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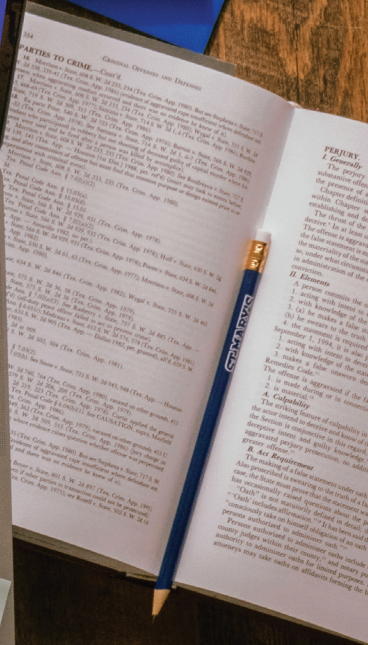
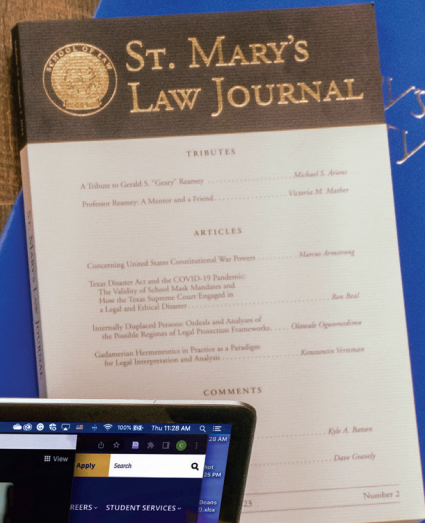
GOLD & BLUE

LAW EDITION

FALL 2023

Home is where
the *school* is

The nation's first fully online
J.D. students reflect on
law school and life



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT IN JURY SELECTION COURSE

Third-year J.D. student Kristen Roberts practices her opening statement as a defense attorney in the courtroom at the Center for Legal and Social Justice as part of the Jury Selection course offered during the summer. At the beginning of her statements, Roberts discusses an evading arrest case the potential jury would hear and asks questions of her classmates who served as potential jurors.

Held in June, 12 students attended the four-day program. St. Mary's University Clinical Professor of Law Stephanie Stevens (B.A. '87, J.D. '91) said the purpose of the course is to help students get experience and learn more about jury selections before civil and criminal cases.



ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY

GOLD & BLUE

LAW EDITION

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(Denotes degree from St. Mary's University)

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MISSION

St. Mary's University, as a Catholic Marianist University, fosters the formation of people in faith and educates leaders for the common good through community, integrated liberal arts and professional education, and academic excellence.

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Alumnus from Puerto Rico finds an extension of his home at the School of Law



ON THE COVER: With 25 students living across Texas and the United States, the inaugural cohort of St. Mary's University School of Law's Online J.D. Program navigates virtual offerings from near and far. Announced in Fall 2021, the part-time program was the nation's first fully online J.D. accredited by the American Bar Association. The cover photo illustrates St. Mary's Law's first online cohort, called Section O, attending a Zoom class from the comfort of home. Read more on Page 10. Photo by JoMando Cruz.

Continuing to offer transformative education at St. Mary's Law

by Patricia Roberts, J.D., St. Mary's University School of Law Dean
and Charles E. Cantú Distinguished Professor of Law

The St. Mary's University School of Law faculty and staff, who were hard at work over the summer, continue to find ways to provide our students with a rigorous legal education grounded in the Catholic and Marianist tradition.

During the summer months, we had courses in full swing, our future Bar passers were fully engaged with our Raise the Bar team, students were introduced to international law and hiking in the Alps during our 35th summer in Innsbruck, Austria, and we prepared to welcome our new students during our August orientation.

At St. Mary's, we believe in the power of education to transform lives and make the world a better place. Our law school provides access and opportunity to a legal education to those who will use the law to serve the common good, and those who share our commitment to service, justice and peace.

This commitment is displayed in courtrooms and offices, in large and small firms, and nonprofits and businesses. Regardless of the paths our alumni take, they regularly give back to their communities and, often, to our students. You will enjoy reading about two families with extensive ties to St. Mary's, and how these alumni embody our values in their work.

The access we are providing has added a new modality, and we are excited that our first Online J.D. cohort is wrapping up its first year. The students' commitment to St. Mary's, and each other, is inspiring, and not at all hindered by their virtual engagement. We will welcome our second Online J.D. cohort in August — a group of 27 students carefully curated from 900 applications. You will read on Page 10 of this issue about our online students and how this diverse group of individuals successfully balances a demanding legal education with careers and family.

With this new academic year, we are thrilled to welcome seven new faculty members, from visitors new to teaching to tenured faculty with many years of scholarly and teaching experience.

“At St. Mary's, we believe in the power of education to transform lives and make the world a better place.”

St. Mary's owes much of its culture, community and commitment to our faculty. As many beloved faculty retire, we must ensure those who are filling their shoes also share our dedication to teaching and mentoring our students. I am confident our newest community members are up to the task.

At St. Mary's Law, we are doing important work, and I am excited to see what this year holds for our students, our faculty and staff, and our community. ■



Photo by Robin Jerstad

St. Mary's Law partners with university in Mexico City

The St. Mary's University School of Law has signed a memorandum of understanding with Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) Law School, bringing the two institutions together to collaboratively advance legal studies.

UNAM, the largest law school in Mexico, has agreed to student and faculty exchanges, the chance for St. Mary's Law students to study abroad in Mexico and easier access for UNAM students and graduates to attend the Master of Laws (LL.M.) program at St. Mary's.

"As the southernmost law school in Texas, it is critical we train our students to understand the laws of our closest neighbor — Mexico — and to understand how to do business across our shared border," said Patricia Roberts, J.D., St. Mary's School of Law Dean. "Our Immigration and Human Rights Clinic also looks south to identify ways to protect the human rights of our neighbors who cross the border. Further collaboration between our two institutions will help build cross-cultural collaboration and understanding, which are essential for today's global economy."

Texas Bar Foundation issues grant to St. Mary's for public service fellowships

The St. Mary's University School of Law received a \$15,000 grant from the Texas Bar Foundation to encourage pro bono legal work through public service fellowships.

The grant provides financial support to six St. Mary's Law students who secured an unpaid position with legal services providers serving low-income clients or government agencies.

The funding, which will help offset student expenses, will encourage and promote legal assistance to poor and disadvantaged people and also enhance the ethical and professional practice of law. St. Mary's Law students recorded more than 16,700 pro bono service hours in 2022.

Many St. Mary's Law students seek work with nonprofit organizations or governmental agencies during the summer months, but the reality is that working in the public sector over the summer typically means committing to unpaid hours.

