

LAW Quadrangle

NOTES FROM MICHIGAN LAW



M | LAW



4

BRIEFS

8

IN PRACTICE

SEAN GRIMSLEY, '00,
AND ERIC OLSON, '00
ALEXIS CIREL, '03



12

COVER STORY

AT THE CREST OF A WAVE
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LAW QUAD



“My vision is to sustain what makes Michigan exceptional while positioning us at the forefront of the most important legal challenges of the 21st century.”

—Dean Neel U. Sukhatme

24

FEATURE

Q&A WITH DEAN NEEL U. SUKHATME



26

FEATURE

“TO VERONICA,
WITH LOVE, BEN”



30

FEATURE

DOMINIC AKURITINGA AYINE, LL.M. '98



32

@UMICHLAW

EUROPEAN ALUMNI REUNION
GENDER APARTHEID CONFERENCE
PROFS. KLASS AND BAGLEY ON
"THE LAW OF ABUNDANCE"



40

IMPACT

VIRGINIA GORDAN FELLOWSHIP
30 YEARS OF THE NANNES CHALLENGE
CHARLES KNOX, '73
ARN TELLEM, '79
ASHLEY WASHINGTON, '10
AARON M. LEWIS, '05
GILLIAN C. STEINHAEUER, '76
U-M HONORS RICHARD BURNS, '71

**“It’s really not a matter
of learning something
brand new as much as it
is stretching vertically,
both down into the weeds
and up to the biggest
picture of things going
on in higher education.”**

—Martha Umphrey, '91

48

CLASS NOTES

MATT PRESTON, '21
MARTHA UMPHREY, '91
IN MEMORIAM

60 CLOSING

BRIEFS

108

episodes of the video series *A2Z* have been published as of October 2025. When the pandemic shut down in-person prospective student events in 2020,

Senior Assistant Dean Sarah Zearfoss, '91, took to YouTube from her basement. Five years later, *A2Z*, a video series that demystifies the admissions process, continues to help prospects put their best application forward (even if they end up not applying to Michigan). The most-watched episode is season 2, episode 12, "Soft Factors

That Will Make or Break Your Application," with 85,000 views. Many of the TikTok versions of *A2Z* have garnered more than 1 million views.

Check out *A2Z* on YouTube at @umichlaw.



Bucket List

The William W. Cook Legal Research Library was included in *150 Libraries You Need to Visit Before You Die* by Léa Teuscher, a London-based writer who researched and wrote the book for Belgian publisher Lannoo.

"One of the largest academic law libraries in the world, it is housed in a series of stunning buildings ranging from Collegiate Gothic to International Style," she wrote.

"[R]egulatory models give social media companies more power than we would typically expect of other private entities in relation to speech. Treating them as quasi-state actors would also relieve states of accountability for the things happening on social media."

—Current SJD candidate **Mike Tiu Jr., LLM '25**, one of two students who won 2025 Kouba Prizes for outstanding papers on European Union law or on international peace and security among nations. Tiu, a law professor at the University of the Philippines, argued that social media companies should be treated as quasi-state actors rather than private entities to hold them accountable for protecting human rights, especially as the need for regulations across social media channels evolves alongside the emergence of new technologies. **Isobel Blakeway-Phillips, '25**, also won a Kouba Prize for her paper, which examined how the relationship between the EU's General Data Protection Regulation and the more recently enacted Artificial Intelligence Act might affect the privacy of EU citizens.



Alumni spoke to a packed house at "AI, the Future of the Legal Profession, and You" in October. Panelists were (left to right) **Clarissa Cerda, '92**, chief legal officer and secretary at Pindrop Security Inc.; **David Caragliano, '09**, global head of ads safety at Google; and **Mary Snapp, '94**, former vice president of strategic initiatives at Microsoft. **Ashish Prasad**, an adjunct professor and vice president and general counsel at HaystackID, moderated the event.



Tea for...Four

Ginny Miller (seated, right) cashed in her Student Funded Fellowships Auction prize, “Afternoon Tea with Professor McCrudden and His Wife, Caroline,” earlier this fall. Joining her were (clockwise from front) **Shannon Hickey**, **Ellen Chirikos**, and **Aoife Bennett**. The foursome enjoyed tea and goodies made by Caroline McCrudden, which included cucumber sandwiches, scones, chocolate chip pound cake, strawberries and cream, and pie.

“We chatted in detail about Ireland (notably *Derry Girls*), Caroline’s incredibly interesting career as a tropical botanist, Professor McCrudden’s class on human dignity, and a bunch of other things,” says Bennett. **Christopher McCrudden** is an L. Bates Lea Global Law Professor at Michigan Law, an emeritus professor of human rights and equality law at Queens University Belfast, and a practicing barrister-at-law with Blackstone Chambers.

103 *from* 58
ALUMNI FIRMS

networked with 1Ls during Big Law at the Big House in September. The annual event, hosted by the Office of Career Planning, provides students an early opportunity to explore practice areas and learn to differentiate between them without the pressure of recruiting.

BRIEFS

“Ohio State is arguing primarily that the Brown Jug’s use of ‘Buckeye Tears’ as a trademark will confuse consumers who will erroneously believe that Ohio State licensed, sponsored, or is otherwise connected with the Brown Jug’s products. It is also arguing that the Buckeye mark is a very famous mark, so any business’s use of a mark with ‘Buckeye’ in it will damage the distinctiveness of its marks.”

—**Jessica Litman**, the John F. Nickoll Professor of Law, in a *Michigan Daily* story about a notice of opposition that Ohio State University filed in response to the Brown Jug restaurant’s trademark application for its beer Buckeye Tears. The restaurant submitted an initial answer to the notice in October, stating that “Buckeye Tears” refers to the sentiment that “Ohio State and its supporters may on occasion act like sore losers.” The Brown Jug’s legal team includes **Todd Gregorian, ’04**, who is handling the case pro bono.

BRIEFS



All-In-One Reunion Welcomes Alumni Home

In September, alumni who graduated in class years ending in 0 and 5 and emeritus alumni who graduated more than 50 years ago returned to Ann Arbor to celebrate Reunion. It marked the first time in decades that the Law School hosted a single Reunion weekend, which offered an opportunity for attendees to build cross-generational connections.

Reunion also took place when the football team was on the road. While some alumni expressed disappointment at not being able to attend a game, others lauded the increased programming and chances for social connection, including an “Ask a Law Professor” panel that covered a wide range of topics, a lecture by Professor Richard Primus, a panel discussion with the Law School’s associate and assistant deans, and a luncheon and the chance to pose on the field at Michigan Stadium.

This year’s changes were in response to survey feedback from alumni and were an attempt to counter the rising costs and limited availability of lodging and football tickets during home-game weekends. In 2026, the Law School plans to return Reunion to a home game weekend, with increased discounts for recent graduates and those working in public interest jobs.

“We want Reunion to be as accessible as possible for the most alumni possible,” says Lara Furar, director of alumni engagement and programming. “From Big Law to public defenders, recent grads to more seasoned grads, we want everyone to be able to ‘come home’ to the Quad.”

Beyond the strong football tradition, “We want our programming to appeal to a broad range of alumni, so that Reunion is a can’t-miss event,” Furar says. “We will continue to solicit and evaluate feedback as we look toward future Reunion planning.”





From Campbell Teammates to Impact Litigation Partners

By Sharon Morioka

When Sean Grimsley, '00, and Eric Olson, '00, started their impact litigation firm in September 2023, they had the loftiest of goals: to chart a path that would allow them to make a difference in the world. Two years after founding Denver-based Olson Grimsley, they are realizing that goal by taking on several cases that support the public interest through plaintiff-side litigation.

One case resulted in a \$60 million verdict on behalf of a client whose 25-day-old child died after consuming a cow's milk-based formula that caused a fatal intestinal disease. In another, they obtained a judgment of more than \$20 million following an antitrust trial representing a small, upstart industrial insulation manufacturer against the dominant incumbent.



Sean Grimsley, '00, and Eric Olson, '00, are pictured to the right of the podium at the 2000 Campbell Moot Court finals. (The eventual winners, Bill Jenks, '00, and Abigail Carter, '00, are in the foreground.)

Their current work includes two cases related to human trafficking, four more infant formula cases, and another that is seeking compensation for college athletes who opted out of a large class action settlement. In total, the firm has tried seven cases, argued four appeals, and won more than \$80 million in judgments in just two years.

"The firm was a way for us to do work that we valued," says Olson. "And starting the firm with a friend makes it a lot easier because of the trust we have in each other."

Starting the firm

Grimsley and Olson met during a Habitat for Humanity-type service day project during Law School orientation.

"We didn't construct very much that day," says Grimsley, who remembers noticing Olson as he squeezed his lanky frame into a Bobcat. "But I don't think we *deconstructed* anything."

Once classes started, they ended up in the same section and study group and later teamed up for the 2000 Campbell Moot Court Competition, coming in second to their friends Abigail Carter, '00, and Bill Jenks, '00.

What was it like losing to friends?

"It would be better if it weren't people we heard from all the time," Grimsley jokes. "Bill definitely never misses an opportunity to remind us."

Following graduation, Olson's and Grimsley's paths ran on similar tracks. Both had summer jobs at Covington & Burling in Washington, DC, after which Grimsley clerked for the Hon. Harry T. Edwards, '65, on the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit and Olson for the Hon. John G. Heyburn on the US District Court for the Western District of Kentucky, his home state. Olson later clerked for Judge Edwards, and both clerked a year apart on the US Supreme Court (Grimsley for Justice O'Connor and Olson for Justice Stevens).

Their paths converged in 2004, when Grimsley joined Bartlit Beck LLP in Denver, where Olson had worked for about a year, first in the Chicago office, then in Denver. In 2019, Olson left to work as solicitor general in the Colorado attorney general's office; Grimsley left two years later to work as general counsel for Ibotta Inc., a digital promotions network that a former colleague had started.

Both were fulfilled in their careers, but they felt the tug of the civil litigation work that each had done at Bartlit Beck. Their professional stars aligned, and with their shared interest in pursuing plaintiff-side public interest work, Olson Grimsley was born.

Roughly speaking, the firm—comprising 10 lawyers and five other professionals—does about one-third public interest work, generally pro bono or at "low bono" rates (heavily discounted for those who can't pay full freight). The remaining two-thirds of the work is split between plaintiff-side contingency work and more typical lawyer-client payment terms.



Sean Grimsley, '00, and Eric Olson, '00, seated left to right, with members of their team at Olson Grimsley, the plaintiff-side impact litigation boutique they founded in 2023.

"The flexibility of being able to choose what cases we take is very meaningful," says Olson. "We say no to a lot of cases that come across our door because life's too short to work on things that we don't enjoy."

Saying yes to cases

Among the cases they have said yes to are two human trafficking suits, representing about 100 Filipino workers who helped build stadiums in Qatar for the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Construction for the event was massive, including a new airport, railroads, and hotels. While generating billions of dollars in revenue, the event relied on thousands of workers who were subjected to inhumane conditions.

In partnership with Sparacino PLLC, Olson Grimsley filed a complaint that states that four firms violated the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and outlines the treatment and conditions that the workers were subjected to, including long hours, physical injuries, and mental trauma. Earlier this year, the defendants moved to dismiss the case, but the plaintiffs won that decision.

"It is a really novel and interesting case about enforcing what is pretty basic US law, which says that if you're part of a venture that benefits from human trafficking, you're responsible for it," says Olson. "The organization that supervised the construction was a Colorado-based company that was acquired by a larger national company during the construction. So it's a combination of hard legal issues, interesting factual development, and advocacy that makes a real difference."

Another Olson Grimsley case involves more than 300 student-athletes who have opted out of *House v. NCAA*, a \$2.8 billion settlement between the NCAA and the Power Five athletic conferences in a federal class action antitrust lawsuit.

The settlement allows revenue sharing between Division I colleges and student-athletes who competed from 2016 to 2024.

The firm is representing about 75 percent of the student-athletes who opted out of that settlement because it undervalued how much they could have made off their name, image, and likeness as well as their share of revenue generated by college sports, if not for rules imposed by the NCAA. Olson Grimsley aims to recover the full amount these athletes would have made.

In addition to developing their own cases, Olson Grimsley also joins cases brought by other firms.

"One of the things we like to do as a firm, since we're small, is team up with other plaintiffs firms who have worked up a case but need trial lawyers to come in and try the case. We want to be the go-to firm that others call to come in and help out," says Grimsley.

That happened in the \$60 million verdict against Mead Johnson Nutrition, the manufacturer of Enfamil Premature Formula. Olson Grimsley worked with Keller Postman, a Chicago firm that had developed the case but, only a month before the trial, needed lawyers to argue in court. By coincidence, the firm representing Mead Johnson was Covington & Burling, the firm where Grimsley and Olson interned after law school.

"It's an example of us bringing our unique skills and experience to bear in a way that makes a positive difference in the world," says Grimsley, who took the lead on the case.

"There are not many lawyers in the country who can drop into a complicated case against one of the best law firms in the country and have that kind of success," says Olson. "It's a great example of us coming in and working on a challenging case and getting a great outcome."

Opening Doors for the Future of Family-Building

By Annie Hagstrom

When the Michigan Family Protection Act (MFPA) was signed into law in 2024, it repealed the state’s ban on surrogacy and instituted a new regulatory framework related to surrogacy and other assisted reproductive technology, such as in vitro fertilization. The MFPA follows the passage of a similar statute in New York state, the Child Parent Security Act (CPSA), which became law in 2021.



Alexis Cirel, '03, second from right, advocating for the Child Parent Security Act in Albany, New York, in February 2020.

Alexis Cirel, '03, a partner at Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas LLP in New York City, spent years advocating for the CPSA and, more recently, supporting bill draft efforts for the MFPA. Her dedication to the issue—and her legal practice, which focuses on fertility, matrimony, and family law—is rooted in her own experience with infertility in the early 2010s. She has since welcomed two children through surrogacy.

The beginning of the ban

Although historical references to surrogacy date back thousands of years, the first legal surrogacy agreement wasn't documented in the United States until the 1970s. But a highly publicized case in 1986 changed the course of fertility law across the country.

The case, *In re Baby M*, involved what is known as traditional, or genetic, surrogacy, when the surrogate is also the egg donor. The intended parents and the surrogate entered a contractual agreement that the surrogate would forfeit parental rights after the child was born. But the surrogate changed her mind and fought to keep the baby, and a legal battle ensued.

As a result, all forms of surrogacy—including gestational surrogacy, where the surrogate is not the egg donor—were banned outright in New Jersey, where the case occurred, as well as in New York, Louisiana, Kentucky, Indiana, Nebraska, and Michigan. Among those states, New York and Michigan were the last to reverse the ban.

Seeing from both sides

Cirel first pursued in vitro fertilization in 2010. When this avenue was unsuccessful, she turned to surrogacy. As a resident of New York, where surrogacy was still illegal, she had to look outside her home state for reproductive care. Cross-jurisdictionally, Cirel successfully had two children through surrogacy. Still, her experience sparked a curiosity that led her toward a new career path.

“As a client, going through this process was fascinating. As an attorney, the woefully antiquated laws around parentage and children conceived from assisted reproductive technology did not sit well with me,” says Cirel. “I decided to move away from Big Law and pursue fertility, family, and matrimonial law professionally.”

Joining other change-makers

Cirel began her career at Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP as a litigation associate. In 2014, she joined a boutique law firm and became part of a coalition of advocates and legislators aiming to reverse New York’s ban on surrogacy.

Throughout the following years, she held partner-level positions at Mayerson Abramowitz & Khan LLP and then Schwartz Sladkus Reich Greenberg Atlas LLP. During this time, she also began lobbying and working on proposed legislation.

Surrogacy was legalized in New York with the passage of the CPSA in 2021. In addition to legalizing gestational surrogacy, the law implemented a framework to regulate the relationship

between intended parents and surrogates. Traditional surrogacy—when the surrogate is also the egg donor—remains illegal in New York today.

Shortly after the CPSA was passed, Cirel joined Warshaw Burstein LLP as a partner and helped found the firm's fertility law group. Most recently, she returned to Schwartz Sladkus as a partner and started the firm's fertility law practice.

Bringing the legal framework to Michigan

After the CPSA became law in New York, Cirel began focusing on the passage of a similar law in Michigan. The MFPA, a package of nine bills signed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, was passed in early 2024. Cirel has since been admitted to practice in Michigan to support families who wish to enter into surrogacy arrangements.

Both bills encompass broader, more nuanced laws than surrogacy alone; they are also significant in reframing the way we think about the legal parentage of children conceived using assisted reproductive technology. This shift, Cirel says, involved updating outdated legislation that focused solely on genetic relationships, gestation, the marital presumption, and gender-based norms.

"It zooms out from all of that and focuses instead on issues of intent to be a parent and consent to the assisted reproduction undertaken to that end. By doing so, it extends the accessibility of family building to many more hopeful parents—single individuals, unmarried or same-sex couples, and others."

The bills also establish legally recognized relationships before birth, making the orders effective immediately once the child is born. Additionally, the laws in New York and Michigan empower surrogates to make all health and welfare decisions that affect their bodies.

"When these laws were enforced, I offered myself as a legal resource to fertility clinics in both states," she says. "It can be overwhelming, not just for patients and intended parents who have this new door opened but for health care providers, too. What was once deemed criminal is now available, so it can be tricky to navigate without legal guidance."

Beyond the bills

Cirel's practice also involves helping clients navigate the substantial costs of assisted reproductive technology.

"Financial access is a real problem," she says. "Part of that stems from the lack of insurance coverage, not just for

assisted reproductive technology but also for the ancillary costs, like agency and attorney fees. It becomes cost-prohibitive for many people."

The definition of *infertility* by insurance companies has been based, historically, on heterosexual couples being unable to conceive after 12 months, which posed challenges for single individuals, unmarried or same sex couples, and others. Cirel continues to work with professional organizations, such as the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, that seek to expand the definition and enable more individuals to be covered by insurance. She also volunteers her time as a board member for various nonprofit organizations to raise funding for fertility treatment grants and awareness.

Additionally, Cirel counsels clients through embryo disputes, speaks at professional conferences, guest lectures at law schools, and appears on various media outlets as an authority on fertility and family law issues. Her written work has appeared in law and medical journals, including the American Bar Association's *Family Law Quarterly*, the *New York Law Journal*, and the *Fertility and Sterility Journal*. Cirel is also one of approximately 200 attorneys in the country to be named an Assisted Reproductive Technologies Fellow of the Academy of Adoption and Assisted Reproduction Attorneys.

"I hope to encourage more discussion about this area of the law, especially at the law school level," she says, "because I've seen firsthand how life-changing it can be for families."







AT THE CREST OF A WAVE

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE LAW QUAD

Depending on whom you ask, artificial intelligence (AI) can evoke many things. For some, it could bring to mind Deep Blue, the AI chess program that made global headlines in 1997 when a computer defeated the reigning grandmaster for the first time.

Others may recall Marvin, an android whose superintelligence imbued it with existential malaise, to great comedic effect, in the 1979 novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

Or perhaps they are reminded of nascent AI technology, which was used to map neural networks and advance our understanding of the human brain—and, simultaneously, expand the possibilities of AI itself—in the 1950s and '60s.

But today, AI's most prominent association is with the large language models that power chatbots like OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, and the similar models that undergird image-generation platforms like Midjourney.

These technologies are becoming embedded in our daily lives at an astonishing pace. Some, like AI companions for the lonely and pseudo therapists for the un- or underinsured, seem to represent genuinely new frontiers and raise a score of ethical and social concerns. Others fall into a more incremental bucket, such as AI-powered project management software or research tools designed to streamline specific functions at law firms or other organizations.

But there are many things we do not understand about these new AI products. Will they actually deliver the efficiencies that have been promised? Can our infrastructure, and the rapidly changing climate, sustain the energy demands required to train and operate these new tools? Is there a realistic long-term equilibrium between profits for the AI innovators and products that deliver an affordable value proposition for paying clients? Can these technologies be harnessed to advance human progress while simultaneously limiting potential social harms?

For now, the answers to these questions remain debated and mostly unknown. They are also largely outside of the scope of this series of articles.

What we do know is that AI tools have arrived. Millions of people are using them every day, and they are shaping the lived experience of nearly everyone—including those who would prefer to eschew the technology. Lawyers and law schools are no exception.

Here, *Law Quadrangle* examines how our faculty and students are navigating this new landscape and exploring how AI may be incorporated into legal education and the profession. —JW

AI AND THE EVOLUTION OF LAW AND LEGAL EDUCATION

BY SHARON MORJOKA

As society pieces together how artificial intelligence (AI) fits into the education puzzle, Professor Nicholson Price invites Michigan Law students to wrestle with questions of how the law shapes AI and how AI shapes the law.

