

SPRING 2023

Akron Law MAGAZINE

The Experiential Learning Issue

Akron Law goes to the
White House

School expands
experiential options

Two top students
overcome obstacles

Greetings Akron Law family!

It has been an amazing year at Akron Law. We have celebrated many student and alumni successes, new faculty and staff additions, an installation of art, and attained a 95% employment rate for our 2022 graduating class. We also had the highest pass rate among Ohio's public law schools for both first-time takers and all takers on the February bar exam.

This issue of the magazine celebrates those in our community who have made recent and extraordinary contributions to the Akron Law legacy. We are nationally known for providing practical training to students and producing practice-ready graduates. In these pages, we highlight some of the practical training our students are receiving and their success stories. Our cover story spotlights rising third-year student, Elijah Hardee, who started his time at Akron Law as a member of the PLUS program while an undergraduate and has now successfully completed an externship with the White House Counsel's Office in Washington D.C.

I would like to also take this opportunity to recognize the alumni who serve on the Law Alumni Association (LAA) Board and the Advancement Council. The members of the Advancement Council, chaired by Sally Benson, have been fantastic advisors and guides during my first full year as dean. I cannot thank you enough for your time and dedication to Akron Law. The same can be said of the LAA Board, chaired by Michael Pfahl. You have given your time and support to Akron Law and I truly appreciate it and the students do as well.

Thank you for staying in touch and continuing to instill Akron Law pride in all of us. I encourage you to stop by the McDowell Law Center to see our new work of art and to say hello.

Warmest wishes,

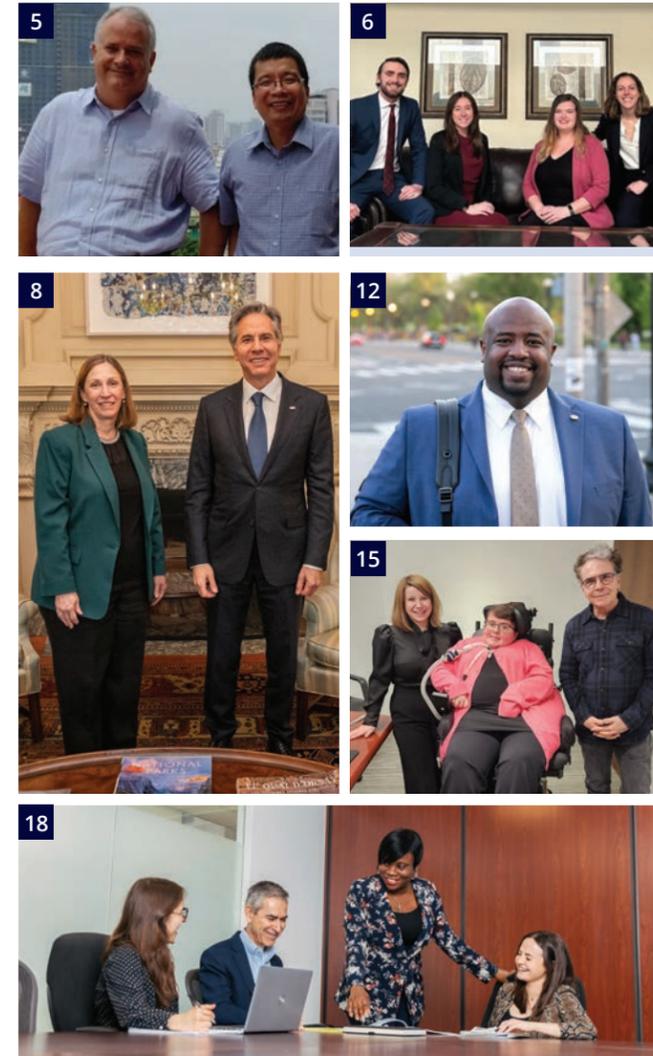
Emily M. Janoski-Haehlen

Emily M. Janoski-Haehlen

Photo by Tim Fitzwater.

THE UNIVERSITY of AKRON SCHOOL of LAW

AKRON LAW MAGAZINE



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NEW PROGRAMS PROMOTE A MORE DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

Prospective students talk with faculty and staff at a recent open house. Photo by Pat Gallagher.



Two recently instituted programs are designed to promote a more diverse student body at the Law School. Akron Law Prep Week is a proprietary version of the Pre-Law Undergraduate Scholars (PLUS) program that Akron Law successfully offered from 2018-2021 with the support of the Law School Admission Council. Both programs are designed for, but not limited to, college students from racial and ethnic minority groups underrepresented in the legal profession who want to explore a legal education.

The PLUS program was a residential program (pre-COVID) open to students from around the country. The new Prep Week is a non-residential program for college students in the Northeast Ohio area. It is a chance for them to learn about law school, the admissions process, and the LSAT. Prep Week activities included mock law classes, social events, an etiquette lunch, LSAT prep support, and admissions guidance. The inaugural summer Akron

Law Prep Week was offered in partnership with Brouse McDowell LPA.

The second program is a partnership with AccessLex Institute's LexScholars Post-Baccalaureate Program (LexPostBacc). Launched in 2022, LexPostBacc exposes participants to a yearlong law school prep curriculum designed to strengthen their applicant credentials and position them to thrive as law students.

"Almost every admissions cycle, we have a number of applicants from backgrounds that are underrepresented in law school and the

legal profession who, for various reasons, we believe would benefit from additional preparation prior to starting law school," said Akron Law Associate Dean for Administration and Enrollment Management, Barbara DiGiacomo. "AccessLex Institute's LexPostBacc program enables us to offer qualified applicants deferred admission to Akron Law, a renewable scholarship, a \$3,000 annual stipend, and a one-year law school preparatory program.

"We've set an initial goal of referring at least two

applicants to the program each year, and we'd be delighted to have additional applicants who meet the criteria," she continued. "As of mid-April, one student has confirmed and one is still considering our offer to participate in the PostBacc program. If they follow through, they will begin the 12-month prep program in July 2023 and start at Akron Law in fall 2024, assuming successful completion of the program."

TOP PRO BONO CONTRIBUTORS RECOGNIZED

University of Akron (UA) School of Law students take their pro bono and community service commitments seriously. The 124 graduates of the Class of 2023 upheld that tradition, donating more than 15,000 hours during their time in law school.

Topping the pro bono honor roll were Jason Sanders, who logged 1,986 hours of service, and Michael Njus, who recorded 1,597 hours. They each received the Perantinides and Nolan Pro Bono Service Award at a ceremony on April 20 honoring all 25 students who completed at least 150 hours of pro bono and community service. The \$500 award is presented annually to one full-time and one part-time student reporting the highest number of service hours.

Both Sanders and Njus are non-traditional students. Njus had retired early following a successful business career that culminated with a decade as the head of his own organizational excellence consulting firm.

"My wife [Emily Njus] had just started law school on a part-time basis. I was bored in retirement. She said, you should do law school too—full-time."

As a UA undergraduate, Njus had found it fulfilling mentoring underprivileged

students. He saw earning a law degree as an avenue to doing meaningful pro bono work in the social justice sphere. He wasted no time that first semester, signing up with the Valid Clinic, which helps people with suspended driver's licenses get their licenses back.

He went on to also volunteer at the Certificate of Qualification for Employment (CQE) Clinic and the Academic Success Program and serve as a Student Bar Association officer. An Army veteran, he's also done volunteer work outside of law school as a service dog trainer for disabled veterans for the last five years.

Last summer he worked "more than full-time" as a volunteer at the Summit County Public Defender's Office doing criminal defense work at the Akron Municipal Court.

"It was a wonderful experience," he said. "I would encourage any law student looking to do pro bono work or get hands-on experience to check out the Public Defender's Office."

