

# DOCKET

THE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY SCHOOL OF LAW MAGAZINE

FALL 2023



INSIDE

## MISSION DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

Leaders in Legal Education | Leaders in Law Practice





# DOCKET

THE UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY  
SCHOOL OF LAW MAGAZINE

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## DETROIT MERCY LAW MISSION STATEMENT

University of Detroit Mercy School of Law is a diverse, urban Catholic law school in the Jesuit and Mercy traditions. We seek to *educate the complete lawyer* through a dynamic curriculum that integrates theory, doctrine, and experiential learning; provides unique global perspectives through transnational educational opportunities; and emphasizes ethics and service to others.

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**FRONT COVER**  
Hon. Kyra Harris  
Bolden '14,  
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Court Justice



**FRONT COVER**  
Detroit Mercy  
Law All-Female  
Team Places Third  
in National and  
First in Regional  
USPTO Patent  
Competition

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# MESSAGE

FROM **DEAN JELANI JEFFERSON EXUM**

In this issue of the *Docket*, we celebrate our alumni, students, faculty, and staff who live out our mission through their leadership. We pay tribute to those who broke barriers in the legal profession and those who continue to positively impact the future through their work. I am proud to be part of a law school community committed to leading with integrity and a sense of justice.

We recognize our faculty for their mission-driven leadership in our program of legal education. Starting this fall, our faculty voted on the bold step to replace the traditional grading curve with criterion-referenced assessment and implemented a new first-year required course, Critical Lawyering Skills in Social Context, that is being led by alumni through online, asynchronous instruction. Our faculty will continue to lead us to the future of legal education through innovative curriculum that prioritizes academic excellence and student success and well-being.

The future of our institution remains bright. This fall, we are joined by three new full-time faculty members who bring a wealth of experience and expertise. We welcomed another diverse entering class—**85** percent are the first in their family to attend law school, **29** percent are first-generation college graduates, **48** percent are students of color, **59** percent are women, **11** percent are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and **7** percent are students with disabilities. I am proud that we continue to provide access to the legal profession.

Our students continue to serve the Detroit community and beyond through our numerous clinics. This year, our traveling expungement clinic served **200** people in need across Michigan. Our students also achieved national success with an all-woman team competing in the final round of the USPTO's National Patent Drafting Competition.

I am excited to continue working with you as we dedicate ourselves to sustaining the tradition of *educating the complete lawyer*, serving our students, and serving the community by developing mission-driven lawyers and leaders.



**Jelani Jefferson Exum**

Dean & Philip J. McElroy Professor of Law

# MISSION-DRIVEN LEADERS IN LEGAL EDUCATION

## *Criterion-Reference Assessment*

### *Prioritizing Academic Excellence, Student Achievement, & Well-Being*

**Beginning in the fall of 2023, Detroit Mercy Law transitioned to criterion-reference assessment. The faculty approved the change after extensive research, discussion, and committee work. The program of legal education will remain rigorous and in compliance with American Bar Association standards.**

"Our faculty's mission-driven and innovative leadership in legal education will be good for our students, the profession, and the communities we serve," stated **Dean Jelani Jefferson Exum**. "These changes better align our program of legal education with our mission of *educating the complete lawyer*, emerging trends and best practices in legal education, and our Jesuit and Mercy roots emphasizing academic excellence and attending to the whole student."



Criterion-referenced assessment replaced the grading curve in all Detroit Mercy Law courses. Students are now evaluated based on objective standards of competency rather than in comparison to their classmates. With this new assessment model, students still have grades, grade point averages, and a class rank.

"The curriculum committee reviewed scholarship on student learning, trends in support of humanizing law school, and developments in assessment, all of which support this change. This change allows us to continue to provide a rigorous program of legal education while also supporting our work in assessing student achievement of learning outcomes and evaluating our program of legal education," said **Karen McDonald Henning**, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Law.



"Criterion-referenced assessment fosters a collaborative learning environment, which supports the type of learning and critical thinking that is essential to developing good lawyers. Assessing levels of proficiency provides students and professors more meaningful information about student performance, which helps everyone improve student learning," stated **Paula Manning**, Associate Dean of Student Learning Outcomes & Assessment and Professor of Law.



"This change is not intended to inflate grades—that can be done by adjusting a curve. The goal is for students to earn grades that more accurately reflect their learning, which we hope will be more helpful to students, professors, and employers," explained **Jennifer Rumschlag**, Associate Dean of Institutional Outcomes and Communications, who leads the Career Services Office.



"When you use a curve, students at the top figure out what they need to do to get by and students at the bottom lose motivation. When you move away from the curve, students get a clearer idea of their strengths and weaknesses and how they can improve, which is perfectly in line with bar preparation," stated **Sarah Garrison**, Director of Bar Preparation.



"Criterion-referenced assessment prioritizes both student learning and well-being," explained **Ieisha Humphrey**, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs. "The traditional grading curve deemphasizes growth mindset during law school and does not lead to a healthy culture for the legal profession. It negatively impacts civility, teamwork, and mental health."



## Critical Legal Skills in Social Context

### Ensuring a Strong Foundation for Students

The faculty also approved changes to the first-year curriculum, including the establishment of a new, required, skills-based course: Critical Legal Skills in Social Context. The online, asynchronous course aims to help students develop a strong foundation for legal practice by integrating skills, professionalism, and ethics into the first semester of legal studies. The curriculum committee developed the four-credit hour course in collaboration with faculty and deans from a wide range of expertise.

Students complete modules throughout the semester. Modules include many of the areas of education required by the new ABA 303(c) standard and focus on professional identity formation, bias, cross-cultural competency and anti-racism training, academic success skills, law practice skills, and career and professionalism skills.

"Legal education needs to prepare students for practice," stated **Nicholas Schroeck**, Associate Dean of Experiential Education and Associate Professor of Law. "This course gives us a space to intentionally educate our students on matters we know are important to their success that have traditionally not had a significant place in the curriculum—some of which are now required by the ABA."

"This course is especially important at Detroit Mercy Law, where a significant portion of our students are first-generation law students with limited exposure to the profession," explained **Courtney Griffin Ph.D.**, Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Belonging. For the incoming class of 2023, 85% are the first in their family to attend law school.

During the fall of 2023, there are six sections of the course. Each section is led by an adjunct professor, all of whom are alumni. The professors serve as mentors to the students, answer questions about the course content, and assess their students' work product.



**Migladys Bermudez '14** is a Staff Attorney at Justice for Our Neighbors of Michigan. Her career path is rooted in public interest.



**Fatmeh Cheaib '22** is an Associate at Bodman. She attended Detroit Mercy Law as a Dean's Fellow.



**Nicole Huddleston '14** is the Managing Director of the Detroit Justice Center. She served as a prosecutor and then transitioned her career to public interest work.



**Joy Mohammed '22** is an Associate Attorney at Ottenwess Law, PLC. Prior to law school, she worked as a counselor.



**Kory Steen '18** is an Associate at Dickinson Wright. His practice is focused on litigation. Before entering private practice, he served as a federal judicial clerk and coached Moot Court at Detroit Mercy Law.

**Aidan Maraachli '17** is a Career Law Clerk at the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. He served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Detroit Mercy Law Review while a student.



WITH **SARAH GARRISON**

Director of Bar Preparation Services

**Sarah Garrison** leads bar preparation services at Detroit Mercy Law. She is a licensed attorney in Illinois and has dedicated the past 14 years of her career to helping law students succeed on the bar exam.

Director Garrison created and implemented the Detroit Mercy Law Power of One Campaign, a program that helps graduates pass the bar exam on their first attempt by providing key preparation benchmarks and financial support. Since the launch of Power of One, 100 percent of the graduates who completed the program's key benchmarks passed the July 2022 and February 2023 exams on their first attempt. Data collection is currently underway for July 2023. The benchmarks include taking the Bar Exam Strategies course, completing 85 percent of an approved commercial bar prep course, completing 1,200 AdaptiBar questions, and participating in the faculty mentoring program. Graduates that complete these benchmarks and pass their first bar exam receive a financial incentive from Detroit Mercy Law to help reimburse their bar preparation expenses.

Director Garrison recently initiated meetings and discussions between the five law schools of Michigan and the Michigan Board of Law Examiners (BLE) in response to the many recent changes in Michigan licensing requirements, most notably the bar exam, that resulted in statewide challenges for law graduates seeking to join the State Bar.

While Detroit Mercy Law graduates pursue licensure throughout the US and Canada, most graduates who pursue licensure in the US choose to sit for the Michigan Bar Exam, which is administered by the BLE twice a year—in February and July. Most graduates sit for the July exam following graduation in May.