In his seminar Artificial Intelligence and the Law, which he has taught three times since the Winter 2022 term, his students dive into discussions at the frontier of legal thought: How should we think about regulating AI in different contexts? How does the use of AI in medicine or autonomous vehicles, for example, affect liability doctrines? What impact does AI have on the intellectual property system? How do privacy and transparency factor in?

“It’s been great,” he says. “That course has been full every time I’ve taught it. Procedurally, I ask my students to use AI to help them draft some of their responses and tell them that in others they can’t. And I have them reflect on what the experience of using AI tools is like—how that shaped their writing process, things like that—so they can engage with the technology on a more direct level.”

“

I WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT WHATEVER STUDENTS ARE LEARNING ABOUT HOW TO USE AI, THEY ARE NOT SKIMPING ON THE ‘HOW DO I DO THE THINKING ON MY OWN?’ AT LEAST FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, THAT’S GOING TO REMAIN ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. —Professor Nicholson Price

While AI’s surge into the public’s consciousness has been relatively recent, thanks to the launch of tools such as ChatGPT, Price has researched AI for the past decade. He also has collaborated on various projects with faculty in U-M’s College of Engineering; the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; the Medical School; and the School of Public Health.

Price has a PhD in biological sciences in addition to a JD. He has leveraged his research—which focuses on the use of AI in medicine and how it shapes biomedical innovation—into his teaching at the Law School.

“It’s been really nice to bring together students from very different backgrounds,” he says of the interdisciplinary curiosity. “I’ve had computer programmers in my class. I’ve had people who have interacted with AI systems in medicine. I’ve had engineers, including in the autonomous vehicle space. I’ve had people with no background at all. And to see this cross-cutting interaction of AI across the different areas is quite interesting.”



Professor Nicholson Price has taught Artificial Intelligence and the Law three times since it was first offered during the Winter 2022 term.

While he does challenge students to use AI for some of their assignments, this doctrinal class is different from the skills-based “sandbox” class that Professor Patrick Barry teaches. (See page 16.) Instead, students discuss legal scholarship as well as cases, statutes, regulations, and other materials; hear from guest speakers who are active in the field; and even read science fiction short stories such as Isaac Asimov’s “Franchise,” a futuristic tale about a presidential election with a single voter.

NO REPLACEMENT FOR LEARNING

Like everything related to AI, students also have to keep up with the constant changes in technology. Today’s AI could be very different from AI in two to three years.

“I certainly can’t keep up with all the changes,” Price says. “I do my best with changes related to medicine, which is already like drinking from a fire hose. But one of the nice things about teaching a seminar like this is that I have the students do current event presentations, and that helps me learn about what’s going on.”

While AI can play a role in enhancing legal learning, it is far from replacing learning.

Price mentions the popular analogy that using AI to do some of the basic tasks is like using a robot to lift weights for you at the gym. By outsourcing that training to AI, students won’t learn how to think.

“I want to make sure that whatever students are learning about how to use AI, they are not skimping on the ‘how do I do the thinking on my own?’” he says. “At least for the foreseeable future, that’s going to remain absolutely essential.”

Case in point, feedback he receives from students in his seminar shows that AI can fall short of expectations.

“I sometimes ask students to use AI and to write a reflection about it, and those reflections are quite interesting,” he says. “Some students report that they’re really disappointed by the tools. They thought it was going to be tremendously helpful, but it ended up taking them much more time than before and didn’t sound as much like their voice as they wanted it to.”

While he hesitates to label AI as a foundational skill, Price acknowledges that it most likely will show up in legal practice when students start their careers. Therefore, they have to know about it, at least to the extent that they can discern that a model isn’t making something up or how to interact with an AI model in a way that makes it more likely to give them useful results.

“If we move to a phase where it turns out AI can do all the complex legal thinking for you, and you don’t need anybody to check it because it’s always right,” he says, “then we’ve got a lot of other transformational changes to worry about.”

HANDS-ON WITH AI TOOLS

BY SHARON MORJOKA

When 3L Ryan Distaso first came to Michigan Law, he was a self-described “AI Luddite” and possessed a healthy skepticism about artificial intelligence. But he was certain that it would occupy an important place in the practice of law in the near future.

During his 2L year, intent on demystifying the technology, Distaso turned to AI Sandbox, a Law School class taught by Patrick Barry, a clinical assistant professor of law and director of digital academic initiatives.

“I didn’t want to be behind the curve in using AI,” says Distaso. “And I thought Professor Barry’s course might help me get up to speed.” The class proved useful, and as a summer associate, he used the technology at his firm as a starting point to research key cases and contours of unfamiliar areas of law.

“

[THE CLASS] CONVINCED ME OF AI’S BENEFITS AND USE CASES, WHILE ALSO EMPHASIZING ITS RISKS AND LIMITATIONS. —3L Ryan Distaso

But Distaso still maintains a healthy skepticism and sees AI as neither panacea nor Pandora’s Box, which Barry addressed during the class.

“He did a great job of entertaining both perspectives: skeptics like me and AI optimists,” says Distaso. “He convinced me of AI’s benefits and use cases, while also emphasizing its risks and limitations.”

AI REWARDS EXPERTISE

As Barry leads students through the process of developing AI skills, he says that it is no replacement for the critical thinking skills that are a foundation for their legal education.

“One thing that is beginning to emerge out of the research is that AI tends to reward expertise,” he says. “If you know your subject area, then the power of AI to generate ideas is potentially more useful because you’re able to sort through the nonsense. If you don’t have that ability, then you may be convinced by something that is really just bonkers.”

One question he asks students, as well as himself, when using AI is, “Am I doing less thinking?” If a user is perhaps producing more but doing less creative work, coming up with fewer ideas, or

feeling less energized after using the tool, the answer is probably “Yes.”

“I push my students to structure their

interaction with AI so that they are not falling into the trap of cognitive offloading,” he says.

To reframe perceptions of AI, Barry encourages students to explore the tool as a feedback mechanism that provides responses to their original work and a chance to course correct. He stresses, though, the difference between feedback and advice.

“I get nervous about following the advice of AI,” he says. “One my students said, ‘What I like about ChatGPT feedback is I don’t have to accept it.’”



USING THE TOOLS

Barry, who has taught AI courses both in and outside Michigan Law, focuses his sandbox course on the hands-on use of various tools, from large language models like ChatGPT to text-to-image generators. (See page 21.)

“The term we use in class is ‘mechanical sympathy.’ I want them to understand the strengths and limitations of these tools.”

Students experiment with AI and can, for example, use it as a study buddy or upload their research to NotebookLM, which then produces a personalized podcast that summarizes legal concepts.

Opportunities for robust class discussions follow the students’ experiments with the tools, as Barry asks them to share their reflections. They also provide feedback on small whiteboards, writing of their experiences on a scale from zero (most negative) to 10 (most positive). Students then discuss their thoughts behind those numbers.

These interactions allow for less top-down instruction, says Barry, with students learning from each other as much as from him as the professor.

“I hope I contribute some expertise, but I’m very open to them coming up with new ideas and suggestions,” he says. “It’s less the pedagogical model that they’re empty vessels, and I’m pouring in information. It’s more of ‘We’re exploring together.’ I want to give them principles so they explore in a skillful and responsible way, but I also want them to share with the students and with me what they learned and their reservations.”

CHALLENGES OF AI

Lindsey Bressler, a 3L who also took AI Sandbox last year and used the technology in her summer job, says that in addition to hands-on skills, the class also explored the tricky questions that the use of AI raises.

On a practical level, she feels challenged by working and learning in an entirely new manner. Instead of spending hours on research or reading, she might spend more time asking smarter questions to a chatbot. She also has found it useful in jump-starting the writing process.

“I suffer from writer’s block,” she says. “AI’s ability to break the first step of drafting something—whether that’s a quick email or a more substantive piece—can help spur productivity in ways that were unavailable to me before this technology and make procrastination or fear of getting something ‘good enough’ far less of an obstacle.”

She adds that the biggest challenges of using AI are much more philosophical than practical.

“There are questions of whether or not a chatbot provides accurate information or if it truly saves time in comparison to not using AI, not to mention the questions about AI’s energy usage and ethical questions that come up when people use AI for their mental health,” she says. “One of the appeals of going to law school for me was the opportunity to work at the cutting edge of society’s most thorny and interesting problems. AI presents both societal problems and solutions.”

Professor Patrick Barry designed his course AI Sandbox to emphasize the hands-on use of and experimentation with various tools.

”
ONE OF THE APPEALS OF GOING TO LAW SCHOOL FOR ME WAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF SOCIETY’S MOST THORNY AND INTERESTING PROBLEMS. AI PRESENTS BOTH SOCIETAL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS. —3L Lindsey Bressler

AI AND LEGAL RESEARCH IN THE LAW LIBRARY

BY JAMES WEIR,



As the head of emerging legal technologies, Christine Schauder leads the Law Library's series of AI-related trainings.

Christine Schauder, who joined the Law Library in 2025 in the new role of head of emerging legal technologies, oversees the Law School's Legal Tech Series, an ongoing program that offers training and resources for students to learn about emerging legal tools, including those powered by AI.

"We are devoted to ensuring our students are practice-ready by providing them with foundational legal research skills but also teaching them how, when, and if they should incorporate all of these new generative AI tools," she says.

Recent Legal Tech Series events include a presentation about common AI hallucinations and how to mitigate the risk of AI-introduced errors, and an overview of the regulatory landscape related to AI. The Law Library also offers trainings for AI search enhancements in legal research databases like Lexis, Westlaw, and Bloomberg Law as well as demo opportunities for legal products like Gavel, Spellbook AI, and Rhetoric's Cicero—tools that are designed for document automation, contract drafting and review, and improving oral advocacy, respectively. The goal is to introduce students to software that law firms are using already.

"Part of my job is trialing and demoing these different generative AI products that attorneys are currently using, so that we can give our students an opportunity to experience and test them out," says Schauder. "I want to make sure our students are prepared and experienced with these products so they are a step ahead of their fellow associates when they enter practice."

The library maintains an online research guide dedicated to AI that is regularly updated and serves as a clearinghouse for a wide variety of resources. It includes links

to American Bar Association guidance on the use of AI; relevant state, federal, and international rules and regulations; and the latest in AI and legal research news, including articles like "Generative artificial intelligence: Legal ethics issues," written by Law Library Director Kincaid Brown, '96, and published in the *Michigan Bar Journal* earlier this year.

Students also have subscription access to a number of leading-edge AI research tools, including products that are specifically tailored for legal tasks and trained on legal materials, a process known as retrieval-augmented generation that helps improve accuracy and minimize hallucinations.

"There are more and more AI products that do really specific tasks, and those are usually pretty good because they specialize rather than generalize," Schauder says. "Complex legal questions often involve several different steps and databases, so if an AI focuses on just one part of that process, like analyzing a contract for specific clauses, it's usually more accurate and a lot easier to double-check than a lengthy output from a complex legal question."

While AI may enhance some aspects of legal research, the foundations remain largely unchanged. And there are real risks for students and lawyers who are overreliant on AI technology.

"It's really important for students to understand the legal research process to use these tools effectively. Students need to have that foundational knowledge and be able to recognize credible sources to evaluate the quality of the output and continue on from there," Schauder says.

Turn to page 23 to read more about the tools available to students through the library and other U-M subscriptions.

AI DOOMERISM, AND REFRAMING RISK

BY JAMES WEIR

Assistant Professor Salomé Viljoen's mini-seminar, *Does AI Pose an Existential Threat to Humanity?*, opened with discussion about what AI technologists and philosophers call the alignment problem. This school of thought explores the idea that powerful artificial general intelligence (AGI)—loosely defined as AI that can complete complex tasks that reach or exceed human capability—could develop in a way that conflicts with the continued existence of humanity.

Companies in the AI space see AGI as something of a lodestar, and OpenAI, Meta, Google, and others have invested billions of dollars into AGI research. They see the consumer-facing chatbots that have come to market in recent years as a stepping stone in the race for AGI. But a common point of discussion among alignment theorists is the risk of inadvertently designing an AGI that produces unintended results—to potentially devastating effect.

“You can imagine, for example, designing an algorithm with an objective function to eliminate traffic congestion in Ann Arbor,” Viljoen says. “But if you don’t appropriately specify or constrain the prompt, an artificial general intelligence could determine that the most complete way to eliminate traffic would be to kill everyone in Ann Arbor. But Ann Arbor is an attractive place, so maybe people from Ypsilanti would then move to Ann Arbor, so perhaps the AGI would choose to kill everyone in Southeast Michigan, and so on.”

While this scenario may seem far-fetched in 2025, some technologists and engineers are focused on aligning the incentive mechanisms of AI and future AGI systems with human flourishing. But even if AGI isn’t realized, Viljoen says there is value in exploring the different ways that opportunity and risk are being framed in the context of these technologies.

“The alignment problem is one way to conceive of the risk of AI, and I want students to take that seriously. But AI is a real technology that exists right now, and there are a lot of ways to bring this topic down from the theoretical to the immediate and the material, and to

think through the costs and benefits,” she says. “I want to provide other ways of articulating how we should think about trade-offs and how we should think about this technology from other perspectives.”

From there, the discussions were more granular and examined how AI is already interacting with the environment and energy infrastructure, racial and sexual forms of discrimination, labor law, and other aspects of law and society. Viljoen assigned a variety of readings to inform the conversations, including news articles, proposed regulations in the US, and analysis of existing AI laws in the European Union.

“

WE CAN CHOOSE THE DIRECTION ALONG WHICH THIS TECHNOLOGY UNFOLDS AND THE WAYS IT CAN IMPACT OUR LIVES. THERE'S A ROLE AND AN EXPERTISE FOR LAWYERS IN SETTING THE SOCIAL RULES THAT DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT THESE TECHNOLOGIES END UP BEING SOCIALLY VALUABLE OR SOCIALLY HARMFUL.

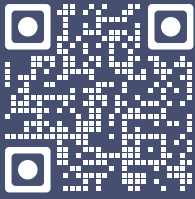
—Assistant Professor Salomé Viljoen

Viljoen taught the mini-seminar in fall 2023, when ChatGPT and similar products were beginning to take off—a trend that has only accelerated since. In winter 2026, Viljoen will teach a course called *Law, Technology, and Society* and will offer a course on digital governance and privacy during a future term, both of which will involve discussion of AI.

“What I really want to get across in my classes is not how to use the technology but how to think about it as something that lawyers are going to be regulating,” she says. “We can choose the direction along which this technology unfolds and the ways it can impact our lives. There’s a role and an expertise for lawyers in setting the social rules that determine whether or not these technologies end up being socially valuable or socially harmful.”



Salomé Viljoen, an assistant professor of law, teaches a number of courses related to the intersection of artificial intelligence and technology.



Download the paper

RESEARCH RESULTS

Researchers asked law students to complete six realistic legal tasks with and without the aid of newer AI technology—a reasoning model (o1-preview from OpenAI) and retrieval-augmented generation (Vincent from vLex). Among their findings:

- Both o1 and Vincent yielded “substantial, statistically significant improvements” in the speed of completing the tasks.
- For four of the six tasks, the quality of the work product using AI tools was “considerably better” than that of students not using AI.
- Quality improvements were concentrated in litigation-oriented tasks; they did not extend to the one transactional task that was tested (drafting a contract).
- Both Vincent and o1 demonstrated quality improvements in “clarity, organization, and professionalism.”
- Vincent’s effect on accuracy was mixed, but it produced fewer hallucinations than o1—and about the same as human researchers.
- For three tasks, o1 produced “statistically significant and substantial improvements in the quality of the legal analysis.”

PUTTING AI TO WORK: RESEARCH SUPPORTS VALUE OF TECHNOLOGY IN THE REAL (LEGAL) WORLD

BY BOB NEEDHAM

Until recently, empirical legal research has largely concluded that generative artificial intelligence tools may be interesting, but they don’t offer much actual value in real-world lawyering.

However, a new study by Michigan Law Professors J.J. Prescott, Patrick Barry, and their colleagues suggests that certain AI tools can help with efficiency and, in some cases, accuracy and legal reasoning.

“This project suggests that not all AI models are always going to be helpful on all dimensions, but by and large you’re not any worse off using AI as a tool. And, on many dimensions, you are much better off,” Prescott says.

The researchers focused on two newer types of AI tools:

- A reasoning model, OpenAI’s o1-preview. An improvement over earlier “chatbots,” such models are designed to plan their responses before providing them.
- A retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) tool, vLex’s Vincent. RAG tools integrate generative AI technology with legal source materials.

For the study, researchers asked 127 law students from the University of Michigan and the University of Minnesota to complete six tasks that were developed in consultation with working lawyers, such as writing an email to a client, drafting a contract or legal memo, and analyzing a complaint. Each student completed two tasks without the use of AI, two with the aid of o1-preview, and two with the support of Vincent. The tools and control conditions were randomized across the tasks and participants.

The researchers graded the resulting work for accuracy, analysis, organization, clarity, and professionalism. For four of the six tasks, students produced better work with the support of AI tools than without them. (See the results sidebar.)

The study “provides the first empirical evidence, to our knowledge, that AI tools can consistently and significantly enhance the quality of human lawyers’ work across various realistic legal assignments,” the researchers write in their paper.

Prescott says, “The technology is going to keep getting better and easier to use, and it’s going to look more and more professional. So being able to establish that right now, with these earlier models, AI can already provide an advantage—that should be enough to tell us that this is really going to change the way we practice law.”

The results have clearly generated interest: The paper has been downloaded more than 10,000 times from the website of SSRN, an open-access research platform for academics, making it one of the site’s 50 top papers in all disciplines over the past year.

Prescott hopes to see law firms and companies take up the task of further evaluation of AI’s real-world effectiveness—especially as the number of AI products continues to grow. It’s now clear, though, that a shift in the practice of law has arrived.

“AI is going to change the kinds of tasks lawyers do,” Prescott says. “Ultimately, they’ll still be facilitating transactions and resolving disputes and giving counseling. But what constitutes a valuable way for them to spend their time will certainly change.”

CONSPICUOUSLY GOOD

BY PATRICK BARRY

I have an ambitious goal for the students who take the courses on artificial intelligence I teach. By the end of the term, I want them to become “conspicuously good” at AI.

I want them to become conspicuously good at using AI. I want them to become conspicuously good at understanding the risks and limitations of AI. And I want them to become conspicuously good at adapting to whatever new AI tools and trends develop in the coming months, years, and decades.

AI FRANKFURTERS

I take the phrase “conspicuously good” from a compliment that US Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter received early in his career, when he was a 24-year-old prosecutor in New York. His boss at the time, Henry Stimson—who later served in the cabinet of four presidents—described Frankfurter’s work as “conspicuously good.” What Stimson meant is that Frankfurter’s work stood out in a positive way. It attracted laudatory notice and attention.

“

“I LOVE SEEING HOW, BY THE END OF OUR TIME TOGETHER, [MY STUDENTS’] RELATIONSHIP WITH AI TRANSFORMS IN SEVERAL POSITIVE WAYS. —Professor Patrick Barry

I want people to say something similar about the work my students produce, especially when it comes to AI. I want them to be the person in their office, their industry, or just their group of friends and family who earns a reputation for being AI savvy—someone whom other folks turn to when they need help with an AI-related issue or want to learn more about the latest AI innovation.

Imagine what that kind of status and expertise might do for their job prospects and professional ambitions. Imagine what it might do for their professional development, as well as their entrepreneurial endeavors—regardless of whether those endeavors are commercial, cultural, or wonderfully idiosyncratic.

More importantly, imagine what being AI savvy might do for their confidence and own sense that they’re equipped to navigate a fast-changing future. As Mhairi Aitken, a senior ethics fellow at the Alan Turing Institute, observed during a lecture on AI she gave at the Royal Institution in London, it used to be exciting when there was a new AI breakthrough every two to three months—now, it seems, there’s one every two to three hours.

Helping students, lawyers, and other advocates adjust to (and then excel in) that kind of fiercely dynamic environment is one of my favorite things about the AI courses and workshops I teach. The participants come from all over the world—India, Japan, Brazil, Nigeria, Mexico, Canada, Australia, France, and Saudi Arabia, not to mention every US state. I love seeing how, by the end of our time together, their relationship with AI transforms in several positive ways.

They become a lot more comfortable with AI. They become a lot more creative with AI. They also, importantly, develop a critical eye for spotting what the Princeton computer scientists Arvind Narayanan and Sayash Kapoor call “AI Snake Oil”: those bogus, over-hyped AI products that “don’t work, and probably never will.”

Part of being conspicuously good at AI, I tell my students, involves knowing how to avoid what is conspicuously bad.