Jason Sanders' route to law school was as circuitous as Njus's. He had a 14-year college football career before he and his wife decided they'd had enough of the lifestyle. Their longest and happiest stop had been at Akron. That's where he found a job in the UA development office in 2017, assisting in fundraising for the Law School.

Sanders enjoyed fundraising and built a network of Akron Law alumni. He decided to go all in. In summer 2019, he started law school in the evening, while continuing his day job.

"I promised my wife I would take the path of least resistance—no extracurriculars or pro bono and such—and then I ended up doing the exact opposite."

He served on the Law Review, Moot Court, Student Bar Association, Student Disciplinary Board, and University Hearing Board, and mentored 1Ls. Outside of the University, he began serving through Leadership Medina County and on the boards of Main Street Wadsworth, the city's downtown revitalization nonprofit, and the board of Feeding Medina County. His 1,986 hours of pro bono and community service is believed to be the highest number ever for a part-time student.

In August 2021, Sanders was named director, gift & estate planning, at Cleveland State University, where he was able to take some of his law school courses as a visiting student. He graduated in just 3-1/2 years, cum laude.

"This award is one of my proudest accomplishments because a lot of people told me it wasn't possible to work full time, have a family, go to law school and do well academically, and still do all the pro bono stuff. It can be done."



Jason Sanders with Paul Perantinides (left) and Chris Nolan. Photo by Tim Fitzwater.

IP SYMPOSIUM MARKS 25TH YEAR

The 25th annual Symposium on Intellectual Property Law and Policy, held on March 27, lived up to its billing as the Midwest’s premier annual intellectual property law CLE, with about 100 registrants in attendance and an engaging program.

“Our primary purpose is to provide a high-quality program that attracts IP law practitioners to the University,” said Mark F. Schultz, Goodyear chair in IP law and director of the Center for Intellectual Property Law & Technology. “Events like this serve our local legal community while giving our students the opportunity to learn from and network with practitioners.”

Among the highlights of the day were two panels discussing Effective and Ethical Use of Experts in Litigation: Views from the Bench and Bar. The views from the bench came from a panel of six federal judges, including the Hon. Ryan T. Holte, distinguished jurist-in-residence professor of law and judge, United States Court of Federal Claims.

Other panels and presentations included: Serving MedTech in Our Region: Building a Practice and a Business Community; The Unitary Patent & Unified Patent Court Are Coming: The Biggest Global IP Development Since the AIA; and After the Acquisition: Ensuring Your Client Can Keep and Use All the IP Assets It Just Bought.



L-R: The Hon. Philip Calabrese, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio (N.D. Ohio); the Hon. Theodore Essex, Hogan Lovells and former Chief ALJ, U.S. Trade Commission; the Hon. Daniel Polster, N.D. Ohio; the Hon. Robert Kinder '03, PTAB; the Hon. James Gwin, N.D. Ohio; and the Hon. Ryan Holte, U.S. Court of Federal Claims. Photos by Tim Fitzwater.

The luncheon keynote speaker was Gene Quinn, founder, CEO & president of IP Watchdog, a top source for news and opinion on IP law and policy. Quinn commented on the ways that the Supreme Court, the Patent Trial and Appeal Board (PTAB), the federal circuit courts, and corporate giants like Apple, Google and Cisco have worked to constrain IP rights in the United States from the rights holder’s perspective.

“And there is a fourth group that is also responsible for the plight of the IP system—you all, the IP industry,” he said. “Because as rights have been taken away, nobody is standing up and talking about what’s really going on.”

If there is a bright note, Quinn said in conclusion, it’s that we’ve been here before.

“Some old timers who lived through the ‘70s, when it got really bad, tell me not to give up, that in the ‘80s it got better. Because of competition from Japan,

the patent system was reinvigorated. I think the way forward may be through [the similar concern today] about China as a geopolitical and geo-economic adversary.”

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS

One of the Symposium faculty presenters was Akron Law Professor of Intellectual Property Law Camilla Hrdy. She moderated a panel on Trade Secret Claims: Choosing Your Clients’ Battles and presented her article, “Beyond Trade Secrecy: Confidentiality Agreements That Act Like Non-Competes,” co-authored with Chris Seaman. The article was recently accepted by the Yale Law Journal. It may be viewed or downloaded on SSRN.



Camilla Hrdy

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM REROUTES TO VIETNAM



Pat Gaughan with the head of the International Cooperation Department at Hanoi Law University in 2020.

Readers of the fall 2022 issue of Akron Law Magazine may recall that plans were in place for a new Akron Law summer 2023 study abroad program in Arequipa, Peru, led by Assistant Dean of Global Engagement and Associate Professor of Law Patrick Gaughan. Political turmoil in Peru dashed those plans, but the ever-resourceful Gaughan had a Plan B—Vietnam—which had been Plan A before the pandemic intervened.

In fact, Gaughan initiated discussions with Hanoi Law University in 2016 and facilitated the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Hanoi Law and Akron Law in 2017. In spring 2020, he became the first U.S. Fulbright Scholar to teach at the university. He is now on the editorial board of the

Journal of Legal Studies there. (Tạp chí Luật học).

As a result of Gaughan’s groundwork, and political challenges facing Peru, Akron Law was able to pivot to a summer 2023 Vietnam study abroad program. The program was coordinated with Hanoi Law and Hue University of

Law, located in Hue, a major city in central Vietnam.

In the end, seven Akron Law students, Visiting Practitioner and retired Clinical Professor of Law Gary Spring, and Gaughan were scheduled to arrive in Hanoi on May 18. Dean Emily Janoski-Haehlen was to arrive on May 25 for



Downtown Hanoi, Vietnam

formal signing ceremonies updating the MOU with Hanoi Law and entering into a new MOU with Hue Law.

All students will take a 2-credit course taught by Spring plus a 1-credit course taught by Gaughan (plus the option to take two additional credits of the class asynchronously). Throughout the trip, Akron Law students will interact with students and faculty at both Hanoi Law and Hue Law.

Scheduled activities in Hanoi included visits to the Vietnamese National Assembly, Supreme People’s Court, Ministry of Justice, an active trial at a trial-court level, the U.S. Embassy, and the American Chamber of Commerce. In Hue, students will visit a local law firm as well as participate in joint Law and Economics seminars.

“I expect our students will find Vietnam to be a truly unique experience and hopefully develop both an appreciation for different legal systems as well as establish stronger international relationships,” Gaughan said.

TRIAL TEAM NOTCHES AAJC STAC REGIONAL WIN

Legal skills competitions remain one of the primary ways Akron Law students get practical training, and dozens of students were active this spring. Heading the list was the trial team of 2Ls Casey Ruppen, Alyssa Pijanowski and Kelsey Jennings and 3L Rachel Pearson, which notched another American Association for Justice Student Trial Advocacy Competition (AAJ STAC) regional championship for Akron Law and advanced to the national championship in New Orleans, March. The team was coached by Tony Wise '13, Jessica Forrest '10, Susannah Bender '13, and Kevin Kita '11.



L-R: Casey Ruppen, Alyssa Pijanowski, Kelsey Jennings and Rachel Pearson

LAW LIBRARY SUPPORTS STUDENTS, FACULTY AND ALUMNI



From left to right, Assistant Professor, Law Library Sue Altmeyer, Associate Dean of Library and Information Services Kerry Lohmeier, Library Service Coordinator Tiffanie Nevins, and Assistant Professor, Law Library Sarah Starnes. Photo by Scott Horstman.

"We're focused on creating a space that supports the general health and wellness of our students. We are adding more ergonomic and variable-sized seating, adjustable standing desks, a treadmill desk, and a cycling desk."

The library is also a resource for Akron Law alumni. "We have a wealth of databases that alumni can come into the library and use for their research," Lohmeier said. "That includes Westlaw, Bloomberg Law, HeinOnline, and ProQuest Legislative Insight. We received an Akron Bar Foundation grant that will allow us to provide Akron Bar Association members remote access to some materials in the Lexis Digital Library."

