bar related expenses. It helped one student with living and medical expenses when they had lost their job due to the pandemic.

"I will never stray away from being a part of my community. If someone needs help and I can help, then that's what I'm going to do," Bell says. "But I don't do this alone. Members of the Bar have been fantastic during this pandemic in giving with open hearts."



Paul Painter III, '07, chaired the State Bar of Georgia COVID-19 Pandemic to Assist Legal Services to ensure continued access for lawyers and connect them with experts in their areas of need during the pandemic.

COURTESY OF BOWEN/PAINTER/TIMAL LAWYERS

OTHER ACTS of SERVICE

COMING TOGETHER TO MAKE
A DIFFERENCE, MERCER LAW
STUDENTS BOTH PAST AND
PRESENT PUT REAL VALUE ON
SERVICE TO THEIR COMMUNITY,
ESPECIALLY IN TRYING TIMES.

- **Ivy N. Cadle, '07**, has flown COVID-19 tests to testing centers in North Carolina and Florida as an Angel Flight Soars volunteer pilot.
- **Darl H. Champion Jr., '07**, and his firm donated 25 new laptop computers to students who lacked access to computers at home.
- **D. Jordan Josey, '16**, donated convalescent plasma as a possible treatment for COVID-19 patients.
- **Joseph Sumner, '03**, coordinated volunteers in identifying elderly, home-bound residents of Johnson County, who were impacted by the shelter-in-place policy.
- **Jeff Harris, '99**, and **Jed Manton, '06**, created a campaign to encourage people to get vaccinated.

W. ANDREW “ANDY” HAGGARD, ’67

Giving back to help future Mercer Lawyers

By Steve Murray

The reason W. Andrew “Andy” Haggard, ’67, wanted to make a major impact at his alma mater isn’t one bit complicated. “It goes back to the very simple fact that I love Mercer Law School and what Mercer Law School gave me,” he says from Coral Gables, where he recently eased into semi-retirement after more than half a century as a trial attorney.

“It may sound like a cliché, but it’s true. What Mercer gave me is just incredible. It gave me not only a legal education, but the tools to work with.”

At Law Day in 2017, the alumnus announced a \$1 million commitment to create the Haggard Scholars Program at the Law School, a full-tuition award. The first student to earn the three-year scholarship, Dana Nagel, will graduate with the class of 2022.

“Mercer Law School not only taught me how to be a lawyer, it taught me the principles of being a person, being a leader and helping people in the future,” Haggard says. “I never, ever dreamed that any school could give you that much information. It was unbelievable, and the professors were fantastic. Mercer taught me that long hours and hard work pay off.”

Also, these things: “To be humble and don’t brag. To treat people fairly and honestly. Don’t prejudge people. Don’t be afraid to voice your opinions and ideas to clients, just do it tactfully and respectfully — and trust your instincts.”

After earning his JD at Mercer, Haggard was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1967. He served as an assistant state attorney in the 11th Judicial Circuit, and as chief prosecutor, trial counsel and military judge in the Judge Advocate General’s Office (JAG) of the U.S. Air Force from 1968 to ’71 — the youngest military judge ever selected in the field of trial litigation. From 1972 he practiced in the field of personal injury law, wrongful death, negligent security and liquor liability, representing plaintiffs in more than 150 jury trials.

Haggard credits Mercer Law School for providing the focus he needed in his career. “When I went to law school, I didn’t know

exactly what I wanted to do, particularly,” he says. “But while there, I developed an instinct that I wanted to be a trial lawyer. That’s what Mercer helped me do.”

For the scholarship in his name, first preference is given to students who have shown a commitment to trial practice. A secondary preference is toward students graduating from Florida State University (FSU), Haggard’s own undergraduate alma mater, where he served as chairman of the board of trustees from 2010-2012. He also served on the Mercer University board of trustees prior to his semi-retirement.

But he wants to clarify one point: “I never meant the scholarship to be *just* for FSU students,” he says. “It’s for anybody who needs a scholarship, who needs to go to a great law school.”

As it happens, rising third-year student Dana Nagel, the scholarship’s first recipient starting with her enrollment year of 2019, did indeed graduate from Florida State University, with a major in family and child sciences and a minor in criminology. She chose FSU because it was far enough away from family to be on her own, but not so far that she couldn’t go home when she wanted. Also, when she visited the school, “It was the most beautiful campus I’d ever seen,” she says.

Raised in Atlanta, Nagel doesn’t come from a family with a strong legal tradition. Yes, an uncle is an attorney, and so is her stepmother. But her drive toward the courtroom generated independently.

“I’ve known since I was eight that I wanted to go to law school,” she says. “I couldn’t tell you *why*, when I was eight, but it has just strengthened since then.”

In her final year at the Law School, following the disruptions of more than a full year rattled by the pandemic, Nagel will be managing editor for *Mercer Law Review*. “One thing my stepmom always stressed, once I got into law school in my first year, was *law review, law review, law review, law review*,” Nagel says. Her



CHRISTOPHER AN SMITH



LAUREN E. WALDON

LEFT: Andy Haggard, '67, speaks at the annual Law Day in March 2017, where he announced his \$1 million commitment to give back to his alma mater and create the Haggard Scholars Program at Mercer Law School.

ABOVE: Dana Nagel, '22, is the inaugural Haggard Scholar, and is "beyond grateful" for the opportunities the full-tuition scholarship provides for her. She is the incoming president of Mercer Trial Lawyers Association and managing editor for *Mercer Law Review*.

stepmother wasn't herself on her own school's law review, "and she always wished that she had — everyone got such a good experience from it."

Once she was asked to be on *Mercer Law Review* in her second year, Nagel realized it was not an easy gig. "It was definitely time consuming, and not easy work," she says. "Everything took hours and hours at a time, but I felt I was learning a lot from the writing and editing process — especially for future internships and things of that nature."

Also this year, she will be president of the students' Mercer Trial Lawyers Association (MTLA), having previously served as its community relations chair. "This upcoming year I really want to give the members more opportunities to meet professionals and do workshops and seminars geared towards trial and pre-trial," she says. "I am also hoping to expand the membership and try to get more students interested in MTLA. Overall, my main goal is to get MTLA back up and running since COVID had set us back."

Like Haggard, Nagel has also found her career plans being shaped and refined by her time at Mercer. At FSU, she originally thought she'd go into family law, but her internship with an

attorney as an undergrad changed her mind. "One client into family law, and I thought, 'This is not for me,'" she says. "It felt like everyone was leaving angry, no matter what the outcome was. I wasn't getting the feeling I wanted from being a lawyer, of helping somebody and making a difference."

In her last year at the Law School, "I'm definitely still geared toward trial practice," she says. "I've been more interested, since this past semester, in corporate litigation. But I've done a lot of personal injury and medical malpractice work, so I've enjoyed that as well."

As for the scholarship, she says, "I am beyond grateful for the opportunities that have been available to me through Mr. Haggard's generosity. Mr. Haggard has been nothing short of the positive reputation that precedes him. In addition to the financial benefit I gained through this scholarship, I gained a wonderful mentor."

While she's busy planning the start of her own legal career, down in Florida, Haggard is happily winding his down.

As he puts it, "After 50 years of trying cases, you kind of say, 'You know what? Maybe it's time for somebody else to get in there.'"

ALYSSA LEFFALL

Meet the new Dean of Students

By Renee Corwine

During the course of her career, first in law and then in higher education, Alyssa Leffall was always looking for a way to pay forward the support and mentorship she experienced as a student. When a position opened at Mercer University in fall 2019, she jumped at the chance to apply.

“When I came to Macon to interview, I noticed the city was quaint and quiet but had all the amenities I look for in city,” she says. “When I interviewed at Mercer, my takeaway was that people are truly invested in being here. People find that it’s home and a place where it feels safe to learn, grow and work. Over my time here, and especially during COVID, that’s been solidified for me.”

In her role as Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at Mercer Law School, Leffall has helped countless students navigate not only the usual college crises of finances and housing, but also the unique challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which struck in full force only months after she took the job.

“It’s almost like you’re trying to rebuild the plane and reconfigure the plane while you’re learning how to fly the plane. Early on, it was about figuring out how things work while re-evaluating how to make them work during a pandemic,” she says.

Her role, which she described as a “professional problem solver,” includes helping students navigate normal graduate school challenges, some of which exponentially increased in 2020.

“Some of our students who took on part-time jobs to cover expenses lost those jobs during the pandemic. Others had parents who were helping pay for expenses, but couldn’t cover those costs anymore due to lost employment or businesses,” she says. “The past year also involved helping students who are grieving. Most semesters we have a handful of students who experience loss, but the pandemic increased those numbers. I try to help them figure out the best way to find a path forward. Each of us had to help our law school community stay safe at the same time.”

Leffall has first-hand knowledge of how difficult law school can be, even in non-pandemic years. Originally from a small town in

East Texas, she is the child of a father who was an educator and a mother who worked in business management roles. Leffall holds a bachelor’s degree in kinesiology from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. After a professor encouraged her to look into law school during her last semester of coursework, she went on to earn her juris doctor degree, summa cum laude, from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas.

Leffall then practiced commercial litigation for five years with a law firm in downtown Nashville, Tennessee.

“While there, I realized that I enjoyed the people I worked with and the clients I worked for, but my work didn’t really speak to me. In serving as a mentor for local pre-law students, I realized that role did. That prompted me to figure out what I wanted to do career-wise and with life, how I wanted to give back,” she says. A part of that life journey was returning to Texas A&M to earn her master’s in higher education administration and going on to work in several roles in student affairs over the past decade. Through her work at Mercer, Leffall says she’s found the balance she’d been looking for.

“Even though it’s been challenging this year, I’ve been able to see people shine, and that makes me proud to work here and be in the Dean of Students role at Mercer,” she said. “The students give me the most joy. I love to see their energy. When they are able to learn and the lightbulb goes off, that’s joyous. I’m proud of them when they overcome difficult circumstances and meet goals they’ve set.”

Saying that no two days are alike, Leffall provides a listening ear to students and also works with student organizations on campus, advises the Student Bar Association, consults with the law school community about COVID-19 event protocols and hosts programs on leadership development and diversity, which she hopes to expand in the coming year.

“Going into this year, we knew we wanted to create a series about building a community of respect through an equity, diversity

and inclusion lens. Students are learning what these terms mean, how they can prepare themselves to be inclusive leaders within their organizations and how to appreciate diversity and inclusion as future lawyers,” she says.

As a woman of color, it’s a topic that speaks to Leffall’s own experience.

“I’ve been in places where inclusion hasn’t been a priority, and it was unfortunate. People of all social identities should be heard and respected. Diversity is bringing together people with different backgrounds and perspectives. Inclusion is taking it to another level. That’s when individuals are respected and appreciated as valuable members of their communities,” she says. “Having my own life experiences, and hearing those of others, makes me more mindful of doing what I can do as a professional to support our students along their journey.”

For Leffall, supporting students is the key to her work at Mercer. “In every aspect of my career, nothing’s come easy. When you’re dealing with people and helping support them through their

challenges, it’s not always clean — sometimes it’s messy. But you know why you’re there — to provide encouragement and support through the ups and downs. A lot of it is about trust. You hope that you can earn students’ trust and they feel comfortable enough to rely on you or even simply ask a question. That’s a big piece of it for me,” she says. “I love our students and want to talk to them. Having real conversations with them about life and how things are going is a bright spot in my day.

“When I see them learn and grow during their time in law school and then walk across the graduation stage three years later ... wow, that’s pretty awesome.”