Patrick Barry is a clinical assistant professor of law and the director of digital academic initiatives at Michigan Law. His four-part series, AI For Lawyers and Other Advocates, launched in November 2024 on Michigan Online and Coursera. The courses are free for U-M students, alumni, faculty, and staff.

NEW CLINIC TO EXPLORE IF AI TOOLS CAN BROADEN LEGAL ACCESS

BY SHARON MORJOKA

As directors of Michigan Law clinics focused on social justice, Professors Bridgette Carr, '02, and Vivek Sankaran, '01, are aware of a sobering truth: A staggering number of low-income Americans (92 percent) do not have access to legal help for their civil needs.

Both have dedicated their careers to finding ways to make the justice system accessible to people who have been left behind. Now, they're looking to artificial intelligence (AI) as an ally in the effort.

Carr, co-director of the Human Trafficking and Immigration Clinic, and Sankaran, director of the Child Advocacy Law Clinic and the Child Welfare Appellate Clinic, are leading a new initiative that brings AI to clinical education at Michigan Law. Their AI Law and Policy Clinic, launching in January, allows students to explore how they can leverage emerging technologies to expand the ability of low-income people to understand and vindicate their legal rights—without losing sight of the human element that underpins justice or diminishing the critical thinking skills that are vital to their work.

“Michigan Law students, with their training in the law and AI, can serve the needs of organizations that are overburdened and under-resourced,” says Carr. “For them to be able to leverage the efficiency gains and other benefits that AI is offering—that’s what I’m really excited about.”

USING AI TO HELP ACCESS JUSTICE

The idea for the clinic began in early 2024, when Carr and Sankaran started conversations with AI innovators who believed the technology could not only transform how people adjudicate their rights but also make legal information affordable and actionable for those who need it most.

“In many ways, this is the natural extension of what clinics do, which is to commingle educating students while also serving some of the greatest legal needs that we have,” Carr says. “AI offers us a chance to scale up to actually meeting those needs.”

Clinic students will work in teams and collaborate with organizations such as courts, legal aid organizations, nonprofits, or even other Michigan Law clinics to produce a tangible solution for a client. For example, students could develop tools that help overburdened lawyers provide more efficient legal services or other tools that help self-represented litigants navigate a complex system.

The key through line is that the solution needs to be related to helping those in poverty access justice systems.

“I want us thinking about how tools we develop might positively or negatively affect certain populations,” says Carr. “I also think there are discussions that we’re not having right now; for example, will there be a point where, if you’re not using AI, you aren’t providing ethical representation? There’s going to be a lot of room for students to really engage in pressing ethical issues.”

DESIGN THINKING MINDSET

Both professors see use of AI as a foundational skill that should be taught early in law school—but also must be taught with care. If used poorly, they say, AI can have a harmful effect on a student’s learning abilities. In essence, it cannot be used as a replacement for learning but as a tool to deepen learning. The role of human judgment is irreplaceable.



*Professors Bridgette Carr, '02, and Vivek Sankaran, '01, brought design thinking to the classroom by co-teaching *Designing a Fulfilling Life in the Law*. Their new clinic will use design thinking to prototype, test, and iterate ways that AI can help low-income Americans access legal help.*

“AI, at least in this moment, is great in the middle,” Carr says. “But you still need humans at the beginning and end to frame and conceptualize, and then to verify that something’s accurate.”

Sankaran adds that attorneys have an obligation to check everything that goes into every pleading, to examine their biases, to interrogate systems, and to make sure that they’re treating people fairly.

“And that has not changed,” he says. “I think that if folks view this technology as outsourcing all of those roles, because you don’t have to check it anymore, they are gravely mistaken. We will be educating our students about it.”

He adds that the clinic gives students space to experiment with AI tools as they learn. And the clinic’s focus will evolve alongside the rapidly changing technology. Carr and Sankaran say use of AI will foster what they call a “design thinking” mindset, where students prototype, test, and iterate solutions. The clinic, in other words, is as much about mindset as mechanics, and that spirit of experimentation requires comfort with ambiguity.

“A lot of the traditional skills that we used to value, like memorization and knowing case law, aren’t going to be as important,” Sankaran says. For example, basic AI tools can analyze a legal document in minutes rather than hours.

“With AI and other technologies,” says Sankaran, “there’s a completely different skill set of design thinking that students need to be taught. It’s an innovator’s mindset of spotting areas where AI can be useful, and then developing prototypes where we try something, and then learn to iterate and create more prototypes, and then get user feedback. Once you get the mindset, the tech part is easy.”

AI TOOLS IN THE LAW QUAD

As of November 2025, the AI tools and databases that are available to Michigan Law students include:

- **Two products from LexisNexis: Lexis+ and Protege.** Lexis+ is integrated into the platform for drafting and advanced search, and to provide other resources like document analysis and legal workflow recommendations. Protege is an AI assistant that offers a more conversational and customizable user experience.
- **Westlaw CoCounsel.** This generative AI tool uses Westlaw’s repository of case law and other legal resources to support document review, research, drafting, and other tasks as well as Westlaw AI Deep Research, which performs multistep research queries and produces results with detailed notes and links to primary sources.
- **Two tools from Bloomberg Law: Answers and AI Assistant.** Bloomberg Law Answers is a generative AI tool integrated into the platform’s legal database. Bloomberg Law AI Assistant is a chat-based interface that is focused on document summary and analysis.
- **Rhetoric’s Cicero.** Cicero is an AI-powered tool focused on helping to improve oral arguments, cold call responses, and interview skills.
- **LegaltechHub.** This directory includes AI technologies as well as articles providing insights into trends, innovations, and best practices in the legal field
- **A number of AI tools from Google.** Students have access to Gemini—a generative AI chatbot tool that can be used across a suite of Google products—and NotebookLM, an AI tool that allows users to upload documents for analysis, drafting, and other tasks.

Meet

DEAN NEEL U. SUKHATME



ON JULY 1, THE LAW SCHOOL WELCOMED ITS 19TH DEAN, NEEL U. SUKHATME—THE FIRST FULLY EXTERNAL DEAN IN MICHIGAN LAW’S 166-YEAR HISTORY.

Sukhatme is an interdisciplinary empirical scholar whose research focuses on crime, intellectual property, voting rights, and AI and the law, among other areas. He joined the Law School from Georgetown University Law Center, where in addition to his faculty titles, he served as associate dean for research and academic programs and co-directed the Georgetown Law and Economics Workshop series.

Just months into his deanship, Sukhatme shares his first impressions of Michigan Law, what motivates his approach to leadership, and what excites him most about the years ahead.

1. You’ve been in Ann Arbor for a few months now. What has surprised you most about Michigan Law, and what have you learned about this community that you didn’t fully expect?

The warmth and authenticity of our community. Faculty, staff, students, and alumni have gone out of their way to welcome my family and me, and I’ve quickly learned that “collegiality” here isn’t just a phrase we toss around. I knew that Michigan Law has a tradition of excellence, but now that I’m on campus, I’ve seen firsthand how invested everyone is in making Michigan Law not just a remarkable institution but also a community where people genuinely support one another. I’ve already seen how far that spirit travels—from the European Alumni Reunion in Berlin to swapping stories at the Los Angeles tailgate before the USC football game (even if that game didn’t go as we’d hoped). It’s humbling and energizing to be part of a community like this.

2. Early in your tenure, what priorities are rising to the top of your agenda? How do you balance near-term needs with long-term ambition?

Several priorities are both pressing and foundational. For students, my focus is on access and support, especially in the wake of changes to federal financial aid. We’re looking at how to ensure all students—regardless of background—have the resources they need to thrive. For faculty, my goal is to deepen support for research and teaching. I want to strengthen the connection between legal scholarship and its real-world impact, whether that’s through new interdisciplinary partnerships or exploring the possibility of new centers and institutes. Helping faculty pursue big ideas benefits our entire community. Operationally, we’re sharpening our focus on financial sustainability—expanding financial aid, identifying new revenue streams, and ensuring efficient operations so we remain competitive and well positioned to serve our mission in the long run. My goal is to make thoughtful decisions now that set Michigan Law on an even stronger trajectory for the future.

3. As you look ahead to your first few years as dean, what is your overarching vision for Michigan Law? Where do you see the greatest opportunities to strengthen the school's academic excellence, student experience, and societal impact?

My vision for Michigan Law is of a community that honors its traditions while embracing change, preparing students not only for their first job but for a lifetime of principled leadership. I want to strengthen our longstanding excellence in legal scholarship by supporting innovative research and teaching—especially at the intersections of law and technology, where Michigan has an opportunity to lead nationally on questions of AI governance, ethics, and societal impact.

At the same time, the student experience is central, and I'm committed to ensuring every student feels supported, challenged, and empowered through expanded access, stronger resources, and more hands-on learning. As a public institution, we also have a responsibility to make a broad societal impact, whether by building on the tremendous work of our clinics, supporting faculty research on topics including access to justice, or leading in areas such as public defense, among many others. I'm eager to expand these efforts and deepen interdisciplinary partnerships that connect scholarship with real-world benefit.

Put simply, my vision is to sustain what makes Michigan exceptional while positioning us at the forefront of the most important legal challenges of the 21st century.

4. Alumni and donors are essential partners in advancing the school's mission. What areas of investment or innovation are you most excited to champion, and how do you envision engaging alumni in those efforts?

I'm energized by the momentum of the Look to Michigan campaign and the partnership it invites with our alumni, whose generosity and engagement have always been central to the Law School's success. Our most immediate opportunities include expanding support for students through financial and career resources; strengthening faculty support so we can attract and retain the very best scholars and teachers; and enhancing our facilities, including modernizing our classrooms and renovating the underground Law Library.

Just as important, I want alumni to feel deeply connected with us as mentors, ambassadors, and thought partners, because every form of involvement enriches our community and helps ensure Michigan Law remains a place where exceptional learning and leadership can thrive. I want alumni not only to support our work but to help shape it.



5. Aside from the fact that you're the dean, what do you want alumni to know about you?

First and foremost, I see myself as a member of this community: someone who cares deeply about the people and mission of Michigan Law and genuinely enjoys connecting with students, faculty, and alumni wherever those conversations happen. I'm naturally curious and interested in alumni perspectives, and I hope people will see me as approachable and engaged. Indeed, one thing I immediately noticed after coming to Ann Arbor: Michigan Law graduates really love their alma mater, in a way I've never seen anywhere else.

On a personal level, I'm a lifelong learner, a parent, and someone already embracing Ann Arbor's uniqueness—from football Saturdays to searching for the best local venues for music. I'm also someone who believes strongly in data-driven decision-making and in creating an environment where people can bring forward bold ideas. Above all, I view my role as a steward: honoring our tradition, inviting new ideas, and fostering the sense of belonging that makes Michigan Law extraordinary.

To Veronica,

By Edward Mears, '16

Benjamin King
Miss Carter
Loena Crawford
Estelle Kinsler

May 1933
at Alpha
Fraternity
Party
at, Michigan



An old photograph sent Eddie Mears, '16, on a trans-Pacific quest to learn more about a friendship between his grandmother and a Chinese student in 1930s Ann Arbor.

With Love,

Ben



The author in the arms of his grandmother.

The Michigan connection

My search began in the *Michigan Daily's* digital archives. Articles from the early 1930s mentioned a Chinese student named Benjamin King, including a series covering the 1933 International Students Conference on World Affairs, held in the Michigan Union Ballroom. For four days, students and professors debated the rise of Nazism, American-Soviet relations, and the Sino-Japanese conflict, adhering to a procedure modeled on the League of Nations. The *Daily* recorded that the chair of the conference's World Politics Commission was Benjamin King, while the secretary was my grandmother, Estelle.

In 2022, while visiting the United States with my father, Patrick Mears, BA '73, JD '76, I discovered a box of my late grandmother's belongings that opened a window into an aspect of her life I had never known. Inside was a faded photograph of a young Chinese man standing beside my grandmother in front of the former Alpha Lambda Chinese fraternity at 1402 Hill Street, Ann Arbor. The photo had been taken in May 1933. Across the bottom, he had written, "To Veronica, with love, Ben." On the back she had written his full name, "Benjamin King."

This academic connection likely established the foundation of their friendship. It also recast my grandmother, whom I had only known as a provincial schoolteacher, as a campus leader engaged in international issues. Yet the newspaper articles offered little about Benjamin himself. Who was he? And where did he go after Ann Arbor?

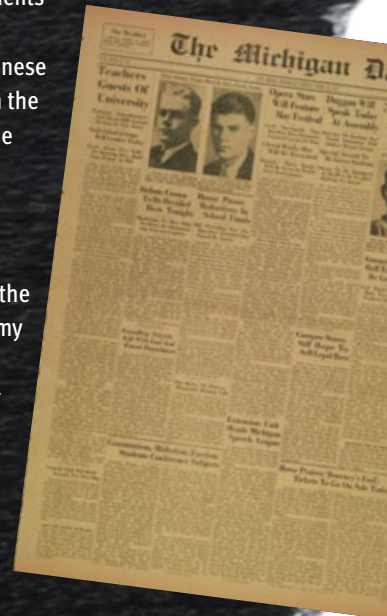
My grandmother, Estelle Veronica Mislík Mears (1909–1992), was the daughter of poor Polish immigrants who settled in Flint, Michigan. She was the first in her family to attend college—specifically, the University of Michigan—and later became a teacher in Detroit and Flint. I knew her only briefly, as a loving grandmother who encouraged my sister and me to read.

At the Bentley Library, I unearthed his student record. It revealed that Benjamin King was the anglicized name of 金伯铭 (Jīn Bó Míng), born in Hangzhou, China, in 1907 or 1908. The son of a merchant, he arrived at Michigan in 1930, earned a master's degree in municipal administration in 1931, and then enrolled in the Law School for the 1931–1932 academic year. Benjamin ultimately earned a master of science in engineering in 1933 and returned to China soon thereafter. He was active in both the Chinese Student Club and the Alpha Lambda fraternity. His emergency contact listed a Baptist pastor in Hangzhou, hinting at his religious background.

In the time that I knew her, I was too young to inquire about her college years or her Asian friend. But Benjamin's image hinted at a friendship that crossed national, racial, and political lines during a volatile period of history.

Even from these dry administrative forms, a portrait began to emerge of a thoughtful, principled young man deeply interested in law, governance, and international affairs.

As a lawyer and long-term resident of Tokyo, I immediately became intrigued. Who was Benjamin, and what had become of him? That pursuit, which was equal parts personal odyssey and historical investigation, would transport me from U-M's Bentley Historical Library to the streets of Shanghai and Hangzhou. Along the way, my Michigan Law training and my subsequent career as a corporate attorney proved invaluable in piecing together the story of an unlikely friendship between my grandmother and a Chinese law student in 1930s Ann Arbor.



2 1931-32
DIPLOMA FEE No: 13626
Name: BENJAMIN KING (Jin Bo Ming)
College or School: THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Degree Expected Now: MASTER OF SCIENCE IN ENGINEERING
Permanent or Forwarding address: 11 MA SHIH STREET, HANGZHOU, CHINA
Expected address next year: 11 MA SHIH STREET, HANGZHOU, CHINA
LAW
IF ENROLLING IN U. OF MICH. FOR FIRST TIME MAKE CHECK ONE IN THIS SPACE
SECURITY CARD
Name: Benjamin King
Address: 11 Ma Shih Street, Hangzhou, China
Phone No: 7593
City or Town: Hangzhou
State: China
Country: China
I am enrolled in the U. of Mich. in the (check one)
Law School
Other (specify):
I have received my degree from the U. of Mich. in the (check one)
Law School
Other (specify):

BENJAMIN KING
Degrees received: A.B. SHANGHAI COLLEGE 1930 - A.M. UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, 1931
Religion: BAPTIST



Handwritten notes and stamps on a document, including a circular stamp with the text "RECEIVED" and "MAY 1933".

Edward Mears, '16, met Benjamin King's relative, Kainan Jin, thanks to the documentary Searching for Benjamin King, which aired across China.



Lawyer detective

Although the project began as a family curiosity, I soon realized how closely my legal training shaped my approach to this research. As a corporate attorney advising foreign investors in Japan, I spend much of my professional life piecing together incomplete records, drafting from fragments, and searching for coherence amid complexity. The same mindset guided my search for Benjamin.

I began tracing Benjamin's paper trail: old university bulletins, Rotary Club rosters, and alumni postcards. The Bentley file included letters requesting that his transcripts be sent to several US law schools and to the Shanghai Municipal Council, which indicated to me his ambition for a legal or administrative career back home.

It also struck me that, at a time when few American students socialized with their foreign peers, my grandmother and Benjamin had formed a genuine friendship built on shared curiosity about the world. She was a first-generation woman from Flint, navigating an elite university setting; he was one of a handful of Chinese students on campus. Both were outsiders with cosmopolitan aspirations. Perhaps this is how and why they found each other.

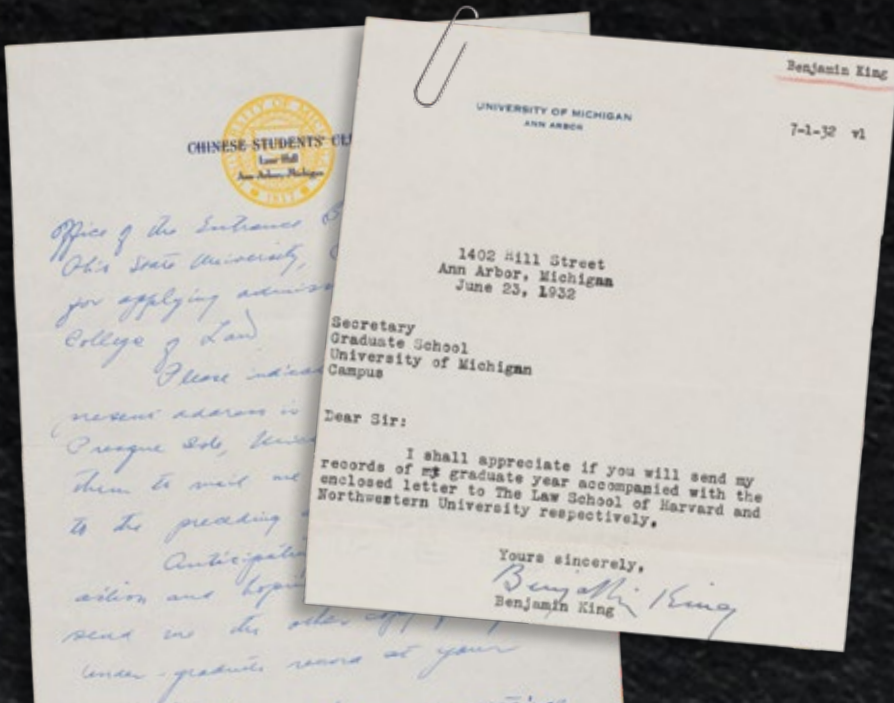
From Ann Arbor to Shanghai

Once I had exhausted Michigan's archives, I turned to China. Using AI translation tools and help from Chinese colleagues, I began combing through digitized Republican-era newspapers and banking directories. In 2024, I traveled to Shanghai and Hangzhou several times to trace Benjamin's footsteps.

There I learned that after returning to China, Benjamin briefly taught law at Peking University before becoming employed by the National Commercial Bank of China in Shanghai, where he rose to the position of sub-manager. In 1940, he published one of the country's first Chinese-language textbooks on modern banking practices. He was a member of the Rotary Club and vice president of the University of Michigan Alumni Club of Shanghai from 1939 to 1940, during the Japanese occupation.

The traces of his life are still visible in China. The Art Deco building near the Bund where he worked as a banker survives, as does his address in the former French Concession. I walked these neighborhoods, imagining him balancing his Western education and Chinese identity during one of the most turbulent decades in modern history. In Hangzhou, part of his old Baptist high school, the Huizhou (Weyland) School, still stands.

Through these discoveries, Benjamin's life began to entice me: He was no longer just a name on the back of a photograph but a man who carried his Michigan education back to a country on the brink of transformation.



Finding his family

Even so, many questions remained: Had Benjamin survived the political upheavals that followed 1949? Did he have descendants? The language barrier made progress slow until a Chinese colleague—who serendipitously happens to be a popular debater and key opinion leader—offered to share my research on her Weibo, China’s equivalent of Twitter.

My grandmother’s story went unexpectedly viral. Within days, journalists and television producers reached out, offering to help. Phoenix Television, a Chinese satellite television network, produced a half-hour documentary about my quest, *Searching for Benjamin King*, which aired nationwide in early 2025.

