Fourth graduate in five years to serve as U.S. Supreme Court clerk

Merritt McAlister (J.D.'07) will serve as a judicial clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens for the October 2009 term. She will be the fourth Georgia Law graduate in five years to serve our nation's highest court in this capacity. Photo by Dennis McDaniel.

Counting the selection of Georgia Law alumna Merritt E. McAlister (J.D.'07) as a U.S. Supreme Court judicial clerk for the October 2009 term, the law school will have had graduates serve our nation's highest court in this role for four of the last five years.

In a recent ranking, Georgia Law is among the top law schools in the nation for supplying clerks to the U.S. Supreme Court for the 2000-08 terms.

"It is such a rare opportunity and an extraordinary privilege," McAlister said. "I am looking forward to being exposed to that level of legal thinking and decision making."

Applicants for this position come from students at the top of their class and from the top law schools in the nation. It is considered by many as one of the most prestigious positions available to recent law school graduates. McAlister will join this very elite group as a judicial clerk for Justice John Paul Stevens.

"This appointment will provide Merritt with invaluable experience that will benefit her for the rest of her professional life," Dean Rebecca H. White said.

Currently, McAlister is an associate with the law firm King & Spalding in Atlanta, where she will remain until leaving to work for Stevens before the start of the October term. Previously, she served as a judicial clerk for Judge R. Lanier Anderson III of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

"After clerking for an appellate court, I understand even more the depth of what you can learn and am excited to have the same opportunity with the U.S. Supreme Court," McAlister said.

While faculty members at Georgia Law encouraged her to apply, Georgia Law's recent history of Supreme Court judicial clerkship success bolstered her confidence.

"I could not have done it without the support of everyone at the law school," McAlister said. "Knowing that I am coming from a great school that has produced great clerks gave me the confidence I needed to take this step. It is an unparalleled opportunity."

Besides graduating first in her class at Georgia Law, McAlister also participated in the school's accomplished advocacy program, worked as a teaching and research assistant, served as executive articles editor for the *Georgia Law Review* and was inducted into the Order of the Coif.

McAlister's clerkship selection brings the total number of Georgia Law graduates who have clerked for U.S. Supreme Court justices to eight.

The other seven Georgia Law alumni who have served the highest court in the land in this capacity are: Jason T. Burnette (J.D.'06), clerked for Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. in 2007; Adam M. Conrad (J.D.'05), clerked for Justice Clarence Thomas in 2006; John H. Longwell (J.D.'99), clerked for Justice Stephen G. Breyer in 2005; Anne Proffitt Dupre (J.D.'88), clerked for Justice Harry A. Blackmun in 1989; Bruce P. Brown (J.D.'84), clerked for Chief Justice Warren E. Burger in 1986; Glen M. Darbyshire (J.D.'84), clerked for Justice Thurgood Marshall in 1985; and Benna R. Solomon (J.D.'78), clerked for Justice Byron R. White in 1980.

Georgia Law Ranks High in Supreme Court Clerkship Placement, 2000-08 Terms*

1. Harvard University
2. Yale University
3. University of Chicago
4. Stanford University
5. Columbia University
6. New York University
7. University of Virginia
8. University of California at Berkeley
9. University of Michigan at Ann Arbor
10. Northwestern University

13. University of Georgia

* *This ranking was compiled by University of Chicago Wilson Professor of Law Brian Leiter and is based on the total number of clerks hired from each law school by an active justice of the court for the 2000 through 2008 terms.*

Background Image: West façade of the U.S. Supreme Court. Franz Jantzen, Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.

This spring, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich taught a course on judicial review at Georgia Law with the assistance of Randy Evans (J.D.'83). Here, Gingrich (left) walks to class with Georgia Law students enrolled in his course after having breakfast with them downtown. Photo by UGA Public Affairs' Andrew Davis Tucker.

Gingrich serves as Sanders Scholar

Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, taught a course on judicial review at Georgia Law this spring as a Sanders Political Leadership Scholar.

"We were honored to have Newt Gingrich leading a course at the law school," Dean Rebecca H. White said. "We strive to offer our students a variety of learning opportunities, and I am confident that studying under the former speaker helped them to better understand the interplay of law, politics and policy."

Assisting him with the course was J. Randolph "Randy" Evans (J.D.'83), a frequent lecturer and author on government ethics and politics.

Extending his time on campus, Gingrich also spoke to law school students at an event organized by the Georgia Law Republicans as well as to the wider university community at a separate gathering.

Gingrich was first elected to Congress in 1978, where he served the 6th District of Georgia for 20 years. He served as speaker of the U.S. House from 1995 to 1999. Today, Gingrich is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a distinguished visiting fellow at Stanford University. He is a member of the Terrorism Task Force for the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. Commission on National Security and the Defense Policy Board.

Evans is a partner at McKenna Long & Aldridge. He served as counsel to the speakers of the 104th-109th Congresses of the United States. He has also participated in and supervised matters on behalf of the Office of the Speaker involving the separation of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

The Sanders Scholar position is named for Georgia's 74th governor and Georgia Law alumnus, Carl E. Sanders (J.D.'48).