Last, a major development that became effective at the start of 2023 is that the school's librarians are now non-tenure track faculty, equivalent to legal writing and clinical faculty.

"It's not common nationally for librarians to have this status," Lohmeier said. "Akron Law is at the forefront of bringing more equity into the law school professional environment, which is a point of pride for the school. This was voted on while I was being interviewed last year, so I didn't have anything to do with it. But it was definitely something that told me this would be a great place to work. It shows that the faculty clearly value the work done by the library."

2L PRESENTS AT PSYCHOLOGY + LAW CONFERENCE

2L Lynn Williams recently presented research at the American Psychology-Law Society Conference

in Philadelphia in a presentation titled Juvenile Transfer Evaluations: The Utility of the RSTI Treatment Amiability Scale. Williams is a forensic psychologist with the Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court-Juvenile Court Division. She holds a Ph.D. in Transpersonal Psychology from the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, California, and a bachelor's degree from Denison University in Psychology and East Asian studies. She is a member of the Law School's part-time evening program, on track to graduate in December 2025.



Lynn Williams



The new art has quickly become a favorite photo backdrop.

ART INSTALLATION DEDICATED

The Law School hosted a reception on March 14 to celebrate new artwork in the main stairwell of the Law Center. Created by local artist April Bleakney, the 13-layer screen print was refitted for the wrap-around stairwell area and completed with custom milled brushed silver lettering featuring the Law School's mission. This installation was a One Percent for Art Program project of the Ohio Arts Council. See more images on [Facebook.com/apemade](https://www.facebook.com/apemade).

When she started last summer, the first item on the agenda for Associate Dean of Library and Information Services Kerry Lohmeier was strengthening the research portion of the Legal Analysis, Research, and Writing I class. Dean Emily Janoski-Haehlen and the faculty wanted to increase the amount of research taught in the course, which all 1Ls take.

"Research used to be a half-credit of the course; now we have one credit of legal research instruction during the first semester," Lohmeier said. The library is building upon these changes by adjusting the Advanced Legal Research curriculum and by exploring additional course offerings.

"We're aiming to increase advanced legal research offerings. This semester we're

offering a course on Foreign, Comparative & International Legal Research," she said. "We're looking at other electives we could run again, such as Social Media and the Law and Technology and the Law."

Another initiative the library is focusing on is helping prepare incoming students for the NextGen bar exam, which is expected to incorporate mixed item sets that more closely reflect situations that a newly licensed lawyer may see in practice. The library is in a key position to support these changes in legal education, as they use similar methods in teaching legal research.

Not all the changes at the library are academic. Big changes are coming to the physical space, including more collaborative areas, such as whiteboard table workstations.

WELCOME PLESHAE MCPHEE



Pleshae A. McPhee has joined the Akron Law staff as program coordinator, alumni and development. She is a 2022 graduate of Saint Leo University with a Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies and a minor in Multimedia Management. She brings over eight years of experience in public relations, social media management, copywriting/editing, administrative work and program planning.

AMBASSADOR'S CAREER PATH INCLUDED AKRON LAW

For Lynne Tracy '94, who was sworn in as United States ambassador to Russia on January 9, 2023, law school was a backup plan in case she didn't realize her dream of entering the U.S. Foreign Service.

Being accepted into the Foreign Service is a long and very competitive process, with thousands applying each year for just a handful of open slots. Tracy was selected for one of those slots and embarked on her diplomatic career in 1995. But her three years at Akron Law were not in vain.

"I enjoyed the law school experience. I sometimes thought that, in the end, it might be my career path," she said in a recent interview from Moscow. "Law school really provided an important educational experience that I firmly believe was critical to my success in the Foreign Service. A legal education is extremely [valuable], not just for a legal practice, but for other kinds of career opportunities."

One of the professors who made a mark on her was Richard Cohen, now retired, who headed the Legal Analysis, Writing and Research program for many years.

"What I learned from him ultimately became extremely relevant to my diplomatic career," she said. "He had an approach to writing clearly in a way that stripped away the jargon. I've talked about it over my career as one of the most important things I got out of law school—the ability to think about a problem analytically."



Ambassador Lynne Tracy with Secretary of State Antony Blinken in 2023

"Some of my first assignments were to report on what was happening in the former Soviet republics in Central Asia after the breakup of the U.S.S.R. It was important to bring data and knowledge to our writing, not just speculate off the tops of our heads."

The future ambassador from Barberton, Ohio, entered college in 1982 at the University of Georgia thinking about a career in the Foreign Service. The professor in a first-year general survey history class commented that the government really needed more people who understood the Soviet Union.

"That was the spark," she said. "I put together an interdisciplinary major in Soviet Studies that included the Russian language as well as history, political science and other courses."

Fortuitously, right as she was graduating, the U.S. needed to add more Americans to the embassy staff in Moscow as a result of a dispute with the Soviets.

"So, I had this wonderful opportunity to come in as a contractor for three years. I worked in the consular section, primarily on visa issues, but it was a chance to see the Foreign Service without having to make a career commitment."

Prior to her ambassadorship to Russia—for which the U.S. Senate confirmed her nomination by a 93-2 vote—she served for three years as ambassador to the Republic of Armenia. Prior to that, she served as senior advisor for Russia Affairs in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, 2017-2018, and was deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, 2014-2017. Her other leadership positions include deputy assistant secretary for Central Asia in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs at the Department of State, 2012-2014, and deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, 2010-2011.

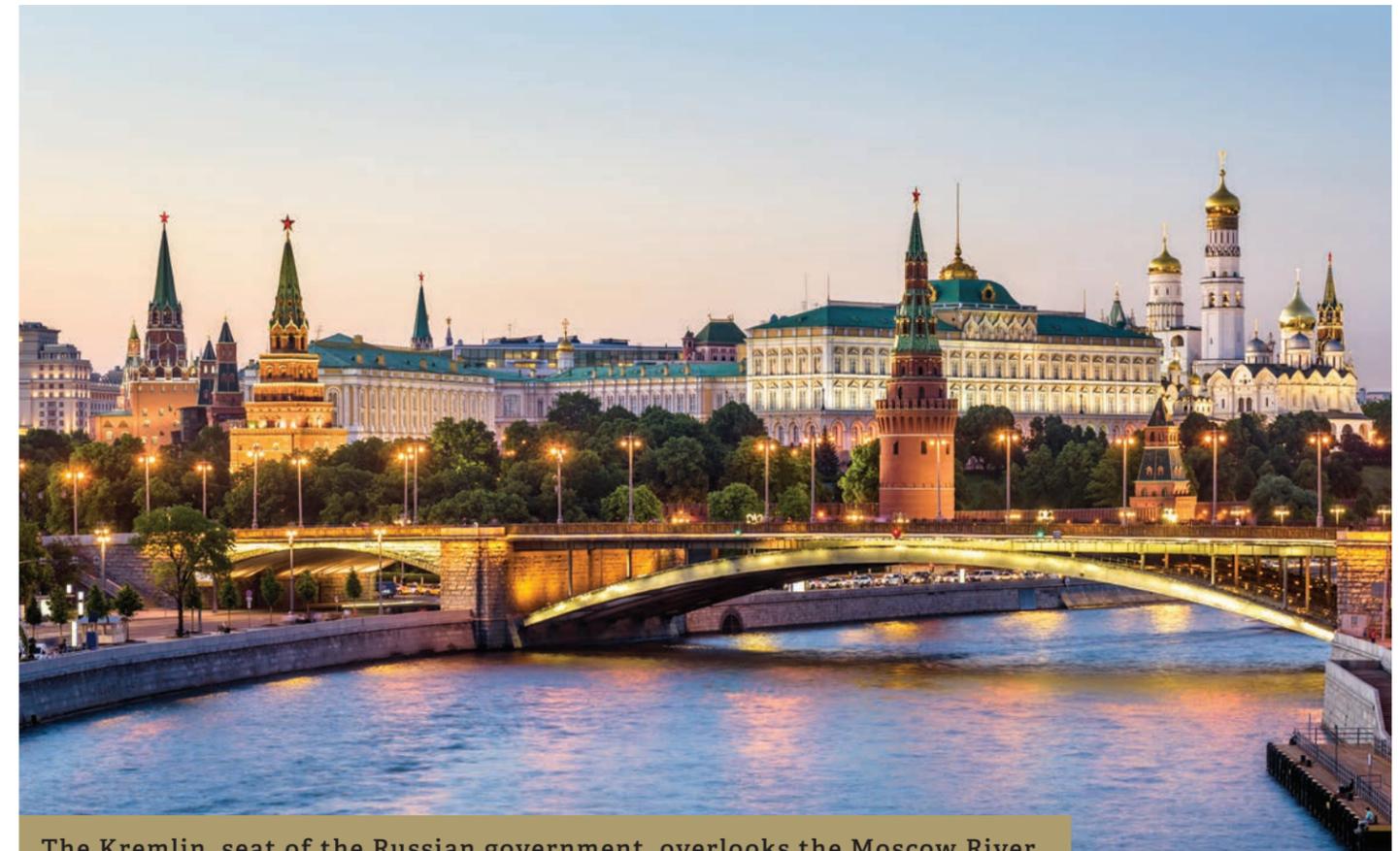
She was principal officer at the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar, Pakistan, 2006-2009, and principal officer at the U.S. Embassy branch office in Astana, Kazakhstan, 2004-2006. Other overseas assignments include the U.S. embassies in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. She worked in the Office of the Special Envoy to the Newly Independent States at the Department of State in 2000-2001.