That visibility led to the breakthrough I had long hoped for. In March 2025, I returned to Hangzhou and met Benjamin’s 84-year-old relative, Kainan Jin. Over a dinner of braised beef and some of Benjamin’s other favorite delicacies, Kainan Jin shared stories about Benjamin’s quiet life in Shanghai after 1949. He showed me an email from Benjamin’s daughter, describing how he always stirred his morning coffee with a spoon engraved “The University of Michigan League.” Because men during Benjamin’s Ann Arbor sojourn could not enter the League without a female escort, and because my grandmother was known to frequent the League, I can’t help but wonder: Did she give him that spoon?

After returning to Japan, I thought the search had reached its natural end. Then, just weeks later, a friend who owns an antiques shop in Shanghai’s former French Concession contacted me. He had located a collector who had come into possession of Benjamin’s old photo album.

Emblazoned with the University of Michigan seal, the album contains candid snapshots of campus life: classmates in the Law Quad, football games at the Big House, and photos of Benjamin’s fraternity brothers. Most moving were two photographs of my grandmother: one in a cap and gown and another in a dress and coat, both dated March 1933. On the front of the second photo she wrote, “To Benjamin, Yours, Veronica.” On the back, in neat cursive, “To one of the nicest boys I’ve ever known at Michigan.”

That this album survived wars, the Japanese occupation, and the Cultural Revolution before resurfacing in 2025 is nothing short of miraculous.



Reflections on the search

Benjamin King’s story is both extraordinary and familiar. Extraordinary because it reveals the truly global reach of Michigan even in the 1930s and how friendships formed in Ann Arbor could ripple across continents. Familiar, because it reflects a shared Michigan experience: curiosity and the pursuit of understanding.

The process drew me closer to a grandmother I hadn’t had the chance to know well, and it breathed new life into a chapter of her story that time had almost forgotten. Most of all, it reminded me of the power of unlikely friendships: between a first-generation Polish-American woman from Flint and a Chinese exchange student from Hangzhou, two outsiders who found common and friendly ground at Michigan during an age of isolationism.

Eddie Mears, '16, is a senior associate in the Tokyo office of DLA Piper, where he practices corporate law with a focus on the sports, media, and entertainment sectors. He has lived and practiced in Asia (Japan and Singapore) since graduating from Michigan. View the documentary Searching for Benjamin King at youtube.com/watch?v=15HV1SctbBo.



A Former Shepherd Now Shepherds Ghana's Legal System

BY SHARON MORIOKA



Despite humble beginnings, Dominic Akuritinga Ayine, LLM '98, has risen to the rank of attorney general and minister for justice in Ghana.



Dominic Akuritinga Ayine, LLM '98, is Ghana's attorney general and minister for justice.

The small town of Zuarungu, situated on the savannah grasslands of northeast Ghana, is about as far from Accra, the dynamic capital city, as you can get in this West African country.

It was here that Dominic Akuritinga Ayine, LLM '98, grew up. As a shepherd in his youth, he did not consider formal education to be an option until an encounter with a catechist in his Catholic church changed his life's trajectory. When the teacher asked why he wasn't in school, Ayine—then 11 years old—replied that his family could not afford a school uniform.

"A few days later, he appeared at our doorstep and told my mom that he thought I was a brilliant chap and yet I was not attending school. So he paid for my uniform in order for me to go to school," Ayine says. "I always mention him as my hero. If not for him, I wouldn't be sitting here today."

While Ayine was the oldest student in his initial class—"they used to call me the class's 'old man'"—he quickly advanced and graduated from secondary school before proceeding to college. Decades later, Ayine has had a career that has allowed him to pay it forward as he reached the highest levels of the Ghanaian government, first as a member of parliament (MP) and now as attorney general and minister for justice.



Running for office

Ayine’s political career started in 2012, when he was elected to parliament to represent the Bolgatanga East District, the region where he grew up. Up until that time, he had taught at the University of Ghana—the same university where he earned his bachelor of law degree—and founded the law firm Ayine & Felli (now Ayine & Partners), where he focused his practice on oil and gas law, commercial disputes, international trade advisory services, and trial and appellate criminal defense. His legal education also included an LLM from Michigan Law and an LLM and JSD from Stanford Law School.

His turn to politics began when the National Democratic Congress party took note of an amicus brief he had submitted to the Supreme Court in a case concerning the creation of constituency boundaries (similar to redistricting in the US).

“The Supreme Court actually relied upon my amicus brief,” says Ayine. “The justices quoted me extensively and said that I had brought the best arguments to the court.”

He was elected MP to represent a newly drawn district and was reelected in 2016, 2020, and 2024. In addition to leading the Constitutional Committee in parliament, where he helped pass legislation dealing with governance, he also chaired the Legislation Committee in charge of regulations.

He also focused on giving back to his constituents, ensuring improvements to his community that included connecting several towns to the national electrical grid and providing potable water. Along the way, he heard from constituents about their needs, including from some constituents very close to home about the need for a modern market center.



Ayine, during hearings vetting him for the position of attorney general in early 2025.

“Markets are a very, very important part of the economic life of towns in Ghana,” Ayine says. “We had a local market where my mother used to be a petty trader, and it was unchanged from the time I was a child. When I became a member of parliament, my mother and my aunties reminded me that this was a very important thing that they wanted me to do, to build a modern market.”

He successfully lobbied the minister of trade to build a modern market for the town. He also hopes to build a library that will make it easier for children to access books, remembering the 5-kilometer walks he took as a child to borrow books from the Bolgatanga Central Library.



Ayine (center) confers with Justice Srem-Sai, deputy attorney general and minister for justice, and Exorm Azuma, his assistant.

Appointment as attorney general



Ayine’s career took a turn when he was appointed deputy attorney general in addition to his role as an MP. The deputy position helped prepare him for his current job as attorney general and minister for justice, for which Ghana President John Mahama nominated him in early 2025.

Under constitutional directive, Ayine is the principal legal adviser to government ministries, departments, and agencies as well as the president and his cabinet. He also oversees approximately 300 attorneys throughout the country.

Additionally, he argues on behalf of the government in Supreme Court cases and is in charge of prosecutions instituted in the name of the republic. Since coming to office, he has investigated a number of white collar crimes, including a former government employee accused of diverting funds from a \$7 million cybersecurity contract. The case is part of a larger anti-corruption effort by the government.

“I’m very passionate about accountability and fighting corruption,” Ayine says, “because it has an adverse impact on government when public funds are siphoned into private pockets—and then the public suffers as a result.”

He also is working on a piece of legislation, he says, to “radically shake up the legal education system [and] create equality of opportunity for all persons who are desirous of becoming lawyers, to the extent that they have the academic acumen to be able to pass their exams, to do their bachelor of laws, and then subsequently to sit for a national bar exam.”

With such a large portfolio, Ayine doesn’t have much time to focus on the future and prefers to seize opportunities as they arise—just as he did when he was offered the opportunity to attend school at 11 years old.

“My approach to life has always been to do one thing at a time,” he says. “It doesn’t mean that I do not have any ambitions, but I just want to do what I’ve been given now and let the public see for themselves who I am and what I stand for. And if there’s any way for me to progress from here, I will make that decision when I get to that point. So I will do my best, and I leave the rest to God.”



Insights from the European Alumni Reunion

In July, more than 150 alumni and friends of the Law School gathered in Berlin for the European Alumni Reunion, a quinquennial opportunity for alumni who live far from Ann Arbor to enjoy the spirit of camaraderie and intellectual discussion that permeate reunions in the Quad.

Here are a few takeaways from the reunion’s keynote events:

“When people lose trust in their institutions, you can fix it. You can regain trust. ...It’s a much more profound trouble when people lose faith. You cannot regain faith. If people lose faith in the constitutional democracy—in the key aspects, key institutions, key mechanisms of that construct—they’re not coming back easily, or they’re not coming back ever. If people do not have faith in their institutions, it’s a very challenging thing for judges.”

—**Justice Goran Selanec, LLM ’02, SJD ’12** (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Croatia). He was a panelist in “Protecting Democracy in Populist Times: Views from the Judiciary Across Europe” alongside fellow jurists Susanne Baer, LLM ’93 (formerly of Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court); the Hon. Tamara Perišin, a Fulbright Scholar at Michigan Law from 2005 to 2006 (Court of Justice of the European Union); and the Hon. Siniša Rodin, LLM ’92 (Court of Justice of the European Union). The moderator was Daniel Halberstam, the Eric Stein Collegiate Professor of Law and director of the Law School’s European Legal Studies Program.

“The most important case [that I participated in during my time on the International Court of Justice (ICJ)] was probably the genocide case versus Serbia, namely because I think that was the case that really formed and gave firm contours to the ICJ concept of genocide—the concept that the international court is pursuing up to today. In order for a genocide to be committed, for instance, it would not be enough if you say, ‘I hate everybody blonde, and I’m going to kill as many of them as possible.’ There has to be that special intent to eradicate the entire group.”

—**Professor Emeritus Bruno Simma**, a former judge at the International Court of Justice and co-founder and editor of the *European Journal of International Law*, in a keynote conversation with Steven Ratner, the Bruno Simma Collegiate Professor of Law.

“We have had three external shocks in three years: the Russian invasion into Ukraine in 2022; then the Hamas massacre in October 2023, followed by an extreme warfare; and, third, the election of [Donald] Trump as US president. ...[The shocks aren’t only the use of force; it’s the rules of international humanitarian laws, international economic law, environmental and climate law, human rights law, even taxation law. All branches are affected, and there is a shocking silence from states not responding to violations.”

—**Anne Peters**, director at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, on the current state of international law. She participated in a panel alongside her fellow L. Bates Lea Global Law Professors Christine Chinkin (London School of Economics, University of London) and J. Christopher McCrudden (Queen’s University Belfast). The moderator was Kristina Daugirdas, the Francis A. Allen Collegiate Professor of Law.

Professor Steven Ratner (left) with Professor Emeritus Bruno Simma.



Conference Explores International Law Strategies to Fight Gender Apartheid

By Bob Needham

The fight against gender apartheid—such as the Taliban practices in Afghanistan—should pursue multiple tracks, according to the panelists at a conference held at Michigan Law in September.

Organized by Professor Karima Bennouna, '94, "Countering Gender Apartheid with International Law: A Strategic Convening" brought together UN experts, frontline women's human rights defenders, academics, and other experts working against gender apartheid, as practiced in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

In her introductory remarks, Bennouna, a leading international scholar on this issue, defined *gender apartheid* as "a system of governance based on laws and/or policies that imposes systematic segregation on women—and may also systematically exclude women from public spaces and spheres. Adapted from the international law on racial apartheid, the concept of gender apartheid emphasizes that discrimination has been made the system of governance itself, requiring an effective international response to end it."

Speakers highlighted two specific avenues to pursue the fight through international law: interpreting existing international law as applying to gender apartheid and including gender apartheid in the upcoming UN treaty on crimes against humanity.

The expansion of existing law could be supported by an international declaration on gender apartheid, which human rights and legal experts are currently drafting. This could "enhance the normative value of international law by clarifying and reinforcing the understanding of the term as a systematic and institutionalized form of gender discrimination," said panelist Azadah Raz Mohammad of the End Gender Apartheid Campaign. "It could particularly play a strategic and complementary role in paving the way for binding legal instruments...and could serve as a vital advocacy tool."

The drafting of a UN treaty on crimes against humanity, meanwhile, was authorized in a resolution that was approved in November 2024 and will be negotiated starting in 2026.

"This will be the first-ever multilateral treaty for crimes against humanity that entails state responsibility as well as individual responsibility for the prevention and punishment of these crimes," said panel chair Hannah Garry of the University of Southern California Gould School of Law. She noted that activists in the 1990s also described the Taliban's treatment of women and girls as having "the same character and gravity as apartheid. ...



Professor Karima Bennouna, '94, addresses the audience alongside panelists, from left, Sima Samar, former minister for women's affairs (Afghanistan) and former chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission; Professor Valerie Oosterveld, University of Western Ontario Faculty of Law; and Richard Bennett, UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan.

In that view, recognizing such a crime against humanity is necessary for filling a gap in international law." This has led to the current effort to incorporate gender apartheid into the UN treaty; several top UN officials and member states have already signaled support for the effort, she said.

In addition to these two primary efforts, panelists identified several other ways to push the fight forward.

Richard Bennett, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, expressed deep concern about the normalization of the Taliban's authority and the world seeing Afghanistan as a lost cause.

"Afghanistan is not a lost cause," Bennett said. "It's a test for whether the world will stand firm against gender persecution and gender apartheid. . . and a test of whether we are prepared to challenge the impunity that has perpetuated violence for decades. How do we stop Afghanistan becoming a lost cause? By using every tool at our disposal."

Bennett and other panelists listed a number of such tools, such as sustained international pressure, including for accountability; expanding humanitarian assistance; strengthened support for Afghan women-led NGOs; and Islam-based challenges to the Taliban's version of sharia law.

Bennouna called the gathering "a sign of hope and commitment to defend equality in difficult times." She added that those on the front lines of the struggle "do not need saving or pity, but they do need and they deserve empathy and concrete international solidarity. Our efforts here today are meant to support them and to offer great respect for their leadership, their expertise, and their heroism."

Bankruptcy Expert Belisa Pang Joins Faculty



Belisa Pang joined the Michigan Law faculty in August as an assistant professor. Pang, who is teaching bankruptcy law, is fascinated by how bankruptcy law affects individual people.

After earning a bachelor of science in commerce at the University of Virginia, Pang worked as a research assistant at Columbia Law School. She then earned a JD and a PhD in finance from Yale. “My consumer bankruptcy project at Columbia enabled me to trace live human beings in my data set,” she says. “Before I worked on that project, I was mostly working on the stock market—numbers and abstract financial instruments.

But when I started working with bankruptcy data, those are people with real names, real addresses, experiencing real hardship.”

In addition to making a difference with her teaching, Pang hopes that her research ultimately helps improve the US personal bankruptcy system. “Recently, I’ve been investigating why the filing rate of customer bankruptcy has been dropping pretty much continuously since the financial crisis,” she says. “I think part of the reason may be because the bankruptcy system has to be improved.”

One reform she’d like to see is to separate the systems for consumer and corporate bankruptcies—which generally use the same judges and bankruptcy trustees—since the concerns of the petitioners are so different. “It is not good for either party, and I think it’s hard for the judges also. They’re dealing with two completely different sets of realities,” she says.

“The US personal bankruptcy system is ahead of its counterparts in other countries in general,” she adds. “From my background [living in Argentina and China], I know what life is like without a functioning consumer bankruptcy system. However, just because the US system is ahead of its peers doesn’t mean that it’s good. There is still so much that we can improve.”

Ratner Receives Rare Honor for US Academics

Professor Steven Ratner will give a specialized course to students at the Hague Academy of International Law in 2027. Ratner, the Bruno Simma Collegiate Professor of Law and director of the University of Michigan Donia Human Rights Center, was selected by the academy’s curatorium, a group of international law scholars from around the world.

The Hague Academy, one of the oldest institutions in public and private international law, attracts top students and practitioners from around the world who are admitted through a selective process to attend a three-week term. Students can receive a diploma for their work by passing a rigorous exam.

“When you see that someone has attended a session there or received a diploma, you know they have a deep exposure to international law,” says Ratner. “I’m very honored to be selected to give a course, especially as the academy does not often invite academics from US institutions. I’m also pleased that my lectures will be part of the *Recueil des Cours* [the courses’ resulting publications], which are an essential reference work for international lawyers.”

Ratner, who has advised the United Nations on human rights violations in Cambodia, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia, teaches and writes on a range of issues, including war and peace, human rights, foreign investment, the United Nations, territorial and ethnic-based disputes, and business and human rights. He is also interested in the intersection of international law and political philosophy and other theoretical issues.





Albert Pak, left, chats with student-attorneys during a Community Enterprise Clinic workshop for entrepreneurs that was held at the Detroit Hispanic Development Center in April.

ABA Honors Pak

Albert Pak, a clinical assistant professor of law, received a 2025 On the Rise – Top 40 Young Lawyers award from the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association this summer.

Pak joined the Michigan Law faculty in 2022 as a clinical assistant professor in the Community Enterprise Clinic, which provides transactional legal services to nonprofit and community-based organizations, social enterprises, and neighborhood-based small businesses in Detroit and other disinvested cities throughout Michigan.

He first began working in Detroit as a Skadden Fellow and then practiced at Bodman PLC in Ann Arbor. He says that serving in the clinic allows him to feel an important connection between his work and his desire to improve his community.

“A big part of our clinic focuses not just on giving students transactional tools but teaching them the history of where they’re working,” he says. “It’s about challenging them to think critically about what economic and racial justice looks like through the work that we do as attorneys. We aim to be a resource for the community so our clients can pursue their missions, making their communities stronger and more resilient.”

Michigan Law Welcomes Four Fellows

Three early career academics joined the Law School through the Michigan Faculty Fellows program this fall, while a fourth is part of the University’s Michigan Society of Fellows.

MICHIGAN FACULTY FELLOWS

Amanda Leon

Leon’s research examines questions regarding jurisdiction to tax, multilateral cooperation, and interpretation, particularly considering the borderless economy and climate. She practiced as an accountant before earning her JD from the University of Virginia. She worked at a boutique tax law firm and for the Internal Revenue Service before entering academia.

Edgar Melgar

Melgar examines how the regulatory state interacts with marginalized and disenfranchised communities, from a historical, contemporary, and comparative perspective. He began doctoral studies on the origins of technocracy in the Middle East and Latin America before pivoting to pursue a JD at Yale.

Andrew Stawasz

Stawasz worked as a researcher in an economic consulting firm before earning a JD from Harvard. He is interested in administrative law and federal benefit cost analysis as well as animal law. Much of his work sits at the intersection of how animals’ interests ought to be and can be reflected in economic analysis.

MICHIGAN SOCIETY OF FELLOWS

Aabid Allibhai

Allibhai’s fellowship project is “Belinda Sutton’s World: Everyday Life, Legal Claims, and Political Activism in Early Black New England.” Sutton, a slave who was emancipated through her enslaver’s will, petitioned a Massachusetts court for a pension from the estate—one of the first cases of reparations from the slave trade.



Q&A: Bagley and Klass on Developing a Law of Abundance

By Bob Needham

The concept of “abundance” has gained considerable traction in academic and policy circles in recent months. An essay on the website of the Niskanen Center think tank explains the goal of the abundance movement as “producing housing, infrastructure, energy, and scientific innovation more rapidly, in greater volumes, and at lower cost. . . . The diagnosis of what is standing in the way typically points to some combination of anti-competitive rules and processes driven by concentrated interests on the one hand, and an absence of state capacity to design and manage large projects on the other.”

Michigan Law Professors Nicholas Bagley, the Thomas G. Long Professor of Law, and Alexandra Klass, the James G. Degnan Professor of Law, have both become active in the abundance movement. They have published essays with the Niskanen Center. Klass has written an article on “The Law of Energy Abundance”; Bagley has written a paper on “The State Capacity Crisis,” is working on a book, and will teach a Michigan Law seminar on abundance in winter 2026.

They sat down recently to discuss the topic.

How did you become interested in abundance?

Bagley: The big idea of abundance is that you don’t want supply constraints on things that people really need. One of the big problems with supply constraints these days is a lack of state capacity to deliver what it is that people want or need.

I’ve been writing for a long time about problems with American administrative law and the way that it makes it very hard to govern. As that set of ideas about weak state capacity took hold in more and more quarters, I became part of a small coalition of people who started coming together to talk about this set of ideas. The discussions were broadly concerned about housing and renewable energy and the tattered infrastructure of the country and our inability to build in the physical world.

Klass: Energy abundance, at least as I define it, is what I’ve been writing about for a long time. Nick and I are both part of the Abundance Academic Network, which is trying to promote research and scholarship in these areas. I got involved with the network because I thought that having someone with some energy expertise would be helpful, since a lot of the development of the movement has been in the housing area.

I believe it’s vital to define energy abundance as building a lot of carbon-free energy. It’s really important to build alignment with environmental protection advocates, who often end up being the villains to some abundance advocates. I think there is an opportunity to bridge those two movements.

The ideas behind the movement seem to appeal to both ends of the political spectrum. What are the implications of that?

Bagley: This is a big question for the abundance movement. Does it have a political future? At this point, it's mostly an elite-level consensus. It's not clear there's a constituency clamoring for it anywhere on the political spectrum.

Right now, it does appear to be on the left in the sense that there is plasticity in the Democratic Party right now. There's openness to new ideas. There's a sense that part of the reason Trump is so appealing is because housing is so expensive and energy costs are about to spike.

On the Republican side, there are some ideological overlaps that are quite compelling. Less regulation can appeal to that sensibility. The trouble is the Republican Party right now, at least the version that's in national office, is not committed to a positive, forward-looking agenda for rebuilding the United States. It's a grievance project, and you could do nothing more anti-abundance than firing at random huge chunks of your workforce and making it less capable of getting work done for the public.