"Without the fellowship, I would not have been able to complete my summer placement," said Leslie Espiricueta, St. Mary's J.D. student. "As a first-generation



A PASSION FOR JUSTICE

Cody Huffman (J.D. '23), of San Juan, Texas, learned the importance of advocating for justice at an early age. Huffman's law school career would see him co-found the Wrongful Conviction Series, an event series of the Pro Bono Program. He also racked up awards, including the St. Mary's University School of Law Dean's Award, the Pro Bono Public Service Certificate and the Marianist Service to Community Award. But his proudest moment, he said, was knowing his mother, who is serving a life sentence in prison, was able to watch him graduate via livestream. Read more about Huffman's journey at bit.ly/CodyHuffman2023.

student from a low-income background, pursuing my passions is a luxury I am usually unable to afford."

Read more about Espiricueta on Page 7.

The Princeton Review names St. Mary's Law program among the best

The Princeton Review's Best Law Schools for 2023 rankings included the St. Mary's University School of Law, using data the company gathers from surveys of administrators at the law schools and surveys of students attending the schools who rate and report on their experiences at them.

The rankings for 2023 are based on surveys of administrators at 168 law schools in 2021-22 and surveys of 17,000 students enrolled in the schools over the past three academic years. More than 60 data points are factored into the ranking.

St. Mary's Law advocacy team wins back-to-back National Trial League championship

The St. Mary's University School of Law National Trial Team became back-to-back national champions in January by beating some of the toughest advocacy teams in the nation at the National Trial League Competition.

This is the second consecutive win at this national competition for the Trial Team, ranked 12th in the nation by U.S. News and World Report, and 14th by the American Bar Association, for 2023. Trial advocacy competition simulates litigation skills in a courtroom setting.

The Advocacy Program at St. Mary's also includes the National Moot Court Team, the Dispute Resolution Team, the International Jessup Moot Court Team and the Board of Advocates. The Moot Court Team was named national champions at the 52nd Annual William B. Spong Jr. National Moot Court Competition in February and at the National Latino Law Students National Moot Court Competition in March.

Read more about the winners of this year's Linda and Dave Schlueter First-Year Moot Court Competition in the cover story beginning on Page 10.

St. Mary's creates unique Business and Law undergraduate major

St. Mary's University has created a collaborative major for undergraduate students interested in the intersection of business and law, unique among San Antonio's universities.

The B.B.A. in Business and Law is a collaboration between the University's Greehey School of Business and the

School of Law, giving students the unique opportunity to take between five and 15 credit hours of School of Law courses for undergraduate credit taught by law faculty.

The program's first students begin in the Fall 2023 semester.

This program will prepare business students for a broad spectrum of professional careers and graduate programs for which an understanding of business and legal topics — such as human resources, risk management, compliance and real estate — are essential.

To learn more about the Business and Law degree at St. Mary's, visit www.stmarytx.edu/business-and-law.

Dean elected to Law School Admission Council Board

St. Mary's University School of Law Dean Patricia Roberts, J.D., was appointed to a three-year term on the Law School Admission Council Board of Trustees in June. She serves on the Investment Committee and is a trustee liaison to the Emerging Markets and Innovation Committee.

The Law School Admission Council is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to advance law and justice by encouraging and assisting diverse individuals in their journey through law education.

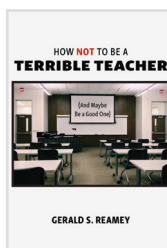
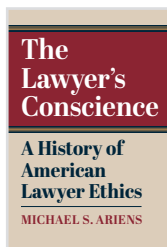
St. Mary's Law faculty in the books

The St. Mary's University School of Law's faculty do more than teach — they also share their expertise in publications. Between May 2022 and April 2023, many faculty members published articles, papers and even podcasts. Some examples of their work are seen below.

A longer list can be found online at www.stmarytx.edu/law-publications.

Books, chapters and podcasts:

- Michael Ariens, J.D., LL.M., Aloysius A. Leopold Professor of Law, wrote the book *The Lawyer's Conscience: A History of American Lawyer Ethics*, University of Kansas Press, 2023.
- Gerald Reamey, J.D., LL.M., Professor Emeritus of Law, wrote the book *How Not to be a Terrible Teacher*



(*And Maybe a Good One*), Carolina Academic Press, 2023.

- Genevieve Hébert Fajardo, J.D., Clinical Professor of Law and Englehardt Research Fellow, and Ramona Lampley, J.D., Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Development, wrote *Texas Practice Series: Consumer Rights and Remedies*, Third Edition, 2021; and *Texas Practice Series: Consumer Law Handbook*.
- Patricia Roberts, J.D., School of Law Dean, hosts a weekly podcast for thought leaders in legal education, *Aspen Leading Edge*, a venture with Aspen Publishing.

Articles and white papers:

- A.J. Bellido De Luna, J.D., Assistant Dean for Advocacy Programs and Hardy Service Professor of Law, contributed to *Collective Wisdom: One Memorable Cross Examination Lesson*, in the *National Institute for Trial Advocacy*, 2022.
- Robert Hu, Ph.D., LL.M., Professor of Law, wrote *Reconstruction of the Reasonable Person Standard Under Chinese Patent Law*, in the *Marquette Intellectual Property and Innovation Law Review*, 2022.
- Al Kauffman, J.D., Professor of Law, wrote *A Quarter Century of Challenges and Progress in Education, and an Agenda for the Next Quarter Century*, in *The Scholar: St. Mary's Law Review on Race and Social Justice*, 2023.
- Dorie Klein, J.D., Professor of Law and Englehardt Research Fellow, wrote *Taking Corrigibility Seriously*, in the *Berkeley Journal of Criminal Law*, 2023.
- Colin Marks, J.D., Associate Dean for Strategic Partnerships and Innovative Programs and the Ernest W. Clemens Professor of Law, wrote *Total Return Meltdown: The Case for Treating Total Return Swaps as Disguised Secured Transactions*, in the *Pepperdine Law Review*, 2023.
- Willy Rice, J.D., wrote *Grossly Negligent Utilities, Unimaginable Property Damage and the Scope of Liability Insurers' Duty to Indemnify Subrogated Property Insurers — Probative and Empirical Inferences From Courts' Divided Subrogation and Indemnification Decisions*, *Ohio State Business Law Journal*, 2023.

School of Law welcomes new faculty

The St. Mary's University School of Law has added seven new faces to its ranks for the fall semester. These faculty members new to the St. Mary's Law classrooms are:

- Adam MacLeod, J.D., Professor of Law, specializes in private law theory, property, contracts and intellectual property.



Adam MacLeod

- Patricia Moore, J.D., Professor of Law, specializes in civil procedure, federal courts, evidence and complex litigation.



Patricia Moore

- Michael Smith, J.D., Assistant Professor of Law, specializes in the areas of criminal law and criminal procedure.