Graduates intensely prepare for the bar exam following graduation, but preparation at Detroit Mercy Law can begin prior to graduation. Students are strongly encouraged to take the course Bar Exam Strategies taught by Director Garrison during their last term. Around 90 percent of students who intend to sit for a US bar exam enroll in the course.

## **WHAT CHANGES HAVE RECENTLY HAPPENED AND WHAT ADDITIONAL CHANGES ARE TO COME TO THE MICHIGAN BAR EXAM?**

Most recently, the Michigan Bar Exam has switched from a single jurisdiction exam—written, graded, and valid only in Michigan—to a multi-jurisdiction exam known as the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE). The UBE is written by the National Conference of Bar Examiners, a not-for-profit organization that develops licensing exams that are then purchased by the different jurisdictions. The score you receive on the UBE can be used to be admitted in additional jurisdictions without having to sit for the bar exam again. Michigan has administered two sessions of the UBE in the state.

In July of 2027, the UBE will be phased out and potentially replaced with a new exam called the NextGen Bar Exam. NextGen will be first made available in July 2026 and individual jurisdictions will need to decide when they adopt NextGen, if they choose to do so at all.

## WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU AND THE STUDENTS EXPERIENCED WITH THESE CHANGES?

The biggest challenge for the students and myself, in trying to prepare the students, is the lack of certainty regarding the licensing exam in our state. It's important to inform students upon matriculation of the expectations of the bar exam to ensure students statewide can be successful at respectable rates. Through the last five years, our students have dealt with different versions of the exam during the pandemic, then the switch to the UBE, and now the uncertainty of what our exam will look like after July 2026.

Due to the lack of transparency of the National Conference of Bar Examiners, the drafters of the NextGen Bar Exam, it is very unclear to governing bodies, like the BLE, what the exam is really going to look like, what it will cost, how it will be graded, and what a passing score looks like. Many jurisdictions are waiting for brave early adopters of NextGen to go through a testing cycle before making the switch.

It is difficult for students to know the best approach to studying when the target continues to shift and bar professionals are given little time to adjust their curriculum to fit the new exam format.

## HOW IS DETROIT MERCY LAW SUPPORTING STUDENTS THROUGH THESE CHANGES AND CHALLENGES?

Through the many changes, we have used historical bar exam data from our students to determine benchmarks that impact our students' passage rate. Through our data, we can isolate our students' strengths and weaknesses and address them in the Bar Exam Strategies course, suggested study strategies, and in our Power of One program. Even with the changes, our benchmarks have stayed true and so it provides some certainty to the students that if they do the work and meet the benchmarks, they will very likely pass the exam—whatever its format. We will continue to monitor upcoming changes, new data, and the outcomes of our students so we can adjust our services and programs as needed to continue providing clarity and a path for success to our graduates.

## ALUMNA HOSTS PRIVATE FUNDRAISER IN SUPPORT OF POWER OF ONE BAR SUCCESS PROGRAM



**Rita Samir Soka '22** hosted a private fundraiser at her home in support of the Detroit Mercy Law Power of One program on September 14. The program helps graduates pass the bar exam on their first attempt by providing key preparation benchmarks and financial support. With over 100 graduates sitting for a US bar exam each year, the program requires significant annual funding. Since the launch of Power of One, 100 percent of the graduates who completed the program's key benchmarks passed the bar on their first attempt.

As part of the first class to experience the program, Soka credits her success in passing the Michigan Bar Exam to the Power of One. "It's a checklist of what you need to do to be successful on the bar exam, and that was so helpful for me," Soka explained. "I believe this is a great program that is benefiting all students."

Many generous alumni and friends contributed to the private fundraiser event at Soka's home. The funds raised will help reimburse graduates who complete the program and pass their first bar exam. It will also help provide the AdaptiBar program free of charge to students and graduates. The private fundraiser was sponsored by Citizen's State Bank. Dash Diamonds donated a diamond necklace for the 52-card raffle. Abu K'nafa and Rollow Bar Detroit donated desserts.

Alumni and friends interested in hosting fundraisers to support Power of One or other Detroit Mercy Law programs or scholarships are encouraged to contact [lawdean@udmercy.edu](mailto:lawdean@udmercy.edu).

# MISSION-DRIVEN LEADERSHIP

**For more than a century, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law has educated lawyers who lead with a commitment to the pursuit of justice, service to others, and the highest standards of the legal profession.**

Our alumni, who serve the rule of law in many capacities, are a testament to our commitment of *educating the complete lawyer*.

## Leading from the Bench

We are proud of our many alumni who have led and continue to lead through their service to the bench. We applaud their distinguished careers and value their contributions to the community and to Detroit Mercy Law.

With two alumni Justices serving on the Michigan Supreme Court, Detroit Mercy Law is the only law school with multiple alumni currently serving on the bench of the state's highest court. The seven alumni Judges serving on the Michigan Court of Appeals account for over a quarter of the state's appellate bench—currently more than any other law school.



**HON. BRIAN K. ZAHRA '87**  
Michigan Supreme Court, Justice

**Justice Brian K. Zahra '87** holds 29 years of service to the Michigan bench. He joined the bench in 1994 as a judge in the Wayne County Circuit Court. In 1999, he was appointed to serve on the Michigan Court of Appeals, and in 2011, he was nominated to the Michigan Supreme Court, where he has served as a Justice since.

Zahra did not begin his career in law; he began it following his experience as a small business owner. At an early age, an entrepreneurial spirit was instilled in him, and he opened a number of retail establishments. “I started off with a small health and personal care store in Detroit,” he explained. “I then joined with a couple of other partners and opened a larger, full-service, grocery store.”

Zahra’s experience with the law as a business owner, for example managing personal injury summons and property leases, inspired him to pursue the dream of law school that his mother had for him. “As a child, my mother always told me she wanted her son to be a doctor or a lawyer. By the time I was a teenager, I realized I wasn’t going to be a doctor.”

When he began law school, Zahra had dreams of a political career and thought a law degree would be helpful in that pursuit. “After a semester of law school, I really loved the law. I thought, I’m going to be a lawyer and practice as one. I gave up the idea of Congress at that time.”

Zahra began his career clerking for Judge Lawrence P. Zatkoff of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan and then joined Dickinson Wright in 1989.

“I became frustrated early in my career at the law firm. I was fortunate enough that there were many files that were given to me to do on my own as a young lawyer. I’d read the court rules, the cases, and the statutes, trying to advise my clients on where I thought we stood. And I thought we’d have a good chance of winning, and then I’d get into court and lose the motion. I wouldn’t understand why we lost.”

“I said to myself, if I get the opportunity to serve as a judge, I really am going to try to make it different and go the extra mile to make sure that not just the winner, but the loser in my cases appreciate and understand how I see the case,” he explained.

As a Michigan Supreme Court Justice, Zahra serves as a commissioner on the Justice for All Commission, something he calls the most rewarding administrative assignment of his judicial career.

“Pro bono work is great, but we just don’t have enough lawyers willing and able to put in enough pro bono time to address all the needs of people who have legal problems, but simply can’t afford to retain a lawyer,” Zahra said. “I also saw as a trial and circuit judge how many people would come to court without the ability to have assistance.”

Through this commission, Zahra works with judges and lawyers throughout Michigan to develop innovative ways to level the playing field and allow those who would not otherwise have access to representation a fair chance at achieving justice. “We, I believe, are changing the lives of everyday people who are unable to obtain legal services and we’re thinking outside the box.”

“Michigan has always been a great leader in providing assistance for people to understand what their legal rights are. We have self-help centers throughout Michigan. Recently, we issued several grants throughout the State to improve and expand upon these centers to help people in need.”

The Commission has also worked to expand limited scope practice and regulatory reforms to allow greater access to legal assistance.

“We’re also re-imagining the courthouses to make them a friendlier and more welcoming place,” he said. “Perhaps one day we’ll even put some kiosks in the courthouses that will help people understand their rights—right there in the court, if they’re going to be unrepresented.”

Zahra credits Detroit Mercy Law and the faculty members he learned from for instilling in him a passion for law. **“The culture is still the same even if the professors I had are no longer there. I learned most from watching the professors I had and their passion for teaching us the law.”**

Zahra remains connected to Detroit Mercy Law. He serves on the Dean’s Advisory Board, presides over Moot Court competitions, and mentors students.



**HON. KYRA HARRIS BOLDEN '14**  
Michigan Supreme Court, Justice

**Justice Kyra Harris Bolden '14** made history when she was sworn in as a Michigan Supreme Court Justice on January 1, 2023. As the first Black woman to serve on the highest court in Michigan, she recognizes the importance of her leadership on the bench. “Representation is beyond important,” she said. “It is an honor to serve and to be an inspiration to others who look like me.”