I hope that there is a core of the Republican Party that can embrace the ideas and move productively forward. I know there are people like that. Whether there's a movement there, I don't know.

Klass: I think it also differs from the federal level to the state and local level, and also what we're talking about building. It seems like there is more potential for bipartisanship around housing, which is really not a federal issue.

You're seeing reforms in places like California. And Minneapolis was the first city to have a comprehensive plan getting rid of single-family zoning. But there's also been housing reform in Montana.

Twenty years ago, we did have that bipartisan approach on energy, with Iowa and Texas being the centers of wind energy. But unfortunately clean energy has become politicized in a way that it was not when I first started teaching energy law.

In addition to housing and energy, are there other big sectors that fall under the abundance umbrella?

Klass: Transportation. Obviously, it would be nice if we had a working city or regional light-rail system like other modern countries do. Why do we not build those? There's been a lot of work on that.

Bagley: Yes, housing, energy, and transportation are three threads. The transportation people have realized they have a lot in common with the housing advocates and a lot in common with the folks who are trying to get transmission lines and renewable energy projects built. That formed the understructure.

On top of that has been scientific infrastructure. Supporting development of science is a big part of what it means to progress. Occupational licensure could also be seen as a problem for abundance. If we want more abundant doctors or more abundant lawyers or more abundant plumbers, we might want to think about that as well.

Klass: Or pharmaceutical access, which has been an issue for a long time.

What are the biggest obstacles to moving these ideas forward?

Klass: On the energy side, the current Trump administration is a huge obstacle, even more than people thought. We knew that wind and solar on public lands and new offshore wind was not going to happen, but what has been even more destructive is shutting down projects that are almost complete. What I would call weaponizing the administrative state to shut down privately funded projects on private land just because it helps the fossil fuel industry is going to cause energy prices to skyrocket and cause all sorts of problems.

On the state and local level, a lot of states are trying to do innovative things to build more quickly. But there are legal changes that would help, like changing some of our eminent domain laws and creating expedited permitting processes for carbon-free energy generation. There just needs to be the political will to do it.

Bagley: The problem of having a movement organized around breaking incumbent power is that incumbents are powerful. They tend to be pretty well organized. They tend to be intensely committed to the status quo. And the benefits that you get from expanding housing supply or building more renewables or building a better infrastructure are so diffuse that people don't agitate for them. That's just a tough nut to crack.

You need a broad-scale social consensus filtered through elected officials again and again and again over a sustained period of time. That is going to have to be bipartisan if you want it to happen nationwide.

Two Wins for Child Welfare Appellate Clinic

By Sharon Morioka and Bob Needham

Student-attorneys in the Child Welfare Appellate Clinic led successful efforts to restore parental rights of clinic clients in two recent cases before the Michigan Court of Appeals.

The opinion in *In re Boshell/Shelton, Minors*, published July 2, stated that the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) should not have been involved in the life of the clinic's client, "Ms. C.," and her children and that the termination of her parental rights was inappropriate.

Ms. C. shares three daughters with her former partner, identified as S. Shelton in the court opinion. One daughter lived with Shelton, while the two others lived with Ms. C. and sometimes visited Shelton. Ms. C. also has three sons with her current partner, Z. Boshell. Her sons bore no relation to Shelton. When Shelton was charged with the torture and murder of his current partner's son, DHHS sought custody of all of Ms. C.'s children. DHHS alleged that she should have known about the boy's abuse because her two daughters visited their father at his house.

Following a trial, the trial court took jurisdiction over all six of the children. The court also terminated Ms. C's parental rights.

"They were trying to make sure that they covered all their bases," says Nadia Fassa, a 3L who worked on the case. "But what they ended up doing is tearing apart a family that had nothing to do with it."

Fassa and 3L Augie DeLuna worked during the 2024–2025 academic year to develop an argument on behalf of the mother and filed the brief at the end of the fall term. When the case came before the appeals court over the summer, Clinic Director Vivek Sankaran, '01, made the oral argument.

"To my surprise, the court didn't even ask a question," says Sankaran. "The students had done such a great job on their brief that it was a very obvious decision."

"Ideal is not the standard"

In October, the Michigan Court of Appeals again ruled in the clinic's favor, this time by finding that small size alone does not mean a home is unfit for a child.

In December 2020, DHHS petitioned to remove a child from his mother's care in Detroit and, years later, sought to terminate her parental rights. The trial court had laid down a number of conditions for the mother to reunify with the child; by January 2023, DHHS found that the only condition with which the mother was not in compliance was to "obtain safe and suitable housing."

She and the child's father were living in an extended-stay motel, but a foster care worker concluded that although the room was safe, it was too small as a living situation. In April 2024, the court terminated her parental rights, citing the unchanged housing situation as the primary reason.

Students Lucy Kates, a 3L who is pursuing a dual degree in social work, and Corey Lipton, '25, did the bulk of work on the appeal of that decision—researching and writing the brief, with Kates handling the oral argument as well.



Student-attorneys (left to right) Augie DeLuna, a 3L; Lucy Kates, a JD/MSW candidate; and Nadia Fassa, a 3L. Corey Lipton, '25, is not pictured.

30 Years of Bergstrom Fellows



Jim Henry, an expert on trauma, resiliency, and building trauma-informed systems, speaks at the 2025 Bergstrom Fellowship retreat.

“The students’ brief included a section on how hard it was to get housing in Detroit with the income that our client had, working full time at a grocery store. It wasn’t a lack of effort. That really stood out to me as a step above what most lawyers would do,” says Sankaran.

In its October ruling, the court of appeals agreed with the students’ brief. “It is unclear why the extended-stay motel room was not appropriate, even if the room size might not have been ideal,” the court concluded. It overturned the mother’s termination of parental rights and remanded the case back to the trial court for further proceedings.

“When we first started working on this case, I was searching for precedent about what constitutes safe and suitable housing, and I was really surprised to find that there wasn’t any,” Kates says. “It’s exciting that our case has finally generated that precedent.”

Sankaran says that the court’s recognition that “ideal is not the standard” is significant. “The standard for separating a family is really about harm to a child. This is an important message to trial courts: You can’t keep kids in foster care because of reasons such as poverty. That is really important, because we have a lot of inconsistent practice in the state on this issue, specifically with regard to housing.”

Trailblazing work

The published opinions in both rulings establish a binding precedent that can help families experiencing similar situations in the future. While the Child Welfare Appellate Clinic is the only clinic in the country that represents parents on appeal in termination of parental rights cases, Sankaran would like to see similar clinics at other law schools.

“It is another example of Michigan leading in this area,” says Sankaran. “I’m hoping that others will follow our lead and create more of these clinics, because in the appellate world we have a lot of work to do; a lot of mistakes are happening. These families need advocates to help them through that process.”

Earlier this year, 16 students from across the country attended the 30th Bergstrom Child Welfare Law Summer Fellowship program—the only national training opportunity for law students interested in pursuing a career in child welfare law to come together and learn from experts before their summer placements.

Professor Vivek Sankaran, ’01, facilitated the three-day program, held at a retreat center set amid the lakes of Detroit’s far north suburbs. He is the longtime director of the fellowship program and director of the Law School’s Child Advocacy Law Clinic and Child Welfare Appellate Clinic.

In 1995, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided a three-year start-up grant to establish what was then known as the Summer Child Welfare Law Fellowship through the Child Advocacy Law Clinic. The Bergstrom Foundation now funds the program in honor of the late Henry A. Bergstrom, ’35. In addition to the training, fellows receive a stipend to attend a national conference within one year after completing the program.

Michigan Law has been a leader in the foster care legal space since the establishment of the Child Advocacy Clinic in 1976. Sankaran notes that Michigan Law’s excellence continues in part because of the Bergstrom Fellowship, especially as it evolves in response to the broader legal landscape. “We’ve focused on what law schools often neglect to do: teach students about trauma, compassion, empathy, and self-care. These topics...are crucial to doing this work well.”

Taylor Fellows, ’20, the youth defense research and training attorney with Michigan’s State Appellate Defender’s Office, agrees, calling her Bergstrom Fellowship “a lens early in my career that has helped me in every position.”

New Fellowship Honors Virginia Gordan

By Sharon Morioka



A new fellowship at Michigan Law will help fund important postgraduate opportunities for masters of law students, while honoring a longtime champion of international students. The Virginia Gordan LLM Public Service Fellowship is named for the first assistant dean for international affairs at Michigan Law.

The fellowship will support postgraduate transnational public service and public interest work at international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), foreign or international courts, and other globally significant public service organizations outside the United States.

"It will give interested LL.M.s an opportunity to pursue the kind of postgraduate opportunities that are quite difficult to get funded," says Gordan. "And these opportunities are very often key to launching or furthering people's careers in their areas of interest. I'm tremendously honored that a fellowship in my name has been established for this purpose."

Gordan started at the Law School in 1981 as assistant dean of students. Her broad set of responsibilities in that position included work with international students. In 1996, then-Dean Jeffrey Lehman asked her to serve as the school's first assistant dean for international affairs, with a mandate to build on and expand the Law School's strong foundation in international and comparative legal studies.

"For almost two decades in her path-breaking role, Virginia was truly the international face of the Law School," says Evan Caminker, the Branch Rickey Collegiate Professor of Law.

"I learned early in my deanship to accept that when I traveled overseas to meet a foreign legal luminary—a leading lawyer, government official, even Supreme Court justice—they would likely greet me with, 'I'm pleased to meet you, now where is Dean Virginia?'" Caminker served as dean of the Law School from 2003 to 2013, while Gordan was assistant dean for international affairs.

"Here at home, our international students respected, loved, and—a teeny bit—feared Virginia," Caminker adds. "She did not pamper or placate, but she advocated for and supported them with unlimited energy and relentless passion."

Gordan retired from the Law School in 2013 and went on to work as a reporter at NPR affiliate Michigan Radio (now Michigan Public) for 10 years. She calls it "the privilege of a lifetime" to have spent so many years interacting every day with talented students from around the world.

"Michigan Law has sought to bring cross-border perspectives to the study and practice of law in order to prepare its graduates, both US and foreign, to be able to effectively and creatively address the problems of an ever-more-interconnected world," she says. "Our overseas students, scholars, and faculty play an important role in this endeavor."

The first two fellowship recipients are Viktoria Baumgartl, LL.M. '25, and current SJD candidate Dmytro Soldatenko, LL.M. '25. Soldatenko, from Ukraine, used his fellowship to work at the International Law Commission in Geneva. Baumgartl's fellowship supported her summer work at the AIRE Centre, an NGO based in London.

"One of the reasons I applied to Michigan was the chance to connect academic studies with practical experience through international fellowship opportunities," says Baumgartl, an Austrian scholar. "This fellowship was the perfect opportunity."

The Law School now hopes to grow the fellowship with gifts from alumni and friends, so that it can provide such opportunities for other scholars for years to come.

"Having a public service fellowship for international students named after a much-loved former staff member reflects our deep respect for a transformational former colleague, our highly individualized support for our graduate law students, and our commitment to training legal professionals who can make the world a better place," says Eric Christiansen, the Law School's current assistant dean for international affairs.

"When we first announced the fellowship at the Michigan Law Japanese Alumni Dinner, we received a very enthusiastic response. Since that announcement this summer, we have already had some very promising interest from donors, which we expect will continue."

If you are interested in making a gift to support the Virginia Gordan LL.M. Public Service Fellowship, contact Jeff Jelinski, director of Law School giving, at jjelinsk@umich.edu.

Celebrating Three Decades of the Nannes 3L Challenge

By Annie Hagstrom



John Nannes, '73, with volunteers during the 2019 Nannes 3L Challenge, when the theme was Mario Kart.

In the early 1990s, the Law School was confronted with a changing fiscal landscape. Funding from the State of Michigan was declining, leaving two choices: increase tuition or find another source of funds. Tuition was already high, and student debt was increasing, so the school turned its attention to increasing financial support from alumni.

The Law School had an annual fund, but the percentage of alumni contributing to it was declining—especially for recent alumni. John Nannes, '73, had an idea: If graduating students could see for themselves how gifts from alumni had enhanced their Law School experience, they might be more inclined to contribute to the Law School after graduation.

The Nannes 3L Challenge launched in 1995. Students who take the Challenge can designate \$250, contributed by Nannes, to any student activity they choose—thus giving 3Ls a taste of how alumni contribute to their time in the Law Quad. In exchange, students commit to making a gift to the Law School Fund in each of the first four years after their graduation. The Challenge does not require a minimum contribution but encourages participants to be as generous as their circumstances permit.

Has the Nannes 3L Challenge been successful? Hundreds of 3Ls take it each year, and most contribute back to the Law School in the years immediately following graduation. But the real test, Nannes says, is what happens thereafter. “Each generation of law students has benefited from the generosity of alumni who came before them. My hope is that students who take the Challenge will want to continue that tradition and become long-term supporters of the Law School. If that proves to be true, the answer will certainly be yes.”

“As a law student, I was inspired by John Nannes’s example and generosity. His idea of making a donation for each 3L who commits to give in their first four years after graduation—when money, time, and attention are often in short supply—is genius. It set me and many others on a path to long-term, consistent giving from the beginning of our relationship with the Law School as alumni. My continued involvement is a testament to the power and lasting impact of the Nannes 3L Challenge.”

—Neal Reenan, '03, a donor who began giving to Michigan Law through the Nannes 3L Challenge

“When I learned the Nannes 3L Challenge was about supporting my classmates now and strengthening Michigan Law’s community for the future, I was eager to help. My class has witnessed a lot of change in the legal landscape just in our time as students, which I think is why the Challenge was especially meaningful to me and my peers. We understand that a strong sense of community is important, and the Challenge was an opportunity to invest in that.”

—Arian Rubio, '25, Nannes 3L Challenge student committee co-chair

“There is something special about being a 3L and having one last opportunity to be involved on campus and serve on a committee that involves all student organizations. The Challenge stands out as an opportunity for students to provide direct support to the organizations that mean the most to them. Every part of serving on the committee was a joy.”

—Drew Harper, '25, Nannes 3L Challenge student committee co-chair

A MEANINGFUL IMPACT

5,000+

TOTAL STUDENT CHALLENGE PARTICIPANTS

63

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS RECEIVED FUNDS FROM THE 2025 CHALLENGE

\$3.9M+

TOTAL GIFTS TO THE LAW SCHOOL FUND BY CHALLENGE PARTICIPANTS AFTER GRADUATION

I M P A C T

Charles Knox, '73: Family Legacy Inspires Legacy Gift

By Annie Hagstrom

For Charles “Charley” Knox, '73, spending time at his father’s law office in downtown Erie, Pennsylvania, was a typical part of childhood. He never considered an alternative career path for his future; becoming a lawyer was always his plan.

Knox’s parents met as undergraduates at the University of Michigan. Both became double Wolverines and had four children together, each of whom went on to earn one or more degrees from the University.



Charles “Charley” Knox, '73, (right), with his father, William W. Knox, '35, and the rest of their family in the early 1950s.

“My mom was from Ann Arbor, and my siblings and I visited the area a lot growing up,” he says. “My grandfather owned a bookstore in town, we’d attend football games, and, given that my father had gone to Michigan Law, I certainly had a favorable impression of the school.”

Although Knox earned his undergraduate degree from Williams College in Massachusetts—the only family member not to attend U-M as an undergrad—his choice for law school was clear.

Finding his path

When he began his studies at Michigan Law in the fall of 1970, the Vietnam War loomed large. Knox was assigned a draft number under the lottery system and allowed himself to commit to his studies only when it became clear his number wouldn’t be called.

“That first semester, I was more distracted than I might have been because of the uncertainty,” he says. “All I could do was question whether I’d be able to finish law school in a regular sequence.”

In his second semester, feeling secure in his path forward, Knox focused more on his coursework, formed close friendships with his classmates, and joined the Law School’s intramural basketball team.

Knox’s plan to join the family firm was scuttled when President Richard Nixon appointed his father to the federal bench. As a pivot, he began interviewing with different Pittsburgh-based firms that visited Michigan Law and secured a position at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC upon graduation.

“I was pretty much the garbage man when I was starting out at the firm, and I worked on practically everything, including trial work,” he says. “But specialization accelerated in the early years of my career, and eventually I developed a practice focused on real estate and banking.”

In time, he began working as outside real estate lending counsel for a regional bank headquartered in Pittsburgh, a role he maintained for the remainder of his career. He retired at the end of 2016.

Investing in the future

Knox recently gave \$200,000 to the Law School in honor of his father, William W. Knox, '35, using two charitable gift annuities (CGAs), a type of legacy gift. The gift establishes the Honorable William W. Knox Family Endowed Scholarship Fund.

“Being a donor to the Law School is largely inspired by the relationship I had with my dad,” says Knox. “He loved the school and the education he received, and it meant a lot to him to give back. Becoming a donor was another way I could honor him.”

CGAs allow donors to support the Law School while also receiving a fixed income for life. Additional forms of legacy gifts include bequests, charitable remainder trusts, or naming Michigan Law as a beneficiary of a retirement account.

“Giving through CGAs enabled me to make a larger donation than I might have otherwise made because it provides me with some financial security and diversification of where my income stream is coming from,” says Knox. “I established one through my undergraduate alma mater and have had a great experience, so I knew it was the right giving vehicle for my contribution to the Law School.”

Arn Tellem, '79: Taking Chances and Giving Back

By Annie Hagstrom

From dreams of being a sportswriter to spearheading significant changes in Detroit basketball over the last decade, Arn Tellem, '79, has achieved more than he imagined in a career he never saw coming.

"The friends I've made and the clients I've worked with are all beyond my expectations," says Tellem, vice chairman of the Detroit Pistons basketball franchise. "I couldn't have predicted the way things have evolved."

Another unexpected outcome of his career is the degree to which he and his wife, Nancy, have been able to give back to Michigan Law. "The Law School has given us way more than we've given it," he says. "We want to help uphold its important place in education, now and for the future."

Carving the path forward

In 1972, when Tellem was a senior in high school, he attended the Philadelphia Sports Writers Association's annual awards dinner. He went to the event with his sights set on sportswriting but left with a newfound interest in the law—thanks to a conversation he had with the man seated next to him.

"I sat with legendary writer Stan Hochman, who wrote for the *Philadelphia Daily News*. He actually encouraged me not to be a sportswriter," Tellem says. "Hochman said, 'Be a lawyer; you can have a greater impact on this world as a lawyer.' Those words stayed with me."

Tellem came to Ann Arbor for law school after graduating from Haverford College, and he focused his legal studies on sports law and commercial litigation. During his 2L summer internship in Washington, DC, he met Nancy on a tour of the White House—she was attending UC Hastings (now the University of California College of Law, San Francisco) at the time. After their respective graduations, the couple married and joined law firms in downtown Los Angeles.

In the early 1980s, Tellem began representing professional baseball and basketball players as their agent. He went on to sign some of the biggest names in sports, including Kobe Bryant. "I felt it was a powerful thing to be on the side of the players—to be their advocate, help guide them in their career, and hopefully make a positive impact in their life, on and off the playing field," he says.

The firm that he founded, Tellem & Associates, was acquired in 1999 by SFX Entertainment Inc. (now Live Nation Entertainment Inc.) and later by Wasserman Media Group. Nancy, meanwhile, had become the president of the CBS Network Television Entertainment Group, a position she held until 2012.



Arn Tellem, '79, may be the vice chairman of the Detroit Pistons, but the Philadelphia native still finds time to root for his hometown football team with his wife, Nancy.

In 2014, Nancy was appointed executive chairman and chief media officer at Eko. A year later, Palace Sports & Entertainment called, and Arn became vice chairman of the Detroit Pistons.

Making a home in Michigan

Tellem acted as the chief negotiator in moving the Pistons back to the city of Detroit in 2017, after three decades of playing in suburban Auburn Hills. He also played a key role in bringing a WNBA team back to Detroit; the Detroit Shock will begin playing in 2029.

In 2020, Nancy founded BasBlue, a nonprofit that advances economic mobility by providing resources for personal and professional development to underrepresented and under-resourced women and nonbinary individuals in Southeast Michigan.

"I'm happy things turned out this way," says Arn. "The Detroit experience has been fantastic; the sense of community here is so fulfilling to Nancy and me, and it's rewarding to be a part of it and help make a difference."

The couple established the Arn Tellem Faculty Research Support Fund in 1999, which they amended in July 2025 by adding \$500,000 and renaming the fund to the Arn and Nancy Tellem Faculty Support Fund. In total, the Tellems have given more than \$1.76 million to the Law School.