Michael Smith

- Matthew Garcia, J.D., Moody Foundation Visiting Assistant Professor of Law, specializes in civil rights litigation, constitutional law, local government law and property.



Matthew Garcia

- Sigrid Vendrell-Planco, J.D., Visiting Assistant Professor of Law, works in the Law Success Program.



Sigrid Vendrell-Planco

- Delores Mayer, J.D., Ph.D., Assistant Service Professor in Law, works in the Law Success Program.

- Ali Nixon (J.D. '10), Associate Service Professor in Law, works in the Law Success Program.



Professor Chenglin Liu's research serves public health

by Leticia Romero

You can trace Professor of Law Chenglin “Gary” Liu’s interest in public health back to his early days researching organic foods. Now, he dedicates his career to academic research and learning.

“During the SARS epidemic in 2003, I was concerned about my parents’ and friends’ health and safety,” said Liu, LL.M., J.S.D. “I did extensive research and completed my first book, *Chinese Law on SARS*.



Photo by Robin Jerstad

Since then, I have been writing on public health law and regulations, including drug and food safety and pandemic-related issues.”

A professor at St. Mary’s University School of Law since 2007 and the Katherine A. Ryan Chair for Global and International Law, Liu began his legal education in China before meeting School of Law Professor Vincent R. Johnson, J.D., LL.M., LL.D., in 1998.

Johnson, then a Fulbright Scholar at Renmin University in Beijing, met Liu, then a visiting scholar at Renmin. Johnson introduced Liu to St. Mary’s, where Johnson had been teaching since the ’80s.

Johnson encouraged Liu to continue his education at Lund University in Sweden. In the early 2000s, Liu came to the United States, earning his J.S.D. from Washington University School of Law in St. Louis in 2005.

WHERE OUR FOOD COMES FROM

In the early 2000s, Liu began focusing more on epidemic-related drug safety, accessibility and food-related regulatory law — topics he’d later research. He said his findings at the time were enlightening yet disappointing.

“With the development of globalization, it’s difficult to find the origin of our food,” Liu said. “It’s very likely the shrimp you just purchased from a large chain grocery retailer were imported from another country. Unfortunately, how those shrimp are regulated is entirely unknown.”

This research fascinated Liu, inspiring him to learn more about pharmaceuticals and the source of the ingredients of drugs. He also noted the challenges of the Food and Drug Administration — limited budget and staff, and intense political scrutiny as a regulatory agency.

“You pay \$5 for a pound of shrimp, and you entertain your guests,” Liu said. “You and your guests are all happy and oblivious to the fact that excessive antibiotics may have been used in the farming process. It is understandable that the public doesn’t fully appreciate the value of government regulation, especially when this would, ultimately, increase the cost for both grocers and consumers.”

Liu enjoys sharing this research with students, saying the comparison of law to real-life scenarios, such as food regulation, makes the understanding more in-depth.

“I tell students that’s what food regulation is about,” Liu said. “From a comparative view, they can understand the law.”

EPIDEMIC-RELATED LICENSE SHARING

Liu’s expertise led him to be featured in the media and to author four books and about 20 publications. His latest article, *Beyond Compulsory Licensing: Pfizer Shares its COVID-19 Medicines with the Patent Pool*, landed in the *New York University Journal of Legislation and Public Policy*.

In the article, Liu wrote about intellectual property rights and the challenges of developing countries to access medicines and technologies previously protected under the General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs.

He explored how Pfizer Inc. shared its patent of Paxlovid, an antiviral COVID-19 pill, with 95 low- and middle-income countries. Pfizer made the decision to share the patent for little to no fee to provide the countries with access to potentially life-saving medicine under a voluntary licensing agreement with the international public health group Medicines Patent Pool.

“By doing this, Pfizer was able to strike a balance of making sure its patent was well protected while ensuring the patented product would not end up in the countries that were ineligible for the relief,” Liu said. ■



CIVIL RIGHTS CHAMPION

J.D. student Leslie Espiricueta helps marginalized communities

by Michelle Mondo

During her Spring 2023 semester, from the St. Mary's University campus, law student Leslie Espiricueta fought for a Georgia Innocence Project client who has served 25 years in prison.

The second-year J.D. student logged more than 150 pro bono hours for her remote internship with the Georgia Innocence Project for a case that remains confidential. She created a trial transcript digest for the attorneys, worked on smaller digests for witness impeachment and even researched and wrote a motion the attorneys filed a few days later.

"The work I completed through the internship made me feel good to contribute in any way I could to something important," Espiricueta said. "Plus, it made me excited to be a future lawyer."

The internship is one more step in Espiricueta's journey to become an attorney who champions the rights of marginalized communities, especially those who need a bilingual, Spanish-speaking attorney.

A desire to help

She first became aware of the difficulties encountered by the Hispanic community in her East Texas hometown of Tyler. Her mother immigrated from Mexico and only spoke Spanish. Espiricueta was the first in her family to learn English.

Espiricueta said she witnessed the results of policing in communities of color, in particular,

among teens with minor infractions who ended up in the criminal justice system.

She also watched her mother struggle through the legal process when trying to get help for relatives in the criminal justice system.

This led Espiricueta to swap a pre-med undergraduate major at Texas A&M University in College Station for sociology in anticipation of law school.

Setting an example

The community focus she found at the School of Law fit her goals, especially for advocacy.

She joined the Equal Justice Works National Advisory Committee and the Advocacy Program's National Team. She does all of this while working as the comment editor of the *St. Mary's Law Journal*. She has also secured a federal clerkship with U.S. Magistrate Judge Juan Alanis, J.D., in the Southern District of Texas.

Professor of Law Albert Kauffman, J.D., taught Espiricueta in his voting rights class.

"Leslie is dedicated to her community and friends, and I am sure she will dedicate her career to the community, especially the immigrant and low-income community," Kauffman said. "She has great skills but is very humble and honest about her abilities."

During the summer, Espiricueta went to New York City, interning with the New York City Law Department Special Federal

Litigation Division. She is now interning at the Western District of Texas Federal Public Defender's Office Capital Habeas Unit in Austin.

As the eldest of five, Espiricueta was the first to go to college and set an example for her younger siblings.

"I feel like it's my responsibility to make sure they know what paths are out there for them and they feel supported," she said. "Since I was a first-generation student, I didn't know how anything worked, and it was difficult. Now that I've gone through that, I'll be here to help." ■

"The work I completed through the internship made me feel good to contribute in any way I could to something important."

HISTORICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Alumnus builds legacy from San Antonio to Supreme Court

by Nathaniel Miller

On a Thursday morning in May in a law office in downtown San Antonio, Roy Barrera Jr. (B.A. '72, J.D. '75) greeted people, happily introducing them to a sharply dressed man standing beside him.