Even though it’s been challenging this year, I’ve been able to see people shine, and that makes me proud to work here and be in the Dean of Students role at Mercer.



LEAH VETTER

Patrick Hitt, '21

Navigating advocacy competitions in a virtual world

How would you characterize your experience at the Law School?

If I had to give one word, it would be “challenging.” Law School itself is challenging, but a novel pandemic makes it even more difficult. However, with any challenge, there are a lot of rewards that come with it. For me, doing Mercer Advocacy Council (MAC) was probably one of the most rewarding things I’ve done in law school. The practical skills it teaches I don’t think you would get elsewhere during law school.

How did MAC enhance your law school experience?

In law school, a lot of the answers are usually some variations of “it depends.” In MAC, there is no “it depends.” You have a set position and your job is to argue that position. When you are advocating for someone, which in the real world is your job, “it depends” is not always the best answer. Experience in MAC reorients you to a client-centric perspective. Especially with moot court, one of the most interesting things is that usually a person’s best argument wasn’t always the one they initially thought would be the best. It was likely the argument that they didn’t personally agree with but, once they put in the work and thoroughly analyzed the argument, decided that it was the best one. In and of itself, critically analyzing an argument to advocate the best for your client is a great skill to have.

What has been your MAC involvement over the years?

In Spring 2020 I competed on Intrastate Moot Court Competition, and in Fall 2020 I competed in the National Moot Competition. This past spring I coached the NBSA Thurgood Marshall team, helped coach the Intrastate Moot Court team and, to a lesser extent, the ABA National Client Counseling team. With each competition I helped set up our virtual competition audio and visual logistics. Each of these competitions were virtual and had different requirements.

What specifically was challenging about coaching and competing in virtual student advocacy competitions?

With any change, there are both advantages and disadvantages. The pandemic was no exception. When I competed in the fall, it was the first virtual competition, and we faced a lot of technical and competition challenges that we did not anticipate. Fortunately, we were able to build on that experience for spring competitions, which ran a lot smoother because of it. The obvious technical difficulties are there — anything from networking issues to a transformer blowing out and cutting off electricity. One of the great things we implemented was bringing in guest justices and judges that we probably would have never had without a virtual format. This has been a game changer for practicing. I think virtual guest judges will be something that will continue to happen, even as competitions transition back to in-person.

How has MAC prepared you for practice?

MAC does a very good job of talking to judges as normal people, which at times can be daunting. I am sure when you get into court, it’s the same. You are in court and think, “I don’t deserve to be here,” but any experience with MAC helps reduce the imposter syndrome feeling, because you have done it before. Even if it’s simulated practice, you have already argued an issue before Superior Court Judges, and it sets the foundation as a practicing attorney.

How has the pandemic impacted your law school experience?

It was definitely challenging. We all, myself included, were just trying to figure out how to operate in a virtual world. It took some time — quite a bit of time — to figure out how to operate, how to connect and how to learn in that new virtual format. It’s hard to answer, because my class has only attended annual events like law prom once, since they have been canceled to ensure student safety. Additionally, networking with alumni and practitioners through events or CLE opportunities has not been possible for students to create connections. I think everyone has done the best that they could without really knowing the right answers with the novel nature of the pandemic.



CHRISTOPHER VAN SMITH

Shreya Shah, '22

First Southeast Asian American Mercer Law Review Editor-in-Chief

Describe your Law Review involvement prior to becoming editor-in-chief.

I wanted to use my opportunity on Law Review to improve my writing and editing skills. During my first semester on Law Review, I began writing a Casenote on Qualified Immunity, which was selected for publication in Volume 72. Volunteering at the annual Law Review Symposium, I actively sought out additional manuscripts to practice and refine my editorial skills. I knew I wanted to join the editorial board to give back to an organization that has given so much to me. I made it a priority to meet every member of the current editorial board because I know being a good leader means understanding each role and how our interconnected relationships culminate in a successful publication of our four books — a high standard that the *Mercer Law Review* has upheld since 1949.

How does it feel to be the first Southeast Asian American editor-in-chief?

I am incredibly humbled. It is an honor to join the legacy of women leaders, including Dean Cox, who came before me and to be given the ability to pave a path for those who will come after me. Being the first Southeast Asian, I greatly appreciate the recognition, opportunity and trust bestowed upon me. I did not seek out a membership in Law Review for recognition. One must work hard to achieve positions like these, and simply being diverse is not going to land you a spot. Immersion in extracurricular activities, refining organization and time management skills, forming relationships and becoming a dependable and reliable peer and being brave enough to take initiative, are all essential to being successful in law school and your legal career. Mercer Law School has allowed me to achieve all this and much more. Being the first Indian Asian female to be elected as editor-in-chief is a culmination of many factors, including respect and trust to execute and maintain the excellence of the Law Review established by those who came before me.



How would you characterize your Mercer Law School experience?

The first year of law school is obviously challenging, but Mercer Law affords students multiple engagement opportunities as a first-year student. I quickly learned I had to engage outside of the classroom and get involved with student organizations. I joined the Mercer Immigration Law Society (MILS), International Law Student Association (ILSA) and Asian Pacific American Law Student Association (APALSA). To me, these organizations are not resume fillers, but connect me to issues and causes I am passionate about while providing new avenues for growth, connecting with upperclassmen, finding mentors and networking with future peers in

the profession. The connections I've developed with fellow students have really enhanced my experience at Mercer Law. Despite only having one normal semester of law school before the pandemic hit, I knew that I could not give up and let my work ethic, goals and commitments to organizations fall through the cracks. Remaining engaged in a virtual world came with new challenges, but I was raised to believe if you commit to something, give it your all.

How has the pandemic impacted your Law School experience?

Leaders at the Law School adjusted to the new demands and requirements quickly and efficiently. While remote online learning is never ideal, it was a new challenge for both students and faculty. A hybrid online and in-person format allowed both the Law School and Law Review to strive for excellence this year. We are fortunate to have such a caring and vigilant community committed equally to our education and our safety. Random selection COVID-19 testing, social distancing, masking and remote accommodations are merely the most visible precautions the school undertook to protect our entire law community.

How would you describe the Mercer Law community?

I love our community, and it's a huge factor for why I chose Mercer. To me, the community of students and faculty differentiates Mercer Law School. Professors who care, who ask how you are doing, who stay to talk with you after class, are encouraging mentors. I've made a home here. It is true what they say at Orientation — you won't find the cut-throat competition you expect in a law school environment. There is a lot of trust here, and I think it's our close-knit community that makes Mercer Law School special.

The LAMENTATIONS *of a* **TECHNOPHOB**

To err is human, but to really foul things up you need a computer. | PAUL R. EHRLICH

By Joseph E. Claxton, *Professor Emeritus*

Perched on a mantel in a book-lined room in our home is a small black-and-white photograph of me that was made when I was 30 years old — a long time ago, 45 years to be exact. I am sitting at my desk in my office in the Ryals Building, where the Law School then was located. My feet are propped on the edge of the desk, with a hole in the sole of my right shoe on prominent display. At the time, I was working on two Law Review articles and preparing a new course for the next quarter (no semesters in those days). The desk is covered with case reporters, a variety of other books, not-so-neat stacks of papers, a few yellow pads (definitely not white), a pen holder, and a small plastic box containing notecards.

That desk symbolized the law in action all those years ago, whether the lawyer at the desk was a practitioner, a judge or a young professor in the process of developing an appropriate degree of humility. The desk was my intellectual home. To me, the materials on the desk were orderly and, in an odd way, a source of comfort and an almost tactile sense of pleasure. For most people today, I suspect that my desk would appear to be the physical manifestation of confusion verging on chaos.

One thing that was not on the desk or anywhere near it was a computer. The word itself was associated with activities such as the space program or very sophisticated scientific research.

As everyone associated with the legal profession knows, that was then and this is now. Technology, especially the ubiquitous computer, has become as common to legal education as a first-year course in Contracts. Literally all aspects of legal education at Mercer and other institutions are tied to technology.

The last 12 months have brought a new dimension to the connection between technology and legal education — indeed, between technology and education in general. For almost a century, little children have played with toy airplanes while yelling “zoom.” Now, law professors are resorting to the technological marvel known as Zoom in order to counter the impact of COVID-19. Without Zoom, legal education at Mercer and elsewhere almost certainly would have ground to a halt by April of 2020. Is teaching by Zoom effective? I do not know because I have never been either a teacher or a student who used that capability. I do know that the idea of teaching a class without an array of attentive (or even inattentive) students directly in front of me is simply beyond my comprehension, but I also recognize that for the last year necessity — medical necessity — has been the mother of invention.

Are we now to conclude that technology is an unmitigated good? Many fine people seem to believe so. They only can laugh when a “grouchy old man” expresses a yearning for the research methodologies of a long-ago era. What is not a laughing matter, however, is the often unintended damage done as a consequence of the opportunities technology provides to create various means of communication that are very rapid, and sometimes very harmful. Technology can be like a gun. It can fire venom very quickly, and once the words are sent they leave a mark that never disappears.

One of the early promises of technology in any setting or profession was that it would save a great deal of money. Whether that really is the case may be impossible to determine, but it is



COURTESY OF JOSEPH E. CLAXTON

clear that huge expenditures are being made regularly to support technology itself. If technology is saving money, it first requires extremely significant expenditures that tend to repeat themselves. The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that worldwide spending on technology this year will reach \$3 trillion, an increase of six percent over last year. By any definition, \$3 trillion is real money!

One interesting, and some admittedly might say ridiculous, question is whether technology in the form of artificial intelligence (AI) may some day take the place of the judgments of lawyers — of human beings. In the broad area of hiring alone, one analyst described the possible impact of AI.

...[I]t would grade the people based on their answers to... questions that are preprogrammed, as well as your micro-expressions and facial expressions, to reflect whether you possess the right IQ and EQ [emotional quotient].

Are those words predictive of the future interaction of technology and the legal profession? If so, that technology would be quite destructive. When technology really helps us, it does not control us. When I retired, I told the editor of this publication that the use of technology was one of the three most significant changes in legal education that I had observed during my years on the faculty. What really matters is that technology must always work for us, as it has during the pandemic. For now, perhaps the key question is one posed in a recent article about a Georgia Tech professor who developed an online degree program: Is Zoom U. the future? I surely hope not, but then, the technology for which I yearn is the return of passenger trains for coast-to-coast travel. That confession may undermine my credibility just a bit.



FURMAN SMITH LAW LIBRARY ARCHIVES



FURMAN SMITH LAW LIBRARY ARCHIVES

TOP: Picture of Professor Claxton's desk in the 1970s. Notice there is no computer to be found, with a telephone being the most advanced technology in sight.

ABOVE: An early computer terminal seen in the background as the Law School implemented technology over the years.

RIGHT: Pictured in the library, again, no computer to be found, but prominently within arm's reach — a rololex.

CATHREN PAGE

Balancing a new classroom and city

Cathren Page can pinpoint the early influences that led her to be a professor of legal writing. Growing up in rural Texas (“I literally went fishing with a fishing pole I made myself, with a branch”), her mother was a teacher who helped to found an elementary school out there in the country. “I was part of the opening class,” Page says. “She had an English minor, and she would sort of hover over me, editing my writing. That kind of set up my career path.”

That writing career path led to law when her father endured years of his employer’s age discrimination. Eventually, he overcame his fear of this Fortune 500 company and sued it. “His lawyer, Elliot Tucker, was the big hero of our family, and he remains a family friend to this day.”