On August 26, 2008, while stationed in Peshawar, she was attacked by gunmen who sprayed her automobile with bullets, shooting out the front tires. Tracy, her bodyguard and driver all escaped. The Secretary of State's Award for Heroism recognized her quick thinking, her return to the post on the day, and her dedication to completing her mission even in the face of repeated threats to her life.

"It's a huge honor to be an ambassador, to be the president's personal representative," she said. "I come from a modest background. I certainly never expected that I would be here today. But as I gained experience, I gained confidence in what I was capable of doing."

An important part of what American embassy personnel do is to gather information by meeting with a wide range of people inside and outside government and inside and outside the capital, she explained.

"Every ambassador brings their own approach to the job. My approach to meeting new people is to talk about my background and my home and the commonalities I see with people and places in the country where I'm stationed. I find it's a very good way to start a conversation."



The Kremlin, seat of the Russian government, overlooks the Moscow River. Photo by Shutterstock.

“I’ve talked about it over my career as one of the most important things I got out of law school—the ability to think about a problem analytically.”

Lynne Tracy

AKRON UPS ITS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND PRACTICAL TRAINING GAME

The University of Akron (UA) School of Law has long enjoyed a national reputation for its emphasis on practical training and experiential learning with the objective of producing practice-ready graduates.

“We look at experiential learning broadly,” said Alisa Benedict O’Brien, assistant dean for career services, strategic initiatives and external affairs. “It can be any of our clinical programs as well as some of our skills-based courses like Trial Advocacy. We also offer a wide variety of externship placements with public, private, and non-profit organizations to match a student’s interests and career goals.”

Externships offer valuable training that is of interest to employers and helps students develop their skills of advocacy, client counseling, legal writing and

professionalism under the supervision of a mentoring lawyer. Federal judicial externships are particularly valued because these placements tend to be very competitive.

Two relatively new programs have increased Akron Law students’ exposure to these opportunities.

The first is the Washington D.C. Externship Program, launched in 2021 for intellectual property (IP) law students interested in opportunities to work in a legal capacity for government, public interest organizations, judges or other related entities. The program has now been expanded to include non-IP students.

“Akron Law students have long taken advantage of externship opportunities, but almost entirely in the Northeast Ohio area,” said Mark Schultz, Goodyear Tire &

Rubber Company Chair in IP Law and UAIP director. “These Washington externships represent a special opportunity.”

“Washington D.C. is filled with full-time legal externships in a variety of settings, likely more opportunities and more varied than any other city in the country,” said Jurist-in-Residence Professor of Law and former UAIP Director Ryan T. Holte, who now sits on the United States Court of Federal Claims bench in Washington.

He cites three unique advantages of externing in Washington:

- professional networking in a larger city with a greater density of lawyers—probably the highest density of Akron Law alumni outside Ohio.

- significant legal work experience opportunities in areas of law and government not available elsewhere—notably, federal executive and legislative branches;
- enhanced connectivity into a national legal marketplace for students considering working outside Ohio now or later in their career.

Students in the program take an accompanying for-credit remote externship course taught by Holte. He also supervises many of the externs in D.C. as well as those doing externships in a federal court outside of Washington. The combination of his location in D.C. and former position on the Akron Law faculty makes for a special way to supervise students remote to the school but local to him.

“I believe Professor Holte’s involvement has been a factor in wider consideration of federal judicial externships among the students,” O’Brien said. “If a student is very strong academically and has an interest in a federal clerkship, then we would suggest that they explore a judicial externship to really understand what the work entails. Last fall Judge Philip Calabrese from the Northern District of Ohio (NDO) came down from Cleveland and did a lunch program that attracted a lot of interest.”

The second federal judicial externship program includes a diversity component. It is a partnership between Akron Law and the Akron Canton Barristers Association. Career Services and the Barristers solicit applications from students who self-identify as diverse, and a committee interviews them to see if they would be a good match with one of the participating judges from the NDO court.

3L Ellison Starnes completed a four-month externship with Judge Calabrese last spring. She will be an associate in the estate planning group at Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLC, this summer.

“It was a great experience,” she said. “You really hone your writing skills working with the judge and his clerks. And it was interesting getting to know the judge and seeing how a court works behind the scenes. I think it’s one of the better programs here because it opens doors for students, whether they’re at the top of the class or in the middle. I even asked Dean O’Brien if I could do it again.”

Meanwhile, consistent with feedback from employers and proposed revisions to the ABA law school accreditation standards that would require law schools to provide substantial opportunities for students to develop a professional identity, Akron Law faculty have been updating degree requirements to include professionalism training. A new professionalism series will bring alumni to the school to speak to students about subjects such as legal practice, professional identity, advocacy, and cross-cultural competency. Interested alumni may reach out directly to Dean Emily Janoski-Haehlen at ejanoskihaehlen@uakron.edu to discuss participating in the program.

IP LAW STUDENT GAINS PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN STARTUP COMPETITION



SaiPranay Vellala, left, with teammate Spencer Frase.

Some students find their own path to experiential learning opportunities. Akron Law 2023 graduate SaiPranay Vellala teamed with UA College of Engineering undergraduates John DiPaolo and Spenser Frase and Ph.D. candidate Dominic Frisone to win the U.S. Department of Energy’s American-Made Energy Tech University Prize regional collegiate startup competition. The Akron team presented a solution for direct recycling of battery manufacturing waste. Team members pitched their plan at the national competition in Austin, Texas, on April 2.

Vellala, an intellectual property law student with a UA undergraduate degree in computer engineering, assisted the team with IP-related issues. He was a judicial extern in the United States Court of Federal Claims in fall 2022 under the Hon. Ryan Holte and has accepted a position in the Washington, D.C., office of King & Spalding beginning this fall.

Last year he received the Jan Jancin Award from the American Intellectual Property Law Association. The award recognizes rising 2L and 3L students from diverse backgrounds who are underrepresented racial or ethnic minorities, have expressed an interest in pursuing a career as an IP lawyer, and who have engaged in activities reflecting that interest.