Bolden did not originally plan to attend law school. As a psychology major, she knew she wanted to help people. An advisor recommended law school to her. Following this advice, Bolden enrolled at Detroit Mercy Law.

“Being a part of Detroit Mercy Law afforded me many opportunities that enhanced my experience as an attorney and now as a jurist,” she said. Bolden explained that the location, comradery, and diversity of Detroit Mercy Law helped shape her into the well-rounded attorney and jurist she is today.

**"I was able to do internships and externships in and around the city of Detroit. It was a great benefit to my career to be able to walk to them and gain experience while a student."**

“The comradery of Detroit Mercy Law is unmatched,” Bolden continued. “I have life-long friends that support me and I do the same for them. The diversity of background, experience, and perspectives that Detroit Mercy Law allowed me to encounter facilitated my direction and how I wanted to move through my legal career.”

After graduating with her law degree, Bolden served as a criminal defense attorney, judicial clerk, and civil litigator before deciding to run for public office. She was first elected to serve as a Michigan State Representative in 2018 and was re-elected in 2020. While serving in the Michigan State House, Bolden served on the Judiciary Committee and focused her work on criminal justice reform.

“I knew how the laws would affect people and my community. That perspective was incredibly important, and I wanted to represent that in the legislature.”

During her time in the legislature, she helped pass the “Medically Frail” prison reform package, the revision to the Wrongful Imprisonment Compensation Act, and the “Address Confidentially for Survivors of Domestic Violence” package.

Now as a member of the Michigan Supreme Court, Bolden wants to continue to make a difference in the lives of Michigan residents. She shared some of her vision for that with the Detroit Mercy Law community while delivering the fifth annual Dewitt C. Holbrook Lecture on Social Justice. Her lecture, titled, “Justice for All,” examined the concept of justice for all and how Michigan could achieve that goal.

She spoke of the need for a justice system that provides more than a lawyer for every defendant and emphasized the importance of a justice system that provides a pathway to resolve concerns while treating everyone with dignity and respect. She encouraged a comprehensive approach to justice for all that includes courts engaging with local communities, supporting and nurturing families and children at risk, providing access to treatment for behavioral health disorders, and embracing the problem-solving model that focuses on making participants whole again.

Bolden also contributed to the law school community while a student. She was a part of the International Law Students Association, the Black Law Students Association, and the Constitutional Law Association. “Those experiences helped me become a well-rounded person as well as an attorney,” said Bolden.

As an alumna, she encourages law students to get involved. “Go to everything you can; meet as many people as possible in the legal field. You never know where it may take you.” During law school, Bolden received a mentor through the Wolverine Bar Association who later became the partner she worked for while practicing law. “Make sure you’re reaching out to people asking them to be your mentor because you never know how one person will enhance your experience as a lawyer or change your perspective of where you want to go in your legal career.”

## HON. MICHELLE RICK '91

Michigan Court of Appeals, Judge

**Judge Michelle Rick '91** aspires to be a servant leader. “For me, this requires leading from the heart and valuing the contributions of all members of the team. It is critical to see that every person has skills that can benefit the task at hand.”

Rick always knew she wanted to become a lawyer, but it wasn't until after her second year at Detroit Mercy Law that she learned she wanted to be a litigator. “I had the opportunity to become an intern through a program managed by the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan and was placed in the Allegan County Prosecutor's Office. I was fortunate enough to have my own docket under the supervision of an assistant prosecutor. That summer, I had several jury and bench trials. I was hooked and immediately knew I wanted to be a litigator.”

Prior to joining the bench, Rick briefly worked in private practice before devoting her career to public service. She served as a prosecutor in Livingston County, an assistant attorney general for the State of Michigan, and Deputy Legal Counsel to Michigan's Governor Jennifer M. Granholm.

“It is a privilege to work as a public servant,” she said. “Prosecutors and those working on behalf of the state wield significant power. It must only be used to advance justice.” Rick believes the job of the prosecutor is not to win, but to see that justice is done.

Rick was elected to the Michigan Court of Appeals in 2020. Prior to that, she served as a trial judge for the 29<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Michigan. She values oral argument as an opportunity to better understand an advocate's position.

“I ask hard questions as a judge,” she explained. She reminds her students that oral arguments are not an opportunity to argue with the judge on their case. “I tell them to view it as the time and place to test the strength of one's position. I have respect for lawyers who are willing to concede a losing position rather than going down with the ship. When blatantly obvious, concessions are noble, and not a sign of weakness. You also gain credibility.”

Rick credits Detroit Mercy Law for providing her a firm foundation to be a successful attorney and now judge.

**“Detroit Mercy Law taught me to be analytical, empathetic, morally responsible, and just. I believe the school gave me the tools necessary to become a complete lawyer. It isn't just a saying – it is true.”**

Now, as an experienced jurist, engaged alumna, and adjunct professor, Rick advances the mission of Detroit Mercy Law and is an important contributor to *educating the complete lawyer*. She teaches the course Access to Justice, and helped organized traveling expungement clinics across the state of Michigan staffed by Detroit Mercy Law students that helped hundreds in need of legal assistance.



## DETROIT MERCY LAW'S TRAVELING EXPUNGEMENT CLINIC SERVES 200 PEOPLE ACROSS MICHIGAN



University of Detroit Mercy School of Law's traveling expungement clinic served nearly 200 people across the state of Michigan in Saginaw, Sault Ste. Marie, and Marquette from May 15-19. The traveling expungement clinic included seven students and three professors, including one alumna judge.

The purpose of the clinic was to help Michigan residents with expungement, which is the process of seeking removal of a person's criminal conviction from their records. At the clinic, law

students and supervising attorneys reviewed clients' Michigan criminal record, known as an ICHAT, and advised them on eligibility for expungement. If eligible, they were provided with assistance preparing the Application to Set Aside Conviction and received directions for filing and next steps.

"The legislature made significant changes to the expungement statute over the last few years," explained **Rebecca Simkins Nowak, Director of Clinical Operations and Outreach**. "One of which is increasing the number of convictions that a person may have and still be eligible for expungement. Another, which is impactful for many people, is that a first DUI is eligible for expungement."

"This clinic is important to the clients it serves, and expungement is a vital piece of our criminal justice system," said **Steven Meerschaert, 2L**, who participated in the clinic. "Everyone deserves a second chance, and we should honor those who turn their lives around. The fact that the clients have a criminal record does not encapsulate who they are, and expunging their record gives them a chance to be treated like who they are today, rather than who they once were."

"There is quite a difference between reading how to do expungements or seeing a lecture on how to do expungement compared to actually going through the process with real clients," said **Zahara Madahah, 2L**, who also participated in the clinic. Over the course of the week, Madahah assisted in helping expunge records for two felonies and 12 misdemeanors.

Additional student clinicians included **Miguel Brikho, 3L**, **Max Cavellier, 2L**, **Evelyn Galvan, 3L**, **Tiffany Harvey, 3L**, and **Cassie Weck Wun, 2L**. The students were a part of the Access to Justice Practicum, taught by **Judge Michelle Rick '91** of the Michigan Court of Appeals, who supervised the student clinicians along with Simkins Nowak and **Nicholas Schroeck, Associate Dean of Experiential Education and Associate Professor of Law**.

Detroit Mercy Law first offered traveling expungement clinics in 2019. Simkins Nowak, Schroeck, and Rick received the 2020 State Bar of Michigan Kimberly M. Cahill Leadership Award for their work in organizing the original traveling expungement clinics.

Throughout the fall, Detroit Mercy Law continues to offer expungement clinics across the state and continues to process applications for expungements. Expungements can take up to eight months to be processed by the Attorney General. The goal is students will be able to eventually appear in court in front of judges in support of the expungement applications they file.



**HON. MICHAEL RIORDAN '90**  
Michigan Court of Appeals, Judge

**Judge Michael Riordan '90** is known for being generous with his time and talent. He serves on the Alumni Association Board of Directors, is the immediate past-President of the Association, and supports students throughout their law school journey.

“My life really has been divided into two parts: before law school and after law school. That's the impact Detroit Mercy Law has had on me as a person. I don't know if I'll ever be able to repay all the things it has given me,” stated Riordan.

Riordan leads by example as an engaged alumnus. He supports the admissions team and connects with future students. He attends many Detroit Mercy Law events and speaks with current students. He recruits students for judicial externships and alumni for judicial clerkships. He judges the annual Patrick A. Keenan Appellate Advocacy Competition and has taught US Securities Regulation as an adjunct professor since 1999.