Because she was still a schoolchild, Page didn’t get to attend the trial. But each day, her parents came home and filled her in on the latest details of what happened in court. “The story that Elliot was telling at the trial appealed to me, to be that kind of theatrical storyteller,” she says. “I became interested in becoming a trial lawyer and saving the world, of course.” She pauses. “Eighteen-year-old me would be very disappointed to see that I’m looking down the barrel of 50 and still haven’t saved the world.”

So, love of language, storytelling and the law ultimately pointed her toward Macon. Now director of the Law School’s Advanced Legal Writing certificate program, Page previously worked in family law in child protection. She was passionate about the work and feels it has made her life worth living. However, she reached the limits of what she could achieve in the system and wanted to have a broader policy impact.

“I felt I wasn’t doing anything to solve the problem, long-term,” she says. “Plus, it was an 80-hour-a-week job at a 10-hour-a-week salary.” And she had to be mindful of her health. Diagnosed with cancer near the end of her time at law school, she underwent multiple surgeries and, at one point, she couldn’t even move her left arm. As a lawyer, “The travel and the hours sitting at a desk were starting to be difficult with the disability I had,” she says. “So I thought, ‘You know what? I’m going back to my original plan of being a writer. That’s how I can have an impact on the world.’”

So she returned to school for her MFA. Upon graduating, she discovered Applied Legal Storytelling. “It’s like everything I love—law, teaching, and writing—came together in this one thing.” So she became a law professor.

Prior to coming to Mercer, she taught at Barry University Law School in Orlando, and was there when the COVID-19 pandemic erupted. When she learned about the Florida plan to hold an in-

person bar exam with over a thousand bar takers for two days, she feared for her former students. She started a petition, went to the press and worked with advocates to get the exam moved online.

Accepting the position with Mercer for the 2020 fall semester,

as someone with preexisting conditions, Page has taught her classes 100 percent remotely, from the home she shares in Warner Robins (though eventually they would like to move to downtown Macon) with her husband Nicholas “Nico” Baynham, a musician and a cloud architect with Oracle. His job lets him work remotely.

“During the pandemic, we do yoga every day,” she says. She’s a special fan of online courses taught by Julia Marie. “Her philosophy for yoga is all about being patient with yourself, and understanding that you grow in increments,” she says. “That’s what I aspire to be in

“It’s like everything I love — law, teaching, and writing — came together in this one thing.”

the classroom — someone who’s inspiring and encouraging, but also pushes you to do the hardest things.” She and Nico work out with Peloton and run a couple of times a week.

“I believe in silver linings and in putting on your own oxygen mask when the cabin depressurizes,” she says. “To cope with the pandemic, I nurture my health so that I have the best energy to give to my students in the classroom. Online teaching was such a challenge at first, but I have fallen in love with several tools that I dug into my own pocket to use—like the advanced version of Kahoot and Mentimeter. This technology enables professors to be more interactive and provide more assessment in a constructive manner.” Once the coronavirus eases off, she looks forward to meeting students in person and regularly seeing colleagues in person as well.

“I’m loving Mercer so far,” she says. “The biggest thing that bugs me about the remoteness, it’s not so much the students. Back at Barry, when you were in the office you’d stop in and talk to your colleagues and form these informal relationships right away. Right

now, I’m only talking to my colleagues when it’s programmed on Zoom.”

That said, “I’m really loving my colleagues and feeling very fortunate to be at a place that feels really nice and healthy.” In fact, having to meet via Zoom may have caused faculty communication to be better than it might be in other years. “We’re all able to be very frank about what the institutional challenges are, and they are such interesting, caring people when it comes to the world and their jobs.”

As for her legal writing students, “They’re eager and they want feedback, so that’s reassuring.”

So, moving to a new university and a new state at the height of a global health crisis may not be ideal. “On the one hand, it’s been the craziest experience,” Page agrees. “On the other hand, it’s been easier than you might think it would be.” After a year of learning the ropes, she wants to focus on enhancing the writing certificate program in the upcoming year and hopes to hear everyone’s ideas and build consensus.

Practicing yoga every day during the pandemic has shaped Cathren Page’s teaching approach to be “inspiring and encouraging, but also pushing you to do the hardest things.”



LEAH VETTER

PAM WILKINS

Walking through first year at Mercer Law

By Steve Murray

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, Prof. Pam Wilkins was teaching at University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. That Michigan city was, along with New York, one of the first to be swiftly, badly affected by the coronavirus.

“On a Wednesday in March, I remember a panel discussion where someone in public health said that before this is over, we will all know someone who has died,” she recalls. Moving in May 2020 to Macon, a place slower to be hit by the virus, she felt that “people as a group seemed to take the virus a little less seriously.”

In prior years, the summer might have offered casual meet-and-greet opportunities to get to know her new faculty colleagues. That didn’t happen. Instead, a regular series of Zoom meetings was set up, and Wilkins thinks, unexpectedly, the remote format was a plus. “The series was a super-helpful orientation for the school,” she says. Once classes started, the mix of remote and in-person teaching meant she could move into her office at the Law School and have those delayed face-to-face encounters. (She still has not met, in real life, the other new faculty hire, Cathren Page; but via the small screen, “We have gotten to know each other fairly well.”)

Joining the faculty who teach legal writing faculty, Wilkins has a background in a wide range of the law, from death penalty issues to feminist legal theory. “My interests are pretty eclectic, which is a strength and a weakness,” she admits. She has contributed to the Feminist Judgment Project, which was created by former Mercer Law School professor Linda Berger, rewriting established legal opinions in the United States from

a feminist prospective, using only precedents that were established in the period when the laws were made.

Her writing has been cited by some of the nation’s top law reviews, including the Vanderbilt Law Review, the Northwestern University Law Review and the Yale Journal of Law and Feminism. “I expect my writing will continue to straddle storytelling, narrative theory, women and feminist issues and issues of criminal law,” she says. At the Law School, she teaches legal writing, torts and other topics, including the first seminar on Police Practices

On moving here, Wilkins made her home in the heart of Macon. “I’m a big walker...I get to do a whole lot of walking, getting to know downtown and the Mercer campus and doing it in a relaxed way,” she says. “I was struck by how pretty the undergraduate campus is, and the park on Magnolia and the beautiful neighborhoods. I learned right away this is a great place to walk a dog.”

That would be Buster, an 18-pound poodle-terrier mix. “Anyone who has met me in Macon while walking the dog will remember him, if not me,” Wilkins says with a laugh. “He’s an energetic guy.” (She describes him as a semi-rescue, taking him on when the previous owner could no longer care for him, due to a family member’s dementia diagnosis.)

Over the academic year, she’s worked with fellow legal writing expert, professor Sue Painter-Thorne, on the 2021 Applied Legal Storytelling Conference, which Mercer is hosting for the Legal Writing Institute and Clinical Legal Education Association as sponsors. The Conference is an international event that occurs every other year. Initially it was scheduled to be held, in-person, in London. Then came the coronavirus, wreaking havoc on those plans.

“I expect my writing will continue to straddle storytelling, narrative theory, women and feminist issues and issues of criminal law.”

When it became clear that the conference could not be held in London, Wilkins and Painter-Thorne submitted a proposal that focused on the subject of interrogating the past. “We thought Macon would be a hard sell, because [the conference] is usually at a sexy location,” Wilkins says. “Now, Macon is a wonderful location, but it’s not San Francisco.” In the end, though, their proposal led to Mercer being chosen as the host for a virtual conference.

So how does Wilkins have fun in her off hours and summers? “Some of it depends on these strange times,” she says. “I love hiking and going to national parks.” Among the ones she’s visited are Glacier, Yellowstone and Isle Royale. She also plays the flute. “I would no longer say I play seriously, but there was a time and place — my un-lived life — I could have played in a small city orchestra.”

In June 2021, she stepped into the role of associate dean of academic affairs, a job she also performed at Detroit Mercy School of Law. “There is no better way to get to know an institution than doing this,” she says, “working as part of a team with senior administrators and the rest of the building, too.”

Growing up in Greenville, South Carolina, (“It was much smaller and sleepier, but it’s a gorgeous, hip city now”), Wilkins attended UNC-Chapel Hill as an undergrad. She earned her J.D. at the University of South Carolina School of Law. After her time in chilly Michigan, she’s glad to be returning to the South; her sister and brother-in-law live in Milledgeville.

But she had to adjust to one, polite Southernism when she returned and encountered Mercer’s student body: “Being called ‘ma’am.’”

Pam Wilkins learns a lot about her new community by walking in her and Buster’s favorite walking spots: downtown and Mercer’s undergraduate campus (pictured).



LEAH YETTER

FOURTEEN YEARS AND 90 COLUMNS LATER, AND

Writing Still Matters

BY PROFESSORS DAVID HRICIK AND KAREN SNEDDON

IN 2007, WE BEGAN TO WRITE OUR “WRITING MATTERS” COLUMN IN THE GEORGIA BAR JOURNAL. IN WHAT IS PROBABLY THE ONLY WAY WE ARE LIKE THE ROLLING STONES, WE DID NOT EXPECT THE COLUMN TO RUN FOR MORE THAN A COUPLE OF YEARS.¹ THIRTY STUDIO ALBUMS LATER, THE STONES ARE STILL AT IT; 90 COLUMNS LATER, SO ARE WE.

Writing matters at Mercer because the university continues its commitment to prepare students for the practice of law, which now more than ever requires superb writing skills. We offer not only a variety of writing instruction, but also other opportunities for our students to write more than typical law students. Students write more than memos and briefs. They write complaints, emails, interrogatories, letters, contracts and PowerPoint presentations. Externships, experiential courses and upper-level writing courses promote development of advanced writing skills. Members of *Mercer Law Review* and moot court teams write complex documents.

In addition, students have the opportunity to earn a Certificate for Advanced Legal Research, Writing and Drafting. Students take a variety of courses as part of the certificate program — still one of the only such certificates in the country — including taking two semesters of writers’ workshops. Our certificate students continue to progress to become better, confident and creative legal writers. Writing matters at Mercer because it is a critical skill for lawyers.

With that in mind, here we’d like to share our “greatest hits” of five critical lessons from those 90 columns, in the hopes we can help you to continue to become a better legal writer.

¹In 1964, Mick Jagger said, “I know this won’t last. I give the Stones another two years.”

CRITICAL LESSONS FROM 14 YEARS OF “WRITING MATTERS.”

The name of our column really does say it all. Writing, specifically legal writing, matters. Below are five lessons we think are particularly important to all legal writers.

1. EACH STAGE OF THE WRITING PROCESS IS IMPORTANT.

The writing process can be divided into five stages: (1) prewriting, (2) writing, (3) revising, (4) editing and (5) submitting. A writer may compress some of the stages, but each stage has its own distinct purpose.

Prewriting is the planning stage. Prewriting techniques, such as outlining, freewriting and mapping, allow for the generation of ideas and the identification of connections. The writing stage requires the writer to put the words on the page. Revising, or the “rewriting” stage, develops and refines the text by adding, removing, or reorganizing text. The editing stage, also called “proofreading,” focuses on polishing the text. For many of us, the last stage is the hardest — letting go — and should happen only when the writer is ready to share the text with the reader.

2. WRITER’S BLOCK HAPPENS TO EVEN EXPERT WRITERS.

Even for a writer who has written a particular type of document dozens of times, writer’s block can happen. If you find yourself staring at a blank screen or sheet of paper, try a new approach. Create a flow chart. Talk through the issues with a colleague. Write the conclusion first. Or, go do something else: switch to another task to give your brain a break. A new approach can give you inspiration to begin or finish the document.