Akron Law judicial clerks, externs and alumni pose with Judge Holte (second from the right in the back row) in front of the Court of Federal Claims in Washington.



“These Washington externships represent a special opportunity.”

Mark Schultz, Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company Chair

AKRON LAW GOES TO THE WHITE HOUSE



Akron Law students have had a lot of unique externships over the years—NASA, the Copyright Alliance, Bounce Innovation Hub, and the Mid-American Conference. But rising 3L Elijah J. Hardee has definitely blazed a new trail with his spring 2023 internship in the Office of White House Counsel. He was one of five legal interns in that department—along with two from Georgetown University and two from Harvard University—and a host of other interns in a range of other White House departments.

Hardee first became aware of the program last summer in conversations with Alisa Benedict O'Brien, assistant dean for career services, strategic initiatives and external affairs.

Photos by Jacqui Photography.

“She helped me quite a bit with my application materials and explained how I would have support from Akron Law’s Washington D.C. externship program if I were selected,” he said. “I really didn’t think prestigious internships like this actually considered students from the Midwest, but I viewed it as kind of a lottery where you’re never going to win if you don’t buy a ticket. So, I applied. A couple of months later I went through the interview process, and a few weeks after that I received an offer to join the program.”

Hardee might have underestimated the strength of his credentials.

He majored in sports management at Central Michigan University with a minor in legal studies and earned certificates in political advocacy and elections, and lawmaking and legal processes. He was a Social Justice Fellow as a 1L under Brant Lee, professor of law and assistant dean for diversity and social justice initiatives. Last summer he worked as a law clerk in the civil division of the City of Akron Law Department and then last fall as a judicial extern in the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Ohio, in Youngstown under Magistrate Judge Carmen E. Henderson.

He also may have underestimated the Biden-Harris administration.

“The administration overall and the people I work with are really committed to the idea of diversity,” he said. “Not just racial and gender, but in terms of socio-economic background, education background and geography. There are students from all over America in the broader White House internship program.”

As for the Office of White House Counsel job, the hours are long and the work challenging, Hardee said. Each of the five interns was assigned to different practice groups within the Office. Hardee was assigned to the Judicial Nominations team and the Oversight team monitoring congressional hearings.

“The work with the Nominations team has been a great experience. Many of the candidates being considered are sitting judges; others have been attorneys from vastly different backgrounds. The Nominations team goes through their background, reads their decisions, briefs and past legal arguments they’ve made and, as a team, we come to a conclusion on whether a particular candidate is qualified for a lifetime appointment as a federal judge.”

Hardee is also involved in prepping nominees for their confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, including preparing materials for the nominees to review.

“That part of the job is very rewarding because you can actually follow your work from start to finish.”

Hardee felt he was well-prepared for the internship.

“Akron Law does a great job of teaching us legal analysis, writing and research,” he said. “It starts with being a good listener, understanding what the other person is looking for as an end product, and maintaining clear and open communication with supervisors as you work on and complete a particular matter.”

Elijah Hardee



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“I’m extremely proud of Elijah, and I admire his drive,” O’Brien said. “He is a hard-worker and an asset to the internship program. I had the privilege of visiting him in D.C. this spring and seeing firsthand how he is thriving in this role.”

Hardee didn’t spend all his time burning the midnight oil in the West Wing. He was able to bowl in the Truman Bowling Alley, volunteer at the White House Spring Garden Tour and the Easter Egg Roll and explore the city a bit. In April, he attended a Roadways to the Bench event at the D.C. Bar hosted by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts. The event supports the judiciary’s goal of attracting the broadest possible pool of qualified applicants to seek appointments to Article I and Article III judgeships. Following a simulcast, judges at the event held small group meetings with the participants.

Akron Law Jurist-in-Residence Professor of Law Ryan T. Holte, who is now a judge in the United States Court of Federal Claims in Washington, supervised Hardee during the spring externship class.

“Given that our office distance is only one block, it’s been especially helpful and enjoyable for my chambers staff to meet Elijah in person and host him for lunch and coffee,” Holte said. “I’ve been impressed with how much success he has had with professional networking. D.C. has significant opportunity for legal education and networking events compared to other cities, and Eli has worn out his shoes in taking advantage of these engagements during his months in town.”

Has the internship caused Hardee to redirect his career plans?

“I thoroughly enjoyed my Washington experience, and if an opportunity in government or politics presented itself, I’d have to consider it,” he said. “But right now, I’m going to enjoy my last four or five weeks in the White House and turn my attention to working as summer associate in the litigation practice group at Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease in Akron. It’s really about trying different opportunities and experiences so that once I graduate and pass the bar, I’ll know what path I want to take.”



AN EARLY CONNECTION

Eli Hardee first connected with Akron Law as part of the summer 2019 PreLaw Undergraduate Scholars (PLUS) Program, which Akron Law hosted for four years in coordination with the Law School Admission Council. The program is focused on increasing diversity in the legal profession. Hardee was impressed with Akron Law, and the school was impressed with him.

“He was really prepared to take advantage of the new experiences in the PLUS program,” said Professor Brant Lee, who oversaw the program and later wrote a letter of recommendation to the Admissions Committee. “I wrote that he was focused and articulate and showed reliability and maturity.”

Lee was also able to offer some informed advice. He spent three years in Washington at the beginning of his legal career as counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee, followed by a short stint at the beginning of the Clinton administration as interim deputy staff secretary and special assistant to the president.

“Every office has inside politics and ambitious people, but it’s especially intense in Washington,” Lee told him. “You’ll do a better job for the people you’re working for if you’re not distracted by your own agenda.”

MEGAN PARKER DRAWS ON PERSONAL EXPERIENCE FOR LAW REVIEW NOTE

Megan Parker had already made her mark at The University of Akron during her undergraduate days as Editor-in-Chief of the student newspaper, the *Buchtelite*. She has continued to add to her CV since she began law school in August 2020, despite being physically disabled from birth and dependent on a ventilator, power wheelchair, and full-time caregiver (her mother Jaclyn Sims).

Now in her third year, Megan is president of the Moot Court Honor Society, an associate editor of the *Akron Law Review*, a Legal Writing fellow, and active in the Trademark Clinic. She was a semifinalist in the 2021 ABA National Appellate Advocacy Competition, and she won CALI Awards for having the highest grade in five different classes. She will graduate with a Juris Doctor and a Master of Laws in intellectual property. In spring 2022, she completed a four-month virtual externship at the Copyright Alliance in Washington D.C.

Parker’s latest accomplishment is to have her law review note, “Outdated, Archaic, and Stereotypical: Current Medicaid Income and Asset Limits Discriminate Against Working Individuals with Disabilities,” published in the *DePaul Journal for Social Justice*. The article draws on her own personal experiences to argue that, while Congress explicitly stated



Megan Parker in her summer associate office at Benesch Law. Photo by Jaclyn Sims.

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Assistant Professor George Horvath with Megan Parker. Photo by Pat Gallagher.

A HAPPY MOMENT DEFLATED

As Parker details in the article, she encountered the archaic Medicaid income impediments at what should have been the happiest of moments: receiving an offer to join Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff, an AmLaw 200 firm, as their 1L Diversity Fellow for summer 2021. She suddenly realized the income she would receive for the nine-week fellowship would be more than she is allowed to earn within a year to maintain her Medicaid insurance.

Moreover, she later learned that, under the law, all the income she will ever earn will need to go into an irrevocable Medicaid Payback Trust that she can have no control over. These trusts have fairly restrictive limits on what the money can be used for, Horvath noted. When she eventually passes away, any money in the trust would go to Medicaid to reimburse it for the services she received throughout her life. There was no choice: to accept the Benesch offer she had to create the trust.

