

Advocacy teams capture two national titles among other honors

Georgia Law's moot court and mock trial teams once again earned several top honors during the 2011–12 advocacy season, including two national championships, two regional crowns, domination at the state level and a top 10 finish internationally.



National Title: Buffalo-Niagara Mock Trial Competition

Georgia Law took home the national championship trophy at the 8th Annual Buffalo-Niagara Mock Trial Competition. Representing Georgia Law were (l. to r.) third-year students B. Clarke Nash, Chadrick A. Mance, Samuel E. Meller and William F. Carter. In addition to capturing first place with his teammates, Nash won the Best Advocate Award.



National Title: Legal Ethics and Professionalism Moot Court Competition

The school's other national win of the season came at Mercer University School of Law's Legal Ethics and Professionalism Moot Court Competition, where third-year students R. Tyler Fisher (left) and Miguel A. Trujillo secured first place. Trujillo also was named best oralist of the championship round.



Texas Bar Association National Trial Competition

Securing the Region 5 championship title at this year's Texas Bar Association National Trial Competition were third-year Georgia Law students Grace N. Witte (left) and Scott S. Eren. This is the third time in the past five

years a team from Georgia Law has captured first place during the regional round of this tournament.



ABA National Appellate Advocacy Competition

Georgia Law went undefeated through all five rounds and captured first place at the regional level of the American Bar Association National Appellate Advocacy

Competition, held in Atlanta. The team consisted of (l. to r.) second-year students Nneka A. Egwuatu, Rory A. Weeks, who received an award for best oralist, and Emily A. Cook. The trio went on to finish as semifinalists during the national round of the competition.

Intrastate Moot Court Competition

Georgia Law continued its dominance in the Intrastate Moot Court Competition, taking home both the top trophy and the Best Brief Award. This is the seventh consecutive year UGA has won this tournament, which has teams from all five of the state's law schools competing for top honors, and the ninth straight year it has earned the best brief title. This year's championship team consisted of second-year students Tyler A. Dillard, Nicholas H. Howell and Emir Sehic.

Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot

Georgia Law finished ninth in the world at this year's Willem C. Vis International Commercial Arbitration Moot held in Vienna, Austria. Third-year students Melissa L. Bailey, Jennifer L. Case and Hillary L. Chinigo secured the top 10 finish against a field of more than 280 teams from almost 70 countries. They also recorded the second highest finish out of the 52 teams competing from the United States.

Negotiation team wins second national championship

Georgia Law captured its second national negotiation championship trophy in two years when it won the Robert R. Merhige, Jr. National Environmental Negotiation Competition this spring.

Second-year students Christopher A. Knapik and Christopher S. Smith participated in several rounds of competition involving negotiations between governmental and private parties concerning current environmental law issues against teams from schools such as the Georgetown University Law Center and the Lewis & Clark Law School.

Georgia Law also finished among the top eight teams in the country at the Transactional LawMeet held at Drexel University in March.

Third-year students Rachel E. Hudgins and Meghan R. Plantz represented an executive in the negotiation of a hypothetical employment contract and tied for third place with their draft term sheet as part of the written portion of the tournament.

Prior to advancing to the national round, this pair finished in second place at the southeastern regionals, which was hosted by Georgia Law in Athens earlier in the year.

“Transactional competitions, like advocacy tournaments, give law students a chance to hone their practical legal skills,” Business Law and Ethics Program Instructor Carol Morgan (J.D.’79) said.



Second-year students Christopher Knapik (left) and Christopher Smith brought home the national championship trophy from the Robert R. Merhige, Jr. National Environmental Negotiation Competition.

“Transactional competitions have emerged in recent years to provide opportunities for law students interested in transactional practice to build their drafting and negotiation skills. This experience is extremely valuable for our students to help them become more prepared for the practice of law,” she added.



Watch the final round of the Merhige competition where Georgia Law captured the national championship at <http://tinyurl.com/merhige2012>.

Pledge-A-Day, support a fellowship

Georgia Law students, in conjunction with the law school’s Office of Development, have created a new way to support classmates pursuing non-paid public interest work during the summer months.

It is called Pledge-A-Day, and it is spearheaded by the Equal Justice Foundation.

Combining this new pool of dollars with money raised during the annual EJF auction and other fundraising activities, this student group hopes to provide even more fellowships and/or increased monetary awards in the future.

Pledge-A-Day campaign chair and second-year law student Mary Beth Martinez said encouraging students with paid summer employment to donate to other students who have volunteered to work for various public service organizations not only advances collegiality among the student body but also furthers the goal of giving back to the community.