This man, Barrera continued, is his father, 96-year-old Roy Barrera Sr. (J.D. '51), and he's coming back to the office to assist on an upcoming case.

Proudly, the son compares his father's willingness to return to work to that of a famous National League Football quarterback who retired only to return and play the following season.

"He's the Tom Brady of lawyering," Roy Barrera Jr. said. "He really is the GOAT (greatest of all time)."

Both men, along with nearly a dozen other family members, have obtained either an undergraduate degree, a law degree or both from St. Mary's University. Graduates from the School of Law include Roy Barrera Sr.'s other son, Robert J. "Bobby" Barrera (B.A. '80, J.D. '84), his nephew, Gilbert C. Barrera Jr. (B.A. '77, J.D. '88), Stephen A. Barrera (J.D. '82), Stephen C. Barrera (J.D. '05) and Robert E. Arellano (J.D. '10).

Barrera Sr., a San Antonio native, graduated from what is now Fox Tech High School and immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving in the Philippines and Korea.

While overseas, Barrera was thrown from a truck and lost his left ring finger when his high school ring snagged on a nail. Losing a finger meant he could no longer play the clarinet in the Army band.

"So that was basically the end of my military career," Barrera Sr. said.

Upon his return, Barrera Sr. planned to become a mechanic. However, his mother convinced him to use his GI Bill to attend law school because he "loved to talk."

While a law student, Barrera Sr. worked with the Bexar County District Attorney's Office as an investigator, working alongside Pat Maloney, J.D., until 1951, when he became an assistant district attorney upon passing the bar exam.

In 1957, Barrera Sr. and Anthony Nicholas, J.D., then an assistant criminal district attorney, left to open their practice, Nicholas & Barrera. Their partnership celebrated 50 years together in 2007. Though Nicholas died in 2011, his name is still on the downtown building where the Barrera family continues to work.

That same year, Barrera Sr. argued in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Alcorta v. Texas*. The Court ruled Alvaro Alcorta was denied due process because the prosecution's main witness withheld crucial information during the trial.

Barrera, an assistant district attorney during the initial trial, argued the case for the state at the request of Bexar County District Attorney Hubert Green.

"I have always been rather confident about what I can do, and what I like to do is argue cases," Barrera Sr. said. "The Supreme Court was just another case where

you get to argue before judges. Even to this day, I enjoy the atmosphere and environment of the courtroom."

Barrera Sr. was approached by Texas Gov. John Connally in 1968 to serve as secretary of state, making him the first Hispanic man to hold the position.

Barrera Jr. said while he watched his father work in the courtroom most of his life, there was no pressure for him or his siblings to become attorneys. The love of the law, he said, is what led him down the same path.

"He used to tell us, 'You need to follow your heart and do what makes you happy,'" Barrera Jr. said.

Barrera Sr. founded an endowed scholarship for the School of Law in 2008 to provide "assistance to a Hispanic student who has excelled in the area of criminal law and who exhibits need." Following his father's lead, Barrera Jr. also established an endowed scholarship for law students in 2009.

"My siblings and I were blessed to have a father whose career could finance our education 100%," Barrera Jr. said. "Many young, deserving students who aspire to practice law don't have the same advantages my father provided to us, and I felt it was incumbent on me to contribute." ■

**"The Supreme Court was just another case where you get to argue before judges. Even to this day, I enjoy the atmosphere and environment of the courtroom."
— Roy Barrera Sr.**



Photo by Vanessa Velazquez

Roy Barrera Sr. (J.D. '51) sits surrounded by his son Roy Barrera Jr. (B.A. '72, J.D. '75), left, and nephew Gilbert C. Barrera Jr. (B.A. '77, J.D. '88). Many family members continue to work out of the law office founded by Barrera Sr. and his partner in downtown San Antonio.

Home is where the School is

The nation's first fully online J.D. students reflect on law school and life

by *Nathaniel Miller*

Rebecca Thompson and Gabrielle Tyler live 2,100 miles apart and more than 1,200 miles from the St. Mary's University School of Law. But that does not stop them from attending classes with the San Antonio-based institution — or from becoming fast friends.

Aaron Chapman lives in Vail, Arizona, and works with a law firm specializing in representing children as they make their way through the adoption system. After work, he goes home to his wife and five kids.

Natalie Kuo, of Austin, was looking for a part-time law program with the flexibility to work without relocating and a university that has a welcoming community.

Scattered across Texas and the United States, these students are part of the inaugural cohort of the School of Law's Online J.D. program. Announced in Fall 2021, the part-time program was the nation's first fully online J.D. offering to be accredited by the American Bar Association.



Photo by Josh Sailor

➤ Aaron Chapman, of Vail, Arizona, enjoys the flexibility of the Online J.D. program because it allows him to attend classes and still spend time with his wife and five children.

As the first to navigate this four-year program, many of the students were searching for a way to make a law degree more attainable, unaware a fully online program existed until they found St. Mary's Law.

Some just wanted a part-time program. Others already knew of St. Mary's through family or word of mouth. Some applied on a whim.

"Among the Texas Capitol crowd, most people either went to the University of Texas or St. Mary's, and St. Mary's has a great reputation," said Katie Carmichael of Austin.

Much like getting into any law program, each student application enters a competitive pool. Of the 797 applications for the inaugural class, only 27 earned a seat — an acceptance rate of 9%. This online cohort is called Section O, a name they embrace proudly.

Already, many students have expressed gratitude for getting the chance to pursue a law degree. Though interactions with each other and faculty are primarily virtual, those in Section O said they have never felt like they've been treated differently than on-campus J.D. students.

"It's allowed me the flexibility to be a present father and also a student."

— Aaron Chapman

Continued on next page

Continued from Page 11

"I feel like I don't just attend St. Mary's University. I feel like I'm a student at St. Mary's University," Thompson said. "And I am proud of it."

Juggling act

When Aaron Chapman was 18, he already knew he would one day want to adopt children.

As a 9-year-old, he and his brother were officially adopted by their stepfather, and Chapman was always amazed when his stepfather referred to them as his own children.

That compassion encouraged Chapman to consider adoption as well. Now, he and his wife have five children — four adopted.

"They're mine. It doesn't matter what their blood says," Chapman said. "Blood might be thicker than water, but it's not thicker than love."

It's that love of seeing children successfully navigate the foster care system that drove Chapman to law school with the desire to become an attorney who advocates for children's rights. He used the tribulations of his family's latest adoption process as extra motivation.

"My primary focus is going to be what's most important for children and their psychological development versus what's important for the parents," Chapman said.

Initially looking to apply to a university in Arizona, Chapman's research led him to information about the St. Mary's Online J.D. program while researching schools that offered a part-time or hybrid program. He wondered how different the program would be from his undergraduate studies at Western Governors University, an online, competency-based university.