“These rules are just ridiculous,” she said in an interview. “In order to get this government health insurance—which was created specifically for the elderly and people with disabilities—you can’t earn more than 28% below the poverty level. These rules were written in the 1980s, when there wasn’t all of

“These rules are just ridiculous. In order to get this government health insurance—which was created specifically for the elderly and people with disabilities—you can’t earn more than 28% below the poverty level.”

Megan Parker

in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 that the United States’ goals “regarding individuals with disabilities are to assure equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for such individuals,” essential Medicaid and Social Security programs remain in direct conflict with these goals, to the serious detriment of many permanently disabled people like herself.

“The law review note itself is impressive, but it’s also impressive that as a law student, she’s getting this published,” said Assistant Professor George Horvath, Parker’s faculty advisor on the article. “There are really very few opportunities for law students to publish outside of their own school’s law review. And DePaul has always had a strong health law program, so getting this placed there is a real accomplishment.”

In fact, DePaul was one of several law journals Parker called to ask if they accepted submissions from students at other law schools before sending off her note to the ones that did. She got an offer to publish from DePaul three days later, which she accepted. She later received offers from four other journals.

the technology available today that allows disabled people to work at the same capacity as able-bodied people.”

Parker didn’t know much at all about Medicaid and Medicare when she started her research.

“Assistant Professor and Law Librarian Sarah Starnes helped me look for relevant case law and research how this type of trust got created,” she recalled. “I had posted on the Ohio Bar Association’s community page asking attorneys in disability law and elder law for some ideas, and a couple of them told me, you have no idea the amount of research that you’re getting yourself into.”

Read the law review note here: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/jsj/>

BACK TO BENESCH

Parker was invited back to Benesch as a summer associate in 2022 and has now accepted an offer to join the firm as a full-time associate this fall.

“My first summer, we had no idea what we were getting into. But Benesch completely blew us out of the water with how accommodating they were about my mother having to be with me all the time. We were able to participate in all the social activities and family-oriented events. I’ve never once felt like I was the odd one out.”

She recalled a fortuitous encounter early in her first summer at Benesch with Mark Avsec, vice chair, Innovations, Information Technology & Intellectual Property (3iP) Practice Group.

“I met him outside the elevator as I was going back to my office. He introduced himself as one of the partners in the IP group. I said, ‘I’m a summer associate interested in IP.’ He said, ‘Well, let’s see if I can get you some work.’ An hour later, he emailed me with a research assignment.”

He gave her three more assignments that summer. When she returned the second summer, he had already submitted assignments specifically labeled for her. She ended up doing some 10 different assignments that summer.

“We’re really excited about having Megan join us in the fall in the intellectual property group,” Avsec said. “She is an IP lawyer through and through. Her research skills are very good, and she’s a great writer.

We have approximately 35 lawyers in the IP group spanning the Cleveland, Columbus, Chicago and San Francisco offices, and great clients, so Megan is going to get some really sophisticated work to do.”

HARVARD LAW’S LOSS

When Megan was in third or fourth grade, she came home one day and told her mother she wanted to be a lawyer and go to Harvard—like Elle Woods from Legally Blonde, Megan’s mother recalled.

“I told her then, if you get accepted, we’ll move the whole family to Boston. So, when it came time to start applying to law schools, I asked her if she was applying to Harvard, and she said no. I said, why not? You’ve wanted to go to Harvard your whole life. And she said, because she didn’t like New England Patriot fans.”

Today, Patriot fans notwithstanding, she feels like she made the right choice in going to Akron Law.



Parker with Benesch Associate Lidia Mowad and Partner Mark Avsec. The three call themselves the Copyright Club. Photo by Jaclyn Sims.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT REALIZES HER DREAM A CONTINENT AWAY



Left to right: Assistant Dean for Career Services and Strategic Initiatives Alisa Benedict O'Brien, Associate Dean of Student Engagement and C. Blake McDowell, Jr. Professor of Law Willa Gibson, and Tolulope Ajifowobaje. Photo by Scott Horstman.

Tolulope Ajifowobaje knew since she was 12 that she wanted to be a lawyer. But growing up in Nigeria, she never could have imagined she would be studying for her Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree at The University of Akron School of Law, where she would land a summer internship with a Fortune 500 company, win a nationally competitive scholarship and receive a prestigious legal fellowship.

Ajifowobaje was raised in a single-parent household and felt determined from a young age to fight injustice and improve conditions and opportunities for other women.

"I come from a background where my dad felt it was acceptable to beat my mom, like every other day," she said. "She eventually left him, but I also saw bits and pieces of that around me with different families. As I got older, I came

to realize some people are not strong enough to speak for themselves. I felt like that was my calling, to speak for them."

She pursued that path, earning a master's in law degree at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies and spending more than a decade in the legal field, starting as a legal officer at the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission before establishing her own practice, where she assisted clients with matters related to domestic abuse, constitutional law, contracts and land ownership. During that time, she married and had two children.

In 2019, her husband, an electrical engineer, got an opportunity to migrate the family to the U.S. They both felt this would be a great opportunity for the family, even though she would have to start her legal career all again. The plan was that her husband would continue to work and she would

go to law school and earn her J.D. so she could practice in the U.S.

In the months before they left, her husband hadn't been feeling well, but no one suspected it was anything serious. They planned to get him checked out after they got to the U.S. However, he became extremely ill on the flight and was taken straight to the hospital upon landing.

The diagnosis was cancer. He underwent surgery but never recovered. He died two weeks after arriving.

A GLIMMER OF HOPE

At the burial in Maryland, where her husband had family, Ajifowobaje spoke with an in-law who was studying in Cleveland. She invited Ajifowobaje and her children to stay in her house for a while. This would give her time to mourn—away from her husband's family—and decide on her next steps. As Ajifowobaje explained, while it is not the law in Nigeria, many people there still believe in the traditional practice whereby when the husband passes, the widow is not expected to have any say in the affairs or estate of her late husband but is expected to undergo some demeaning traditional rites and the property reverts to his family, not his widow and children.

She decided she would remain permanently in the U.S. with her children and pursue her quest for a career path into the U.S. legal system, while also fighting for her rights in the Nigerian court. And then things started falling into place.

Through a mutual friend, Ajifowobaje was connected to Norman James, whose nephew happened to be Nolan James, Akron Law class of 2012 and a former assistant director of admissions. From that role, he was familiar with the school's innovative two-year J.D. program for students and practicing lawyers with a foreign law degree. Even better, he introduced her to a Nigerian lawyer, Olaide (David) Oseni '20, who was just completing the program.

Ajifowobaje visited a couple other law schools before her interview at Akron Law. Norman James drove her to each of the law schools. She met Oseni that day at Akron and he introduced her to the Akron Law admissions team.

The admissions staff at Akron emphasized three things," she recalled. "Number one, they sold me on the school's career services. The other schools didn't talk much about that. At the time I was thinking of paying someone to rewrite my CV for the American market. [Assistant Dean for Career Services and Strategic Initiatives Alisa Benedict O'Brien] told me, 'No, we will do all that for you. We will get you interviews and find you a good job. You just do the best you can in law school.'"

The second factor was the accelerated two-year J.D. program. She had assumed it would take three years to get her J.D.

"The third reason I came here was the warmth of all the people I met, the way they answered my questions. And the building itself just felt really welcoming. After the visit, I told Norman that I was done looking."

STILL STRUGGLING

She was accepted to start in January 2021, but after one week, she asked to defer until the fall. She was still struggling with her loss when August came around, but she started classes anyway.

"I'm not going to lie. I didn't think I was going to make it through first semester." She had fallen behind most of her classmates, her financial situation was dire, childcare remained a challenge, and she still had clients in Nigeria to attend to. She was only getting three hours of sleep at night.