3. ORGANIZATION IS CRITICAL.

Good legal writing is well organized. Legal writers use the organizational paradigm known as IRAC (that’s issue, rule, application, conclusion) for a reason. The paradigm helps a writer convey the information in an order expected by a reader.

But IRAC is only the beginning of good organization. Strong paragraphing is essential. Each paragraph should begin with a thesis sentence, include the explanations and examples, and then close with a takeaway or linking sentence. Each paragraph should be complete, cohesive, and unified with what comes before and after. Transitions also help the reader navigate the text from beginning to end. The content of any text is important. But that content must be well organized.

4. SCREEN WRITING AND SCREEN READING ARE (AND WILL BE) CRITICAL SKILLS.

The pandemic has required all of us to consider new approaches to both reading and writing. Now, more than ever, we are writing exclusively on digital devices for an audience who will read our work exclusively on digital devices. Screen writing may appear to be efficient, but for writers, studies show it can lead to less and less effective proofreading. In addition, readers struggle with screen-based text. Studies show that more white space, more diagrams and fewer footnotes and hyperlinks help convey meaning more efficiently and effectively.

5. FEEDBACK IMPROVES WRITING.

Seeking meaningful feedback during the writing process helps produce a more complete, developed and polished final product. In many of the five stages, getting responses on drafts can help make a text better. Don’t be afraid to ask for feedback. When you do, help your reader by identifying specific concerns and invite any and all suggestions. Perhaps most importantly, listen to and be open to the responses.

CONCLUSION

Yes, it’s only legal writing...but we like it. While you can’t always get what you want, we hope you have at least gotten some satisfaction from this piece on why writing matters.

MERCER LAW SCHOOL WELCOMES NEW FACULTY

Mercer University School of Law is proud to welcome three new professors to its faculty for the upcoming 2021-2022 academic year.

"We are excited for Professors Carlson, Kundawala and Nixon-Jones to join the Mercer School of Law faculty as we continue to enhance our legal curriculum," said Dean Cathy Cox. "The vast experience, creativity and dedication that these professors bring to the classroom will prove invaluable to our instruction and preparation of students for all aspects of law practice."

COURTESY OF BONNIE CARLSON



Bonnie Carlson, Assistant Professor of Law

B.A., University of Virginia

J.D., The George Washington University Law School

Professor Carlson joins the faculty with extensive expertise in advocating for domestic violence victims. As a clinical teaching fellow in the Domestic Violence Clinic at the Georgetown University Law Center, she co-taught the clinic seminar and supervised clinic students in their representation of domestic violence victims in Civil Protection Order litigation.

Prior to working at Georgetown, Carlson was a training and technical assistance staff attorney with the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence (ABA CDSV) and a family law staff attorney representing victims of domestic violence. At Mercer Law School, Carlson will teach courses including Law of Lawyering and Family Law. She will also coordinate and launch a domestic violence clinic in Fall 2022.

LAUREN E. MAULDIN



Ishaq Kundawala, Professor of Law and the Southeastern Bankruptcy Law Institute and W. Homer Drake Jr. Endowed Chair in Bankruptcy Law

B.A., Austin College

J.D., Tulane Law School

Professor Kundawala joins Mercer Law School as a tenured professor of law. Prior to Mercer, he taught at Nova Southeastern University's Shepard Broad College of Law for 13 years. He created a consumer bankruptcy externship program allowing students to gain hands-on experience representing consumer debtors in bankruptcy proceedings on a pro bono basis. He intends to launch a similar program for Mercer Law School students.

Prior to his teaching career, Kundawala was in private practice in Dallas, Texas. As an associate at the international law firm of Baker Botts L.L.P., he handled the estimation and ultimate resolution of approximately \$1.5 billion of toxic tort related bankruptcy claims against one of the nation's largest copper producers. He also clerked for the Chief Bankruptcy Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Texas. Kundawala is licensed to practice law in both Texas and Georgia. At Mercer Law School, he will teach Contracts and Bankruptcy courses.

COURTESY OF LATISHA NIXON-JONES



Latisha Nixon-Jones, Assistant Professor of Law

B.S.M., Tulane University

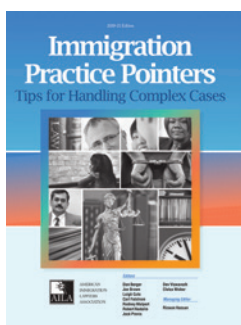
J.D., Southern University Law Center

Professor Nixon-Jones is an emerging voice in the developing field of disaster law. Prior to joining Oregon University School of Law's Legal Research and Writing faculty, Nixon-Jones was the assistant clinical professor of the Disaster Law Clinic at Southern University Law Center (SULC). She is the recipient of the University of Oregon's 2020 COVID-19 Research Innovation Award. Her research on COVID-19 and its disparaging effects on vulnerable populations in the class has been presented in *The Conversation*, and several other national publications.

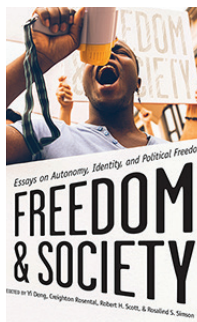
Nixon-Jones is a member of the Disaster Housing Recovery Coalition and is a certified business coach and a national SCORE mentor. She also serves on the Association of Legal Writing Directors' members committee and the Legal Writing Institute's diversity committee. Nixon-Jones will teach Torts, Legal Writing and Disaster Law at Mercer Law.



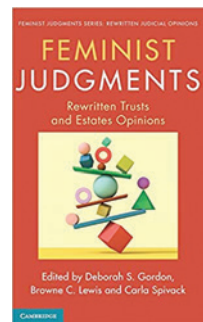
David C. Hricik
REMEDIES: A PRACTICAL APPROACH
 (Carolina Academic Press 2020).



Scott C. Titshaw, et. al.
Supporting LGBTQI+ Client Identities and How to Obtain Gender-Affirming Immigration Documents, in **IMMIGRATION PRACTICE POINTERS** 105 (AILA 2020–2021 ed. 2020).



Gary J. Simson
Constitutional Law and the Culture Wars: When Religious Liberty and the Law Conflict, Which Should Prevail?, in **FREEDOM AND SOCIETY: ESSAYS ON AUTONOMY, IDENTITY, AND POLITICAL FREEDOM** (Yi Deng, Creighton Rosental, Robert Scott & Rosalind Simson eds.) (March 2021).



Karen J. Sneddon
Rewritten Opinion: Estate of Myers, in **FEMINIST JUDGMENTS: REWRITTEN TRUSTS AND ESTATES OPINIONS** 137 (Deborah S. Gordon, Browne C. Lewis, & Carla Spivack eds.) (Cambridge Univ. Press Aug. 2020).

Daisy H. Floyd, Timothy W. Floyd & Patrick E. Longan, *A Virtue Ethics Approach to Teaching Professional Identity: Lessons for the First Year and Beyond*, **UMKC L. REV.** 3 (2021).

Cathren Page, *An Unusual Suspect? Unreliable Narrators in Fiction and Law*, **9 BERKELEY J. ENT. & SPORTS L.J.** 1 (2020).

James Fleissner & Patrick Longan, *Professionalism and the Attorney General of the United States: Timely Lessons from Edward Levi and Griffin Bell*, **72 MERCER L. REV.** ____ (forthcoming).

Linda D. Jellum, *Portland Cement Association v. Ruckelshaus*, in **ADMINISTRATIVE LAW STORIES** ____ (forthcoming).

Stephen M. Johnson, *From Protecting Water Quality to Protecting States' Rights: Fifty Years of Supreme Court Clean Water Act Statutory Interpretation*, **73 SMU L. REV.** ____ (forthcoming).

Mark L. Jones, Cathren Page, Suzianne Painter-Thorne, & Gary Simson, *"It's Alright, Ma, It's Life and Life Only": Are Colleges and Universities Legally Obligated During the Coronavirus Pandemic to Exempt High-Risk Faculty from In-Person Teaching Requirements?*, **48 PEPP L. REV.** ____ (forthcoming).

Pamela A. Wilkins, *Commentary to Etsitty v. Utah Transit Authority*, in **FEMINIST JUDGMENTS: REWRITTEN EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION OPINIONS** 278 (Cambridge Univ. Press, Oct. 2020).



FACULTY LAUNCH LEGAL EDUCATION PODCAST

Linda Jellum, associate dean for faculty research and development and Ellison Capers Palmer Sr. Endowed Chair in Tax Law, **Billie Jo Kaufman**, law library director and professor of law, and **David Ritchie**, director of international initiatives and professor of law, launched the podcast, Talking Legal Ed. The podcast focuses on cutting-edge legal issues and bringing them into the classroom.

"We created this podcast because, as teachers, we always struggle with how much of the real world to bring into the classroom," says Jellum. "Learning what other good teachers do well helps us improve as teachers."

A new episode is released monthly and features legal educators from across the country as they discuss current events and how to apply them in the classroom.



LISTEN NOW

David Pope Receives Manley F. Brown Distinguished Adjunct Law Professor Award

Adjunct professor **David Pope, '92**, received the 11th annual Manley F. Brown Distinguished Adjunct Law Professor Award recognizing his dedication and service to the School of Law as an adjunct professor.

Pope is a partner at Spivey Pope Green, LLC of Macon. He practices business and corporate law, employment and human resources law and has expertise in other areas such as historic tax credits, tax-exempt organizations and tax planning.

He began teaching as an adjunct law professor in 2008. Pope lends his expertise to teaching classes such as Business Drafting, Business Associations and Secured Transactions.

Students repeatedly praise his classes and the practical wisdom he brings to the classroom.

"David has been a significant member of our adjunct faculty now for more than a decade," says Dean Cathy Cox. "He is very deserving of the recognition as the recipient of the Manley F. Brown Award. We are grateful for his professionalism, his commitment to our students and his willingness to pitch in whenever we need him."

This award is named in honor of distinguished trial lawyer and Mercer Law alumnus, **Manley F. Brown, '64**. Brown created the first Trial Advocacy course at Mercer Law School and taught more than 1,000 students during his 44 years as an adjunct professor. He was the first recipient of the award in 2010.



NICOLE TYLER

Cathy Cox appointed to Federal Nominations Advisory Committee

Cathy Cox, '86, dean and professor of law, was appointed by U.S. Senators Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock to serve on the Federal Nominations Advisory Commission, which will review and recommend individuals for federal judgeships, U.S. Attorney, and U.S. Marshal positions in the Northern, Middle and Southern Districts of Georgia.

Legal Writing Leadership

Karen J. Sneddon, professor of law, accepted an invitation to join the Editorial Board of the Legal Writing Institute Monograph Series for Volume 10 and Volume 11. She was also elected chair of the Association of Legal Writing Directors Scholars Forum Committee for 2020-2021.

Pam Wilkins, associate professor of law, was selected to serve on the Editorial Board of Legal Writing: *The Journal of the Legal Writing Institute* (JLWI), a peer-reviewed journal devoted to the theory, substance, and pedagogy of legal writing.

ABA Leadership

Billie Jo Kaufman, law library director and professor of law, was appointed to serve as the liaison from the ABA Standing Committee on the Law Library of Congress to the ABA.

BOARD OF VISITORS FACULTY AWARDS

The Mercer Law School Board of Visitors has created — and funded — two faculty awards to recognize and further incentivize the outstanding academic work and commitment of our faculty.