Riordan decided to pursue a law degree while working as a United States Immigration Inspector. **“My mother told me to either go to the seminary or become a lawyer. In my mother's eyes, going to University of Detroit School of Law was one of the best things one of her sons could do.”**

After graduating, Riordan clerked for Judge Robert E. DeMascio of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. He also served as a senior attorney in the enforcement division of the United States Securities and Exchange commissions, as an assistant general counsel for Northwestern Mutual financial, and as an assistant United State Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan.

“I came into my position as a judge with a broad background that has only been helpful,” he said. “I know the pressures that attorneys are under, and I have an understanding of criminal and civil procedure that only comes from practice.”

As a judge, Riordan serves the law, society, and individuals. “I must be faithful to the law. That's the best way I can serve society. And to treat everyone who comes into my courtroom respectfully. It doesn't make a difference whether someone is with a big firm or a small firm. Everyone deserves to be given the time of day.”

Through his experience practicing in and presiding over a courtroom, Riordan recognizes a challenge often associated with resolving disputes through the courts. “Somebody wins, and unfortunately, somebody loses. It's very rare that both sides go away happy, but if that happens, that's a great day.”



**Christos Strubakos '23** accepted a position as a research attorney with the Research Division of the Michigan Court of Appeals—one of the highest volume intermediate appellate courts in the country.

He performs legal research and analysis to assist judges with determining the disposition of matters before the Court.

“The Research Division at the Court of Appeals exposes me to a wide breadth of cases and legal issues from across the spectrum of the law. The role allows me to apply and hone my critical thinking, research, legal reasoning, and writing skills,” stated Strubakos.

Each year, the Michigan Court of Appeals Research Division participates in On-Campus Interviews at Detroit Mercy Law and interviews 3Ls for post-graduation research attorney positions. Research attorneys begin their employment after graduating and sitting for the bar exam.

The experience helps new attorneys build their skills and network. After completing a term as a research attorney, there are opportunities within the Court and beyond. Many research attorneys transition to judicial clerkships and private practice following their service with the Research Division.

Strubakos is an accomplished academic and experienced researcher and writer. He joined Detroit Mercy Law as a Dean's Fellow after earning a Ph.D. in Physiology and a Master of Divinity. While in law school, he participated in Law Review and served as a research and teaching assistant.

#### ADDITIONAL ALUMNI SERVING ON THE MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS

**Hon. Kristina Robinson Garrett '10**

**Hon. Kathleen Jansen '82**

**Hon. Kirsten Frank Kelly '81**

**Hon. Christopher M. Murray '90**

**Hon. James Robert Redford '85**

## MARK WISNIEWSKI '90

Kitch Attorneys & Counselors, PC, Chair & CEO

**Mark Wisniewski '90** did not know any lawyers while growing up on Detroit's Eastside near Gratiot and 8 Mile. "Most of my friends' parents were police, firefighters, or worked for the City of Detroit. I have to credit my mother, Betty Lou Wisniewski, who is also a Detroit Mercy graduate, for always encouraging me to follow my dreams. She is the one who suggested law school to me while I was in college."

An employer also encouraged Wisniewski to pursue law school. "He gave me the book *The Brethren: Inside the Supreme Court* by Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong as a gift when I went away to college. I still have the book in my library at home some 45 years later."

Wisniewski joined Kitch Attorneys & Counselors, PC in the Detroit office in 1990 when he graduated from Detroit Mercy Law. Since 2014, he has served as the Chair and CEO of the firm, which has offices across the Midwest. He is also the co-chair of the firm's asbestos liability and mass tort defense practices.

**"The lesson I learned from law school that I use every day at the firm is to surround yourself with the most ethical, diverse, and honest people you can to help you take on the challenges you face every day,"** he said.

"The best part of my practice, at both the local and national level, is the number of great lawyers, both plaintiff and defense, and judges I get to see during the discovery and trial process. I have had the pleasure of going up against the best plaintiffs' attorneys and being in front of fantastic judges across the country. I had the privilege of being trial counsel with great national attorneys in mass tort defense."

Wisniewski prioritizes civility in his practice and encourages new lawyers to do the same. "Treat every opponent and judge with dignity and respect. If you do, they will treat you with the same dignity and respect."

As a leader, Wisniewski describes himself as a decision maker. "The worst thing a leader can do is not make a decision. Base your decisions on the facts that are available to you at the time. It doesn't mean that you can't change your thinking based upon updated facts or changing circumstances. You need to surround yourself with people you trust and people who will give you their honest opinion."

Throughout his career, Wisniewski witnessed changes to the legal profession. "Law school and the practice of law is very different now from how it was over 30 years ago. However, one thing will always be the same: it doesn't matter where you grew up, what undergraduate school you attended, or what your parents did for a living. Your success in law school or as an attorney will depend upon how hard you work. It is not an easy life, but it is a very rewarding life."

As a champion of Detroit Mercy Law, Wisniewski generously accepts requests for support. He serves on the Alumni Board of Directors, supports future students, recruits students and graduates, and attends many alumni events. He taught Trial Practice as an adjunct professor, served on countless committees, and received the Detroit Mercy Law Time and Talent Award in 2016.



## BERNARD FUHS '03, '06

Butzel Long, Vice President, Director, Shareholder

**Bernard Fuhs '03, '06** played four years of Division I basketball at University of Detroit Mercy. He knew he wanted to merge his entrepreneurial spirit with his love for sports, but did not know exactly how he would do that. “I thought going to law school, along with my accounting and finance degree, would be a great foundation while I figured it out.”

Now a Vice President, Director, and Shareholder at Butzel Long in the firm’s Detroit office, he maintains an active litigation practice while serving as a firm leader. “I enjoy the competition and strategy involved in litigation. There is a lot of overlap in that regard to the basketball world. Every case or game is different. You need to strategize and make a game plan for each case or game. And then you go out and compete,” he explained.

Fuhs works as an emergency litigator and expert on non-compete and trade secret matters. He has litigated or counseled clients on these matters in all 50 states. He also specializes in franchise litigation and business shareholder disputes. Fuhs advises start-ups and closely held businesses, as well as sports and fitness industry members.

**“I was blessed to attend both undergrad and law school at this University. We have an amazing network and community filled with people from all walks of life that genuinely care about each other and the University,”** Fuhs said. “There are so many former teammates and classmates doing amazing things around the world. And nearly all of them are always willing to help a current or former Titan. That’s the influence of servant leadership.”

“True servant leadership can come in many different forms. In my humble opinion the most important qualities are authenticity, humility, grace, and the pursuit of selfless exceptionalism,” Fuhs said. “Are you truly genuine and authentic in your approach and actions? Are you trying to help others? Do you have the humility to acknowledge your own weaknesses and listen to others? Do you provide grace to others, as well as yourself? I try to ask myself these questions nearly every day and in my pursuit of selfless exceptionalism.”

“I don’t always get it right. I’m a work in progress. But I’m pushing myself to be a better servant leader every day.”





WITH **DAMIAN PORCARI '84**  
Elijah J. McCoy Midwest Regional USPTO, Director (retired)

**Damian Porcari '84** retired from leading the Elijah J. McCoy Midwest Regional United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) on August 11, 2023. His desire to protect the rights of inventors led to his career in intellectual property law. Prior to serving at the USPTO, he worked nearly three decades at Ford Motor Company and began his career with the United States Army Tank-Automotive Command.

Porcari was the second in his family to attend college after his older brother. Before deciding to pursue law school, he had never met a patent attorney. "I joined USPTO to help today's kids growing up in Detroit that don't have connections enjoy the awesome opportunities that inventing and patent law offer. USPTO gives me a platform to talk about inventing and patenting. I wanted to share my experience with the next generation of inventors."

### **What inspired you to pursue a career in Intellectual Property Law?**

As a kid growing up in Detroit, all I saw was industry and the opportunities it provided. I wanted to be part of it. I was a junior in college studying chemistry and I was interested in graduate school. I went to the library and looked up careers for people with chemistry degrees and noticed that patent law was an option. I didn't know any patent attorneys, so I looked up every inventor I could find and asked them about patent law. All of the inventors enjoyed working with their patent attorneys, so I made a leap of faith and applied to law school. I didn't meet my first patent attorney until my second year of law school.

### **How would you describe yourself as a leader?**

I encourage imagining a future state.

My office has a constant rotation of examiners that work in Detroit for between six to twelve months. On their first day of work, I ask them to write a prophetic summary of what they accomplished, what skills they learned, and how they changed as an employee. We then develop assignments and tasks to make those statements real.