"The professors are experts in their field. They've worked for amazing companies. And this is a golden opportunity for us because they're here to teach us."

– Helena Hernandez Fisher



What he found was an experience similar to any other classroom. Classes are via Zoom but begin promptly. Students can schedule times to meet virtually with professors during office hours or at another convenient time.

Professors post recorded lectures online to help students review lessons or catch up on what they missed, especially if they get caught in traffic on the way home from work or are dealing with a sick family member.

Chapman said there have been times when St. Mary's Law professors have answered emails late into the evening.

"They know we have children, work and everything else," he said. "They adjusted schedules to keep answering emails because we're doing class work at night. We don't always have other options."

To teach in the Online J.D. Program, School of Law faculty must be certified through a six-week pedagogy course and complete periodic continuing education.

Colin Marks, J.D., Associate Dean for Strategic Partnerships and Innovative Programs and Ernest W. Clemens Professor of Law, said building an online course can be challenging to blend asynchronous and synchronous learning. However, he added, faculty have enjoyed many benefits of teaching online courses.

"After designing the classes, many professors enjoy the smaller classes we have for the online students and the freedom to conduct class from anywhere," Marks said.

Helena Hernandez Fisher, originally from Laredo, now lives in San Antonio. Though she takes courses online, she enjoys coming to campus when she can. She said juggling a full-time program would not have been possible with her full-time job as a Senior Grant Development Manager at the University of Texas at San Antonio and raising her 5-year-old son.

Hernandez Fisher said faculty have been accommodating of the situations in students' personal lives. When her son had a karate test to move up in his belt rankings, Hernandez Fisher was sure she would have to miss it because of class. However, her professor told her to go to the event because the lecture would be recorded.

"The professors are experts in their field. They've worked for amazing companies. And this is a golden opportunity for us because they're here to teach us," Hernandez Fisher said. "These are not C-string coaches. This is the A-Team. And they're not leaving anything on the table."

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Photo by Silvia Pangaro

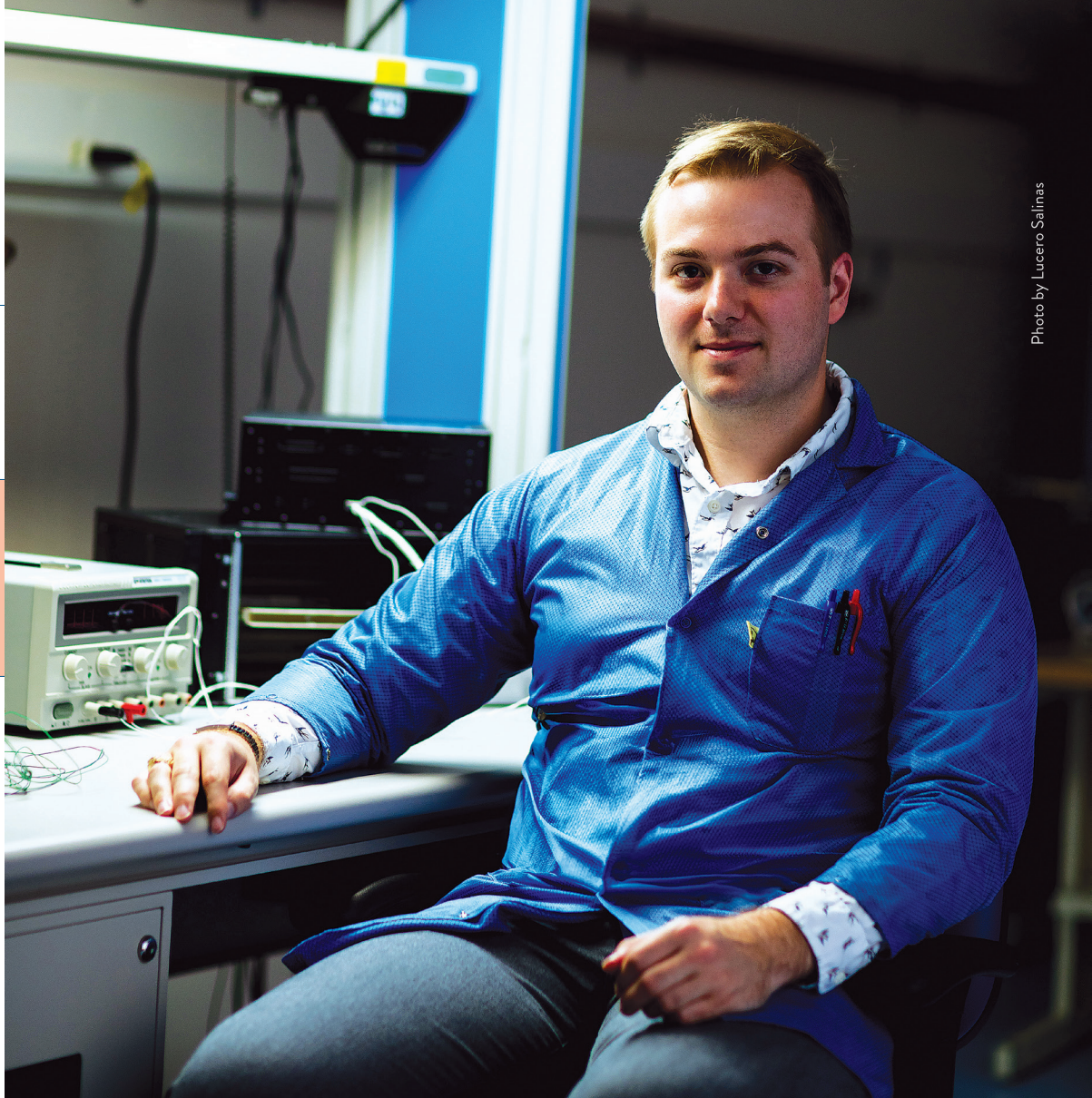
▶ Rebeca Thompson, her son, Jayden-Levi, and their dog, Ash, review a law school textbook in their home in Lake Worth, Florida.



Photo by Cari Faye Antonovich

▶ Gabrielle Tyler sits with her son, Caleb, at their home in Casper, Wyoming. Tyler and Thompson have forged a strong friendship despite living across the country.

▶ Helena Hernandez Fisher, originally from Laredo, works in grant development during the day. Fully online courses let her work full-time as well as attend classes and her son's extra curriculums.



▶ Grayson Russell, of Castroville, works as a space avionics engineer at Southwest Research Institute but said his calling is to follow in his family's footsteps and pursue a career in law.

Continued from Page 13

Chapman stressed online classes are not easier because they are virtual. Students must prioritize studying and time management. But flexible schedules have allowed him to be present at events, such as his son's first track meet.