“... it is a clear expression of the unity and camaraderie that exists at the core of the law school student body.”

“EJF is the only student organization at Georgia Law that is devoted to giving money raised *by* students *to* students,” Martinez said. “And in that way, it is a clear expression of the unity and camaraderie that exists at the core of the law school student body. We are truly all in this together.”

For the last four years, approximately 12 students annually have received an EJF fellowship.

Recent placements have included positions with the ACLU of Georgia, Advocates for the Children of New York, the Atlanta Legal Aid Society, the DeKalb County Child Advocacy Center, the Immigration Department of the Latin American Association, the South Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

For information on how you can support Georgia Law students, please contact the law school’s Director of Annual Giving Phyllis Cooke at cooke@uga.edu or 706-542-7637.

Student Profiles

Jennifer W. McNeely: Advocating for change

When recent graduate Jennifer W. McNeely was younger, a not-so-typical trip to a fast food restaurant sparked a passion in her that still holds significance.

“There was a woman there and she was trying to place an order, but she was deaf,” McNeely said. “I could see her frustration – where she was just trying to order food and how rude the cashier behind the counter was to her. I just thought how someone has to be able to stand up and say, ‘You can’t treat people like that. That’s wrong.’”

This incident was one of the reasons she wanted to learn sign language and build a relationship with members of the hearing-impaired community.

“These people are members of our society, and we need to make sure that we accommodate them and do what we can to make them feel just as normal as anyone else,” McNeely added.

By becoming a sign language interpreter, attending silent dinners and participating in workshops to educate members of the deaf community about their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act, McNeely knew advocating for the hearing-impaired would become one of her future responsibilities.

“I wanted to pursue a law degree and be able to make a difference,” she said. “I know it is important to have someone in your corner who knows the ropes of the system.”

McNeely’s current career plans lie in the political realm, where she aspires to find a way to improve the treatment of disadvantaged people in our society.

“Law and politics go hand-in-hand, and any significant social



change must involve both,” she added.

Specifically, she would like to do pro bono work on behalf of the hearing-impaired.

“Whether it’s ensuring they have an interpreter when going to court or helping them file the proper forms with government agencies, I want to do my part in making sure they have someone on their side that cares about their interests,” McNeely said.

But, her helping hands will not end there. She also desires to assist young ladies and older women transition into and readjust to the workforce, respectively.

“With the economy as it is, there are many women who are being forced to

reenter the workplace and lack current office skill sets to market themselves,” she added. “There are also a number of high school girls graduating who have never owned a proper-fitting suit or worked in corporate America, and they are looking for jobs in a very difficult market.”

Her goal is to equip women with the tools they will need to confidently apply for jobs, through business attire donations, networking events and workshops.

Because of the women who selflessly offered their time, talents and skills to shape her into the woman she has become, McNeely understands the importance of improving the quality of life for others.

“I would not be the person I am today without the women in my life who have loved me, admonished me and taught me that no one is an island and everyone needs someone to care about them.”



David W. Mullens: From crocodiles to bulldogs

As a lover of “Matlock” and “Perry Mason” and a member of a politically passionate family, attending law school has always been an item on rising second-year student David W. Mullens’ to-do list.

Mullens knew his skill set – fighting for his beliefs and public speaking – would benefit him in his quest to advocate for people and explore political issues, both of which have been important to him since childhood.

Growing up in Tampico, Mexico, where he lived from age 5 to 15, Mullens was not able to play on a pee wee football team, but he did find ways to have fun.

“I grew up saying, ‘Hey mom, can I go throw coconuts at the crocodiles?’” he said. “I feel like it was a really cool childhood.”

Unfortunately, he added, Tampico is not what it once was, as violence has destroyed the beauty for which the coastal city was once known.

John A. Eunice: Driven to make a difference

Rising third-year student John A. Eunice grew up playing baseball, knowing there was nothing else he would rather be doing.

“It gave me the opportunity to travel around to different ballparks, and there’s just nothing like the seventh-inning stretch. I loved it,” he said.

Eunice’s plan was to go to college and play baseball. However, he underwent hand surgery during his freshman year of high school, which ended his dream of playing the game at a competitive level.

“I had to find something else to do,” he said. “I had the opportunity to live in Washington, D.C., for my junior year of high school and work for former Congressman and now Sen. Saxby Chambliss as his page. Following that awesome experience I got involved in a couple of local campaigns and decided I wanted to run for office.”