When faced with an issue, I ask and imagine how people would feel about this issue 1,000 years from now. When projecting that far into the future, people are free of constraints and imagine an ideal state. It's a great way of creating consensus. I then ask, what about 100 years, then 10 years. After doing this, it's easy to start sooner rather than wait.



## How did Detroit Mercy Law impact your practice of law?

I owe my career to Detroit Mercy Law. I was going to school during a recession. The car companies, suppliers, and law firms weren't hiring. I didn't know anyone in the business. My strategy was to take any class taught by an adjunct professor. I figured they were in the profession and could give me career advice. I took the class Government Contracts taught by Dick Tarnas '49, the Chief Counsel of the Tank Plant in Warren. He taught at Detroit Mercy Law for fifty years. I sat in the front row and prepared for every class. In those days, our exams were in real Bluebooks, and I earned the Bluebook award on the course exam. Dick asked me if I would be interested in working for the Army and I said I would. It took me about six months to transfer from government contracts to the patent department, but I was able to make the switch.

Dick and other professors connected the school's community service mission to the practice of law. The Jesuits oversaw the law school at that time. Their founder, St. Ignatius, like Dick, was a former soldier. Ignatius was very creative and instilled that creativity in the Jesuit community. Jesuits traveled throughout the world sharing what they learned in each country. One of their inventions, the Gregorian calendar, we literally use daily. Dick Tarnas and other professors at Detroit Mercy Law echoed the Jesuits' mission to the greater good of all people.

## What advice do you have for students interested in pursuing intellectual property law?

Call someone. Call everyone. People in this profession want to talk to students and we need to talk to students as much as they need to talk to us. We need to know about new technology and work practices. Don't be afraid to share your thoughts. Call someone that doesn't look like you or who has a different degree. If you're interested in litigation, call a litigator, but also call a different type of practitioner, like someone in licensing. It will make you a better litigator.

Hopefully, someone reading this article will call and ask me about becoming a patent attorney. I encourage students interested in a specialty to reach out to bar associations, law firms, corporations, and say they are interested in learning more and can they attend a program or talk to an attorney about the practice. I know it won't take many calls before they connect with an attorney excited to help them.

## FUTURE IP LAW LEADERS

Each year, Detroit Mercy Law awards the Intellectual Property Law Fellowship to highly-qualified incoming students with STEM backgrounds interested in pursuing IP law.

### MEET THE IP LAW FELLOWS



**Andrew Majchrzak, 1L**, holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Kettering University. He worked for several years as an engineer before deciding to pursue law school. He plans to use his background to become a patent attorney and to serve others by protecting their intellectual property.



**Sarah Wilson Meyrer, 1L**, holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Michigan. She is a registered patent agent and worked at a law firm specializing in IP law. She plans to use her law degree to help support local businesses and serve clients seeking protection of their intellectual property rights.



**Yasmeen Moradshahi, 3L**, holds a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Kettering University. Yasmeen's experience working at an intellectual property law firm solidified her interest in becoming a patent attorney.



**Rachel Schulte, 2L**, holds a B.S. in Physics with minors in Mathematics and Leadership from Oakland University. She has experience as a Patent Classification Specialist working with private companies that perform contract work for the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Rachel hopes to use her background in STEM to be a patent attorney.



**Christopher Storms, 1L**, holds a B.S. in Physics and a M.S. in Electrical & Computer Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He is a registered patent agent and worked as a patent engineer. He was inspired to pursue working with patents and intellectual property law after working on his own patents, of which he has two.

## THANK YOU TO OUR ALUMNI SERVING AS MENTORS TO OUR CURRENT IP LAW FELLOWS.

Jennifer Dukarski '10

Deanna Kossaras '13

Shannon Smith '13

Michael Solt '16

## SHANNON SMITH '13

### Reising Ethington, VP of Diversity and Inclusion

**Shannon Smith '13** is leading change in the patent law field, where it is estimated that women represent 20 percent and people of color represent 5 percent of United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) registered attorneys.<sup>[1]</sup> As a Shareholder and Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion at Reising Ethington, she works diligently as a part of the firm's management committee to develop institutional-level, program-level, and individual-level goals for expanding DEI efforts.

"Achieving parity sometimes seems like a monumental challenge, but it's a challenge we're willing to accept to broaden our opportunities with a diverse client base, to enhance perspectives within our current client work, and to drive our diversity efforts," explained Smith.

"At an institutional level, we have focused on strategic community partnerships, like supporting the Cranbrook Institute of Science Women Rock Science Program, which helps sponsor educational opportunities for underprivileged students throughout Michigan."

"At a program level, we carry out regular training from ABA recommended materials, along with extra guidance for new interns and associates regarding cognitive bias. We've enhanced our parental leave policies, including offering coaching programs to parents returning from leave."

"At an individual level, we regularly work to enhance connections, so everyone feels they have a voice and opportunity, working with interns and associates to expand their networks both within the firm and outside the firm. We also enacted initiatives to help our clients develop female engineers into named inventors on more patents."

Smith majored in neuroscience on a pre-med track while in undergrad but gravitated more towards research. "The thought of spending my time alone in a lab all day didn't fit with my personality. Patent law became an amazing way to apply my STEM background," she said.

The patent bar requires a scientific and technical background. Smith experienced many firms that preferred engineering backgrounds over her science background when she was looking for patent law internships. "I did not have the easiest time. There are certain bars to entry when it comes to patent law in particular. Even within those 'acceptable' constructs, there are limits," she explained.

Now, as an experienced attorney, Smith recognizes her neuroscience background is advantageous to her patent law career. "I've been able to extrapolate my experience over the years into other technical areas. Working on neural probes that have micro-LEDs to selectively stimulate neurons has helped me to work on optics-based applications for vehicle interiors. Helping engineers quantify the signal-to-noise ratio improvements involved with processing neural signals has translated into a better understanding of signal processing in other mediums, such as piezo-based sensing, capacitive sensing, and RFID sensing in a wide array of applications," she explained.

"**Detroit Mercy Law shaped my career,**" Smith said. "My patent law professor, Jim Stevens, hired me after I received the Book Award in his class. It's hard to imagine where I would have ended up without that opportunity."

As an alumna, Smith supports the future of intellectual property law. She serves a mentor to Intellectual Property Law Fellows and teaches a patent drafting course as an adjunct professor. She also coached an all-woman team of Detroit Mercy Law students that placed third in the 2023 National Patent Application Drafting Competition hosted by the USPTO.

"I try my best to be someone that my family, colleagues, clients, community, and students can rely on. That regularly requires different qualities at different times, but being attuned to who and how I'm impacting a situation is important."

<sup>[1]</sup> Elaine Spector & LaTia Brand, *Diversity in Patent Law: A Data Analysis of Diversity in the Patent Practice by Technology Background and Region*, LANDSLIDE, Sept.–Oct. 2020, at 32.



## DETROIT MERCY LAW ALL-WOMAN TEAM PLACES THIRD IN NATIONAL AND FIRST IN REGIONAL USPTO PATENT COMPETITION

An all-woman team of Detroit Mercy Law students placed third in the 2023 National Patent Application Drafting Competition hosted by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) after winning the regional competition. Across the nation, 55 teams competed in regional rounds for an invitation to advance to the national competition in Washington, D.C. to present in front of a board of USPTO patent examiners.



Left to right: Megz Kubis '23, Yasmeen Moradshahi 3L, Caley McCarthy 3L, Michelle Hudson 3L

Detroit Mercy Law's team included **Yasmeen Moradshahi, 3L**, **Megz Kubis '23**, **Caley McCarthy, 3L**, and **Michelle Hudson, 3L**. **Shannon Smith '13** coached the team. **Mark Adamaszek '23** helped the team with their patent application.

“Preparing for the national competition was surreal,” said Moradshahi. “We didn’t go into the regional competition expecting to win, so I didn’t even look at the process like a competition. Once we started to prepare for nationals, the nerves increased. As overwhelming as it was at times, it was also enjoyable learning different aspects of the patent writing process.”

“Being an all-woman team competing in a very male-dominated industry was empowering. I think it brought us, as a team, closer together,” said Moradshahi. “It was an honor to represent Detroit Mercy Law as an all-woman team and set an example for other women who want to be a part of this industry.”

The competition introduces students to patent law and develops their patent application drafting, amending, and prosecution skills. “In addition to gaining practical experience they will use in their future careers, the students had the opportunity to interact with leaders in the intellectual property community,” said **Damian Porcari '84**, Director of the Elijah J. McCoy Midwest Regional USPTO, who presented the Detroit Mercy Law team with the news that they had won the regional round which was hosted at the USPTO office in Detroit.