"I was able to pay attention in class, but I was also there to support my son," Chapman said. "It's allowed me the flexibility to be a present father and also a student."

Friends in virtual places

Rebecca Thompson and Gabrielle Tyler talk as if they've been lifelong companions.

Thompson, of Lake Worth, Florida, and Tyler, of Casper, Wyoming, never met before their on-campus orientation at St. Mary's Law in 2022. Striking up a conversation on the ride to campus from the hotel, the two found shared experiences: husbands who served

as youth pastors, motherhood and a return to their education as nontraditional students.

Since that short ride and bonding throughout the first year of classes, the two are planning to get together — along with their husbands — when they come to campus for a professional development weekend during the Fall 2023 semester.

Even during semester breaks, the two make it a point to stay in contact.

"We talk almost every single day," Tyler said. "During our last break, Rebeca FaceTimed just to say she wanted to see me. It's hard to make new friends, especially as an adult with children."

Meeting online for class has been a unique experience. Most on-campus students go to their classroom and sit in the same seat and next to the same people. In comparison, online students mostly see each other on screen.

To build camaraderie, students have found ways to make different connections in place of face-to-face interactions. Many open their virtual rooms for study groups on weekends or will log in to chat before or after class.

The cohort also communicates on GroupMe — a mobile messaging board. Used chiefly for school, the students have also made it a point to make the message board a place for sharing life updates and pictures of children and pets. Students stuck in traffic after work, or someone with a sick family member can leave a message for the group to share with the professor during that evening's class.

"In my opinion, the online cohort is much closer knit than an in-person cohort because we have this online connection that makes it easier for us to share information," Thompson said.

Section O also uses the message board to participate in on-campus events when its members cannot all visit in person. For instance, in October 2022, Carmichael led the cohort in collecting donations to purchase candy for the School of Law's Boo Bash, which provides Halloween candy to local kids. Carmichael said the group had a 100% participation rate and raised just under \$1,800.

Sending the money to Grayson Russell, of Castroville, the section purchased enough candy to load his Jeep Grand Cherokee.

"That was a big point of pride for us because it showed everybody that we might not physically be on campus, but we're here," Carmichael said.

Connection to campus

During spring semesters, all first-year J.D. students participate in the Linda and Dave Schlueter First-Year Moot Court Competition.

Russell, needing a partner, teamed up with Austin Halvorson, who happens to live in Austin, for the competition despite neither knowing anything about arguing a trial case.

Continued on next page

"In my opinion, the online cohort is much closer knit than an in-person cohort because we have this online connection that makes it easier for us to share information."

– Rebeca Thompson



Photo by Jessica Pages

➤ Austin Halvorson prepares to attend his online class at home in Austin. Halvorson said he enjoys the closeness of the law community whenever he finds himself on campus.

Halvorson is employed with the Gober Group and works with the Texas Legislature and lawmakers. Russell, a space avionics engineer at Southwest Research Institute now works on computers for satellites, but grew up around attorneys. His father graduated from the School of Law in 1986.

When COVID-19 started, Russell realized how much he missed talking with people. Growing up and watching people ask his father for advice, Russell recognized a type of leadership that can make a lasting impact.

"I like that aspect of being the person someone comes to for questions," Russell said. "It's why I went into engineering. But being a lawyer is a little bit more down to Earth."

The duo did not expect to advance far in the moot court competition but found themselves growing more confident with each victory. Before they knew it, they were both on campus for the finals in March — winning first place from from judges comprised of the Texas Fourth Court of Appeals justices.

After each round, professors and judges would give the duo pointers on how to improve. The most shocking thing, Halvorson said, was when they first headed into the Law Courtroom and received words of encouragement from on-campus J.D. students in other cohorts.

"They had never seen us before, and they were just really welcoming," Halvorson said.

Russell added that winning the competition was one of those moments that made law school feel real.

"It gave me the validation that 'Oh, this is law school,'" Russell said. "That was the final turn for me, saying I can go from engineering to being a lawyer."

While the teammates found a connection to the campus through competition, some students find their connections through interactions with smaller groups.

Having attended private colleges with small teacher-to-student ratios in the past, Natalie Kuo said she enjoyed building relationships with her instructors and classmates instead of sitting in a large classroom.

Living and working in Austin, Kuo has tried to be part of the larger campus community when she can. In April, she attended the event, Gavel and Gowns, also affectionately known as "law prom," with a friend in the program and attended the *St. Mary's Law Journal's* banquet. She plans to start writing for the *Law Journal* this fall.

As a paralegal at Groom Law Firm, Kuo said finding a sense of community can make the challenge of adapting to a new location easier. As someone who was challenged by frequent moves, Kuo said being able to find fun and friends makes challenges feel smaller, even in law school.

Early in her college career, she worked as a DJ in Santa Cruz, California, playing music from the 1990s on a show called *All That and a Bag of Chips*. Listeners knew her on the air by the name "Status Kuo."

Though her DJ days are behind her, and she's not required to participate in extracurricular activities in the online program, Kuo said she wants to do something to continue building her sense of community with the campus by helping grow organizations for online students.

She also said she hopes Section O will continue building stronger personal connections as they progress through the program.

"Forming the camaraderie in the cohort has been essential," she said. "All the people in Section O sense we're doing this together. We're all going to make it across the finish line together." ■

"All the people in Section O sense we're doing this together. We're all going to make it across the finish line together."

– Natalie Kuo

Natalie Kuo, of Austin, spends time with her dogs, Bruce and Chip, during the day. Though she is taking courses online, Kuo is pursuing ways to be engaged with the campus community, such as writing for the *St. Mary's Law Journal*. ↗



Photo by Jessica Pages

RAISE THE BAR

St. Mary's Law supports students all the way to licensing exam

by Leticia Romero

Law school can feel like one hurdle after another. First, prospective students study and take the LSAT to get accepted into law school. Next comes the challenge of succeeding in law school by juggling studying, exams and everyday life. Finally, there's the ever-dreaded bar exam — a six-hour, two-day ordeal that requires months of full-time studying to prepare. This last leg of the journey can be isolating for many.

Afton Cavanaugh (J.D. '13), Assistant Dean for Law Success, said the St. Mary's University School of Law saw a need to extend support to students beyond graduation. In true Marianist charism form, this extra helping hand comes in the form of the Raise the Bar program.

"I see Raise the Bar as part of the family spirit, and that doesn't end just because somebody walked across the stage," Cavanaugh said. "It's about taking this next very challenging leap with them and making sure that they feel supported as they go through it."

The Raise the Bar program, a supplement to a commercial bar prep program, is offered to all School of Law graduates. Once enrolled, the only requirement is that students maintain standards, such as meeting with coaches a certain number of times and staying within a certain percentage of completion of the commercial course.

"When I studied for the bar, my coach offered immense support and encouragement that undoubtedly contributed to my success."