"When I think of faculty, it's just like having a team," says Arn. "You need the talent, and they need to be supported. We want Michigan Law to continue recruiting legal scholars who will inspire young people, just like I was inspired as a student."



Ashley M. Washington, '10, connects with classmates during a 2025 Reunion event at Michigan Stadium.

Ashley M. Washington, '10: Serving the Next Generation

By Annie Hagstrom

The law first interested Ashley M. Washington, '10, when she was a member of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America. Memorizing the Girl Scout Promise and Girl Scout Law is part of the gig for any scout, but simply reciting these honor codes wasn't enough for Washington—she needed to understand the implications of the words she was being asked to say and stand by.

"Laws were appealing to me even then, and I remember pestering my parents to help me dissect the meaning of the Girl Scout Law," she says. "I also understood lawyers helped people, and that was the only thing I knew for certain I wanted to do."

Finding her calling

Washington grew up in Wisconsin, New Jersey, and New York and earned her undergraduate degree in criminal justice at The George Washington University in Washington, DC. Having experienced all four seasons in each place, she sought a legal education somewhere that remains warm all year round. This meant Michigan Law didn't make the cut—that is, until she visited campus.

"Visiting the Law School changed everything for me," she says. "Not only were the people on my tour great, but everyone I spoke with on campus was friendly and welcoming. I wanted that kind of environment for my law school experience, especially knowing the curriculum can make for a challenging three years. I decided I could tolerate the winters for Michigan Law because it checked all my boxes."

After her 1L year, Washington worked as a student intern in the Criminal Division of the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York.

"I walked out of that internship thinking it wasn't for me," says Washington. "But Michigan Law's Juvenile Justice Clinic gave me a different perspective during my 2L year that helped direct me where I am today."

Washington clerked on the US District Court for the Northern District of Ohio for two years after graduation, then worked at two different law firms in California. While at one of the firms, she worked as plaintiff's counsel on a case involving child abuse.

"My legal assistant said she had never seen me as passionate as when I was working on that case," says Washington. "That's when I took a US attorney's position in Florida, where I primarily worked on juvenile exploitation cases."

She recently joined the California-based public interest firm Clarkson Law Firm, where she works remotely as counsel, focusing on issues involving sexual violence and fertility negligence claims related to assisted reproductive technologies.

Bolstering connections

Staying connected to Michigan Law is important to Washington, and her involvement with her alma mater comes in many forms.

The Class of 2010 recently celebrated its 15th Reunion, bringing Washington's cohort back to the Law Quad for a weekend of camaraderie. It was also the third time she served on her class's Reunion planning committee.

"There's something to be said for having an experience from beginning to end with the same group of people—it unites you," says Washington. "I wasn't into football before I attended Michigan Law, but being in a college town where everyone enjoys it together, especially in the Big House, is a special experience. I'm grateful to have a multilayered connection that remains unbroken."

Washington has also remained a loyal donor to the Law School Fund, Michigan Law's primary discretionary fund.

"I give to the Law School Fund because I want to help however I can, wherever the funds might be directed," she says.

"Michigan Law has made such an incredible mark in my life, and I want others to have the same experience."

Aaron Lewis, '05: Embracing, and Extending, a Family Legacy

By Annie Hagstrom

Aaron Lewis, '05, comes from a family with strong ties to Michigan Law.

His paternal great-grandfather, Oscar W. Baker Sr., 1902, was the Law School's 100th Black student. He became a vocal advocate for Black Michiganders and a prominent attorney in Bay City, Michigan, along with his sons Oscar, '35, and James, '51. His maternal grandfather, the Hon. Wade H. McCree Jr., joined the Michigan Law faculty after a barrier-breaking career, and his grandmother, Doree McCree, worked at the Law School as a career adviser. His parents are also alumni. For Lewis, his ties to the Law Quad almost proved too substantial.

"I remember being nervous about attending Michigan Law because of my family history—there were faculty who taught my parents and worked with my grandparents, and I wasn't eager to invite comparison," says Lewis. "But when I visited campus as a prospective student, I realized that no other law school aligned so completely with my values and aspirations."

Lewis, a partner at Covington & Burling LLP in Los Angeles, recently made a \$100,000 gift to the Wade Hampton McCree Jr. Scholarship Fund. The fund was established in 2006 by a gift from a 1971 Michigan Law graduate who had clerked for Lewis's grandfather.

Influential figures

Growing up, Lewis didn't have to look far for role models. "Observing the kind of lawyering my grandfather did was inspiring," says Lewis. "I hoped that if I worked really hard, I might be able to accomplish some of the things that my family had accomplished in the law."

After serving in the Army for four years during World War II, Lewis's grandfather went to law school at Harvard and graduated near the top of his class in 1948. He began his career in private practice in Detroit and went on to become a trailblazing judge in state and federal courts. In 1977, Judge McCree was appointed Solicitor General of the United States by President Carter, a position he held until he joined the Michigan Law faculty in 1981.

Lewis's parents, David Baker Lewis, '70, and Kathleen McCree Lewis, '73, met during law school.

"Both of my parents took a great deal of pride in their lawyering, and they worked very hard. My mother was one of the first Black partners at Dykema Gossett PLLC, so I never doubted that a person could be a Black lawyer and succeed

at the highest levels at the very best firms in the country," Lewis says. "My father founded his own firm in 1972, which left me with the view that we could compete with anyone and find ways to win and secure the trust of clients. That was a powerful example as well."



Aaron Lewis, '05, (right), with his father, David Baker Lewis, '70. Aaron Lewis is pictured in the Table of Contents as a child with his grandfather, the Hon. Wade H. McCree Jr., the Lewis M. Simes Professor of Law, at the unveiling of the judge's official portrait at the US Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit.

Carrying the torch

After graduating from Michigan Law, Lewis served as a law clerk for the Hon. Ronald M. Gould on the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He then joined Covington as an associate in the firm's Washington, DC, office.

Between 2009 and 2015, Lewis served as a counsel to US Attorney General Eric Holder and as an assistant US attorney in Los Angeles. He returned to Covington in 2015.

Lewis says he is proud to have the opportunity to continue his family's dedication to the pursuit of excellence in the legal profession, public service, and the betterment of society, and that his recent gift to the Law School is with gratitude for those who came before him.

"My grandfather was an inspiration to me, so I wanted this gift to honor both him and his elder daughter, my mom, who was my first and greatest teacher," he says. "I feel a deep sense of obligation and gratitude to Michigan Law. Giving back and supporting its mission is the least I can do."

Gillian C. Steinhauer, '76: Success in All Seasons of Life

By Annie Hagstrom



Between raising children, navigating interstate moves, and adapting to new roles in her professional life, Gillian C. Steinhauer, '76, developed a knack for finding her footing wherever she landed.

Now retired, she balances her personal travel and duties as a grandmother with her involvement at Michigan Law. Steinhauer recently amended a gift she made to the Law School in 2016, more than doubling the original amount.

"Financial support enables people to do things they otherwise wouldn't be able to do," she says. "With the cost of tuition these days, I want to help."

Mastering the art of adaptation

Steinhauer earned her undergraduate degree from Bryn Mawr College in 1959. She spent the majority of the 1960s out of the job market while raising three children with her husband, Bruce, who worked as a physician at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

When their youngest child was in kindergarten, Steinhauer decided to reenter the workforce, so she took the LSAT and applied to law schools. She began her legal training at Wayne State University Law School and transferred to Michigan Law after her 1L year.

"Going to law school after having been out of the occupational arena for a decade was very stimulating," says Steinhauer.

"The Law Library and the Quad were wonderful places to spend time, and the professors were superb. I really enjoyed my experience at Michigan Law."

After graduating, she joined Miller Canfield PLC as an associate. Six years later, Steinhauer was elected the first woman partner in the firm's history. She learned that she had been made partner while on maternity leave with her fourth child.

"I knew I was up for partnership, and I was optimistic that I'd get it, but part of me was concerned that people thought I wouldn't return after having my baby," she recalls. "I was delighted that we were having another child, but it was important to me that it not affect my career path."

In 1992, Bruce Steinhauer became the CEO of the Lahey Clinic in Boston, which required relocating their family. Gillian Steinhauer found work as the first director of the Workers' Compensation Litigation Unit for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

"I was hired to get the unit up and running," she recalls. "Over the 10 years I was there, I learned so much about workers' compensation and how to be in charge of a team of attorneys who were doing very important work."

Her career pivoted once more when Bruce accepted a position as the CEO of the Regional Medical Center in Memphis, Tennessee. She joined the US Postal Service's Memphis Law Department as an attorney, handling employment cases in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and Florida.

In 2020, after Gillian and Bruce both retired, they relocated to Houston to be close to their youngest daughter and grandchild.

Steinhauer's initial gift of \$40,000 to the Law School was established in 2016 through a charitable gift annuity (CGA). Her recent amendment to the CGA establishes the Gillian C. Steinhauer Endowed Scholarship Fund with a total gift of \$100,000.

"Both my husband and I went to college on scholarships, so the idea of creating one myself had always been important," she says. "I also give to the Law School Fund regularly, but I like the idea of a charitable gift annuity because it's like a little extra pension plan."

Charitable gift annuities are a form of legacy giving that can provide the donor with regular payments for life and allow the Law School to further its mission. To learn more, contact Jeff Jelinski, director of Law School giving, at jjelinsk@umich.edu.

U-M Honors Richard Burns, '71, and Elizabeth Murphy Burns for Fundraising Leadership

In October, the University of Michigan presented its most prestigious donor recognition, the David B. Hermelin Award for Fundraising Volunteer Leadership, to longtime Law School supporters Richard Burns, '71, and his late wife, Elizabeth "Liz" Murphy Burns, who died in April.

"Richard and Elizabeth have been passionate about building connections across campus and with other donors, and their efforts have made an essential difference in students' lives," said President Domenico Grasso when presenting the award.

For more than 50 years, Richard Burns has served as a volunteer fundraiser for Michigan Law. Although she wasn't an alum, "Liz had a true affinity for the Law School, too, which made it easier for us both to be involved," he says. He has helped lead major fundraising efforts at the Law School, including the campaign to build Jeffries Hall and the Robert B. Aikens Commons, and the Victors for Michigan Campaign.

He served on the Dean's Advisory Council and continues to serve on the Development and Alumni Relations Committee.

In 2014, the couple established the Richard and Elizabeth Burns Debt Management Fund, which offsets student-loan debt for Michigan Law graduates who pursue lower-paying jobs in the public or private sector. They also have championed causes like the Women of the Class of '71 Scholarship Fund, which commemorates the first class in Michigan Law's history to admit more than 10 women. The women of the class named Liz an honorary member.

"Contributing to the Law School's reputation as a competitive institution with a beautiful campus is important to me, and I'm happy to have been involved in any way," says Burns. "Liz's and my pride in the University of Michigan extends to many areas, but at the center of it is the Law School."



Recent Gifts

Sue Sikkema, '82, and **Gary Sikkema, '75**, made a \$250,000 gift to the Sue A. and Gary D. Sikkema Endowed Scholarship Fund. Before their retirement, Sue was a partner at Sikkema & Gray in Toledo, Ohio, where she practiced mass tort litigation, and Gary was a partner at Spengler Nathanson in Toledo, practicing corporate law. They reside in Ann Arbor.

David K. Callahan, '91, and his wife, **Terri A. Abruzzo**, have given \$100,000 to create the David K. Callahan Law School Fund. Before retiring, David was a partner at Latham & Watkins in Chicago, where he also served as the global chair of the intellectual property litigation group. He is a member of the Law School's Development and Alumni Relations Committee and the University's Look to Michigan Campaign Council in Chicago.

Kent E. Whittaker, '60, documented a \$3.7 million bequest that will be divided between the Kent E. and Judith C. Whittaker Fund for Student Support and the Kent E. and Judith C. Whittaker Dean's Discretionary Fund. Kent spent 45 years in private practice in Kansas City.

Adrian L. Steel Jr., '75, and his wife, **Karen**, made a \$50,000 gift in honor of his 50th Reunion to the Law Class of 1975 Scholarship Fund.

T. Christopher "Chris" Donnelly, '80, and his wife, **Carolyn M. Bitetti**, made a \$50,000 gift in honor of his 45th Reunion and the Law School Class of 1980. The gift establishes the Class of 1980 Law Scholarship Fund. He is a partner at Donnelly, Conroy & Gelhaar LLP in Boston.

The Park Foundation Inc. made a \$1 million gift to establish the Jerome B. Libin Scholarship Fund in honor of **Jerome "Jerry" Libin, '59**, who passed away in 2024. The gift honors his half-century of service to the Park Foundation and celebrates his significant contributions to the field of tax law. The fund will support need-based scholarships at the Law School.

CLASS NOTES

1964



Richard J. Aronson retired five years ago after practicing civil defense law for 55 years. He was managing attorney for Fireman's Fund Staff Counsel and served as defense

counsel for multiple insurers in more than 150 jury trials and arbitrations. Aronson and his wife, Laurie, who are based in Chicago, have traveled the world, once taking six months off work to circle the globe. He has conducted the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, led mock jury trials at a local high school, and volunteers for various events at Lambs Farm, a facility for adults with special needs. He plays the piano and works incessantly on his N-scale model train layout. He is proud to have graduated from the University of Michigan Law School.

Samuel McKim joined Dickinson Wright PLLC as of counsel. His practice focuses on complex litigation and tax matters, particularly state and local taxation. He also advises clients on tax planning, opinion work, and trial and appellate appeals. McKim is a fellow of the American College of Tax Counsel. He has taught state and local tax law as an adjunct professor at Wayne State University Law School.

1969

George Elworth has retired from the Michigan Department of Attorney General, where he served as assistant attorney general for five decades. He previously spent a year with the Atlanta Legal Aid Society and four years as an associate at Lord, Bissell, & Brook LLP in Chicago. Elworth also sat on the attorney general's opinion review board.

1975



Jeffrey Haynes recently published a three-part article, "Abuse of Discretion: Principles from 180 Years of Michigan Caselaw," in the *Michigan Appellate Practice Journal*.

Using an empirical database of more than 2,000 cases, the article describes how the Michigan Supreme Court has applied the abuse-of-discretion standard of appellate review. Haynes is a fellow of the American College of Environmental Lawyers and the editor of the *Michigan Environmental Law Deskbook*, and he has taught environmental law at the University of Michigan-Dearborn for three decades.

1976



Thomas Linn received the 2025 Pro Bono Service Award from the Legal Services Corporation in recognition of his commitment to expanding access to

justice for underserved Michiganders. Linn serves as of counsel and chairman emeritus to Miller Canfield PLC, following nearly eight years as the chief executive officer and 20 years as a managing director. He was nominated for the award by Lakeshore Legal Aid, where he currently serves as chair of the board of directors.

Did you get a new job or a promotion? Were you recognized with an award? Share your news with classmates in an upcoming issue of the *Law Quadrangle*. Email LQNCClassNotes@umich.edu or visit law.umich.edu/classnotes to submit a class note online.

1977

Ross Petty recently published *From Marking Products to Marketing Brands: A Legal Perspective on the History of Brand Marketing* (Springer Nature, 2025). The book examines the historical evolution from marking or branding products for ownership purposes to branding products to promote the brand itself. He is the author of two other books on the law, advertising, and marketing. Petty is an emeritus professor of marketing law at Babson College, where he served on the faculty for 31 years.

1978

Duncan McMillan was reappointed to the Workers' Disability Compensation Appeals Commission for a four-year term by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. McMillan also served on the board's predecessor body, the Michigan Compensation Appellate Commission. Previously, he worked at Kluczynski, Girtz & Vogelzang for more than 30 years, where he represented clients in workers' disability and civil rights cases.

1982

William D. Ellis, a real estate partner at Akerman LLP in Los Angeles, was named one of the 2025 top 100 Lawyers in Southern California by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*. He also was shortlisted for the California Real Estate Lawyer of the Year award by American Lawyer Media, the parent company of *Law.com* and *The Recorder*. Ellis began his career at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP before becoming a senior partner at Sidley Austin LLP. He also has served as general counsel at NASDAQ-listed Reading International Inc.

George Vincent joined The Kroger Co. as secretary and general counsel. He previously served as managing partner at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP from 2007 to 2022. Vincent also has served as board chair for various civic and business organizations, including the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, The Christ Hospital, the Cincinnati Museum Center, and the Cincinnati Art Museum.

Myint Zan, LLM, published “Reminiscences about Michigan Law School Classes of 1981–82” in the *Seoul Times*. The article highlights how lessons from Zan’s time in Ann Arbor have remained salient throughout his legal career. He is a retired professor of law who taught at universities in Malaysia, Australia, the South Pacific, and the US.

1983

William Young was reappointed to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer for a three-year term. Young is a retired attorney and has served as a Michigan employment relations commissioner since 2021. He previously was a shareholder at White, Schneider, Young & Chiodini PC and spent nearly 28 years with the firm, where he represented unions and teachers, among other clients. In retirement, Young volunteers with Ingham County Meals on Wheels, is a member of the Spring Lake Village Historical Commission, and serves as a fellow with the Michigan State Bar Foundation.

1984



Meg Waite Clayton has published her ninth novel, *Typewriter Beach* (HarperCollins, 2025). The instant *USA Today* Bestseller has been heralded as

recommended reading by the *Today Show*, the *Washington Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, and

Publishers Weekly, among others. Clayton recently relocated to Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, with a new second home in New Haven, Connecticut.



Wayne M. Smith was named executive vice president of the legal department at Warner Bros. Studios, where he will oversee the Warner Bros.

Studios content production portfolio, including HBO, Warner Bros. Pictures, New Line Cinema, DC Studios, Warner Bros. Television, DC Comics, and Warner Bros. Consumer Products. The role also includes legal oversight of theatrical distribution and marketing, labor relations, music, and the physical studio lots in Burbank, California, and in the United Kingdom.

1985



Michael J. Mueller, partner at Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP, was elected as a fellow of the College of Labor and Employment Lawyers by its board of directors,

in recognition of his sustained contributions to the field. In addition to his commercial litigation practice, Mueller has been litigating and trying labor and employment disputes since 1987. He has published and spoken extensively on labor and employment topics, particularly on the intersection of labor and employment law with antitrust and RICO claims, as well as litigation and trial of wage-hour claims.



Ron Yolles has been named a Notable Leader in Finance for 2025 by *Crain’s Detroit Business*. Yolles is co-founder, partner, and chief visionary officer of Diversified

Portfolios Inc. and co-founder of the Council of Independent Financial

Advisors. He also is active with a number of charities and nonprofits in Southeast Michigan, including University of Michigan Hillel.

1986



Robert S. Bick, a shareholder with Williams Williams Rattner & Plunkett (WWRP) in Birmingham, Michigan, has been named to the *Crain’s Detroit Business*

2025 list of Notable Leaders in Mergers & Acquisitions. Bick’s practice of nearly 40 years focuses on corporate law, mergers and acquisitions, and business transactions. He serves as co-chair of WWRP’s corporate practice group and previously served as co-counsel to the owners of the Detroit Pistons.

1988

Thomas Froehle was honored with *The Indiana Lawyer’s* 2025 Leadership in Law Lifetime Achievement Award. Froehle is a partner and chair emeritus at Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP, where he focuses on recruitment, professional development, and community engagement in Indianapolis.

Elizabeth Barrowman Gibson was appointed group vice president and general counsel for Toyota Motor North America, where she oversees the company’s legal department and is responsible for setting legal direction and strategy. Previously, Gibson was vice president and deputy general counsel at the company, with responsibility for complex litigation, product liability, government investigations, risk mitigation, intellectual property, franchise and dealer issues, and regulatory compliance.



CLASS NOTES

1989

Cindy Cohn will step down from her role as executive director of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) in 2026 after more than 25 years with the organization. She first became involved with EFF in 1993, when she served as the outside lead attorney in *Bernstein v. US Department of Justice* on behalf of the organization. From 2000 to 2015, Cohn was EFF's legal director and general counsel.

Damion Frasier was appointed to the Michigan Wildlife Council for a four-year term by Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. He is the owner and operator of Au Sable Riverview Resort and a managing partner at Shedd Frasier PLC.

1990



Kristen (Brink) Rosati received the David J. Greenburg Founders Award, the American Health Law Association's (AHLA) highest distinction. Rosati

is a partner at Coppersmith Brockelman in Phoenix and is the chair of the firm's governance committee. She is a former AHLA president and has been a frequent speaker and author of many AHLA publications.

1991

Johanna R. Ginsberg joined Sussan Greenwald & Wesler as an associate attorney after a 30-year hiatus from the practice of law. Her practice focuses exclusively on parent-side special education law. Previously, she worked briefly in criminal law and public relations before settling into a career as a journalist. Ginsberg's articles have been published in outlets including *Haaretz*, the *Jerusalem Post*, the *Forward*, *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, *New York Jewish Week*, *New Jersey Jewish News*, and others.