“At the national finals, the students competed against the best law schools in the country and held their own,” commented Porcari. “They could work anywhere. I’ve encouraged them to coach future teams so that our region continues to have great attorneys like them.”

## STACY LATTA

'09, '12

Ohio Civil  
Rights  
Commission,  
Regional  
Director



### Stacy Latta

'09, '12 leads the Toledo Regional Office of the Ohio Civil Rights

Commission. She transitioned to this leadership role in August of 2023. She manages the regional investigative program and supervises activities of staff in the enforcement of laws against discrimination.

“What excites me about this position is the opportunity to contribute in a way that fosters the legitimacy of the Commission and provides due process to all parties involved,” she said. “The Commission is not only focused on enforcement, but also on proactive measures through education and provides individuals a process that is user friendly and easily accessed by all, not just lawyers or those with the means to obtain legal assistance.”

Latta was inspired to pursue a career in law based on the efforts family members made navigating the process to access benefits for her aunt, an individual with a developmental disability. “I pursued law school to practice disability law and to acquire skills to assist individuals in navigating legal processes,” she explained.

Professor Peggy Costello encouraged Latta to explore employment law because it would provide disability law experience. “Professor Costello encouraged me to contact Karen Kienbaum '75, who had a labor and employment law firm blocks from the law school. That led to my first legal job as an attorney at Kienbaum Law Group.”

After working at Kienbaum Law Group, Latta worked in labor relations at a public university. “What I love about labor, employee relations, and human resources is the direct impact of the work on an individual’s overall quality of life. We spend so much of our lives at work, that it is inevitable that one’s work environment will impact their overall quality of life.”

“Being taught in the Jesuit and Mercy traditions really framed my perspective,” she explained. **“I could have received the intellectual aspect of my education at other universities, but the spiritual, ethical, and social development stemming from my Detroit Mercy education helped me think differently about my purpose.”**

## JOSEPH VERNON '05

Houston Texans,  
Special Advisor  
Football  
Operations



### Joseph Vernon '05

grew up playing football—from high school through his time in the Canadian & American Dual JD Program. **“While it**

**was challenging at times to balance my law school and football schedules, it was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. I had two great law school experiences and a great experience playing football for the University of Windsor Lancers.”**

Vernon joined Miller Canfield in Detroit following graduation. “Miller Canfield is a great firm with a collegial atmosphere and strong focus on mentoring,” he explained. “The firm also had a strong entrepreneurial spirit, and it supported attorneys who wanted to explore non-traditional paths while building their practices. While I was building a commercial litigation practice, the firm supported my efforts to develop a sports law practice.”

For several years, Vernon balanced a successful commercial litigation and business law practice alongside working with athletes, coaches, and front office personnel in professional sports organizations. In 2023, after almost two decades with Miller Canfield, the opportunity arose for Vernon to join the Houston Texans.

“I believe very much in what the Texans are working to build, and I was grateful for the opportunity to help and be part of that,” Vernon said. “It was a tough decision to leave the practice, but the firm understood and fully supported it. And I’m grateful to maintain the of-counsel relationship.”

“My passion for football helped, but I think they saw a unique set of skills and experiences that, combined with that passion, would serve the organization well,” he explained. “The practice of law enabled me to develop and hone those skills, which were all very transferable.”

## KHALIL RAHAL '09

DTE Energy,  
Director of  
Economic  
Development



### Khalil Rahal '09

leads economic development at DTE Energy. He works to bring major enterprises into DTE's electric

service territory to sell them energy to fund infrastructure, improve reliability, and ultimately help keep prices down for customers.

**"I would not be leading economic development without my law degree, which started me on a path I did not imagine was available while a student,"** stated Rahal.

"Whether we are working on environmental issues that require new legislation to make Michigan a more business-friendly state, or getting through the local zoning or legislative process, my law degree has helped me anticipate and overcome issues as we work to bring jobs and investments to southeast Michigan."

Rahal began his legal career as a Wayne County Prosecutor. "During my time as a prosecutor, I was elected to a leadership position in our union and fought to get the office more resources," he explained.

Rahal then transitioned to an economic development director role, then to an assistant county executive, and finally rounded out his career with Wayne County as chief administrative officer. "In 2015, the county was on the verge of filing for bankruptcy. It was my mission to help ensure we climbed out of that situation while making sure we provided prosecutors and other services with the resources they needed. I pushed what resources we had toward investing in growth."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Rahal led the county through challenging times. "We needed to slow down the infection rate, save lives, protect businesses and jobs, and help residents get food and housing assistance, all while maintaining the county's financial recovery," said Rahal. "Ultimately, the county came out of the pandemic stronger than it went in because of our previous investment in growth."

Rahal says he constantly thinks about how business models could improve lifestyles. "What keeps me up at night is seeking what we need to do to make progress on how to make that vision come to life."

## ELIZABETH REIFERT

'06, '11  
Hungry Howie's  
Pizza, Assistant  
General Counsel



### Elizabeth Reifert

'06, '11 has been with Hungry Howie's Pizza since graduating from Detroit Mercy Law.

"My days are never monotonous. While I do have large annual projects that act as tentpoles in my schedule, such as updates to and submission of our franchise disclosure document, there is a lot of work that pops up," Reifert explained. As assistant general counsel, she works on a variety of legal matters that impact the company—from contract negotiations and execution to filing for new trademarks and more.

**"Detroit Mercy Law provided me with a solid foundation with which to enter the workforce,"** she said. "I still use the skills I learned in Applied Legal Theory and Analysis on a daily basis and found particular value in the Law Firm Program, which exposed me to practical knowledge."

Reifert encourages law students who may be interested in working in house to reach out to businesses they have a particular interest in. "If a position is available, you'll be able to dip your toes into the role of in-house counsel and get a better sense of what it's all about. Even if a position isn't available, you'll have made a contact that could be useful in the future."

While she originally pursued law school with an interest in criminal law, she found in-house work to be an ideal career for herself, especially as a parent. "I have great work-life balance. I am appreciated and respected by my co-workers. Being a valued team member is a large part of why I've been with Hungry Howie's for over a decade," she explained.

And, yes, after three years of free pizza at law school events and almost twelve years of working for Hungry Howie's, she confirmed: "I'm still eating it on a regular basis."

## WOLVERINE BAR ASSOCIATION

The WBA supports students each year through their scholarship programs, judicial externship program (JEP), and summer clerkship program (SCP).



**Larry J. Johnson II, '23**, received the Damon J. Keith Scholarship. The award is based on merit and is awarded to law students committed to social equality and combating racism. He also completed the JEP following his first year of law school. During law school, he served in leadership roles with the SBA and BLSA. Following graduation, he joined Miller Cohen, a firm that advocates for employees and unions.



**Chanel Taylor '23**, received the Wolverine Bar Foundation Scholarship in recognition of her leadership and dedication to the community. She also completed the SCP and JEP following her first year of law school. She will launch her career as an associate attorney at Varnum.



**Mecca Muhammad, 2L**, received the Wolverine Bar Foundation Scholarship in recognition of her leadership and dedication to the community. She also completed the JEP following her first year of law school. She now serves as Treasurer of BLSA.



**Alexis N. Tillery, 2L**, received the Wolverine Bar Foundation Scholarship in recognition of her leadership and dedication to the community. She also completed the SCP and JEP following her first year of law school. She is a member of both Law Review and Moot Court.

## ROBBIE GAINES '15

Gaines & Gaines PLC, Founding Member  
Wolverine Bar Association, President-Elect

**Robbie Gaines '15** is President-Elect of the Wolverine Bar Association (WBA). When he assumes the role of President during the 2024-2025 year, he will promote and adhere to the principles the WBA has stood for since it was established in the 1930s—justice for all, diversity in the legal profession, and community leadership. Through this influential role, he will join the ranks of the many distinguished attorneys who have served as past presidents of the WBA over the years.



“When I serve as President, I hope to increase the support and continuing education for our members. When we are better lawyers, we can create better outcomes for our communities and our clients,” stated Gaines. “We will be committed to improving the justice system and providing leadership on major issues affecting the profession and community. We will promote meaningful access to justice for all persons regardless of their economic or social conditions. We will promote diversity within the legal profession and responsibility for public service by the profession.”

Gaines owns a firm with **Macie Tuiasosopo Gaines '13**, who currently serves as treasurer of the WBA. Their firm, Gaines & Gaines, serves clients in a wide array of issues, including estate planning, civil litigation, family law, and personal injury. “Our firm allows us to cast a wider net to assist a diverse group of people and businesses. We are not driven by numbers; we are driven by the specific needs of each and every client,” explained Gaines.