— Zachary Olvera (J.D. '21)

Along with the commercial course training, graduates can access three full-time faculty members as coaches, all of whom are bar specialists who receive training throughout the year and teach bar prep for credit courses.

The School of Law has also trained bar fellows — usually recent graduates who participated in Raise the Bar, some of whom have done bar coaching before or provided support. They work one-on-one with smaller groups than the full-time coaches. All Raise the Bar coaches are personally invested in students' success on the bar exam and work individually with students to identify and overcome their weaknesses. They help create individual study schedules, manage stress and anxiety, explain test day strategies and improve overall performance on the bar's multiple choice and essay sections.

These measures, beyond the commercial bar prep, are what Zachary Olvera (J.D. '21) said helped him pass the bar on his first attempt and why he was thrilled to help pay it forward.

"When I studied for the bar, my coach offered immense support and encouragement that undoubtedly contributed to my success," Olvera said.

Along with training sessions, weekly check-ins, and daily access to coaches, graduates who participate in Raise the Bar also enjoy wellness support, like massage chairs, snacks and various meals throughout their exam preparations. Much of the program has been supported through donations, such as a \$10,000 grant from the Harbourview Foundation.

Cavanaugh said consistent participation is the key to success.

"Generally, for people who stay engaged with Raise the Bar all throughout the cycle, they usually pass at a 5% to 10% higher rate," he said. ■



Photo by Robin Jerstad

▲ Afton Cavanaugh (J.D. '13), Assistant Dean for Law Success, leads a small, bar-tips group, including second-year J.D. student Pablo Bautista Ramirez, left, in the Blume Library.

LANDING IN LAW SCHOOL



Photo by Rebin Jerstad

“I loved everything about my time at St. Mary’s. I made amazing, lifelong friends and found this whole new family.”

— Cheryl Casteel

Three generations fulfill law dreams at St. Mary’s University

by Nathaniel Miller

When Carter Casteel (J.D. ’85), then a 39-year-old public school teacher, told her father she intended to pursue her dream of becoming a lawyer, he asked what kind of attorney she wanted to be.

“A good one,” she quipped.

Now the founder of a New Braunfels law firm, Casteel works alongside her daughter and granddaughter — all graduates of the St. Mary’s University School of Law — while awaiting a fourth family member to complete her studies.

With three generations having walked the halls of the School of Law, Casteel said she wouldn’t have entrusted their law education to just anywhere.

“The school has definitely taken care of us,” Casteel said.

A native of Monahans, Casteel moved to Austin in 1961, obtaining her bachelor’s degree at the University of Texas at Austin and then her master’s degree at what would later be called Texas State University in San Marcos. While at UT, She met and married Thomas Casteel and had two children, Cheryl and Barron.

In 1972, the family moved to New Braunfels, and Carter Casteel was encouraged to pursue her dream of law school while she was teaching at Canyon High School. Starting her legal studies in 1982, Carter Casteel not only became an attorney, but also was elected the first female county judge of Comal County in 1990. Later, she served two terms in the Texas House of Representatives from 2003 to 2007.

“St. Mary’s gave me the opportunity to maintain my family in New Braunfels and pursue my dream,” she said.

While not initially lured by law school, Cheryl Casteel (J.D. ’04) first became a certified public accountant and then the chief financial officer for New Braunfels Utilities.

Working with the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and the Lower Colorado River Authority, she became interested in learning how laws shape her community and earned her law degree.

“I loved everything about my time at St. Mary’s,” Cheryl Casteel said. “I made amazing, lifelong friends and found this whole new family.”

Morrigan Land (J.D. ’20), Cheryl Casteel’s daughter, fell for the law at age 8, when she drew a picture of herself as a judge.

In high school, Land brought her interest in criminal law to an internship with the Comal County District Attorney’s Office before attending Texas A&M University and working in Washington, D.C., for then-U.S. Representative Lamar Smith.

Once she started attending classes at St. Mary’s Law, Land was named co-captain of the National Trial Team and served as vice president of the Student Bar Association.

“I loved law school,” she said. “I looked forward to going to class. I looked forward to competitions. I looked forward to training, and the community was just great.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Morrigan Land and her sister, Catherine Land quarantined and recovered together after contracting the virus. Watching Morrigan Land study for the bar exam, Catherine Land’s interest in attending law school grew.

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in Communications from Baylor University and working as a producer for National Geographic Wild’s *Walking with Giraffes*, Catherine Land, now a third-year J.D. student, said she never felt pressured to go to law school.

“I feel lucky that my grandmother, my mom and my sister have always made it clear that I’m going to write my own story,” she said.

South Texas Distinguished Professor of Law Vincent Johnson, J.D., LL.M., LL.D., was in his first year of teaching at St. Mary’s when he had Carter Casteel in class. He has since taught every family member at some point in their legal studies.

“Nothing is a stronger vote of confidence in a university than for a family, time after time, to entrust its very able members to the care of that university,” Johnson said. ■

◀ From left, J.D. student Catherine Land, Carter Casteel (J.D. ’85), Cheryl Casteel (J.D. ’04) and Morrigan Land (J.D. ’20) visit the Comal County Courthouse in New Braunfels. All attended the St. Mary’s University School of Law.

M★RIANIST ROOTS IN PUERTO RICO

Alumnus from Puerto Rico finds an extension of his home at St. Mary's

by Leticia Romero

Puerto Rico, known for its vibrant culture and history, decadent cuisine, and majestic beaches and mountains, is a tourist destination for some. But for Carlos Chévere-Lugo, J.D. (LL.M. '17, LL.M. '18), the U.S. territory is home.

As a teenager, Chévere-Lugo graduated from Colegio San José, a Marianist high school in San Juan. The teachings made such an impact on him that he sought further Catholic institutions.

After earning his law degree from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Puerto Rico, he applied to the St. Mary's University School of Law's LL.M. program. He was thrilled to learn that it was both a Catholic and Marianist University.

"It was the best decision I ever made because St. Mary's Law was like an extension of my family, far, far away," Chévere-Lugo said. "These Catholic and Marianist values have been taught in my family, so it's very easy to relate."

TERRITORIAL LAW

Chévere-Lugo reflected fondly on living in San Antonio for the two years it took him to complete two LL.M. programs — in American Legal Studies and International Criminal Law.

The LL.M. program at St. Mary's consists of 24 credit hours that can be completed on-campus, fully online, or through a combination of courses and in-person externships.