STEPHEN SALDIVIA JONES

The inaugural **Board of Visitors Award for Excellence in Scholarship Award** was awarded to **Jeremy Kidd** in August 2020.

His article, *Funding and the Litigation Funding Debate*, 76 WASH & L. REV. 261 (2019), offers "a cutting-edge exploration of a unique topic: how litigation funders have purchased probate rights from putative heirs," says Board of Visitors Chair, J. Henry Walker, '86, managing partner of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton LLP. "Kidd provides sophisticated doctrinal and economic analysis about whether these transactions should be considered a loan and thoughtful policy analysis about whether probate litigation funding is exploitative of the poor."



ROGER DEBIVEN

The inaugural **Board of Visitors Excellence in Teaching Award** was awarded to **Michael Sabbath** in February 2021. Nominations were received from the Class of 2015.

"During his 42 years in the classroom, Professor Sabbath has served as a mentor to so many students," says Walker. "He certainly embodies all the qualities set forth in the award criteria, including imparting competence in subject matters taught, ability to inspire and motivate students to high achievement and standards of integrity and a lasting educational influence."

"The Law School is most appreciative of the Board of Visitors' generous support of our faculty and their recognition of the importance of excellent teaching and scholarship."

DEAN CATHY COX

ClassNotes

Share your personal and professional news with Mercer Law. Submit Class Notes to news@law.mercer.edu

Reported through March 2021.

1949

Thomas H. Morton was honored by the Meansville City Council for 23 years of service. Morton is 98 years old and has served as an attorney for 72 years.

1966

The Hon. J. Nathan Deal received the *Daily Report* Lifetime Achievement Award for his lasting mark on the Georgia legal community.

1972

The Hon. Thomas E. Cauthorn III was recognized with the 2020 Tradition of Excellence Award – General Practice at the State Bar of Georgia's annual meeting. This award is presented to four outstanding lawyers by the General Practice and Trial Law Section: one plaintiff lawyer, one defense lawyer, one general practice lawyer and one judge.

David F. Sipple was selected as one of the Best Lawyers 2021 in the area of Admiralty and Maritime Law. Sipple is a partner at HunterMaclean in Savannah.

1973

The Hon. Hermann W. Coolidge Jr. retired from the Chatham County State Court after 16 years of service.

1976

Randall A. Jordan was selected as one of the Best Lawyers 2021 in the area of Railroad Law. Jordan is a partner at HunterMaclean in Savannah.

The Hon. Samuel D. Ozburn retired in April 2020 from the Alcovy Circuit Superior Court, after serving since 1995. He has been appointed as senior superior court judge by Gov. Brian Kemp and will continue to preside over the Newton County Resource Court and other superior court proceedings.

1979

The Hon. Jeannette L. Little retired after serving as state court judge in Troup County for more than 30 years. She was honored with a painting that will be hung in the county courtroom.

1980

Virgil L. Adams was recognized with the 2020 Tradition of Excellence Award – Plaintiff at the State Bar of Georgia's annual meeting. This award is presented to four outstanding lawyers by the General Practice and Trial Law Section: one plaintiff lawyer, one defense lawyer, one general practice lawyer and one judge.

1981

The Hon. R. Violet Bennett was sworn in by Judge Tammy Thornton on Dec. 21, 2020 to begin her third term as state court judge for Wayne County.

The Hon. David C. Morgan announced his retirement at the end of 2020 after 24 years of service on the Indian River County Court bench. Judge Morgan and his wife reside in Vero Beach, Florida.

Doc Schneider of King & Spalding received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the *Daily Report* for his lasting mark on the Georgia legal community.

1983

Tyson Blue announced the release of *Hope and Miracles: The Shawshank Redemption and The Green Mile (Two Screenplays by Frank Darabont)*, published by Gauntlet Press. This is Blue's second book and his first as an editor.

T. Martin Fiorentino was recognized in the third edition of *Florida Trend's* Florida 500 list, highlighting the 500 most influential executives in different economic sectors throughout the state. Fiorentino serves as president of The Fiorentino Group, one of the largest government affairs and business development firms in Florida.

1984

Stephanie J. Batcher received the 2020 Wells College Association of Alumnae and Alumni Award for Distinguished Career in the Field of Law and Public Service as a public defender and legal educator.

Nancy A. Grace signed a multi-year contract with Fox Nation, a streaming service. Her show, "America's Most Wanted Overtime," premiered on March 15, 2021, at 10 p.m. for a deeper dive into cases showcased on "America's Most Wanted."

The Hon. M. Cindy Morris, Conasauga Judicial Circuit Superior Court, became chairperson for the Georgia Commission on Dispute Resolution. She was sworn in by Justice John J. Ellington, Supreme Court of Georgia, at the Feb. 3, 2021 Commission meeting.

1985

W. Joseph Hollis Jr. joined The McMahan Law Firm in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

1987

Wesley T. Leonard was elected judge of Troup County State Court, succeeding the Hon. Jeannette L. Little, '79, who retired at the end of her term.

1988

David M. Calhoun of Morris, Manning & Martin LLP, was recognized by the *Daily Report* as Most Effective Deal-Maker in 2020. This award recognizes transaction lawyers who get repeat business for how they achieve their clients' goals so that both sides sign on the dotted lines.

Frederick "Rick" L. Hooper III was elected chair of the Georgia Association of Manufacturers. Hooper is the vice president, chief legal & advocacy officer of Shaw Industries Group, Inc. in Dalton.

John H. Irby was appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp to the Board of Directors of the Georgia Lottery Corporation.

Deborah D. Tillman retired as chief assistant district attorney for Mobile County in Alabama after 25 years of service. Tillman previously served as U.S. Air Force Staff Judge Advocate (JAG) for five years upon graduation from Mercer and received an honorable discharge.

1989

Cindy A. Brazell of Holland & Knight was named a Distinguished Leader by the *Daily Report* for achieving impressive results in 2019 and demonstrating leadership while doing so.

J. Christopher Clark received the Macon Bar Association William A. Bootle Professionalism Award. The award is given to a lawyer whose conduct and interactions with clients, adversaries, courts and the public demonstrate an ongoing commitment to integrity, to ethics and to promoting respect and collegiality in the profession of the law.

Clark, who serves on the Law School's Board of Visitors, is a partner at Clark, Smith & Sizemore, a personal injury law firm in Macon.

John "Cal" Harris, Jr. joined the Atlanta business litigation firm Poole Huffman LLC. Harris was most recently with the Law Office of Kenneth Sisco representing Farmers Insurance.

Jeffrey R. Hussey was promoted to director of public interest and litigation at Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida Inc. (CLSMF) to ensure a strategic focus for program litigation and advocacy and provide technical assistance, co-counsel, training and strategic support on litigation and systemic advocacy and emerging legal advocacy approaches to CLSMF's diverse and highly talented legal team.

1990

The Hon. Michael P. Boggs was unanimously elected by the justices of the Supreme Court of Georgia to serve as presiding justice, succeeding Justice David Nahmias, who will become the court's chief justice starting July 1.

The Hon. Vincent C. Crawford was reappointed chief judge of the DeKalb County Juvenile Court for another two-year term.

J. Jeffrey Deery was named chairman of the Lake Highland Preparatory School Board of Trustees. Deery is a shareholder with the law firm of Winderweede, Haines, Ward & Woodman, PA in Orlando, Florida.

1991

Jonathan W. Hedgepeth was named to the SuperLawyers Top 100 list for the second year in a row. Hedgepeth was also included in the 2021 edition of *Best Lawyers in America*. He is a founding partner of Hedgepeth Heredia LLC, a family law firm based in Atlanta. He and wife, **Jane Warren Hedgepeth, '92**, are proud to announce that their son, Warren Hedgepeth, entered Mercer Law School as a first-year student in August 2020.

1992

Bryan D. Anderson was promoted to executive vice president and president of external affairs for Southern Company.

Margaret Daly Heap was appointed to the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles by Gov. Brian Kemp.

2021 COMMENCEMENT

May 15, 2021

J.D. Graduates: **120**

J.D./MBA Graduates: **3**

Graduates with an Advanced
Legal Writing, Research and
Drafting Certificate: **39**

George Waldo Woodruff
Award of Excellence:

Rachel G. Ness-Maddox

Commencement Speaker:

The Hon. M. Yvette Miller, '80,
Presiding Judge,
Georgia Court of Appeals

Reynold J. Kosek Excellence
in Teaching Award:

James P. Fleissner



CHRISTOPHER IAN SMITH AND LEAH YETTER



ClassNotes

1993

Lori Reese Patton was named a new member of the Wesleyan College Board of Trustees starting October 2020.

H. Craig Stafford was re-elected to serve the State Bar of Georgia's Board of Governors representing the Atlantic Judicial Circuit Post 1.

1994

The Hon. Sara L. Doyle received the 2019-20 Distinguished Judicial Service Award from the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia at its annual meeting in June 2020.

The Hon. Lester Miller was sworn in as the mayor of Macon-Bibb County on Dec. 30, 2020 after being elected to office in August. He will serve a four-year term.

Lynne Moore Nelson was named court administrator for the Magistrate Court of Fulton County. Nelson was most recently chief of staff for Fulton County's District Attorney Paul Howard Jr.

1995

The Hon. David L. Cannon Jr. was re-elected to serve the Blue Ridge Circuit Post 1 representing Cherokee County on the State Bar of Georgia's Board of Governors and was installed on June 13, 2020.

R. Hank Pittman was named partner at Hall Booth Smith, PC. Pittman practices transportation, education, government, general liability, agribusiness and food and medical malpractice.

1996

Mark E. Powell was appointed to the Orange County Superior Court Mediation Panel. The panel is a collection of highly-accomplished legal professionals to which the court refers mediation work. Powell is a partner at Snell & Wilmer in Costa Mesa, California.

1997

Christopher D. Huskins was re-elected to serve the State Bar of Georgia Board of Governors' Post 3 seat from the Ocmulgee Circuit. Huskins practices in Eatonton.

1998

Mark E. Beatty was promoted to the role of senior vice president, global total rewards for ViacomCBS Inc. following the merger of the two media companies. In this role, Beatty leads all compensation and benefits-related functions for the combined company.

Cheveda Grier McCamy was appointed judge on the Alcovy Circuit Superior Court by Gov. Brian Kemp. McCamy was formerly chief assistant district attorney in Henry County. McCamy also serves as Mercer's Black Law Students Association (BLSA) Alumni Council secretary.

Robert W. Smith Jr. was appointed to the Judicial COVID-19 Task Force established by Supreme Court of Georgia Chief Justice Harold D. Melton as an ad hoc committee of the Judicial Council. The mission of the task force is to assist courts in conducting remote proceedings and restore more in-court proceedings, including jury trials and grand jury proceedings, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jonathan J. Tuggle was recognized by Best Lawyers in America 2021 as a leading lawyer in the area of family law. He was also recognized in the 2021 Georgia Super Lawyers for family law. Tuggle is a founding shareholder of Boyd Collar Nolen & Tuggle.

1999

Tabitha Ponder Beckford was appointed magistrate judge for Cobb County. Beckford currently serves as development officer for Mercer's Black Law Students Association (BLSA) Alumni Council.

Jeffrey R. Harris was named to the prestigious Georgia Super Lawyers' Top 100 list, making him a four-time Top 100 honoree. A founding partner at Harris Lowry Manton LLP in Atlanta and Savannah, Harris was also recognized as a 2021 Georgia Super Lawyer in the Personal Injury General: Plaintiff category.