“I did not jump right into my own firm,” said Gaines. “I worked at a reputable law firm where I learned and honed many skills of practice under the leadership of some of the finest senior attorneys before partnering with my wife.” He also served as a staff attorney at the Wayne County Third Circuit Court.

Gaines pursued a career in law to make a positive impact on people’s lives. “I knew there would be nothing more rewarding than standing strong with people in some of the most challenging times of their lives to advocate for their rights,” he explained.

As a mentor for law students and high school students, Gaines positively impacts both the lives of his mentees and the future of the legal profession. He provides his mentees with exposure to the legal profession and guidance on the path to becoming a lawyer.

While in law school, Gaines took advantage of the many opportunities available to students at Detroit Mercy Law. He participated in Law Review, Moot Court, the Black Law Students Association (BLSA), internships, and clinics. Now, as an alumnus, Gaines serves as a board member on the Detroit Mercy Law Association of Black Law Alumni. **“Detroit Mercy Law taught me that reputation is paramount in the profession. I learned to be respectful and maintain composure even in the thick of things in our adversarial profession. I truly believe that Detroit Mercy Law educated me well and molded me into the complete lawyer.”**

## HENRY H. TARRANT SCHOLARS

The Henry H. Tarrant Award for Black Student Excellence is named in honor of the first known black graduate of Detroit Mercy Law who graduated in 1922.

The award, established in partnership with Detroit Mercy Law’s Black Law Students Association (BLSA), recognizes incoming Black law students for their achievements prior to law school and for their potential as future leaders, influencers, and activists, who will advance justice, equality, civil rights, and service.



**Gregory Simmons, 1L**  
*B.S., Criminal Justice,  
Campbell University*

Gregory’s experience includes service in the military and with law enforcement. He hopes to use his law degree to advance the rights of Black people in the criminal justice system and to inspire his children.



**Briana Walker, 1L**  
*B.A., Criminal Justice & Sociology,  
Oakland University*

Briana served as captain of the track team while at Oakland University. She is inspired by her parents’ hard work and hopes to use her law degree to make a difference in the Black community.



**Andre Williams, 1L**  
*B.S., Psychology,  
University of Michigan-Flint*

Andre plans to utilize his psychology degree in his future law practice as a defense attorney working with youth. He wants his legal career to be a message to the young Black community that they can achieve great things.

### MEET ALL THE TARRANT SCHOLARS HERE

<https://law.udmercy.edu/admissions/Tarrant-Award-Recipients>



### THANKS TO OUR ALUMNI FOR THEIR SERVICE AS MENTORS TO TARRANT SCHOLARS.

Hon. Leo Bowman '81  
Hon. Kenneth J. King '95  
Hon. Denise Langford Morris '82  
Hon. Kristina Robinson Garrett '10  
Hon. Marlena E. Taylor '09  
Ponce D. Clay '15  
Jailah Emerson '20  
Darwyn Fair '79  
Kymberly Kinchen Reeves '09  
Khadijah McFadden '19

# GRADUATES ACHIEVE 90% EMPLOYMENT RATE

The Detroit Mercy Law graduating class of 2022 achieved an overall employment rate of **90 percent** in legal and professional positions. Graduates secured positions with law firms, the judiciary, businesses, government, and public interest organizations across the US and Canada.

“We are proud of our graduates and look forward to seeing them thrive throughout their careers,” stated **Dean Jelani Jefferson Exum**. “We appreciate our employer partnerships that provide our graduates with opportunities to serve clients and communities in many capacities.”



Each year, Detroit Mercy Law supports graduates with securing employment and is required to report the employment outcomes of graduates as of ten months following graduation to the American Bar Association (ABA). The **90 percent** employment rate includes mostly bar passage required positions. It also includes J.D. advantage positions, professional positions, and a start date deferred position.

With respect to full-time, long-term legal employment, the Detroit Mercy Law graduating class of 2022 surpassed the national average for the third consecutive year. Per the ABA employment summaries, **87** percent of 2022 Detroit Mercy Law graduates secured full-time, long-term legal employment, compared to **85** percent of 2022 law graduates nationwide.

“Each graduate has a unique path that led them to law and inspires their career,” explained **Jennifer Rumschlag**, Associate Dean for Institutional Outcomes and Communications, who leads the Career Services Office. “Our approach is to provide individualized career support throughout law school and to continue that individualized support as needed after graduation.”



“We are fortunate to be a part of a large, international legal community with a far-reaching alumni network that provides a variety of opportunities to our graduates,” stated **Gene LaPoutre**, Director of Career Services for Graduate Employment.



The Detroit Mercy Law employment outcomes include graduates of the Canadian & American Dual JD Program, offered in partnership with University of Windsor Faculty of Law. Detroit Mercy Law is the only ABA-accredited law school that offers a three-year, cross-border, comparative Dual JD program in which graduates earn both a US and Canadian JD and are eligible to pursue licensure in both the US and Canada. Graduates pursuing licensure in Canada are required to complete post-graduation experiential training, which is similar to an apprenticeship, before they are admitted to practice law. For the 2022 Dual JD graduates, **98** percent secured articling, Law Practice Program, or other legal employment.

## JUDICIAL CHAMBERS



**Shanice Hagood '22**

South Carolina Administrative Law Court, Judicial Clerk | Columbia, SC

Hagood works on appeals of decisions from the state’s agencies. “I enjoy seeing both points of view. I work with the Judge to decide if decisions were made correctly. I see first hand how a hearing officer ruled, and I speak with the Judge to get insight on what should happen next.”

Employers seeking to hire graduates or students are invited to reach out to the Career Services Office at [cso@udmercy.edu](mailto:cso@udmercy.edu).

## LARGE LAW FIRMS



**Fatmeh Cheaib '22**

**Bodman, Associate | Detroit, MI**

Cheaib represents financial institutions as a transactional attorney. She decided to work at a large law firm because of the community it provides. **"I'm always one email away from having any question answered."**



**Massimo Di Giovanni '22**

**Clyde & Co., Associate | Toronto, ON**

Di Giovanni pursued his role because of the international reach. **"Having offices worldwide, including in Canada and the US, allowed me to use my Canadian & American Dual JD to assist with international files in collaboration with colleagues from both countries."**

## SMALL & MID-SIZE LAW FIRMS



**Austin Miller '22**

**Reising Ethington, Associate | Troy, MI**

Miller works as a patent attorney. Before law school, he used his mechanical engineering degree in the automotive industry. **"My law degree provided me with opportunities to work with fellow engineers and innovators in fields of technology that I never would have otherwise encountered."**



**Jacqueline Olson '22**

**Parker Harvey, Attorney | Traverse City, MI**

Olson focuses her practice on real estate, land use, and construction matters. She is particularly interested in those areas as they intersect with environmental law issues. **"Working in a smaller law firm, I gain experience in all aspects of my practice. I participate in depositions, mediations, and client meetings, draft various pleadings and contracts, and more."**

## BUSINESS & INDUSTRY



**Yasmine Haidar '22**

**EY Law, Attorney | Toronto, ON**

Haidar, a graduate of the Canadian & American Dual JD program, advises on business immigration law. **"The US way of handling immigration isn't the only way. Having knowledge of another country's legal system in comparison to the US gives me an invaluable perspective to use in my advocacy. When the American Immigration Lawyers Association asks for input from members on issues to be raised to the US government, I can submit information about Canada's lack of a per-country limitation policy and what the results have been to promote a change in US policy."**

## GOVERNMENT



**Michelle Brar '22**

**Department of Justice Canada, Counsel | Toronto, ON**

Brar pursued a role at the DOJ to litigate precedent-setting cases. The Canadian & American Dual JD program provided Brar with the tools to navigate the challenges of a complex and high-volume litigation practice. **"By networking with government lawyers during law school, I realized the government offers the opportunity to explore diverse areas of law through challenging work. I worked on files that involved cross-border actors in the areas of tax, immigration, and extradition."**

## PUBLIC INTEREST



**Benjamin Christensen '22**

**United Community Housing Coalition, Staff Attorney | Detroit, MI**

Christensen helps low-income residents stay in their homes and understand their legal rights. **"I see cases through from start to finish. I argued motions before a judge, drafted many legal documents, managed a large case load, worked directly with clients, negotiated settlements, and will soon argue a bench trial. Legal work can be stressful, but stressful times feel less so if you believe in what you're doing."**

# MEET THE 1L DEAN'S FELLOWS & MCELROY SCHOLAR

**DEAN'S FELLOWSHIPS** are awarded to incoming students who have demonstrated excellence prior to law school through academics, leadership, professionalism, and service.