A newly launched Territorial Law concentration educates those who intend to or currently practice law in the territories

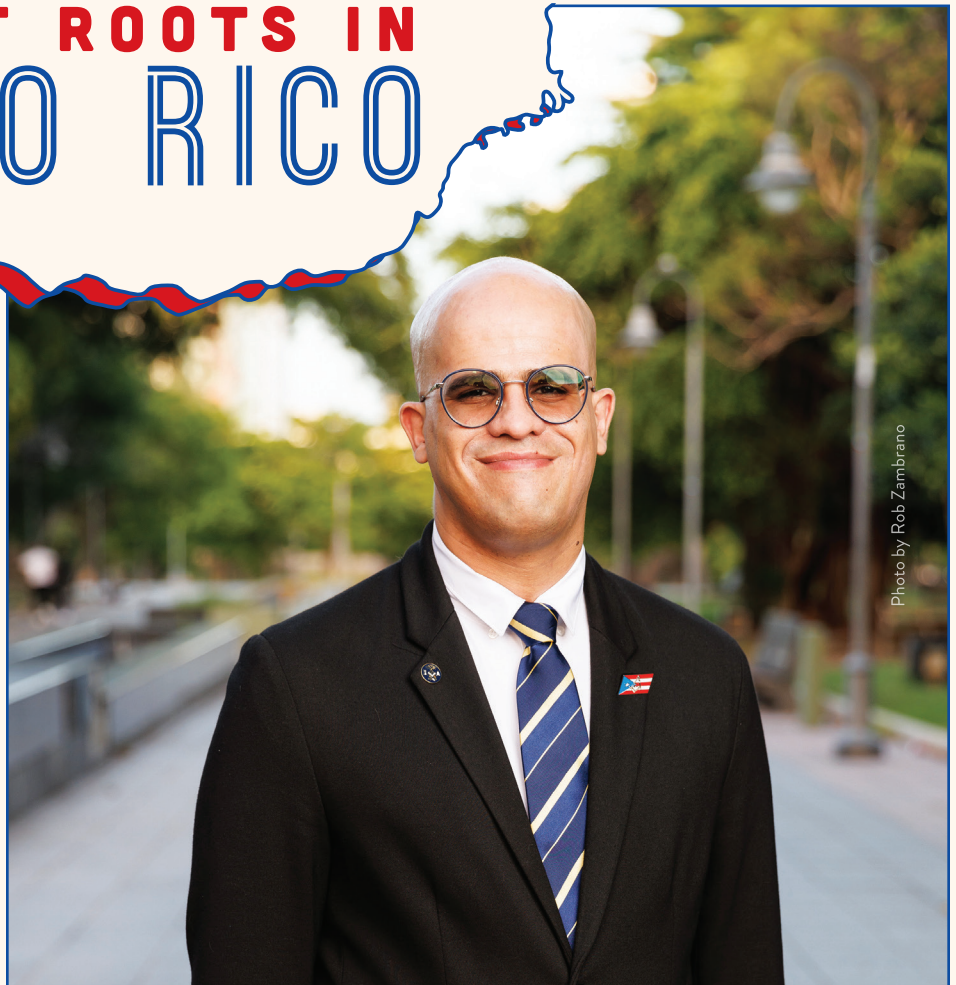


Photo by Rob Zambrano

▲ Carlos Chévere-Lugo (LL.M. '17, LL.M. '18) visits Luis Muñoz Rivera Park in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

of the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa. Additionally, St. Mary's offers a Master of Jurisprudence, or M.Jur., for nonlawyers with a new Territorial Law concentration.

"I'm so grateful because we have an opportunity to create a consciousness not only about the territory of Puerto Rico, but also about the other territories in the nation," Chévere-Lugo said.

BUILDING BRIDGES

With a law practice in Puerto Rico, Chévere-Lugo mostly creates corporate and labor regulation manuals for clients. Chévere-Lugo aspires to teach and works with other attorneys in the Bar Association of Puerto Rico to facilitate community awareness and an understanding of basic inherent human rights, such as the right to adequate housing.

He has continued to help St. Mary's build bridges in the territory. In March,

Chévere-Lugo hosted St. Mary's Law Dean Patricia Roberts, J.D., and Assistant Dean of International Programs Jen Stevenson, J.D., in Puerto Rico for a brainstorming collaboration with Puerto Rican universities, other law school deans and the Puerto Rico Bar Association.

St. Mary's Visiting Assistant Professor of Law Sigrid Vendrell-Polanco, J.D., a Puerto Rico native, also joined Chévere-Lugo at the Law & Society Association Annual Meeting in San Juan in June. Together, they continue to promote the St. Mary's Law LL.M. program's Territorial Law concentration and find other points of collaboration.

"We're hoping to explore everything worth exploring in territorial law, continue to bring awareness to the issues that arise in territorial law and bring it more into the law school curriculum," Vendrell-Polanco said. ■

Congrats

St. Mary's Law Class of 2023



Photos by Robin Jerstad

Karen Crawford, of Webster, New York, left, and Jose "Joe" Pena, of Edinburg, above, celebrate their Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) degrees at the St. Mary's University School of Law Spring 2023 Commencement in May. Overall, 175 new School of Law graduates walked the stage, including four for the Master of Jurisprudence (M.Jur.), 164 for J.D. and seven for Master of Laws (LL.M.).

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FOR A JUST CAUSE

Criminal Justice Clinic students provide support for those in need

by Nathaniel Miller

Kaylie Morgan (J.D. '23) and third-year J.D. student Caitlyn Collins both aspire to be criminal defense attorneys with the dream of bringing effective legal counsel to those in need.

Unfortunately, not everyone receives effective, or even good, counsel. As part of the Criminal Justice Clinic at the St. Mary's University School of Law, eight students worked during Spring 2023 with the Bexar County District Attorney's Office Conviction Integrity Unit to seek justice for a group of female clients they believe failed to get appropriate representation from an unethical attorney.

"These women never received their right to effective counsel," Morgan said. "It's their fundamental right, and they were entitled to a fair trial."

In 2018, the attorney was convicted on six counts of human trafficking and coercing his clients to have sex with him and was sentenced to 80 years in prison. The number of women he is accused of abusing numbers in the hundreds.

In April, the law students had their first writ application granted, making one client eligible for a new trial.

Getting people to come forward is the challenging part, Collins said. Many victims do not want to relive the trauma they've experienced, and many more cannot be found or will not return messages.

"This has been a mix of emotions, criminal justice and criminal defense," Collins said. "I know it's been hard for a lot of people, but we're hoping to help correct something terrible that was done to them."

St. Mary's Clinical Professor of Law Stephanie Stevens (B.A. '87, J.D. '91) said empathy is an important skill for those aspiring to practice criminal law, alongside writing and verbal skills.

"Everybody in life needs help," she said. "To put yourself in someone else's shoes helps make you a better attorney." ■

J.D. student Caitlyn Collins, left, and Kaylie Morgan (J.D. '23), took part in the Spring 2023 Criminal Justice Clinic at the Center for Legal and Social Justice. ▶



Photo by Lucero Salinas