L. Scott Mayfield was appointed solicitor for the City of Griffin Municipal Court by the Griffin Board of Commissioners. Mayfield is a partner at Smith Welch Webb & White LLC in Barnesville.

Bryan C. Ramos was appointed by the United States Commission on Civil Rights to serve on the Georgia State Advisory Committee for four years. The committee will assist the commission with its fact-finding, investigative and information dissemination functions. Ramos practices workers' compensation in Atlanta.

2000

Jacob E. Daly was awarded the 2020 President's Award from the Georgia Defense Lawyers Association. Daly practices tort and catastrophic loss at Freeman Mathis & Gary LLP in Atlanta.

Erick Woods Erickson was placed in WSB-radio Atlanta's noon to 3:00 p.m. weekday slot, which became open after the death of Rush Limbaugh.

Andrew R. Fiddes was promoted to lieutenant commander in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. As a reservist, he is assigned to U.S. Northern Command in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where he serves as a domestic operations officer in support of homeland defense and defense support of civil authorities missions.

Rosemary M. Green was appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp as judge on the Cherokee Judicial Circuit Superior Court, which includes Bartow and Gordon counties. She was most recently the district attorney for the Cherokee Circuit.

Jewel Hanson Scott was elected as Superior Court Judge for the Clayton Judicial Circuit.

Connie L. Williford was named Superior Court Judge for the Macon Judicial Circuit by Gov. Brian Kemp. Williford fills the vacancy left by Judge Verda Colvin, who was recently appointed to the Georgia Court of Appeals. Williford was recently honored as one of the recipients of the 2020 Justice Robert Benham Award for Community Service for her significant contributions to her community, demonstrating the positive contributions of members of the Bar beyond their legal or official work. She also received the 2020 Macon Bar Association Lawyer of the Year Award.

2001

Gina Ginn Greenwood joined Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP as partner and co-chair of the firm's data breach response team. Greenwood was most recently co-chair of a similar group at Baker Donelson.

Scott A. Minot announced the launch of Blue Sky Law in Smyrna on May 1, 2020. Minot is a partner of the firm, providing comprehensive employment and business counsel to the Atlanta community and beyond.

2002

Bradley M. Harmon was selected as one of the Best Lawyers 2021 in the area of Litigation - Construction. He was also listed as 2021 Georgia Super Lawyer in the area of Business Litigation. Harmon is the managing partner of HunterMaclean in Savannah.

Tomieka Richards Daniel was recognized by the *Daily Report* as Best Mentor for her efforts to mentor less-experienced colleagues to become better lawyers. She received the Commitment to Equality Award from the Houston County Bar Association at its luncheon on Dec. 4, 2020, and the inaugural Black Law Students Association (BLSA) Alumni of the Year award at the virtual BLSA Alumni Gala on Oct. 23, 2020. Daniel was appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp as a member of the Georgia Commission on Family Violence. Daniel is managing attorney of the Georgia Legal Services Program.

The Honorable Robert W. Guy Jr. was given the Governor's Award of Excellence by the Rotary International District 6920 for his outstanding service through leadership by example.

Richard L. Perryman III was appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp as judge on the Alapaha Judicial Circuit Superior Court, which includes Atkinson, Berrien, Clinch, Cook and Lanier counties.

2003

K. Alexander Khoury joined the Atlanta office of Smith Gambrell & Russell LLP as the firm's first director of e-discovery and as a partner in its litigation practice. Khoury was most recently with Balch & Bingham LLP.

Wesley G. Person was appointed Gwinnett County Recorder's Court Judge by the judges of Gwinnett County State Court.

Krishna G. Ramaraju joined Syngenta in Durham, North Carolina, as assistant general counsel in February.

Timothy C. Sanders was appointed Thomasville city attorney by the city council. Sanders is a partner at Alexander & Vann LLP and serves as a member of the Mercer Law Alumni Association Board of Directors.

2004

T. Joseph Boyd announced the opening of his personal injury and workers' compensation practice, The Law Office of Joe Boyd. With more than 15 years of experience and \$32 million and counting recovered for his clients, Boyd offers services throughout Georgia.

Jad B. Johnson was named the circuit public defender for the Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit covering Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade and Walker counties in northwest Georgia. Johnson was most recently chief assistant public defender for the circuit.

Trisha Dodd Hargrove joined Aspirion as associate general counsel. Hargrove was most recently with Buchanan Law Firm.

Lauren Shurling Kirkland and husband, Kelly, of Swainsboro, welcomed their first child, Cooper Wade Kirkland, in April 2020.

Brandon L. Peak was one of three finalists for the *Daily Report's* Attorney of the Year Award. Attorney of the Year recognizes the attorney who had the biggest impact on the law or the Georgia legal community or who did the most to advance the cause of justice. Peak is a partner with Butler Wooten Peak and won a \$280 million verdict in a landmark trucking case.

The Hon. Amanda Meloun Trimble was promoted to full-time presiding judge for the Western Circuit Juvenile Court in Athens. Judge Trimble served as the Juvenile Court's part-time judge since 2016.

ClassNotes

2005

Toqeer A. Chouhan was appointed a part-time judge to the Cobb County Magistrate Court by Chief Magistrate Judge Brendan Murphy.

Canon Brown Hill was elected president-elect of the Macon Bar Association in May 2020.

Nicholas J. Laybourn was selected as one of the Best Lawyers 2021 in the area of Litigation-Construction. Laybourn is a partner and the head of the specialty litigation practice group at HunterMaclean in Savannah.

J. Felicia LeRay was named partner at Hall Booth Smith, P.C. LeRay focuses her practice on healthcare law.

Q. Bonita Wang joined Blalock Walters P.A. in Sarasota, Florida focusing her practice on tax, corporate and health care laws.

2006

Emily M. Bradfute-Kolokoff and **Jeffrey M. Kolokoff** welcomed son Isaac Wallace Kolokoff in July 2020. He joins six-year-old Abby and two-year-old Jacob.

Rebecca McKelvey Castañeda was named to the 40 Under 40 list by the *Nashville Business Journal*. Castañeda is a partner at Stites & Harbison in Nashville and Franklin, Tennessee practicing family law.

Jed D. Manton was named a 2021 Georgia Super Lawyer in the Personal Injury General: Plaintiff category for his exceptional work advocating on behalf of his clients. Manton is a founding partner at Harris Lowry Manton LLP in Atlanta and Savannah.

Charlotte Jenkins Redo was selected to 2020 Georgia Super Lawyers in the area of Employment Law. She also served as chair of the Labor and Employment section of the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys for five consecutive years.

2007

D. Barton Black announced the launch of Blue Sky Law in Smyrna on May 1, 2020. Black is a partner of the firm, providing comprehensive employment and business counsel to the Atlanta community and beyond.

Mitchell T. Key was named a member of the LaGrange College Board of Trustees. Key practices real estate, probate and business law in LaGrange.

James Delroy Mayers Jr. graduated with a Doctor of Medicine from American University of the Caribbean School of Medicine on May 16, 2020. Mayers is currently a resident physician at Augusta University Department of Family Medicine in Augusta.

2008

Megan E. Boyd was promoted to senior lecturer at Georgia State University College of Law. Boyd married Commander M. Scott Simmons, U.S. Navy (Retired), and the couple announced the birth of their son, Rowan Grey, in March 2020.

Darryl W. Lunon II was named deputy general counsel and chief ethics and compliance officer at The Georgia Institute of Technology. He was most recently at Pennsylvania State University as associate general counsel and director of compliance.

Patrick M. Mincey was listed among 2021 Legal Elite in Criminal Law and Litigation by Business North Carolina. Mincey is a partner in the Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina offices of Cranfill Sumner and Hartzog, LLP.

2009

William E. Carlan running unopposed, was named to the Canton City Counsel, representing Ward 2. His term ends in 2021.

Freda B. Coleman-Jackson joined the Washington and Lee University School of Law as assistant director of its Office of Career Strategy. She was previously with Indiana University Maurer School of Law in Bloomington, Indiana.

Afiya Folayan Hinkson received the 2020 Chief Justice P. Harris Hines Child Advocacy Award for her dedication to improve justice for children and families. Hinkson became the first African American special assistant attorney general in Forsyth County in May 2019. She is a certified child welfare law specialist.

William P. Horkan was elected secretary of the Macon Bar Association in May 2020. Horkan, of James-Bates-Brannan-Groover LLP, was named an On-the-Rise Lawyer by the *Daily Report*, recognizing him as one of Georgia's most promising lawyers under the age of 40.

Bryan T. Johnson was elected Superior Court Judge in the Rome Judicial Circuit in June 2020, and began serving in Jan. 2021.

M. Cayce Myers was named director of graduate studies for the Virginia Tech School of Communication, where he is also an associate professor in the Advertising and Public Relations Division. His most recent book *Public Relations History: Theory, Practice, and Profession* was published by Routledge, an imprint of Taylor & Francis, in 2021. He resides in Roanoke, Virginia with his wife **Anne Carroll Myers, '09**, and daughter Cayce Anne.

Lindsey R. Stewart joined Speed Seta Martin Trivett & Stubble LLC as an associate in Lawrenceville. She was previously director of admissions and financial aid at Mercer University School of Law.

Kathryn Smith Willis joined the Macon office of James-Bates-Brannan-Groover LLP as counsel in its general litigation and trial practice.

2010

The Hon. Candice L. Branche was sworn in as chief juvenile court judge of Newton County on Jan. 1, 2021. Judge Branche was previously a magistrate judge and associate probate judge for Newton County and was formerly deputy chief assistant district attorney for the Alcovy Judicial Circuit. She is also a trainer for the National Drug Court Institute. She currently resides in Covington with her two daughters, Lexie and Lindsey.

Falen O. Cox was named a Rising Star in the 2021 Super Lawyers list for Georgia.

Amanda Tatman Freeman and **Spencer G. Freeman** announced the birth of their son, James Skylark Freeman, in February 2021.

David Whitlow Frost and wife, Michelle, announced the birth of their son, Adams Whitlow Frost, in October 2020. Adams joins big brother David Brooks Frost.

Margaret A. Head was named partner at Cohen & Caproni LLC in Atlanta practicing estate planning, probate litigation, trust and estate administration, tax planning and business law.

The Hon. Rizza Palmares O'Connor was recognized with the Best 40 Under 40 Award from the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association.

Melissa M. Spearman joined Chamberlain Hrdlicka White Williams & Aughtry practicing tax law.

Wesley C. Turner was elected partner at Krevolin & Horst LLC practicing commercial real estate and corporate law.

2011

Josanne Celestine joined the Atlanta office of Hall Booth Smith PC as of counsel defending clients in transportation claims.

Paulding Chichester IV was promoted to director of global employee relations for ServiceNow Inc. in Santa Clara, California. Chichester joined the company as senior human resource business partner in March 2020 after serving at Stanford University School of Medicine in its labor and employee relations department.

Dustin E. Davies was made a name partner, changing the firm name to Hasty Pope Davies. Davies is the first partner added since Hasty & Pope formed in 2008.

Hayley Strong Hall was named a shareholder with the firm Davis, Matthews & Quigley P.C. in Atlanta. Hall focuses her practice on estate planning and wealth management.

Brian M. Jasper was named partner at the Thomas Law Offices in Prospect, Kentucky. Jasper focuses his practice in plaintiff's nursing home and medical malpractice litigation. Jasper and Tad Thomas, the firm's founding partner, won a \$2.2 million verdict in Aug. 2019 and a \$5 million verdict in Jan. 2020, both in McCracken Circuit Court in Paducah, Kentucky.

