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A Message From the Dean



When the Florida A&M University College of Law held the Annual Hooding Ceremony on Saturday, May 5, 2007, we recognized nearly 100 candidates for graduation in the Fall 2006, Spring 2007 and Summer 2007. Highlighted by a keynote address from Florida Supreme Court Justice Peggy Quince, the hooding ceremony at Orlando's Bob Carr Performing Arts Theatre

hailed a milestone for the FAMU College of Law. We saw our pool of law school graduates grow to more than 250 as the new graduates joined illustrious FAMU College of Law alumni from the 2006 and 2005 classes and the classes from the original law school.

Our graduates have been well prepared to pursue careers in numerous and varied areas of practice. Justice Quince encouraged the 2007 graduates to make the most of their education and to use their talents to serve their community and to benefit those less fortunate.

During this 2006-2007

academic year, we were able to move the law school's plan of action forward. We will continue to build on our accomplishments to make this law school one of the best in the nation.

The successes will continue this summer as many of our law students have embarked on exciting ventures to study abroad, serve in clerkships and internships, and take part in other legal career opportunities throughout the country.

We celebrate and reflect on many of these accomplishments in our first online edition of the *FAMU Lawyer*.

Ruth A. Witherspoon
Interim Dean

College of Law Receives Award of Excellence

In recognition of its newly constructed permanent campus, Florida A&M University College of Law was honored with the Award of Excellence, the highest honor given, from the Downtown Orlando Partnership, which handed out its annual Golden Brick Awards in March. The awards honor projects which make Orlando a more desirable place to live, work and play.

The FAMU College of Law, located in downtown Orlando's Parramore district, was designed by Rhodes + Brito Architects, whose founders are FAMU Alumni, and built by Turner Construction. The award is prominently displayed in the College of Law's Atrium.



Pictured (l-r) are Maria Pesante', Turner Construction; Teska Dillard, Turner Construction; Commissioner Daisy Lynum, City of Orlando; Scott M. Skidelsky, General Manager, Turner Construction (holding award); Ruth Witherspoon, Interim Dean, FAMU College of Law; Tony Stallworth, Associate Vice President of Construction, FAMU; David S. Reaves, Operational Manager, Turner Construction; Shawnda Anderson, PSA Constructors; and, Vernice Atkins-Bradley, Turner Construction.

Photo By Mark Englert.

Founding Faculty Focus: Grace Mills

Grace M. Mills' career as a law librarian began in the City University of New York (CUNY) School of Law Library, where she was a reference librarian and Assistant Law Library Professor of Law. She also taught legal research to first-year law students. She has also been a reference librarian at the University of California Boalt Hall Law Library and she was the assistant law librarian for public services at North Carolina Central University School of Law. Before coming to the FAMU College of Law, Professor Mills was an adult services librarian in the Las Vegas/Clark County Library District and she also served as a contract employee at the U.S. Court of Appeals Law Library in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Professor Mills has taught Legal Bibliography and currently teaches Advanced Legal Research.

Her publications include: (Books) *Making Diversity a Goal through Strategic Planning*, a chapter by Grace M. Mills and Rhea Ballard-Thrower within *Achieving Diversity: A How-To-Manual for Librarians*, by Barbara I. Dewey and Loretta Parham, 2006; *Reference - You are There, Trends in Law Library Management and Technology*, Nov/Dec, 1997; *Profiling Minority Law Librarians*, (co-author) *Law Library Journal*, 1995; *On Influencing Lives*, *Legal Reference Services Quarterly*, 1995.



Grace M. Mills, FAMU College of Law Librarian and Founding Faculty Member

VITA Program Achieves High Recovery Mark

The FAMU College of Law Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program returned for a second year and assisted individuals within the Orlando area with filing taxes in an effort to eliminate the miscellaneous filing fees they would incur through traditional filing agencies. The service was free, and to qualify, potential clients had to have an income of \$39,000 or less, without offshore accounts, capital gains requiring Schedule D, or other related complications. Some exceptions were made for incomes that slightly exceeded the amount.



FAMU VITA student volunteers surround coordinator Assistant Professor Reginald Mombrun (center) who holds a symbolic check for \$88,831 to the Orlando Community, along with Legal Clinic Director Professor Ann Marie Cavazos (left) and Frankie Adamo, '07, Research Assistant (right).

VITA operations began in February and concluded in April under the coordination of Assistant Professor Reginald Mombrun and a team of student volunteers. In its first year, the program recovered \$41,239 in returns, was recognized by the City of Orlando during an elaborate ceremony, and received runner-up for the Outstanding

VITA Rookie Site Award, presented at the American Bar Association Convention in August 2006.

This year, the FAMU VITA Program more than doubled last year's recovered amount with \$88,831 in returns. The program's success and workload has led Professor

Mombrun to revamp its structure. "Due to the magnitude of administrative work involved in maintaining a VITA site, a VITA Board will be created for next year's endeavor," according to Mombrun. The proposed seven-member board will have a Site Coordinator, and will also give FAMU College of Law students a chance to gain leadership experience.

Faculty Member Receives Fulbright Award



The Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) recommended FAMU College of Law Professor Omar Saleem for a Lecturing Award with the People's Republic of China through the 2007-08 Fulbright Program.

After his information was forwarded to the J. William Fulbright Scholarship Board at the American Center for Educational Exchange in Beijing, he was considered and awarded the Lecture Award.

The Fulbright Scholar Program sends 800 U.S. faculty and professionals abroad each year. Grantees lecture and conduct research in a variety of academic and professional fields. The award is slated to initiate in August 2007 for a five or 10-month period.