She opened up to two of her professors who counseled her to start seeing a therapist. Associate Dean of Student Engagement and C. Blake McDowell, Jr. Professor of Law Willa Gibson provided emotional and academic support. She introduced Ajifowobaje to the president of the Black Law Students Association, who provided her with class outlines and advised her on what her professors expected and how to approach each class.

For Ajifowobaje, it was a turning point.

“ Things just started getting better. I learned the biggest problem was that I was keeping everything in. I didn't want anybody to know what I was going through. And that was killing me.”

When first semester grades came out, she was impressed to see that her GPA placed her in the top ten percent of the class. And her grades continued to improve in the two semesters that followed, moving her up to the top five percent. She is on track to graduate in May 2023.

"It was pretty obvious to me early on that she was very capable of doing the work," Gibson said. "She just needed someone to be a cheerleader. She later took a couple of my classes and did very, very well."



Tolulope Ajifowobaje with a section of the legal team at Sherwin-Williams corporate headquarters. Photo by Nick Roth.

THE CORPORATE WORLD BECKONS

With support from Career Services, Ajifowobaje secured a summer internship with Sherwin-Williams, where she said she had the opportunity to work in many different areas of the law, from contracts and internal policy reviews, to employment, litigation, immigration and music licensing.

“They are very pleased with her,” O’Brien said. “They kept her on part-time after the internship, which doesn’t happen very often. Her direct supervisor speaks highly of her—not only her work product, but the energy and positivity that she brings to the office.”

Early last fall, Ajifowobaje applied for a nationally competitive diversity scholarship posted on the Law School’s student blog. As months went by, she forgot about it. Then a letter arrived in early February telling her she was one of seven scholars selected from a record number of applicants to receive the \$2,000 scholarship.

“I was so excited because it came at a time when I really needed something like that. Being selected and reading their words of encouragement gave me such a boost,” she said.

And that wasn’t all of the good news. In September 2022, Ajifowobaje was named the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company Legal Fellowship recipient for 2023-2024. She will start working at the company in August.

“The 12-month fellowship is a partnership between Akron Law and Goodyear that is in its fourth year,” O’Brien said. “Each fall they select one of our 3L applicants to work in the corporate legal department.

“Goodyear does an amazing job of mentoring the fellows. They make sure they get experience on a wide range of legal matters and build a strong network. The job search was very short for the first two fellows.”

Tolulope said she has really enjoyed working at Sherwin-Williams and looks forward to another year in-house at Goodyear. The next step after that will likely be to join a law firm. But she won’t forget her calling to defend the rights of women and the indigent and help young women to dream big.

“I’m so glad everything worked out for Tolulope,” Nolan James said. “She has a very bright future—it’s limitless. Akron Law is lucky to have her. She could have gone anywhere.”

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*Retiring as of May 12, 2023 meeting



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FROM THE ADVANCEMENT COUNCIL CHAIR



I don’t know for certain, but I would guess that while most Akron Law alumni are aware of the Advancement Council, they don’t know much about it. Let me introduce you.

Established in 2003, the Advancement Council is the primary advisory body to the School of Law. The Council advises the dean on strategic matters and serves as a liaison between practical work and academia. Council members donate time to the school serving as speakers and student mentors, and they aid student career placement, alumni relations and fundraising activities.

The Council, which typically meets three times a year (the executive committee meets more frequently), consists of a diverse group of highly qualified alumni and friends drawn from private and public sector legal practitioners, business executives and judges. I’ve been on the Advancement Council for more than a decade and am currently in my second year as chair.

The Advancement Council’s mission is to enhance the overall quality of Akron Law and its programs which, in turn, will elevate the school’s reputation and make it the regional school of national distinction to which it has long aspired. The mission statement goes on to enumerate eight primary objectives that the Council commits to advance. You can view the full mission statement on the Alumni page of the Law School website.

One of the things that I and my fellow Council members are most proud of is the role we played in the renovation of the Law Center and the addition of the beautiful new west wing, which opened in 2017—debt-free!

When I became chair in May 2021, I said, we come to these meetings, but we rarely interact with the faculty or the student body. For the next meeting, we invited the trial team to conduct an abbreviated mock trial for us. It was fantastic. We’d been hearing for years about our great trial teams, but we were able to see first-hand how impressive these students are.

To better connect with the faculty, we asked former Dean C.J. Peters to preview the cases the Supreme Court would be hearing in the upcoming session and then return after the Court released its decisions. We hope to arrange more educational interactions like this.

When the search for a new dean was being set up, the Advancement Council had some concerns that the search committee might not have the institutional memory about events of the prior years. President Miller and Provost Wienczek granted our request for the Council’s executive committee to have the opportunity to interview each of the four finalists and provide our recommendation.

I’m confident that I speak for the Council when I say we are absolutely delighted with the job that Dean Janoski-Haehlen is doing!

Sally Benson

Sally Benson '74

HONORING 2023 AKRON LAW OUTSTANDING ALUMNI

On May 12, the School of Law recognized three outstanding alumni at the 2023 Akron Law Alumni Association Annual Awards breakfast.



MONA SARKAR '94

For over 20 years, Mona Sarkar has worked beside individuals, families and business owners to understand their unique situations and help them reach their desired goals. From individual retirement planning and multi-generational estate planning to business succession planning, her experience as an attorney, consultant and leader of a national family office has allowed her to bring a wide array of technical expertise to her clients. With her Juris Doctor, Master of Taxation, and Bachelor of Science in Accounting from the University, she is able to holistically assist her clients in the management and implementation of their personalized financial plans.

In 2016, Sarkar joined Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated to continue her work educating

and counseling individuals and business owners. She is a member of the Ohio State Bar Association and the Akron Bar Association and holds the FINRA Series 7 & 66 licenses as well as her insurance license. She has served on many panels discussing topics such as financial planning and emotional intelligence at meetings of the Ohio State Bar Association, The University of Akron, and other institutions.

Sarkar's diverse background and passion to help others serves her well on the various boards she chairs. She is a proud board member of the Akron Roundtable, the American Red Cross, Summit County Historical Society, FBI Citizens Academy, Stan Hywet Advisory Council, multiple University of Akron boards and the Archbishop Hoban High School capital campaign committee. She is a graduate of Leadership Akron Class 28, where she serves as class president, and is a past board member of Women's Leadership Council of United Way, Summa Health Systems and Child Guidance and Family Solutions. She is also former chair of the Boy Scouts of America Health Care Division and chair of the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women Campaign and honorary chair for Athena. She has been recognized with the Frank L. Simonetti Alumni Award from the University and the Women of Professional Excellence award from the Women's Network. She was recognized by Baird for its Executive Council every year from 2017 through 2022.



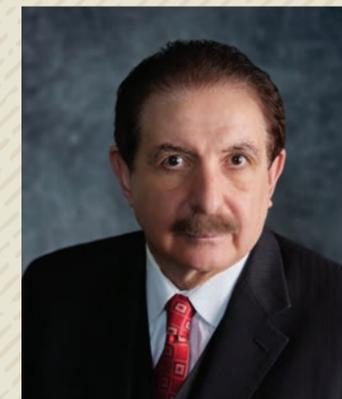
LEWIS W. ADKINS, JR. '92

Lewis Adkins leads Roetzel & Andress' client relations, marketing and business development strategies in his role as shareholder-in-charge of development and practice integration. He is responsible for ensuring that the firm provides clients with top-tier experience across all of its offices and services areas, from the first encounter through project completion.

In addition, Adkins serves as lead counsel to numerous large public and private entities throughout Ohio and Washington, D.C. He also leads a large and diverse team of attorneys and lobbyists in the public law arena as president of Roetzel Consulting Solutions. His team represents clients' interests before state legislatures, administrative agencies and executive branches of state governments.