Elected at the age of 18 as an at-large councilman for the city of Valdosta, Ga., and becoming the youngest person ever elected to a city council in the Peach State, Eunice represented 50,000 people in his local governmental position while also attending Valdosta State University full-time and working for Coca-Cola Enterprises. During his second term on the city council, his colleagues elected him to be mayor pro tempore and represent the city in the absence of the mayor.

After earning his undergraduate degree in public relations, Eunice accepted a full-time position with Coca-Cola and enrolled in Valdosta State’s graduate school to pursue a master’s in public administration.

“I knew that I wanted to be involved in the public sector, and I felt that having that additional degree in public administration would help me with some areas that I wasn’t as strong in, such as budgeting and human resource management.”

Most of Eunice’s public administration professors also held law degrees in addition to their doctoral degrees in public policy,

which gave Eunice a sense of how to bridge the gap between his interests in legislation and public service.

“It really solidified in my mind that attending law school would be the best way for me to get a working knowledge of the law and how legislation affects people, in addition to being a more effective worker in the public sector.”

Still serving on the Valdosta city council during his academic and occupational endeavors, Eunice decided to apply to law school, and Georgia Law was on the top of his list.

“This school has such a rich history of success and of preparing people to be effective attorneys, whether it be in the corporate sector, the public sector or the private sector,” he said. “Athens is such a great town. The professors and the faculty here are second to none. There’s just nowhere else that I would want to be. I’m a Georgia boy, and this is home.”

Other than passing the bar exam after law school, Eunice’s career goals are not set in stone, but he aspires to use his law degree to give back in some way.

“I hope that people view me as someone who put the act of helping people at the forefront,” he said. “I hope that when I’m 50 or 60 years old that I can look back and say ‘I made a difference.’”

—All profiles and photos by Crissinda M. Ponder



Mullens regards his expatriate upbringing as a significant piece of his identity. So, when a study abroad trip to Spain became available during his undergraduate studies, Mullens jumped at the opportunity.

“It was a full language immersion program and it really took my Spanish from street fluency to business fluency,” he said. “Spaniards are very different from people in Mexico, and it was just cool to experience that – a much older culture, for sure.”

While adjusting to life as a law student presented its challenges, Mullens drew on his past experiences to help him excel.

“Really getting immersed in the subject is vital to do well, especially going from undergrad to law school. That first year is the big challenge,” he said. “You do well sometimes, and sometimes you learn how much more there is to know about the law.”

Coffee, first and foremost, is a factor that keeps him focused on his studies. On a deeper level, having lived as both a first- and third-world child pushes him to seek a brighter future.

“Anytime I think, ‘Oh man, this torts assignment will take forever’ or ‘I don’t know about this memo,’ I draw on where I’ve come from and where I’ve always wanted to go,” Mullens said. “That sounds very trite, but it’s also very true.”

During law school, Mullens hopes to establish his craft and personal network to help propel him into the Georgia job market.

“The big reason why I’m in law school is down the road I’d love to get involved behind the scenes and help affect policy,” he added. “I’m not naïve, I know that a lot of people go into it and it doesn’t always work out. But I’ve seen a society collapse, and those people were my neighbors. They were good people, and it could happen anywhere.”

CLASS of 2012

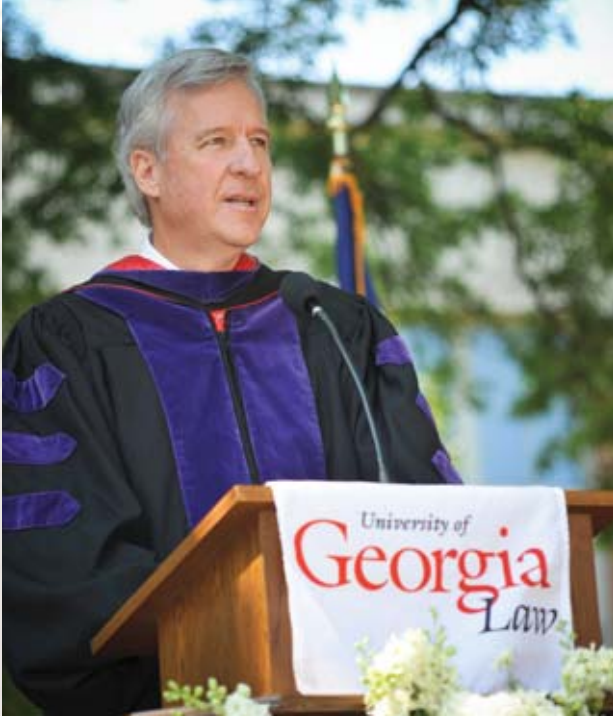


Photo by Dennis McDaniel

Going the distance

Serving as the keynote speaker at this year's Commencement was Judge Richard W. Story (J.D.'78) of the U.S District Court for the Northern District of Georgia.