Previous Sanders Political Leadership Scholars who have taught a course at the law school include: former U.S. Sen. Wyche Fowler Jr., prominent media personality and political consultant Paul E. Begala, former Georgia Secretary of State Cathy Cox, former U.S. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary Theodore "Ted" W. Kassinger (J.D.'78), former U.S. Sen. J. Maxwell "Max" Cleland and former Georgia Supreme Court Justice George T. Smith (LL.B.'48).

Puckett to be honored with AALL's highest award

Georgia Law Alexander Campbell King Law Library Director and Professor E. Ann Puckett has been named a recipient of the most prestigious award presented by the American Association of Law Libraries, the Marian Gould Gallagher Distinguished Service Award.

This accolade is given annually by the association in recognition of outstanding, extended and sustained service to law librarianship and to the AALL.

Puckett will be formally presented with the award in July at the AALL's annual meeting.

One of the letters nominating Puckett for this honor stated, "Ann's lengthy career has been a testament to the ideals of law librarianship. She is an enthusiastic advocate for the profession [and her] extensive knowledge and love of [it] is unparalleled."

A nationally recognized leader in law library management, Puckett joined the Georgia Law faculty in 1994, where she teaches a course on law and disability in addition to overseeing the law library, computing services and educational technology for the law school.

Throughout her career, Puckett has held numerous professional leadership positions within the AALL. She served as an executive board member from 1993 to 1996 and was the founder of the group's Mentor Project. She has also chaired three special interest sections of the AALL.

Additionally, since 2003 she has been a faculty fellow of UGA's Institute on Human Development and Disability.

Puckett also serves on the governing boards of Georgia Options in Community Living and the Georgia Options Foundation as well as on the independent Human Rights Committee for Georgia Options.

Puckett earned her bachelor's degree from Eastern Illinois University and her Juris Doctor and master's degree in library science from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

She served as a law librarian at the University of Kansas, Southern Illinois University and Northwestern University before becoming director of the law library and professor at the South Texas College of Law, where she remained until joining Georgia Law.

Georgia's chief justice to teach at Georgia Law

For the 2009-10 academic year, students at Georgia Law will have the privilege of studying under the former Supreme Court of Georgia Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears.

As a visiting professor, she will teach Contemporary Issues in Family Law as well as another course yet to be named.

Regarding the teaching post, Sears said, "I'm excited to have the chance to work with young people. And I look forward to being back in the academic world of a college campus."

Sears will step down from the state's Supreme Court on June 30, when her term as chief justice ends.

In addition to teaching at Georgia Law, Sears will join the Atlanta office of the law firm Schiff Hardin and will begin a one-year term at the Institute for American Values in a fellowship post bearing her late brother's name – William Thomas Sears.

Sears was appointed to the state's highest court in 1992, becoming the first woman and youngest person ever to serve on its bench. Sears became presiding justice in 2001 and was named chief justice in 2005, becoming the first African-American female chief justice in the country.

Her previous judicial experience includes service on the Superior Court of Fulton County as well as the City Court of Atlanta. She also practiced law as an attorney at Alston & Bird in Atlanta.

Sears earned her bachelor's degree from Cornell University, her law degree from Emory University and her Master of Laws from the University of Virginia.

"I'm excited to have the chance to work with young people. And I look forward to being back in the academic world of a college campus." – Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Leah Ward Sears

Brennen selected as dean of Kentucky

David A. Brennen has been named as the new dean of the University of Kentucky College of Law, a post he will assume on July 1.

Specializing in tax law, Brennen joined the Georgia Law faculty in 2006 and has spent the last two academic years serving as deputy director of the Association of American Law Schools.

Brennen is the co-author of one of the first law school casebooks devoted exclusively to tax laws that impact nonprofit organizations, *The Tax Law of Charities and Other Exempt Organizations*.

Brennen is also the editor of the first electronic abstracting journal on nonprofit law to be published by the Social Science Research Network in its Legal Research Network series titled *Nonprofit and Philanthropy Law Abstracts* and a co-editor of the first blog for nonprofit and philanthropy law professors titled Nonprofit Law Prof Blog.

Prior to entering the legal teaching academy in 1995, Brennen worked as assistant general counsel of Florida's Department of Revenue where his practice areas included tax litigation oversight and tax policy advisory opinions. He also worked as an associate with Messer, Vickers, Caparello, Madsen, Lewis, Goldman & Metz in Tallahassee, Fla.

Brennen earned his bachelor's degree from Florida Atlantic University and his Juris Doctor and Master of Laws in Taxation from the University of Florida.

School ranks sixth in the nation for clinical opportunities

The National Jurist magazine recently ranked Georgia Law as sixth in the nation for providing the most clinical opportunities to its students.

The law school was also described as having a "full range of unique clinical programs" in the article accompanying the ranking.

Currently, there are 10 different service learning programs available to students at Georgia Law.

The newest is the Special Education Practicum, which was formalized into the curriculum this past fall.

Other opportunities include the Capital Assistance Project, the Civil Externship Clinic, the Criminal Defense Clinic, the Environmental Practicum, the Family Violence Clinic, the Land Use Clinic, the Mediation Practicum, the Prosecutorial Clinic and the Public Interest Practicum.