The grant activity can include teaching courses in an area of specialization, consulting on curriculum and development and advising students. Seminars, workshops and public lectures are among the other duties outlined in the grant.

Alumni Spotlight: Trinetta Lyons

Alumna Trinetta Dionne Lyons was born Trinetta Dionne Fisher in Jacksonville, Florida in 1979. She attended Hallandale High School, in Hallandale, Florida where she was able to concentrate her curriculum on international studies, graphic design and television production as a magnet student. She was captain of the cheerleading squad, Junior Class President, a member of the Track & Field team, a member of the National Honor Society and a member of a myriad of other after school organizations. She graduated in 1998 with many honors and pursued her undergraduate education in Tallahassee, Florida at Florida State University. While at Florida State, Lyons was a member of the Women's Varsity Track & Field team, a senator for the College of Information Studies and a member and an executive board member of the W.E.B. Dubois Honor Society.

Lyons earned a B.S with honors in Information Studies and English in 2002. She then pursued her legal education at Florida A& M University College of Law. While at the College of Law she was a member and historian of the Jesse J. McMurray Jr. Chapter of the Black Law

Students Association and a member of the first Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition team. She graduated from the College of Law in 2005 as part of the first graduating class since the re-establishment of the law school.

Since graduation Lyons has been doing her share of Public Service. Her first job after graduation was in Orlando, Florida at the Ninth Judicial Circuit Public Defenders office as an Assistant Public Defender. Lyons was very skillful at defending the poor and misunderstood. She was quickly promoted from the misdemeanor division to the felony division within a matter of months. After her tenure at the Public Defender's office, Lyons continued her Public Service in Tallahassee, Florida at the Department of Environmental Protection. Lyons is currently employed as an Assistant General Counsel in the Waste Clean-up Enforcement Section.

Lyons not only serves her state but she also reaches out to the local community. She is currently a volunteer Guardian ad Litem in Leon County, Florida. Lyons is a member of the Florida Bar, a committee member



of the Florida Bar committee for Student Education/Admission to the Bar, treasurer and a member of the Tallahassee Barrister's Association and she is a judge for the National Black Law Students Association's Southern Regional Black Law Students Association National Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition.

She is married to Jarian N. Lyons, who is also a graduate of the Florida A&M University College of Law.

FAMU Student Selected for JAG Internship



Rising second-year FAMU law student Elvis Santiago was one of 25 law students from an estimated 2,500 national applicants to receive a summer internship with the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps.

Elvis Santiago, a rising second-year day program student, has been selected by the Judge Advocate General (JAG) to serve as a summer intern with the U.S. Army JAG Corps. An estimated 2,500 applicants were considered for only 25 available opportunities for first-year law students – just over 1 percent - from all law schools in the nation.

"I'm truly humbled to be selected," stated Santiago. "My goal is to make sure that after the internship they become aware of the fact that we have quality students and produce quality attorneys." Santiago credits Professor James Smith, III with being instrumental in providing guidance with the application process. "We have a wealth of resources in our faculty. Students should take advantage of their knowledge and experience," he said.

The list of JAG summer interns also includes students from Harvard Law School, Duke Law School, University of Michigan Law School and Stanford Law School. No other law school in the state of Florida was represented.

Santiago, who served in the Armed Forces, also credits his military training in his approach toward achieving success in law school. "The military has taught me that at the end of the day, the most important thing is not awards and personal achievements. The only thing that matters is taking care of your fellow soldier to your left and right," he contends. "This achievement is about the FAMU College of Law and making sure that we can all benefit from this opportunity. My hope is that recruiters of all branches of service and law firms take notice of the quality of our students."

Scenes from the College of Law



The College of Law was a host location for one of the Florida Gubernatorial Task Force for Campus Safety meetings in late May.



Audrey Hicks (2L) poses with Senator Hillary Clinton after participating in a roundtable discussion panel.



Participants in the Southeast/Southwest People of Color Conference attend a reception on Church Street. The Reception was co-sponsored by FAMU Law Review.



(Above) Jean Oguntade (2L), Tamesis Cruz (2L), Tracey Perriera-Smith and Elvis Santiago (1L) distribute gifts to Parramore neighborhood children at the Callahan Center. (Below) All gifts, including 34 bicycles, were donated by faculty, students and staff.

Legal Scholarship Conference

The Southeast/Southwest People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference brought more than 50 legal experts from law schools in different parts of the country to the College of Law March 15 - 18, 2007.

The event held the theme "Scholarly Voices - Developing a Scholarly Agenda by and About People of Color - Multiple Perspectives" and featured workshops and scholarship presentations facilitated by FAMU College of Law Professors.

The annual event will be hosted at North Carolina Central School of Law next year.





Florida A&M University College of Law Annual Hooding Ceremony - Spring 2007

Saturday, May 5, 2007

The Florida A&M University College of Law held its Annual Hooding Ceremony on Saturday, May 5, 2007 at the Bob Carr Performing Arts Centre in Orlando.

The hooding ceremony recognized 100 law school graduates in a prestigious setting with more than 1,200 family, friends and special guests attending. The graduates were initially conferred for the Juris Doctor degree in Tallahassee at the University's Commencement Ceremony on April 29, 2007.

Laura Moody, '07, was recognized as Valedictorian and a total of 27 students graduated with honors.

Florida Supreme Court Justice Peggy A. Quince delivered the keynote address.

Photos by Bob Knight Photo and FAMU College of Law Staff.





**Annual
Hooding Ceremony
Spring 2007**

Florida A&M University College of Law





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