Randal M. McGinley was sworn in as interim district attorney for the Alcovy Circuit on June 2, 2020. McGinley served as chief assistant district attorney since Jan. 2017.

Michaela Mericle joined the family law firm of Naggjar & Sarif LLC as a partner.

Garon O. Muller was listed among the 2021 Super Lawyers Georgia Rising Stars. Muller is a partner at Burnside Law Firm in Augusta, practicing personal injury law.

Elizabeth Pool O'Neal was appointed assistant solicitor for the City of Griffin Municipal Court by the Griffin Board of Commissioners.

Natalia Polukhtin was named among the top 25 investment immigration attorneys in the U.S. by *EB5 Investors* magazine, a leading industry publication. To be eligible, distinguished immigration attorneys must primarily file investor petitions and have their nomination supported by investment advisers, attorneys and clients.

Philip R. Potter was selected as one of 18 Georgia attorneys to participate in the 2020-21 Georgia Trial Lawyers Association's prestigious Leadership Education and Advanced Direction (LEAD) Program. Potter is a partner at Westmoreland Patterson Moseley & Hinson in Macon.

Stephen C. Rogers was promoted to shareholder at Maynard Cooper & Gale PC. He practices correctional litigation, general litigation, complex litigation and construction law.

Christopher A. Steele was named to *Georgia Trend's* 2020 Legal Elite in the Taxes, Estates and Trusts category. This is his fourth recognition as a Legal Elite. Steele is a shareholder at Chamberlain Hrdlicka's Atlanta office.

L. Rachel Wilson was elected to serve as board member of the Girl Scouts of Historic Georgia until 2023.

Doroteya N. Wozniak was named partner at James-Bates-Brannan-Groover. Wozniak represents financial institutions and other clients in creditors rights, bankruptcy and other litigation and regulatory compliance matters, with a focus on cannabis banking, government-guaranteed loan workouts and data privacy.



Mercer University **HOMECOMING** NOVEMBER 12-13 | 2021

Friday, November 12

- Family Day
- Class Reunions

Saturday, November 13

- Half Century Club Luncheon
- Tailgate
- Homecoming Game



CHRISTOPHERIAN SMITH

ClassNotes

2012

Terri K. Benton joined the Atlanta office of the U.S. Department of Education as an attorney case manager in the Multi-Regional and Foreign School Division.

Ronald E. Daniels was named as an On-the-Rise Lawyer by the *Daily Report*, recognizing him as one of Georgia's most promising lawyers under the age of 40. Daniels was installed as treasurer of the State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division on June 12, 2020.

Norbert "Bert" D. Hummel IV, wife Christina, and big sister Mary Olivia, welcomed baby girl Harper Blair Hummel in September 2020. Hummel, a partner at Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith LLP, was installed as the 74th president of the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia in June 2020.

Daniel J. O'Connor was named a Rising Star in the 2021 Georgia Super Lawyers list.

Rahul Sheth married Alice Jablonski in Atlanta on Dec. 6, 2020. Sheth was named partner at Bovis, Kyle, Burch and Medlin LLC in Atlanta, where he practices workers' compensation and subrogation.

Christopher A. Underwood joined Alston & Bird's Atlanta office as counsel in the area of corporate debt finance. Underwood was previously an associate at Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP.

2013

Ashley A. Akins was reinstalled as co-editor of the State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division newsletter starting June 12, 2020.

Sheri Bagheri announced the launch of her employment law firm, Sheri Bagheri Law, serving employees in all aspects of employment law. Bagheri also offers limited general counsel services to businesses that see the value in providing safe, equal and fair work environments.

Jenna Lasseter Carroll was named partner at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP. Her practice focuses on representing commercial lenders, including commercial banks, life insurance companies, CMBS lenders and other fixed-income lenders in real estate finance transactions, and representing real estate developers and investors in commercial real estate transactions, corporate governance, borrower financing, commercial acquisitions and sales and real estate development. She and husband **S. Jake Carroll**, '14, welcomed their son, Colton Carroll, in December 2019.

Devin B. Phillips was promoted to partner at the firm Weener Nathan Phillips, which changed its name to reflect his promotion. Phillips focuses on business litigation and also advises individuals on estate planning and tax liability.

Sara Kate Brannan Rumsey was named partner at James-Bates-Brannan-Groover. Rumsey practices commercial real estate and banking.

Bryson M. Smith was named partner at James-Bates-Brannan-Groover. Smith practices commercial real estate and banking.

2014

Kathryn Ferris Burmeister wrote the book *Overcoming Addiction to the Status Quo*. Burmeister, an author, a speaker and an attorney, owns an Atlanta law firm that specializes in personal injury with a focus on the impacts injuries have on mental health.

S. Jake Carroll joined the law firm of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP as an associate in its Atlanta office. Carroll practices construction law and commercial litigation. He and his wife, **Jenna Lasseter Carroll**, '13, welcomed their son, Colton Carroll, in December 2019.

Lauren McDonalds Childs joined the senior staff at Mercer University School of Law as director of career services in January 2021. She was previously with Adams Jordan & Herrington in Macon.

Wesley E. Childs was named partner at Chambless Higdon Richardson Katz & Griggs LLP in Macon.

Bingzi Hu was recognized as a 2020 Elite Lawyer for her outstanding performances and contributions in litigation and criminal defense. Hu practices with Lowther Walker LLC in Atlanta.

Kyle W. Sharry was appointed by Gov. Brian Kemp to serve as solicitor general of the Barrow County State Court. Sharry is most recently a partner at Massey & Sharry LLP in Winder.

Erica T. Taylor received the 2019-20 Award of Achievement for Service to the Profession from the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia at its annual meeting in June 2020.

Warren M. Tillery was elected partner at Smith Welch Webb & White in McDonough. Tillery practices eminent domain and local government law.

2015

Nicolas D. Bohorquez joined the real estate practice group in the Atlanta office of Chamberlain Hrdlicka.

Kindall E. Browning joined the Macon office of the Georgia Legal Services Program as a staff attorney on June 1, 2020. She was previously with the Houston County Public Defender's Office.

2016

Evan C. Barker was named managing partner of Howard Barker Lane, PC, formerly Howard & Whitley, PC. Howard Barker Lane, PC handles family law matters throughout Savannah, the coastal empire, and surrounding areas.

Sharon Jackson Barker and **Evan C. Barker** welcomed their son, Hendley John Barker, in November 2020.

Ollena S. Bennett joined Bennett Law and Mediation Service LLC in Warner Robins. She was most recently a staff attorney with the Houston County Superior Court.

Laura K. DiBiase joined the Atlanta office of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP as an associate, focusing her practice on debt finance and real estate finance transactions. DiBiase was most recently with Miller & Martin PLLC as a part of the firm's bankruptcy and creditors' rights practice group.

Elizabeth L. Evinger and Jacob Daniel Meyer celebrated their wedding on Nov. 14, 2020 at the Country Club of Roswell. Evinger is an associate at Prieto, Marigliano, Holbert and Prieto Law in Atlanta.

Shaun J. Foley joined the Atlanta office of Freeman Mathis & Gary LLP as an associate. He was most recently with Busch Reed Jones & Leeper PC.

Hillary L. Freesmeier joined BakerHostetler LLP as an associate in its employment litigation practice representing employers and organizations in federal and state litigation and administrative matters.

Ethan C. Hyde accepted a career law clerk position with United States District Court Judge Tilman E. "Tripp" Self III.

D. Jordan Josey was selected as one of 18 Georgia attorneys to participate in the 2020-21 Georgia Trial Lawyers Association's prestigious Leadership Education and Advanced Direction (LEAD) Program. Josey practices personal injury with the MacArthur Law Firm in Macon.

Virginia Josey joined Buzzell, Welsh & Hill in Macon as an associate attorney practicing personal injury, workers' compensation and family law.

Kate Reynolds Kirbo and **Barret W. Kirbo** announced the birth of their second son, George Hughes Kirbo, in February 2021.

ORANGE&BLACK GIVEBACK

\$34,522 RAISED

239 donors to the Law School

**Thank you to our alumni
and friends who donated during
Week of Giving!**

Your donation supports scholarships
and programs that directly impact
Mercer Law School students.

Kyle C. Owenby was promoted leader of the elder and disabled abuse unit for the Macon Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office. Owenby will also continue in his role as prosecutor in the general crimes division.

Priya M. Patel was recognized by Georgia Super Lawyers as one of the Rising Stars in 2021.

Jasmin Morris Robinson appeared on "The Afternoon Tea" radio show on REAL 1100-AM in Atlanta, where she discussed her mission to help thousands of black men and women become lawyers who make the justice system better.

Nyonnohweah S. Seekie was elected a member of the Board of Directors for the Georgia Legal Services Program, serving a two-year term until 2022. Seekie has a general practice law firm in Macon.

H. Tom Shaw joined the Thomasville law firm of Alexander & Vann, LLP, practicing general civil litigation. Shaw was most recently with Alston & Bird in Atlanta and previously clerked for the United States District Court for the Middle District of Georgia in Macon.

Jessica Canedo Wallace and **D. Jacob Wallace** announced the birth of their daughter, Sara Joy, in February 2021 in Columbus.

2017

Elizabeth Manley Brooks was selected as one of 18 Georgia attorneys to participate in the 2020-21 Georgia Trial Lawyers Association's prestigious Leadership Education and Advanced Direction (LEAD) Program. Brooks is an associate at Harris Lowry Manton LLP in Savannah.

Ashley Countiss Thompson married Nicolas Kammerdiener on Jan. 9 in Powder Springs.

Yoojin Lee joined the Atlanta office of Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP as an associate focusing on bankruptcy, creditors' rights and restructuring. Lee previously served as a judicial law clerk with the United States Bankruptcy Courts in New Jersey and Georgia.

Amanda M. Morejon joined the Macon office of Constangy, Brooks, Smith & Prophete LLP, practicing employment and labor law. Morejon serves as Mercer Law's Young Alumni Council president.

Taylor Orgeron joined Swift, Currie, McGhee & Hiers as an associate attorney in the firm's litigation practice group.

Logan Moses Owens joined the Atlanta office of Carlton Fields as an associate focusing on complex torts, products liability, premises liability, transportation, bad faith litigation and business litigation. Owens was a former staff attorney at the Fulton County State Court.

Bruna Bretas Rodrigues and William Richard Morehead celebrated their wedding on Aug. 15, 2020 at Pierce Chapel in Macon.

Sarah Ilg Sevech was named junior partner at Teague Law in Ellijay. She recently married Jason Sevech on March 28, 2021, in Alpharetta.

Ashleigh Provost Smaha joined Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP as an associate in the firm's data breach response team. Smaha was most recently at Baker Donelson.

John "JB" Strauss recorded a new single at Capricorn Recording Studios in Nov. 2020 with plans to record his debut full-length LP in 2021. Strauss wrote the Travis Tritt single "Ghost Town Nation."

Mandisa C. Styles established The Styles Law Firm, a boutique law firm focusing on business, intellectual property and entertainment law.

Trevor J. Vanzant and his wife, Brittany, announced the birth of their first child, Bentley Reese, in June 2020, weighing 8 lbs., 1 oz. and 20.5 in. long. Vanzant joined The Shrable Law Firm, PC in Americus.

Lauren N. Wortman joined Hall Booth Smith PC as a workers' compensation associate in its Atlanta office.

Emily R. Wright joined the Adams Law Firm as an associate in March 2020, and taught as an adjunct professor of law at Mercer Law School during the 2020-21 academic year.