Story congratulated the graduates on their momentous accomplishment of earning a law degree, but reminded them that this is actually only a step toward their ultimate goal of finding their way into the legal profession.

"It will be easy to become discouraged. It will be easy to question whether it is even worth it to continue the quest that you began three years ago," Story said. "[G]oing the distance will not only be worth it, it is essential to all of us that you take your place in this honorable profession that we call the practice of law."

Story explained that the health of our system of justice is critical to the health of our nation, and it is up to new lawyers to take up the mantle of the profession to assure that the dream of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is passed on for generations to come.

"People love to disparage lawyers and our entire system of justice. Yet, they often fail to see that it is the very system that preserves and protects their most basic freedoms," Story said. "In this democracy that we enjoy, the courts are the final defense when government seeks to abridge the rights of individuals."

And, Story added, the only way courts can function is through lawyers.

"Pursue your professional dream by whatever means you choose ... but never forget that you have a professional responsibility to protect the freedoms and rights of all people in this great land."



Watch Story's presentation online at www.law.uga.edu/multimedia-gallery-recent-events.



Photo by Dennis McDaniel

Presenting Law School Association President-elect Santhia Curtis (J.D.'91) (left) and Dean Rebecca White (left center) with a check representing the 2012 class gift of \$89,412 are Legacy Gift co-chairs Micah Engler and Rebekah McCorvey. This is the highest amount pledged since the program was started in 2000. Assisting the class in reaching its goal was an anonymous donor who matched the students' pledges, dollar for dollar.



With a crowd of more than 2,500 attending graduation, it is not always easy to find your friends and family. Here, Connor Magill waves to the other members of his party.



View more photos from this year's Commencement at www.law.uga.edu/photo-gallery.

COMMENCEMENT



Faculty participate in the festivities, celebrating with former students as they transition from 3Ls to Georgia Law alumni. Shown here is (l. to r.) Associate Dean Dan Coenen with recent graduates Jim Wilson, Alex Shalishali and Thomas Whitley.



Photo by Dennis McDaniel

Khaleedah Johnson is all smiles as she walks across the platform.



Part of what makes graduation so special is sharing it with family and friends. Here, Rachael Ivey (left) poses with her longtime friend Wei Wang after the ceremony.



Brittany Bolton (right) waits for the processional to begin with fellow classmates (l. to r.) Bailey Blair, Ben Brighton and Patrick Brooks.

Photo by Dennis McDaniel

Law School Life

GJCL dedicates issue to Gabriel Wilner

The *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law* dedicated its most recent edition, Vol. 39, No. 3, in memory of former Associate Dean and Kirbo Chair Gabriel Wilner. Wilner was instrumental in the formation of the journal and served as faculty adviser. Third-year law student and Editor-in-Chief Lindsey Green (left) and Rusk Center Director Don Johnson (J.D.'73) (center) presented a copy of the journal to Wilner's wife, Gisele, during a ceremony in April.



Photo by UGA Public Affairs/Andrew Davis Tucker

Student groups give back

This year, the Public Interest Law Council continued its tradition of helping coordinate a law school wide community service day to benefit local organizations such as the Butterfly Dreams Farm Therapeutic Riding Program. Pictured above is first-year student Lindsay Tatum. Several other student groups also participated in local programming throughout the year such as Street Law, whose members helped train high school students for the new Athens Peer Court.



Watch videos about Georgia Law students giving back at www.law.uga.edu/multimedia-gallery-recent-events.



Garda speaks on student rights

Robert Garda, an expert in education law from Loyola University New Orleans, visited Georgia Law during the spring where he discussed special education in charter schools as part of a lunch-time presentation and explored the benefits of diversity for white students during a lecture in the UGA Chapel.



View more photos of law school events at www.law.uga.edu/photo-gallery.

Visits by alumni

Georgia Law is fortunate to have a large number of alumni who return to campus to help equip the next generation of lawyers. Among the many visitors this year was Joey Loudermilk (J.D.'78), general counsel for Aflac, who spoke to Associate Professor Usha Rodrigues' Corporations class.