Michael B. Stewart has been included on the *Forbes 2025* list of Best-In-State Lawyers for his intellectual property practice in Michigan. Stewart is the co-founder and a managing partner of Fishman Stewart PLLC in Troy.

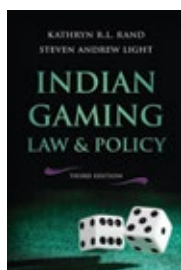
1993



Bethany A. Breetz, a member at Stites & Harbison PLLC, was included on the *Forbes 2025* list of Best-In-State Lawyers for her appellate law practice in Kentucky. Her practice focuses on federal and state appellate advocacy as well as complex commercial litigation, including matters involving financial institutions, real estate, and trusts and estate litigation. Breetz currently serves as co-chair of the firm's appellate advocacy group.



Laura Sheppard Faussié has joined Butzel Long as a shareholder. She is a commercial litigator, legal analyst and strategist, and appellate attorney. Before joining Butzel, Faussié co-founded and ran a boutique-style litigation firm in downtown Detroit for more than 20 years.



Kathryn R.L. Rand, visiting professor at the UNLV William S. Boyd School of Law and co-director of the Institute for the Study of Tribal Gaming Law & Policy, co-authored the third edition of *Indian Gaming Law*

and *Policy* (Carolina Academic Press, 2025). The book is the leading overview of the law and policy shaping the tribal gaming industry. The third edition features comprehensive revisions and updates, including recent case law and new federal regulations as well as new content on issues such as sports betting, mobile wagering, and trends in tribal-state compacting.

1994



Ann-Marie Anderson joined Klinedinst PC as senior counsel. She has served as lead counsel in complex transactional, litigation, and regulatory matters and represented a wide range of publicly traded, privately held, and government entities across industries in her 30 years of practice. She speaks annually at the State Bar of Arizona Convention and other legal, technology, and academic organizations.

Heather Gerken was appointed as the 11th president of the Ford Foundation. She previously served as the dean at Yale Law School, where she also was the Sol & Lillian Goldman Professor of Law. Gerken is a nationally recognized expert on constitutional law and democracy. Before her time at Yale, she was a professor at Harvard Law School and an associate at Jenner & Block.

Mitzi Hill joined Buchalter as special counsel in the firm's Atlanta office. For more than 30 years, she has worked with businesses across a wide range of industries on issues related to the use and development of technology solutions, including AI and privacy. In addition, she is an adjunct professor at Emory University School of Law.



Matthew Preston, '21, Selected for ABA Young Lawyers Division Award

By Annie Hagstrom

The Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association (ABA) recently honored Matthew Preston, '21, as a 2025 On the Rise – Top 40 Young Lawyers awardee. Recipients are selected for their leadership, innovation, and example in upholding the law.

“Being selected for this award forced me to pause and think about everything I’ve done since the Army. I’m grateful for that, and I’m honored to be placed in the same category as so many incredible legal professionals,” Preston says.

Finding a path to the law

Preston spent eight years in the Army before an experience on his base in Colorado set him on the path to law school. After he returned from a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan, the conduct of a newly assigned platoon sergeant raised concerns. Navigating the formal complaint process was a pivotal moment.

“That experience was my first insight into the law, and it motivated me to use the GI Bill to pursue my education,” he says.

In just two years, Preston earned his undergraduate degree from the Indiana University School of Liberal Arts, then worked as a policy analyst intern at the Indiana State Senate before matriculating at Michigan Law.

At Michigan, his campus involvement included serving as the president of the Michigan Law School Veterans Society, a senior editor on the *Michigan Law Review*, and a student-attorney in the Workers’ Rights Clinic (now the 1L Advocacy Clinic).

Pursuing innovation

After graduation, Preston served in four yearlong clerkships with four different judges. During that time, he began to explore how artificial intelligence (AI) tools might help with standard clerkship tasks. This interest led to his involvement with the Legal Accountability Project (LAP) and Learned Hand Inc.

LAP is a nonprofit organization that designed a database to match law clerks with judges based on a range of preferences and interests; Preston now serves as its chief financial officer. Learned Hand Inc., where Preston is an equity adviser, is a legal technology company that provides an AI-powered platform to assist courts and judges with legal analysis.

His service to both organizations has helped inform his understanding of how AI and the judiciary intersect. Coming full circle from his own clerkship days, Preston has begun teaching



When he was deployed in Afghanistan, Matthew Preston, '21, (second from right), often served as an escort to local logistics contractors during deliveries on base.

his findings to law clerks and judges at venues such as the National Judicial Conference and the Judicial Education Institute.

“When using ChatGPT, you can get really granular,” he says. “For example, you can say, ‘Find me a case where the district court granted a motion to dismiss because the plaintiff made allegations against defendants but didn’t say specifically who did what.’ Essentially, you can input an abstract thought, and it will find you cases that match.”

Preston cautions, however, that technology has limits. “No matter how well versed you are with the technology, I never advise blanketly trusting in what you see. I always check citations—you can even ask it to provide you with record citations. The time you save in your research should be used to triple-check the technology’s work.”

Earlier this year, Preston joined Jones Day as an associate in its Detroit office. He still maintains his involvement with the Legal Accountability Project and Learned Hand Inc., and he also serves on the Michigan Advisory Committee to the US Commission on Civil Rights.

“Between those commitments—and a 1-year-old at home—it’s fair to say I’m balancing roughly three-and-a-half full-time jobs,” he says, crediting his wife, Francy, with giving him the support and confidence to pursue his passions.

At Jones Day, Preston has been working in business and tort litigation, “taking a generalist’s approach and immersing myself in as many matters as I can,” he says. That includes seeing how a Big Law firm is approaching artificial intelligence. “Working on both sides of the bench has given me a clearer view of how AI can serve the law. Judges are already reaping its benefits; the challenge now is to identify ways to make the tools just as powerful—and responsible—for the advocates who appear before them.”

CLASS NOTES



Larry R. Seegull has been recognized in the 2025 edition of *Chambers USA* for his labor and employment practice. Seegull is a principal in the Baltimore office of

Jackson Lewis PC, where he represents private and public sector employers in all areas of labor and employment law.

1995

Colin Owyang was appointed as a superior court judge by Vermont Gov. Phil Scott. Owyang most recently worked for Vermont Electric Power Company and Vermont Gas Systems in executive leadership roles.

Karen Zatz was elected to a six-year term on the DuPage County [Illinois] Regional Board of School Trustees. She is vice president of the board, which represents nearly 1 million people in the region.

1996



Thomas B. Cochrane received the Distinguished Alumni Award from Albion College. The award recognized, among other accomplishments, his successful

litigation to compel the State of Ohio to end sexual orientation discrimination in its civil service and his contributions to drafting a city ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in Westerville, Ohio. As an undergraduate at Albion College, Cochrane helped lead the student movement advocating for divestment from corporations operating under apartheid in South Africa. After graduation, he moved to South Africa to join the anti-apartheid liberation

struggle, an experience that inspired him to pursue a legal career. Cochrane has practiced union-side labor relations law for 29 years and currently serves as senior labor relations counsel with the Air Line Pilots Association International, AFL-CIO.

1997

Richard Bierschbach, dean and the John W. Reed Professor of Law at Wayne State University Law School, became the university's interim president in September, appointed by the university's board of governors. Bierschbach joined Wayne State Law School in 2017; previously, he taught at Yeshiva University's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where he also served as vice dean.

Enoh T. Ebong is the new president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' global development department. From 2022 to earlier in 2025, she was the director of the US Trade and Development Agency. There, she led the agency's global infrastructure development efforts in the energy, transportation, digital, and health care sectors and represented the US in high-level engagements with foreign governments, multilateral institutions, and the private sector.

1998

Jonathan D. Andrews joined the board of trustees at Macalester College. He is a mediator and trial attorney at Signature Resolution and serves on the board of Big Brothers Big Sisters in San Diego.



Dina Kallay, LLM, SJD, was appointed deputy assistant attorney general for international, policy, and appellate at the US Department of Justice Antitrust

Division in Washington, DC. Previously, she spent 12 years at the telecommuni-

cations company Ericsson, most recently as head of antitrust and competition. Kallay also has served as counsel for intellectual property and international antitrust at the Federal Trade Commission. She is grateful to longtime Michigan Law Professor Thomas Kauper, '60, who passed away in 2025, for sparking her passion for antitrust law.

The Hon. Nancy (Woodruff) Salomone has been appointed chief judge of Colorado's 20th Judicial District (Boulder County) by Supreme Court Chief Justice Monica M. Márquez. Salomone has served as a judge in the 20th Judicial District since 2017. Previously, she was a partner at the criminal defense law firm Malkinson Salomone LLC.

1999

Jill Abrams joined Crowell & Moring LLP in the firm's health care group. Before joining Crowell, Abrams spent more than two decades at the US Department of Health and Human Services, most recently as a senior attorney in the Office of the General Counsel, where she advised on Medicare program integrity issues with a particular focus on Medicare Advantage and Medicare Part D.

Joel Hassman Samuels was named executive vice president for academic affairs and provost at the University of Miami. He has more than 20 years of experience in higher education and served as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of South Carolina for the last five years.

Did you get a new job or a promotion? Were you recognized with an award? Share your news with classmates in an upcoming issue of the *Law Quadrangle*. Email LQNCClassNotes@umich.edu or visit law.umich.edu/classnotes to submit a class note online.

2000

Rachel Hong was appointed to the Okanogan County [Washington] Superior Court by Gov. Bob Ferguson. She is a litigation attorney and longtime federal judicial law clerk, including more than 10 years at the US District Court for the Western District of Washington. Hong has represented and guided individuals, corporations, and public entities through criminal and civil cases in state and federal courts. She was a litigation attorney at Yarmuth Wilsdon Calfo PLLC and Heller Ehrman White & McAuliffe LLP. Hong also volunteered as an attorney at the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project and recently spent several years as an organic farmer in Shelton, Washington, where she founded a small-scale organic vegetable farm.



Alexandra MacKay was named to *Managing Intellectual Property* magazine's 2025 IP Stars list. She is a member of the Nashville, Tennessee, office

of Stites & Harbison PLLC. She counsels clients in litigation and transactional matters involving intellectual property, including the selection, adoption, and registration of trademarks and copyrights.



The Hon. Asim Rehman, the commissioner and chief administrative law judge at the NYC Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings, published "The

NYC Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings: Forty-Five Years of Delivering Impartial Adjudications and Providing Access to Justice" in the *Cardozo Law Review*. Earlier this year, he received the Trailblazer Award at the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebration. Brooklyn District Attorney **Eric Gonzalez**, '95, (right), presented him with the award.

Michael L. Simes joined Moses & Singer LLP as a partner in the firm's litigation practice. Over more than two decades, Simes has represented clients in complex contractual disputes in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York, the Commercial Division of the New York State Supreme Court, and other jurisdictions. In addition to contractual disputes, his practice includes bankruptcy-related litigation, investigations, and regulatory matters. He joins Moses Singer from Simes Law, which he founded in 2023. Before that, he was a partner at McGuireWoods and practiced at Mayer Brown and Davis Polk & Wardwell.

Stacey Turner was elected vice president of Alabama Power's environmental affairs organization by the company's board of directors. Her responsibilities include compliance and strategy as well as the company's environmental stewardship programs and operations. Previously, Turner served as associate general counsel for environmental policy and litigation for Southern Company Services Inc. and was the lead environmental lawyer at Georgia Power.

2001

Steven Bressler joined Democracy Forward as a senior legal adviser. Previously, he was deputy general counsel at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, where he led all appellate, amicus, and defensive litigation work, including a successful defense of the agency's funding statute in the US Supreme Court, and supervised responses to congressional oversight. Bressler previously served at the US Department of Justice in a variety of roles, including senior trial counsel in the Federal Programs Branch and chief of staff in the Office of Legal Policy. He also was detailed to President Obama's White House Counsel's Office.

Tara McGrath joined Perkins Coie as a white collar and investigations partner in the firm's litigation practice. She previously was the US attorney for the Southern District of California, where she supervised investigations and prosecutions that involved white-collar and financial crime; cyber, environmental, and national security matters; and civil fraud.

Samir Parikh published an essay, "Crossing the Rubicon: Assembling a Litigation Colossus in Mass Torts," in the *Michigan Law Review*. He also published two articles in the *Cornell Law Review*, "The Alchemist's Inversion" and "Mass-Tort Trusts and the Faustian Bargain." Additionally, the *New York University Law Review* recently selected Parikh as the lead faculty organizer for its 2026 litigation finance and aggregate litigation symposium and will be publishing his new article, "Mass-Tort Voting Takes Center Stage."

2002

Laurie Carafone has been named executive director of NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice and NETWORK Advocates for Catholic Social Justice. She most recently served as vice president of US Legal Services for Kids in Need of Defense.

Jerome F. Gorgon Jr. has been appointed interim US attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan. Gorgon has been a federal prosecutor in Detroit for 15 years and has worked on cases related to terrorism, violent crime, sex trafficking, carjacking, and immigration.



Stephanie Hausman was named chief appellate defender for the New Hampshire Supreme Court. She previously worked for the New Hampshire Public

Defender's Office for 20 years. Hausman also chairs the professional conduct committee, overseeing the state's attorney discipline system.



Martha Umphrey, '91: From a Career in the Classroom to a New View from the Provost's Office

By Sharon Morioka

Martha Umphrey, '91, thrived as a professor in Amherst College's Department of Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought for 30 years, teaching undergraduate students the concepts of law through an interdisciplinary lens.

While her own educational experience occurred at a large research university—in addition to her JD, she earned her bachelor's and PhD at the University of Michigan—she enjoyed the “high touch” environment of a small college.

“The beauty of a small college is that student-faculty connection is really at the heart of the educational enterprise,” Umphrey says of Amherst, consistently ranked as one of the best private liberal arts colleges in the country. “We are constantly interacting with these young people, watching them develop, helping them work through the inevitable bumps in the road.”

While she could have remained in that position for the rest of her career, things changed two years ago when the position of provost and dean of faculty opened up. Colleagues nominated her to fill it—a vote of confidence in her ability to transition from a teaching to an administrative role.

Since July 2024, she has served as President Michael Elliott's number two, overseeing everything from academics and libraries to athletics and the Emily Dickinson Museum. She is responsible for creating an educational environment that supports more than 300 faculty and 1,850 students while administering budgetary and personnel issues. Her work on committees over the years positioned her to take on a broader role.

“It's really not a matter of learning something brand new as much as it is stretching vertically,” she says, “both down into the weeds and up to the biggest picture of things going on in higher education.”

Confronting challenges

As Umphrey tackles her new role, her Michigan Law degree has often worked to her advantage.

“Being able to parse different kinds of legal concepts has turned out to be really valuable,” she says. “For example, we got a memo a couple of months ago from the Department of Justice that discussed the ways in which the DOJ was going to use the False



Claims Act to try to enforce its understanding of civil rights law. We needed to explain to our scientists what the False Claims Act is to help them understand the intricacies around certifying their grant applications for federal funds. I spent quite a bit of time translating complicated legal concepts.”

And like administrators at colleges and universities across the country, she is confronting a host of challenges unique to our times.

For example, Umphrey points to the uncharted frontier of artificial intelligence (AI) and the risks and rewards it holds for higher ed. She has constituted a collegewide AI working group to address the effects of AI not just on pedagogy and academic integrity issues but also on research, administrative systems, and other areas.

“This is such a fast-moving and really fascinating environment,” she says. “We're doing a search for a new director of our career center, and AI is very much on my mind as we think about the kinds of people that we're looking to interview.”

Amherst is also adjusting to changes in federal funding for science and the arts.

“It has certainly affected Amherst College,” she says. “We have some very successful scientists here who rely on federal grants. So we've been working with them to secure funding. The same is true with the arts. An arts grant at a small college goes a long way.”

She adds that issues around admissions, academic freedom, and a proposed endowment tax that emerged in the congressional budget reconciliation process are also at the forefront of her thinking.

“We're trying to think forward as far as we can into the future to anticipate what might be coming next,” she says. “And we're working with peer colleges to tell a story about what small colleges do.”

2003

Michael R. Cavanaugh co-founded and serves as a managing partner of Atlas Resolution Partners, a specialized advisory and asset management firm. He also is the chief executive officer and director of Range Impact, a public impact investing company focused on acquiring, reclaiming, and repurposing former coal mines throughout Appalachia.

Jennifer Scheller Neumann was appointed of counsel in the Washington, DC, office of Holland & Hart LLP. She joins the firm after two decades at the US Department of Justice's Environment and Natural Resources Division, where she most recently served as chief of the Appellate Section. In that role, Neumann directed litigation and appeals on issues that involved every major environmental and natural resources statute and represented a broad range of federal agencies.

Skanthan Vivekananda joined O'Melveny & Meyers LLP as a partner in the firm's corporate finance practice group. His practice focuses on structured finance and derivatives, representing banks and securitization sponsors in connection with the formation and structuring of cash and synthetic CLOs, CDOs, and other types of securitization vehicles, as well as other types of credit-focused investment funds. Vivekananda previously worked as a partner at Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe in the firm's structured finance group.

2004

Jennifer Callaghan is now a senior pro bono lawyer with Allen Overy Shearman Sterling LLP, following the merger of Allen & Overy LLP and Shearman & Sterling. She continues to manage pro bono work related to refugee and asylum matters, human and civil rights issues, and other areas. Before the merger, Callaghan worked at Allen & Overy for 15 years.



Tracey Thomas-Gronniger, managing director of economic security and housing at Justice in Aging, testified before the US House Committee on Ways

and Means in September. Gronniger discussed helping people with disabilities find work if they choose, and the particular challenge of doing so without risking access to benefit programs such as Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income.

2005

M. Ryan Calo recently published *Law and Technology: A Methodical Approach* (Oxford University Press, 2025). Calo is the Lane Powell and D. Wayne Gittinger Professor of Law at the University of Washington's School of Law and a professor at its Information School. He co-founded two interdisciplinary research institutions at the university that focus on technology policy and the study of misinformation, and he has chaired a university-wide task force on technology and society. Calo also co-founded the leading North American conference on robotics and artificial intelligence law and has testified before the US Senate about technology four times.

2006

Yuta Delarck joined Reed Smith LLP as a partner in the firm's global corporate group. Delarck represents domestic and international clients, including real estate investment trusts, investment banks, and private equity and venture capital firms, in a range of corporate transactions. Her practice includes initial public offerings, follow-on offerings, private placements, strategic investments, de-SPAC transactions, and comprehensive corporate governance and compliance advisory work. Previously, Delarck worked at Greenberg Traurig LLP as a shareholder in the firm's corporate practice.

Christian Grostic argued on behalf of petitioners before the US Supreme Court in *Esteras v. United States* in February 2025. In June, the court ruled for petitioners, holding that district courts may not consider punitive factors when revoking supervised release. Grostic is an assistant federal public defender at the Federal Public Defender's Office in Cleveland.



Matt Nolan was appointed general counsel with a specialized focus on third-party risk management for Honeywell International Inc. Also, Nolan was

elected to the global board of directors for the Association of Corporate Counsel.

2007

Robert Harmon Jr. joined The Nuclear Company as chief legal officer. His previous legal experience includes leading energy, real estate, and construction initiatives at Amazon and serving as deputy general counsel and director of real estate at Tesla.

Kristin Klanow was appointed senior vice president and general counsel at Constellation Brands Inc., an international producer and marketer of beer, wine, and spirits. Klanow oversees the company's beer division, including the Corona Extra and Modelo Especial brands. Before joining Constellation, she was a partner at McDermott Will & Emery LLP.



Did you get a new job or a promotion? Were you recognized with an award? Share your news with classmates in an upcoming issue of the *Law Quadrangle*. Email LQNCClassNotes@umich.edu or visit law.umich.edu/classnotes to submit a class note online.

CLAS S N O T E S

2008



Osman Abbasi is now a judge in the Los Angeles County Superior Court. Previously, he was a deputy attorney general at the California Attorney General's Office.

He also has served as an inspector at the Los Angeles County Office of the Inspector General, deputy district attorney at the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, and assistant district attorney in the Bronx County District Attorney's Office.



Jacob S. Sherkow was named the Richard W. and Marie L. Corman Professor of Law at the University of Illinois, where he has been teaching since 2020. He also

serves as a professor of medicine at the Carle Illinois College of Medicine and as a professor at the European Union Center, and he is an affiliate of the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology at the University of Illinois. Sherkow's research focuses on intellectual property, regulation, and bioethics of advanced biotechnologies.