Adkins has also acted as lead counsel for several multi-million dollar development projects. His clients include public and private entities, as well as construction companies, engineering firms, financial institutions, diversified energy companies, governmental entities, housing authorities and nonprofit organizations. Prior to assuming his current leadership role, he led the firm's public law and finance team as practice group manager for over a decade. Additionally, he previously served as general counsel to Summit County, and is currently general counsel to Alpha Phi Alpha Homes, Inc.

Adkins received his Juris Doctor from the School of Law and a Bachelor of Science from The City College of the City University of New York. In 2015, he received the School of Law's J. Dean Carro Professionalism Award from the Black Law Students Association. He also created the School's Judge James R. Williams Endowed Scholarship. He has served on the University's Board of Trustees since 2017, and just last month he was selected as the Board's new chair.



GUST CALLAS '78

Gust Callas serves as coordinator for the labor and employment practice area of Black McCuskey Souers & Arbaugh Legal Professional Association. He has extensive experience in litigation and a particular specialty in the defense and counseling of clients in employment-related matters. He has successfully argued cases before the Ohio Supreme Court, as well as the United States Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Callas received his Juris Doctor and Bachelor of Science in Accounting from The University of Akron, both with the highest honors. Combining both degrees has assisted him in commercial litigation as well as advising several corporations as general counsel. He served as past president and board member of the UA Law Alumni Association. He is recognized by his peers as one of the preeminent lawyers in his field, having received an AV Preeminent® peer review rating from Martindale-Hubbell, and he has been recognized as an Ohio Super Lawyer from 2004 to 2023. Callas has been selected for inclusion in The Best Lawyers in America® from 2019 to 2023 in labor law, management, labor and employment litigation, and workers' compensation law - employers.

A member of the Stark County and Ohio State Bar associations, he has been called upon as a lecturer for continuing legal education programs and conducted training programs for businesses and trade organizations nationwide. He also serves as a mediator for the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Ohio. A Canton native, Callas is active in many community and civic organizations and has served as the treasurer of the Stark County Bar Association for over 30 years.

CLASS NOTES

Brandyn Costa '21, and **Hanne-Lore Gambrell '18**, were selected this year by the UA Alumni Association and Student Ambassadors for the annual 5 Under 35 award. The designation honors five UA alumni under the age of 35 who demonstrate excellence in their field and service in the community. Costa is a real estate and business attorney at Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLC in Akron. Gambrell recently founded the Law Office of H. Gambrell, LLC. Prior to that, she was an associate at Brouse McDowell LPA in Akron for four years. Costa also holds an MBA and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Government from the University. Gambrell holds an MBA and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology/Criminology and Law Enforcement.



Hanne-Lore Gambrell '18



Brandyn Costa '21

Jon R. Stefanik '04, '07, partner at Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs in Akron, was one of seven graduates of the UA College of Business who were honored as 2023 Dr. Frank L. Simonetti Distinguished Business Alumni at the April 21 awards breakfast.



Jon R. Stefanik '04, '07

2020s

Anthony Tomusko '22, has been hired as an intellectual property associate at Ulmer & Berne in Cleveland.

Julia L. Denmeade, '21, joined Pierce Atwood, LLP, in Portland, Maine, as an associate in the immigration practice group.

Tu-Anh Amanda Vo '21, joined Ulmer & Bern's Cleveland office as a staff attorney associate focusing her practice on employment-based and family immigration.

2010s

Shannon E. Sorensen '10, was re-elected to serve her fifth term as judge in Ohio's Tuscarawas County Court of Common Pleas, General Trial Division.

Stefanie L. Deka '12, was promoted to of counsel at McGlinchey Stafford, serving clients in the financial services practice group in Cleveland.

Kristopher Immel '12, was elected as a principal at Roderick Linton Belfance in Akron. He was also named as a 2023 Ohio Rising Star. He also serves as a board director of the Akron Law Alumni Association.

Joseph (Joe) A. Manno '14, was named a 2023 Ohio Rising Star. He is a product liability and defense attorney at Tucker Ellis in Cleveland.

Amanda S. Smith '14, has been promoted to shareholder at Kastner Westman & Wilkins (KWW), a Northeast Ohio boutique labor and employment law firm representing management exclusively. She is just the third attorney in KWW's 23-year history to progress from associate to shareholder.

Richard Sykora '14, has joined McGlinchey Stafford's Financial Services Litigation practice group in Cleveland.

Ryan C. Robinson '18, joins Brouse McDowell in Akron as an associate in the business transactions and corporate counseling practice group.

Ross Kowalski '19, has been promoted to Counsel at Tucker Ellis in Cleveland effective Jan. 1, 2023. He assists clients in securing, protecting, licensing and enforcing patents, trademarks, copyrights and other intellectual property.

2000s

Angela Walls-Alexander '00, joined the Summit County Juvenile Court as a magistrate. She previously served 17 years in the domestic violence unit of the Summit County Prosecutor's Office.

Michael Murphy '03, retired from Gravitas Ventures in Nov. 2022. He now turns his attention to bringing men's and women's soccer to Cleveland, Ohio.

John C. Hanley '05, is serving as the Department of Justice resident legal advisor at the United States Embassy in Pristina, Kosovo.

1990s

Melinda A. Murphy '90, is the director of individual and legacy giving at the University of Wisconsin-Madison for PBS Wisconsin.

Renée Rubino '94, joined Bressler, Amery & Ross as a business development specialist in Florham Park, New Jersey. Prior to joining Bressler, she practiced law for over 20 years before serving as her previous firm's marketing and business development partner. Rubino earned an MBA from Centenary University in 2022 and fully transitioned into law firm business development.

Brian R. Mertes '96 has been named managing partner of Black McCusky Souers & Arbaugh in Canton.

1980s

Steve Robbins '80, is (semi-) retired as president and owner of Healthplex Associates, Inc., a hospital consulting and outsourcing firm. He recently published a novel, *The Healer's Miraculous Discovery*, which is partially set on the University of Akron campus.

Taryn L. Heath '82, was elected the 2023 president of the Board of Trustees of the Ohio Common Pleas Judges Association (OCPJA). Judge Heath has been a member of the OCPJA since she took the bench in 2007.

Lawrence Kelly '83, has been named one of the top 50 lawyers in Pittsburgh by PA Super Lawyers for 2022.

Elizabeth Lehigh Thomakos '87, was re-elected to serve her fifth term as judge in Ohio's Tuscarawas County Court of Common Pleas, General Trial Division.

In Memorium

Amanda (Mandy) Miller Boutton '12, '15, passed away after a prolonged battle with depression on April 4, 2023, at the age of 30. At the time of her tragic death, she was a practicing attorney in Cleveland.

Mary Ellen "Susie" Leslie '01, died on Jan. 5, 2023. After graduating from Akron Law at the age of 63, she opened her own firm and practiced law in Akron and Columbus for more than two decades, until the time of her death. She was a fearless advocate for children as a court-appointed guardian ad litem, a family and elder law attorney, and a trained mediator.

Wayne M. Rice '76, died on April 26, 2023, from complications related to bladder cancer. He graduated from the College of Wooster in 1973 and started work as a bank teller at the former First National Bank in Akron. He began his legal career as a law firm associate but returned to banking as regional counsel for TransOhio Savings Bank and then general counsel for Falls Savings Bank. After the bank was acquired, he and a group of partners founded Cuyahoga Falls Savings Bank. He then went into private practice until securing a full-time position as Bar Counsel for the Akron Bar Association.

Ronald N. Towne '69, passed away peacefully on March 22, 2023 at age 78. He was a successful trial attorney, practicing law in Akron for more than 46 years. He volunteered his time and expertise at his church and in the community. He was a dedicated supporter of The Salvation Army of Medina County and Esperanza Threads in Cleveland.

Barbara A. Venesy '91, passed away on Dec. 1, 2022. Among her innumerable community and philanthropic contributions, she served as a chair/president of the Board of the Akron Law Alumni Association.

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