

## From the Dean

The return of students and buzz in the hallways that comes with the beginning of a new semester is always an invigorating time at a law school. I enjoyed reconnecting with professors this week and seeing them so excited about the spring semester! Their commitment to our students and dedication to teaching makes Florida State Law very special. Their outstanding scholarship is another reason why our faculty is one of the most respected in the nation. For most faculty members, the break between semesters was a brief time to flesh out new ideas for their scholarship and to finalize article drafts that they will soon be submitting to law reviews for consideration. Our professors are eager to bring their scholarship into the classroom and to discuss ideas with students and their colleagues. Our [Faculty Scholarship](#) brochure from the fall will provide you with details about their impressive work. I continue to be humbled to be a member of this extremely productive faculty and am so proud of our national reputation in terms of legal scholarship.



- Dean Erin O'Connor

## Faculty & Alum Profile: Sarah S. Butters ('01)

[Sarah S. Butters](#) is teaching Gratuitous Transfer this spring. She has been an adjunct professor at the College of Law since 2010. Butters is a shareholder at Ausley McMullen, trust and has extensive experience in estate, trust and guardianship litigation; the preparation of wills, trusts and sophisticated estate planning techniques; and the administration of probates, guardianship and trusts. Butters serves on the executive committee of the Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section of The Florida Bar and is the current co-chair of the legislation committee. She frequently testifies before the Florida House and Senate on legislation impacting the law of wills, trusts and guardianships. She is a fellow of the American College of Trusts and Estate Counsel, where she serves on the fiduciary litigation, state laws and legal education committees. Butters is also very involved with FSU Law. Last fall, she was the keynote speaker at an FSU Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Society meeting, where she shared her experience and advice and welcomed questions from students. She has also volunteered to help law students during the Career & Professional Development Center's mock interviews and spoke to students about interview preparation and interview tips as part of a professional development workshop.



*"In many ways, I get more out of teaching than I give. Teaching forces me to stay current on the law and the public policy rationales behind the law. Teaching also forces me to be able to articulate the law in a clear and simplistic way, which is the same style I try to use in my oral and written communications with the court."*

## Alum Profile: James V. Cook ('92)



Cook pictured with former Florida Supreme Court Justice and former Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Rosemary Barkett at a 2014 Florida Supreme Court Historical Society event honoring Justice Barkett, who was Cook's professor when she co-taught Constitutional Law with Professor Steve Gey at the College of Law.

James V. Cook practices police misconduct and prison abuse law. His cases have ranged from Pensacola to Key West, from police shootings to prison sexual abuse and wrongful death. Cook became a public defender after law school and then built a practice focusing on federal civil rights litigation. In 2003, he won a national NAACP Foot Soldier's Award. For several years, he chaired the ACLU Legal Panel. In 2016, he received The Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Award for the Second Judicial Circuit. Cook is a member of the National Police Accountability Project of the National Lawyers Guild. In April 2017, he was featured in the Tampa Bay Times article, "Why Cops Shoot." Cook was a teenager in St. Augustine, Fla., during the civil rights protests of the 1960s. "I saw the Klan march back then. I saw a lot of things that still move me today," Cook said. In the 1970s, he worked with a community newspaper in Detroit during an upswing in police shootings and watched young lawyers fight in court to hold them accountable. Cook often speaks to student groups and counsels children's rights cases with the Public Interest Law Center at the FSU College of Law.

*"I can't imagine doing anything else. I get to work with brilliant young interns who really want to save the world. They are shocked to see that abuses we criticize abroad are happening right here at home."*

## Student Profile: December '17 Grad Curt Bender

**Desired Practice Location:** Orlando  
**Specialization:** Business law  
**Field of Law Sought:** Any field where he could provide services to local and regional entrepreneurs and entities



Originally from Guyana, South America, Curt Bender holds a bachelor's degree in political science, a minor in American Sign Language, and a Leadership Certificate from the University of North Florida. In addition to earning his J.D. this December, Bender also completed the Business Law Certificate. During law school, Bender was a member of Phi Delta Phi, Phi Alpha Delta, the Christian Legal Society and the Business Law Society. He was also a research assistant for Professor Mark Spottswood. Bender joined the Business Law Clinic in the fall of 2016, where, for three semesters, he assisted FSU student and faculty entrepreneurs with their business law needs—from initial meeting through entity formation and continual assistance. While a student, Bender co-founded STEM Veterans USA, Inc., a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, where he served as a member of its board and chief operating officer. Also, Bender organized and led a pro bono opportunity for FSU Law students to provide business law assistance to entrepreneur military veterans with disabilities, combining entrepreneurship, business law and veteran services—three of his passions. Bender is implementing the Florida State Law Entrepreneurship Initiative, a pro bono program to connect FSU law students with practical education and experience in business law with local attorneys to aid entrepreneurs within the greater Tallahassee community. He and his team hope to replicate this model throughout Florida. As a member of the William H. Stafford American Inn of Court, Bender was selected by Judge Nina Ashenafi-Richardson ('91), Inn president, to develop a curriculum to foster mentorships between the Inn's professional and student members. Additionally, Bender clerked for public defender offices of both the Fourth and Ninth Judicial Circuits of Florida, and he externed for the Honorable Angela M. Cox, Circuit Judge of the Criminal Division, Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida. If you are interested in hiring Bender, [visit his LinkedIn profile](#).

*"I am a dynamic student, entrepreneur and public servant who is a self-starter with the ability to assemble the resources and personnel necessary to engineer the execution of my visions with immaculate precision."*

**SPRING 2018 ENVIRONMENTAL DISTINGUISHED LECTURE**  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7  
3:30-4:30 PM

FEATURING  
**TOM MERRILL**  
THE CHARLES EVANS HUGHES PROFESSOR  
AT COLUMBIA LAW SCHOOL

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