2009

Israel Moya joined Western State College of Law as a visiting assistant professor. He is a diplomat, human rights advocate, and public servant who has two decades of international experience tackling global issues across South America, Africa, and Asia.

2010

Jessica Bernfeld joined the Korey Wise Innocence Project at the University of Colorado Law School as a staff attorney. Previously, she practiced criminal defense in Colorado, first as a trial attorney in the Arapahoe office of the

Colorado State Public Defender and then in solo practice, where she primarily represented youth charged as adults for serious felonies.

John Bringewatt was appointed as a judge to the New York State Court of Claims by Gov. Kathy Hochul. Previously, he was the Monroe County attorney and oversaw a team of attorneys responsible for the county's civil legal work. Earlier in his career, Bringewatt maintained a wide-ranging litigation practice at Harter Secrest & Emery LLP and was a law clerk to the Hon. Susan L. Carney of the US Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

2011

Maria Jhai was appointed to serve as a judge on the Los Angeles Superior Court by California Gov. Gavin Newsom. Most recently, she was an assistant US attorney for the Central District of California.

Gwendolyn A. Stamper joined Vogel, Slade & Goldstein LLP as a partner. She previously was a federal prosecutor in the Fraud, Public Integrity, and Appellate Sections of the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Criminal Division. At the DOJ, Stamper also served in several leadership positions, including as the highest-ranking career official in the Criminal Division and as a key adviser to the deputy attorney general.

2012

Jonathan E. Algor joined Lowenstein Sandler LLP as a partner in the firm's white collar defense and corporate investigations and integrity practice groups. He formerly served as a prosecutor for the National Security and Cybercrime Section of the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. In his practice, Algor represents individuals and companies in high-stakes criminal and regulatory matters as well as complex commercial and international disputes.

Christiana (Schmitz) Signs joined Reed Smith LLP in the firm's Philadelphia-based global labor and employment group. She defends employers in national complex employment litigation and provides strategic counsel in wage and hour matters, employment class and collective actions, and arbitrations. Before joining Reed Smith, Signs was a shareholder at Greenberg Traurig LLP.

2013

Elizabeth (Cuneo) Thomas has been appointed to the Trinity River Authority board of directors by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott. Thomas is an attorney and partner at Kelly Hart and Hallman LLP. She has represented companies and individuals in complex commercial matters across industries, including aviation and aerospace, banking, construction, electronic components distribution, energy, food distribution, hospitality, and sports and event production. Thomas also has experience representing families and high-net-worth individuals in breach of fiduciary duty and trust matters.

Sarah (Howe) Waidelich, a partner at Honigman LLP, was named one of *Michigan Lawyers Weekly's* Influential Women of Law honorees. Outside of Waidelich's intellectual property litigation practice, she takes on pro bono work, has led or been involved in a number of important child welfare cases before the Michigan Court of Appeals and Michigan Supreme Court, and volunteers as the youngest member of the board of trustees at Trine University. She also serves on the board of MothersEsquire, an organization dedicated to increasing the retention and promotion rates of women in the legal profession, particularly mothers.

Michael Waldman was named a Law360 Rising Star. He is a partner at Latham & Watkins LLP, where he represents financial institutions in leveraged finance transactions, including acquisition financings, debt restructurings, cross-border transactions, asset-based financings, recurring revenue-based financings, and margin loan financings.

2014



Abigail Barkwell joined Bernstein Shur as a shareholder in the business law group. She previously was in-house counsel at the auction

house Christie's. Her practice focuses on complex commercial litigation, art law, and employment disputes, and her clients range from businesses to cultural institutions.

Michelle Sargent was named a Law360 Rising Star. She is a partner at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP, where she advises public and private companies in mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures. Sargent also provides counsel regarding general corporate matters, including reporting requirements, corporate governance issues, and other strategic considerations.

2015



Charles Berdahl joined Pierce Atwood LLP as an associate in the firm's business practice group. Before joining the firm, Berdahl was a litigation and trial

associate at Latham & Watkins LLP in Washington, DC, where he represented clients in a variety of complex commercial disputes with a focus on antitrust and securities litigation.

Jake Gatof joined Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP as a partner. Before joining the firm, he worked at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC for eight years. Gatof advises life sciences and technology companies on venture financings, mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance, strategic collaborations, and other mission-critical transactions.

Avi Kupfer was named a Law360 Rising Star for his environmental law practice at Mayer Brown LLP, where he is a partner. He focuses his practice on briefing appeals and dispositive motions in federal and state courts and developing legal strategy for proceedings before courts and administrative agencies. Kupfer is a former trial attorney at the US Department of Justice and former manager of the Office of Regional Counsel Land Law Branch of the US Environmental Protection Agency.

2017

Ryan Samii was a guest on the American Arbitration Association's *The AAAi Podcast* in conversation with Bridget Mary McCormack—the association's president and CEO, former Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice, and member of the Michigan Law faculty. Samii is the head of product innovation at Harvey; previously, he was head of legal vertical at Hebbia AI and worked in private practice at Paul Hastings LLP.

2018

Ava Morgenstern, an immigration attorney, joined Erickson Immigration Group PC in Arlington, Virginia, as an associate.

2019

Danielle Maldonado joined the Chicago office of Ogletree Deakins as an associate. Her practice focuses on labor and employment law related to a number of federal and state laws, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Family and Medical Leave Act. She represents clients in state and federal courts as well as before other state and federal agencies.

2020



Michael Goodyear joined New York Law School as an associate professor. He previously spent two years as an acting assistant professor and fellow at the New York

University School of Law. Goodyear's research and teaching focus on copyright and trademark law and law and technology. His latest scholarship has or will appear in the *UC Davis Law Review*, *Arizona State Law Journal*, and *UC Law Journal*. Goodyear has presented at conferences at Yale University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of California, Berkeley, and Emory University, and in London, Munich, and Hong Kong.

2022



Bailey Tulloch joined GableGotwals as a litigation associate in the firm's Tulsa, Oklahoma, office. Her practice focuses on commercial litigation and other business

disputes in federal and state courts. Before joining the firm, Tulloch served as a law clerk to the Hon. David Alan Ezra of the US District Court for the Western District of Texas.

2024



Christian M. Bohórquez joined Gravel & Shea PC. He counsels corporate clients on employment matters and assists on employment-related litigation.

Previously, Bohórquez was an associate at a small law firm in Burlington, Vermont, specializing in business litigation, insurance defense, and intellectual property matters.



Ann Fagan Ginger, '47

Ann Fagan Ginger, '47, died on August 20 at her home in Berkeley, California, just weeks after celebrating her 100th birthday.

She was one of only eight women in her law school class. When law firms wouldn't hire her, she began her career as an administrator at the National Lawyers Guild. She was blacklisted when she and her then-husband, Harvard professor Ray Ginger, refused to sign oaths swearing they were not and never had been affiliated with the Communist Party.

She spearheaded efforts to dismantle McCarthyism, including arguing and winning the case *Raley v. Ohio* before the US Supreme Court, upholding the due process rights of a target of Ohio's Un-American Activities Committee. Eventually, Fagan Ginger moved to Berkeley, where she "quickly established herself as a force in the left-leaning legal community around the Bay Area," according to the *New York Times*. She launched the *Civil Liberties Docket*, an archive of civil rights litigation that became an essential resource for lawyers and activists nationwide.

In 1962, she was the only woman lawyer at the first desegregated meeting of attorneys in the South. There, she was photographed alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders, speaking in favor of the movement and predicting the coming women's rights movement. In 1965, she founded the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, naming it after a First Amendment scholar whose advocacy during the Cold War she deeply admired.

She also pioneered the integration of public international law, military law, and constitutional law into what she termed "peace law," a legal innovation that helped secure acquittals for nuclear weapons protesters and other activists. She authored or edited two dozen books; her scholarship emphasized the enforceability of international human rights treaties in US courts.

She is survived by her son James Ginger, of Berkeley.



Bruce Bickner, '68, speaks at the dedication ceremony for South Hall (now Jeffries Hall) in 2012.

Bruce P. Bickner, '68

Bruce P. Bickner, '68, died on October 21 at his home in Sycamore, Illinois. He was 82.

Bickner earned a bachelor's degree in political science from DePauw University. At Michigan Law, he was an editor for the *Michigan Law Review*. After law school, he served in the Judge Advocate General's office of the US Army and was a member of the National Guard. He began his career at Sidley Austin LLP.

He spent 27 years with DeKalb AgResearch, including as chairman and CEO. He later served as executive vice president for Monsanto's global seed business after it acquired DeKalb. He served on the corporate boards of more than a dozen companies and also was active on several civic boards.

At the University of Michigan, he was a member of President Mary Sue Coleman's Advisory Group and Dean Evan Caminker's Advisory Council. He chaired the Law School's Development and Alumni Relations Committee and the steering committee for the Law School's Michigan Difference Campaign, which changed the face of the Law School by raising the funds to build the Robert B. Aikens Commons and South Hall (now Jeffries Hall). In recognition, he received the Law School's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2012 and the David B. Hermelin Award for Fundraising Volunteer Leadership, U-M's highest such award.

"Bruce demonstrated inspired leadership and an unwavering commitment to the Law School through a transformational time for our campus," says Todd Baily, who served as the school's assistant dean for development and alumni relations from 2004 to 2015. "He was dogged in his pursuit of his peers in order to engage them with Law School. Bruce set the bar high, and Jeffries Hall would not exist without him."

Bickner is survived by his wife of 58 years, Joan; three children, Brian, Kevin, and Julie; and nine grandchildren.

I N M E M O R I A M

1940s

Ann F. Ginger, '47	8/20/2025
Aaron H. Fleck, '48	8/09/2024
Philip S. Kappes, '48	4/13/2025
Glen W. Wagner, '48	6/07/2024

1950s

Joel Larus, '51	3/16/2024
Arthur J. Rubiner, '51	1/21/2025
D. Camille Dunn, '52	5/04/2024
Mark W. Griffin, '53	5/22/2025
Robert E. Spier, '53	7/19/2024
Hugh Watson, '53	3/03/2024
R. William Barker, '54	6/06/2025
Henry T. Sanders, '54	5/12/2025
Craig Bulger, '56	3/30/2025
Edward C. Hanpeter, '57	7/25/2025
Kenneth H. Haynie, '57	5/24/2024
Richard S. Benedek, '58	7/05/2025
John I. Iverson, '58	5/07/2025
Francis J. MacLaughlin, '58	3/18/2025
Rainer R. Weigel, '58	9/19/2025
John L. Ashworth, '59	9/20/2025
Leroy Michael, '59	5/17/2024

1960s

Robert J. Emmons, '60	7/23/2025
Mervyn S. Gerson, '60	8/06/2025
Allan Horowitz, '60	9/01/2024
Donald Maxwell, '60	7/03/2025
Donald B. Medalie, '60	1/25/2025
John Pigott, '60	6/24/2025
Judd L. Bacon, '61	5/01/2025

William S. Farr, '61	4/25/2025
Thomas E. Hunter, '61	7/19/2025
Daniel E. Lewis, '61	8/27/2025
Rabe F. Marsh, '61	8/24/2025
Robert L. McLaughlin, '61	9/29/2025
James B. Pannebaker, '61	4/28/2025
William M. Brukoff, '62	7/21/2025
Donald L. Herskovitz, '62	8/25/2025
Bowen H. Tucker, '62	8/16/2025
Lloyd C. Fell, '63	7/17/2025
Anthony R. Michel, '63	7/03/2025
Gail F. Miller, '63	2/19/2025
James H. Rich, '63	5/24/2025
Douglas W. Whitney, '63	4/23/2025
Frank S. Spies, '64	8/05/2025
Charles C. Cohen, '65	8/27/2025
John E. Gates, '65	5/13/2025
James M. Kefauver, '65	4/12/2025
C. Douglas Kranwinkle, '65	4/15/2025
Alexander Macmillan, '65	8/20/2025
Michael S. Mathews, '65	5/17/2025
Fred L. Woodworth, '65	5/31/2025
Douglas M. Crowley, '66	5/15/2025
Michael R. Fegen, '66	8/11/2025
Michael W. Harris, '67	4/16/2025
Sherwood J. Pratter, '67	5/20/2025
James A. Smith, '67	9/18/2025
John A. Artz, '68	9/16/2025
William N. Gross, '68	6/05/2025
Terry J. Klaasen, '68	9/12/2025
Malachy R. Murphy, '68	3/01/2025
Edward W. Pettigrew, '68	2/19/2025
Robert M. Meisner, '69	7/26/2025
Robert M. Sigler, '69	12/13/2024

1970s

Leslie J. Goldman, '70	8/15/2025
Fred Mann, '70	8/30/2025
Winston S. Moore, '70	6/03/2025
George B. Moseley, '70	8/25/2025
William H. Charles, '71	4/26/2025
Karl E. Kraus, '71	9/12/2025
Donald L. Law, '71	8/01/2025
John S. Baker, '72	9/06/2025
Nicholas L. Bozen, '72	8/18/2025
James M. Tervo, '72	7/08/2025
Ernest I. Reveal, '73	3/12/2024
Randolph T. Borden, '74	3/15/2025
Margaret A. Fraser, '74	12/23/2024
Steven E. Hettig, '74	9/12/2025
Anita L. Jenkins, '74	8/18/2025
Michael V. Reed, '76	4/18/2025
M. Annette Horan, '79	6/30/2025

1980s

Bruce W. Baker, '82	1/09/2024
James F. Scales, '87	3/26/2025
Martin B. Carroll, '89	8/28/2025

1990s

Karen A. Beikert, '98	7/14/2025
-----------------------	-----------

CLOSING



Family Ties in the Quad

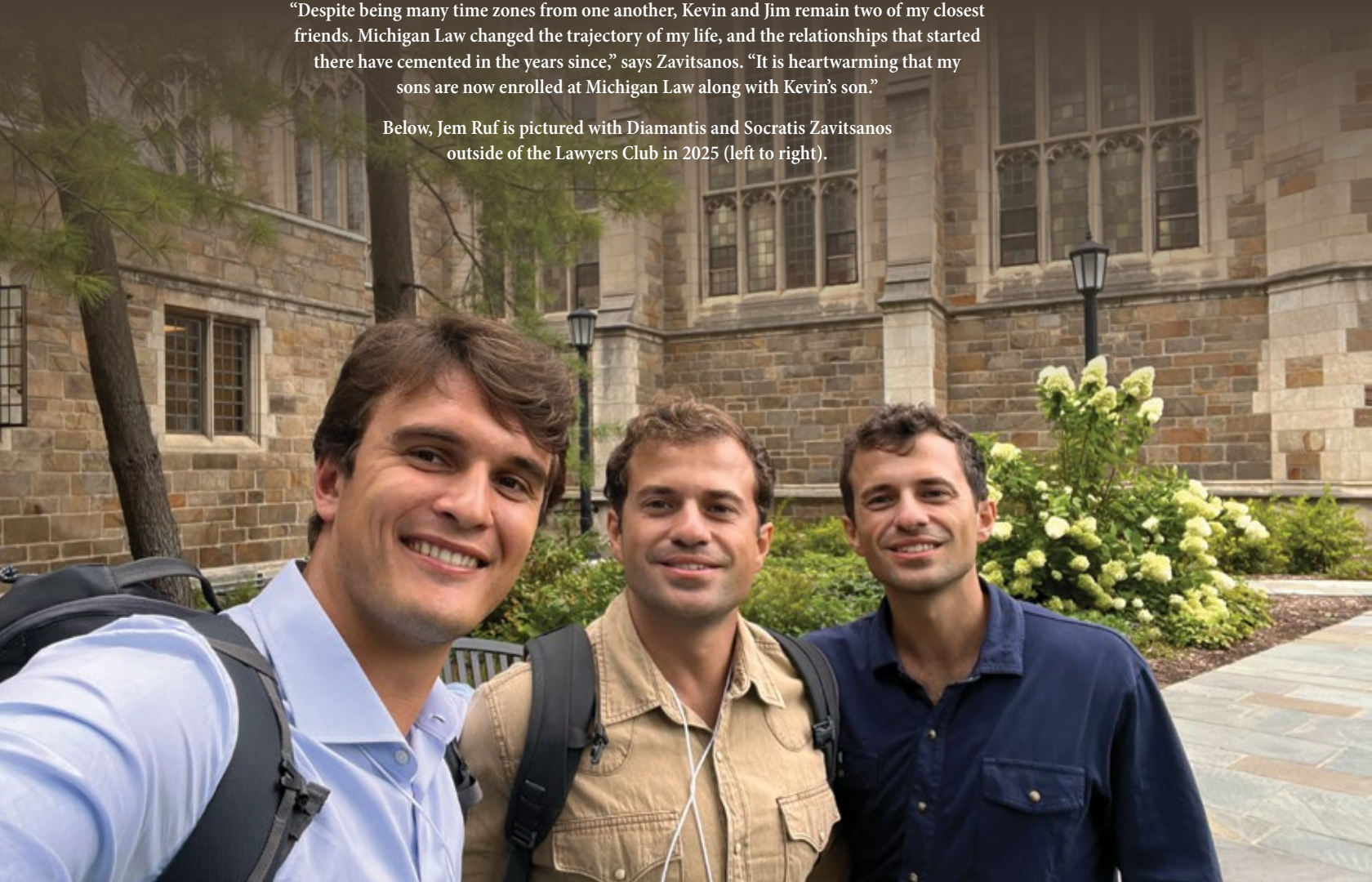
Kevin Ruf, '87, and John Zavitsanos, '87, have been friends since they became roommates in the Lawyers Club in the fall of 1984. Fast forward four decades, and Zavitsanos's twin sons have connected with Ruf's son in the Law Quad—all three enrolled at the Law School in fall 2025.

"I have always been a big fan of Michigan Law, but John takes it to another level," Ruf says. "I remember him talking about our law school escapades while our families were on vacation together, and I think that really rubbed off on my son. He made it his mission to get into the Law School, and it is hard to imagine that they are all now in law school together—it's surreal for all of us."

Ruf and Zavitsanos are pictured above (left and right, respectively) with Jim Davis, '87, after a skydiving trip in Southeast Michigan during their 1L year.

"Despite being many time zones from one another, Kevin and Jim remain two of my closest friends. Michigan Law changed the trajectory of my life, and the relationships that started there have cemented in the years since," says Zavitsanos. "It is heartwarming that my sons are now enrolled at Michigan Law along with Kevin's son."

Below, Jem Ruf is pictured with Diamantis and Socratis Zavitsanos outside of the Lawyers Club in 2025 (left to right).



**The Regents of the
University of Michigan**

Jordan B. Acker, Huntington Woods
Michael J. Behm, Grand Blanc
Mark J. Bernstein, Ann Arbor
Paul W. Brown, Ann Arbor
Sarah Hubbard, Okemos
Denise Ilitch, Birmingham
Carl J. Meyers, Dearborn
Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor
Domenico Grasso, *ex officio*

The University of Michigan, including the Ann Arbor, Dearborn, Flint campuses as well as Michigan Medicine, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination. The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions. Inquiries or complaints may be addressed to the Equity, Civil Rights and Title IX Office (ECRT), 2072 Administrative Services Building, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1432, 734-763-0235, TTY 734-647-1388.



Non-alumni readers should address:

Editor
Law Quadrangle
701 South State Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091
Fax: 734.615.4277

Email: For Class Notes – LQNCClassNotes@umich.edu
For other communications – LQNGeneral@umich.edu

If you are a Law School graduate, please send your change of address to:

Law School Development
and Alumni Relations
701 South State Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091
Phone: 734.615.4500
Fax: 734.615.4539
Email: lawaddresschange@umich.edu



The University of Michigan Law School
Volume 68, Number 2
WINTER 2025

Copyright © 2025
The Regents of the University of Michigan
All rights reserved.

Law Quadrangle (USPA#144) is issued by
the University of Michigan Law School.
Postage paid at Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Publication Office: Law Quadrangle,
University of Michigan Law School,
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091. Published
twice a year.

Postmaster, send address changes to:
Editor, Law Quadrangle
University of Michigan Law School
701 South State Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091

Chief Communications Officer:
Michelle Rodgers
Managing Editor: Amy Spooner
Editor: James Weir
Class Notes Editor: Annie Hagstrom
Designer: Tish Holbrook
Digital Designer: Alex Lee

Writers: Patrick Barry, Annie Hagstrom,
Edward Mears, '16, Sharon Morioka, Bob Needham,
Amy Spooner, James Weir

Photographers: Richard Bermack, Dustin Johnston,
Leisa Thompson Photography

Printing: University Lithoprinters, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Quadrangle

LAW

NOTES FROM MICHIGAN LAW

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
701 SOUTH STATE STREET
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48109-3091