2018

Andrew T. Bennett received the President's Award from the Houston County Bar Association on Dec. 4, 2020. This award recognizes a member's dedication and contributions to the organization throughout the year. Bennett also served as the association's IT director for the 2020 year and currently serves in the role.

Monique Jacqueline Bianco married **Nicholas Michael Shackleford '19**, on Oct. 15, 2020 in Marble Hill. The Shacklefords met while attending Mercer Law.

Joshua D. Boyd married Jordan on Sept. 12, 2020, in Thomasville. Boyd recently joined the Kelley Law Firm practicing workers compensation and personal injury law.

Hannah M. Couch joined Troutman Pepper Hamilton Sanders as an associate attorney in its Atlanta office after completing her clerkship with the Hon. Marc T. Treadwell, '81. She was invited to be a member of the Georgia Bar Young Lawyers Division Leadership Academy, Class of 2021.

Diantha V. Ellis graduated with honors with her Master of Laws in Business and Health Law from Emory University School of Law on May 11, 2020. Ellis currently teaches at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton.

Catherine "Cat" Jenkins was elected tax commissioner for Meriwether County in Nov. 2020.

Kelsey L. Kicklighter married Trey Bartlett on May 23, 2020 on Jekyll Island. Kicklighter is an associate at Hall Booth Smith, PC in Atlanta.

Jacob S. Langley was invited to be a member of the Georgia Bar Young Lawyers Division Leadership Academy, class of 2021.

Morgan E. Lyndall was named a Rising Star in the 2021 Super Lawyers list for Georgia. Lyndall was also awarded the Young Lawyers Division Award of Achievement for Outstanding Service to the Public for the second year in a row in June 2020. Lyndall practices personal injury law at Butler Law Firm in Atlanta.

Robert H. Malone IV, his wife Jessica, and daughter, Kate, welcomed Robert H. "Finn" Malone V, born in January 2021, weighing 9 lbs. 15.9 oz.

Anna G. Mills joined Bowers and Gibson as an associate attorney in LaFayette.

Alex G. Myers took the oath of office to become an associate magistrate court judge in Dawson County. Myers is currently an associate at Miles Hansford & Tallant in Cumming.

Nathan R. Nicholson was selected as one of 18 Georgia attorneys to participate in the 2020-21 Georgia Trial Lawyers Association's prestigious Leadership Education and Advanced Direction (LEAD) Program. Nicholson practices personal injury with Cook Law Group in Gainesville.

Veronica N. Rogusky joined the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as a trial attorney in its Atlanta office. Rogusky received the 2019-20 Award of Achievement for Service to the Public from the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia at its annual meeting in June 2020.

2019

M. Chase Collum joined the McDonough office of Smith Welch Webb & White LLC as an associate practicing general civil litigation.

Maggie L. Conerly earned her Master of Laws in international legal studies from American University Washington College of Law in May 2020. Conerly currently represents asylum seekers in immigration court in Washington, D.C.

Nicholas P. Greer joined the Huntsville, Alabama, office of Maynard Cooper & Gale as an associate in the firm's government solutions group serving government contractors and businesses with resolving disputes. Greer recently served as a law clerk in the U.S. Bankruptcy Courts of the Northern District of Georgia.



CLASS OF 2020

Final Honors

Summa Cum Laude
Mallory Fleming

Magna Cum Laude
Charles Foster
Brian Fussell
Carley Hawkins
Chelsea Henderson
L'Zandra Jones
John Kendall
Shandi Kennedy Zorbanos

Mylee McKinney
Dan Nix
Brittney Sizemore
Mitchell Walker
Shadaisa Wilcox

Cum Laude

Ryland Avery
Auburn Davidson
Autumn DeLee
Steven Grunberg
Lydia Hardy
Elliot Henigan
Christian Kiechel
Samuel Lyon
Marissa Merrill
Maia Middleton
Christina Murray
Ariel Newman
Michael Rosenstein
Katarzyna Rzeszutek
Laura Sheridan
Andrew Skibieli
Jennifer Smith
Tyler Toma
Christopher Wages
Quintessa Williams
Danielle Wilson
Cory Wright

ClassNotes

Abriana B. Horton graduated with a Master of Laws degree in taxation from the University of Florida's Levin College of Law, where she served as a graduate editor for the *Florida Tax Review*. She is now an associate with Moore Ingram Johnson & Steele LLP in Marietta.

Brittain Z. Hunt joined DuBose Law Group LLC in Madison.

Meagan R. Hurley, an Alabama Fellow at the Georgia Innocence Project, started co-teaching a Wrongful Convictions seminar at Samford University's Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham, Alabama, in May 2020. As a guest lecturer for the course, Hurley teaches students about post-conviction innocence work and Alabama criminal procedure, and she supervises student work on select Alabama innocence cases.

Hayley McCoy Kehner joined the family law firm Naggiar & Sarif in Atlanta as an associate attorney. Kehner was most recently a law clerk for the Houston County Superior Court.

Aurora Olivia-Lynn Kirbo married **William Reese Giddens** on Dec. 24, 2020 in Ashburn.

Clayton T. Kendrick and his wife, Morgan, welcomed their son, Joseph Clayton Kendrick, in February 2021. He weighed 7 lbs. 11 oz., and was 20.5 inches long.

Estefania P. Ramirez joined Forward Air Corporation as in-house counsel practicing labor and employment and contracts law. She was most recently an associate at Ford & Harrison LLP.

Conley J. Scott III graduated with a Master of Laws in taxation from the University of Florida – Levin College of Law on May 15, 2020.

Nicholas Michael Shackleford married **Monique Jacqueline Bianco**, '18, on Oct. 15, 2020 in Marble Hill. The Shacklefords met while attending Mercer Law.

Jordan C. Spivey joined the Macon Circuit Public Defender's Office. She was previously with the Georgia Legal Services Program in Macon.

M. Cole Walker Jr. joined Hawkins Parnell & Young as an associate defending corporations and individuals in business disputes and premises liability.

2020

Samuel M. Lyon joined the Sutton Law Group LLC in Marietta as an associate attorney.

Anysa V. Williams announced the birth of her son, Caleb, in January 2021.

Yonna Shaw

Longtime publishing coordinator of *Mercer Law Review*, Yonna Shaw, passed away on Aug. 30, 2020.

Shaw retired in May 2019 after a 45-year career with Mercer Law School, during which she rose from administrative secretary to business manager to publishing coordinator of *Mercer Law Review*. She developed close relationships with the Law Review's loyal authors and subscribers and was the glue that held decades of Law Review alumni together.

As retired adjunct professor and former Law Review editor Charles Adams III wrote of Yonna, she was "the one person who has served, throughout [over] half [*Mercer Law Review's*] existence, as the institutional memory, most honest critic, gadfly, troubleshooter, personal and professional counselor, spiritual sheet anchor; and, in short, the heart and soul of *Mercer Law Review*."



THE CAULDRON, 1978

IN MEMORY

1950s

The Hon. Wallace Kendrick Askew, '50, of Manchester, Feb. 22, 2021

Thomas Anderson Roach, '50, of Canton, March 4

Scott Walters Jr., '50, of East Point, Feb. 14, 2019

James G. Maddox Sr., '52, of Jeffersonville, Oct. 29, 2020

Max Reginald McGlamry, '52, of Columbus, March 14, 2020

Ray Marks Tucker, '52, of McDonough, April 24, 2012

William Palmer Hicks, '53, of Atlanta, May 24, 2020

Donald Autrey Randall, '55, of Fort Myers, Florida, June 22, 2020

Joseph Waxelbaum Popper Jr., '59, of Macon, June 20, 2020

Maurice Virlyn Slaton, '59, of Morrow, July 21, 2015

1960s

John Sanford "Sandy" Sims Jr., '63, of Tifton, Dec. 7, 2020

The Hon. Ingrid Smedresman Braslow, '65, of Scottsdale, Arizona, Feb. 27, 2018

The Hon. Clyde K. Laney, '66, of Pauline, South Carolina, April 30, 2020

The Hon. Stephen Phillip Brown, '67, of Macon, Jan. 28, 2021

Selmer A. Davidson, '67, of Lacey, Washington, Feb. 21, 2021

Allen S. May Jr., '67, of Stone Mountain, July 22, 2020

Robert Hardeman Baer, '68, of Saint Simons Island, Aug. 16, 2020

The Hon. James N. Butterworth, '68, of Cornelia, March 28, 2020

The Hon. Asbury Quillian Baldwin Jr., '69, of LaGrange, March 15, 2020

Roman A. DeVille, '69, of Atlanta, Dec. 20, 2020

1970s

The Hon. Douglas Cooledge Pullen, '70, of Columbus, Sept. 22, 2020

John Wayne Crowley, '72, of Macon, March 15, 2021

John Clyde Campbell, '73, of Monroe, Jan. 15, 2021

Christopher Alan Townley, '77, of Chickamauga, March 6, 2020

1980s

Jiles McNatt Barfield, '80, of Vidalia, Jan. 30, 2021

Larry Samuel Herrington, '80, of Milledgeville, July 8, 2020

Susan Pyeatt Kimmey, '81, of Atlanta, April 30, 2020

Julius Authell Powell Jr., '82, of Macon, March 26, 2020

William Dallias Price, '82, of Kennesaw, Jan. 4, 2020

Phillip McCoy Durrence Jr., '83, of Chattanooga, Tennessee, Aug. 28, 2020

Richard Gadsden Groff, '83, of Bradenton, Florida, Aug. 30, 2020

Robert W. Savage, '83, of Hampton, New Jersey, Dec. 7, 2017

James B. Blackburn Jr., '84, of Savannah, Nov. 1, 2020

Richard Lee Rothman, '84, of Cooper City, Florida, April 2, 2014

James J. Fason III, '86, of Kennesaw, May 2019

Robin Shellow, '86, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Feb. 25, 2021

Kurt George Schieber, '88, of North Fort Meyers, Florida, Nov. 21, 2019

Gloria Lynn Murphree Finney, '89, of Newnan, Jan. 20, 2021

Barbara Ann Wright Willis, '89, of Sumner, Jan. 17, 2021

1990s

David Jonathan Grindle, '90, of Winston-Salem, North Carolina, January 2020

Charles Terry Webber Jr., '90, of Clinton, Tennessee, Nov. 2, 2020

Russell Brooks Poole, '95, of Jacksonville, Florida, March 24, 2020

Emily Katherine Turner Smith, '99, of Pawley's Island, South Carolina, June 10, 2020

Reported through March 2021.

PAYING IT FORWARD

The Slappey & Sadd Trial Lawyers Scholarship supports law students with financial need who have demonstrated an interest in trial practice and representing individuals and families harmed by negligence.

Your financial support is one of the most important ways you can give back to Mercer Law School. Your gifts to Mercer Law help make a difference in the lives of students and ensure they receive the rich Mercer Law School experience you received as a student.

“It was an honor and a privilege to attend law school at Mercer a few decades ago, and it’s an honor and a privilege to be able to support the school’s efforts today.”

SCOTT SLAPPEY, '86



“It is difficult to overstate the value of our Mercer education. Establishing this scholarship is the least we could do for the law school and its deserving students.”

JAY SADD, '87

For more information about giving to the Law School, please contact the Office of University Advancement at 478-201-2322 or visit law.mercer.edu/campaign.



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SAVE *the* DATE!

MERCER LAW'S ANNUAL ALUMNI DINNER Friday, February 25, 2022

InterContinental Buckhead, Atlanta, Georgia
More details and updates: law.mercer.edu/alumnidinner