The **PHILIP J. MCELROY SCHOLARSHIP** is awarded to an incoming law student in honor of the late distinguished graduate's lifelong commitment to education.

## MENTORS

THANKS TO OUR ALUMNI SERVING AS MENTORS TO OUR 1L DEAN'S FELLOWS FOR CONTRIBUTING YOUR TIME AND TALENT.

- Hon. Marlena E. Taylor '09
- Jewel Haji Boelstler '19
- Katherine Christy '21
- Jennifer Fahrenholt '22
- Robbie Gaines '15
- Carley Kavanaugh '22
- Ellie Mosko '09
- Rebecca Zarras '21

If you are interested in helping recruit and mentor future students, please contact the admissions team at [lawadmissions@udmercy.edu](mailto:lawadmissions@udmercy.edu)

## SPONSOR A STUDENT

Help support future Detroit Mercy Law fellows and scholars by funding one, two, or all three years of a student's legal education.

Contact **Julie Hein**, Director of Development, [heinja@udmercy.edu](mailto:heinja@udmercy.edu) to learn more.



**Alexis Farmer**  
Dean's Fellow

*B.A., Public Policy, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, Master in Public Policy, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government*

Alexis hopes to use her law degree to help those who have been affected by the criminal justice system. Her master's thesis focused on making the case for a government initiated expungement process in Louisiana.



**Bianca Ivezaj**  
Dean's Fellow

*B.A., International Studies, University of Michigan Ann Arbor*

Bianca also studied the Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian languages. She was inspired by her family's immigration experience to pursue a law degree and help people who are going through the immigration process.



**Isabella Filary**  
Transnational Law Fellow

*B.A., Political Science & Communications, University of Detroit Mercy*

Isabella is inspired by the Detroit Mercy mission and is looking forward to continuing her education in the Canadian & American Dual JD program to impact the greatest number of people in need.



**Heather Keery**  
Dean's Fellow

*B.S., Criminal Justice & Philosophy, University of Detroit Mercy*

Heather was a member of the Division I women's lacrosse team during her undergraduate studies. She is interested in laws and policies that impact border crossing and international business transactions.



**Abigail Schaefer**  
Dean's Fellow

*B.A., Social Relations and Policy, Michigan State University James Madison College*

Abigail plans to use her law degree to serve the public and utilize her privilege to ensure justice for others. She has experience working as a Domestic Violence Victim Advocate and Mental Health Court Intern.



**Sabrina Soka**  
Dean's Fellow

*B.S., Global Supply Chain, Wayne State University*

Sabrina has been interested in pursuing a law degree since elementary school. She inspired her mother, a former alumna fellow, to attend law school. She is interested in civil disputes and commercial litigation.



**Allura Williams**  
Philip J. McElroy Scholar

*B.A., Political Science & Philosophy, University of Detroit Mercy*

Allura's prior service and leadership experiences have helped others in their educational and professional pursuits. As a future lawyer, she plans to continue helping her community.



**Nigel Wright**  
Dean's Fellow

*B.A., Political Science & Administration of Justice, Texas Southern University*

Nigel hopes to use his law degree to help those who have been wrongfully convicted and prevent false convictions from happening in the first place. Through his work as a legal assistant, he discovered a passion for litigation. He also hopes to provide more Black representation in the legal community and to inspire others.

## MEET THE 2023 INCOMING CLASS

This fall, Detroit Mercy Law welcomed **225** students into the incoming class of 2023, including **151** students in the JD program and **75** students in the Canadian & American Dual JD program. Students hold degrees in liberal arts, criminal justice, business, and STEM from universities across the US and Canada.

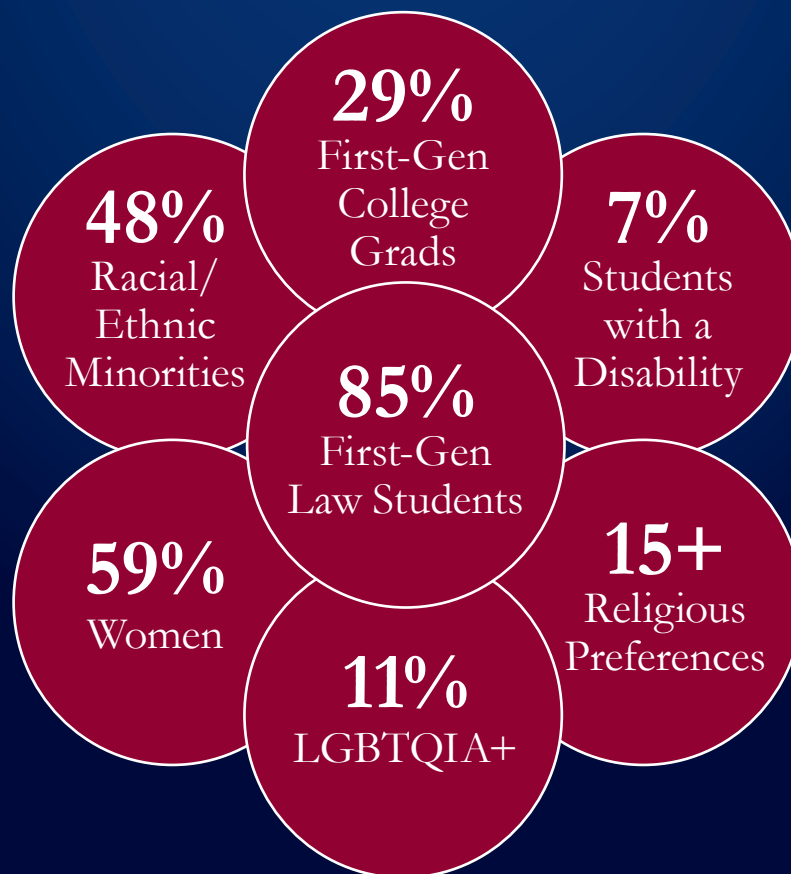
Each year, Detroit Mercy Law conducts an anonymous demographic survey at the 1L orientation to learn more about the entering class and how students self-identify. This year's **95** percent response rate provided comprehensive additional information about the wide range of backgrounds represented in the class.

Detroit Mercy Law is proud that it provides access to the legal profession for first-generation students. The survey revealed that **85** percent of the first-year students are first-generation law students and **29** percent are first-generation college graduates.

Detroit Mercy Law's heritage of enrolling racial and ethnic minorities, women, and people of various religious affiliations in the earliest classes continues to be integral to the mission and identity of the school. The incoming class is **48** percent students of color and **59** percent women. Over **15** religious preferences are represented.

This year's entering class includes an increase to **11** percent of students identifying as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. New this year, the survey asked about disability status, with **7** percent of students identifying as students with a disability.

Detroit Mercy Law values diversity in many forms, including gender, race, religion, national origin, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, physical ability, and learning style. In accordance with Jesuit and Mercy traditions, Detroit Mercy Law is committed to enhancing the legal profession and advancing justice through a commitment to diversity and inclusion, remains committed to increasing access to legal education, and welcomes applications from all qualified candidates who seek a legal education.



## STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

### Detroit Mercy Law Review



**Nicholas Prys '23** had his article "Ending the Shell Game: Devising Strategies to Confront Insurer Evasion of Behavioral Health Parity Regulations" published in Volume 100, Issue 1 of the Detroit Mercy Law Review.



**Christos Strubakos '23** had his article "In What Furnace Was Thy Brain? Redefining Ethics, Cognition, and Tort Duty for Medical Artificial Intelligence" published in Volume 100, Issue 1 of the Detroit Mercy Law Review.



**Cassidy Capoferri '23** had her article "Stranded on the Shoulder: American Tort Law is Unprepared to Protect Individuals from Cyberattacks on Fully Autonomous Vehicles" published in Volume 100, Issue 2 of the Detroit Mercy Law Review.



**Vikram Mandelia '23** had his article "The Next Viral Challenge: Using Smart Contracts to Increase Influencers' Attribution Rates" published in Volume 100, Issue 2 of the Detroit Mercy Law Review.



**Matthew Snyder '23** had his article "Environmental Justice and Public Company Disclosures: Mandatory Reporting for Polluting Facilities Located in Minority and Low-Income Communities" published in Volume 100, Issue 2 of the Detroit Mercy Law Review.

## OUTSIDE JOURNALS & LAW REVIEWS



**Christos Strubakos '23** had his article "Brain Print: Using Cognitive Neuroscience and Brain Imaging as an Objective Measure of Criminal Insanity" in the Lincoln Memorial University Law Review. His article "Raze Out the Written Troubles of the Brain: The Constitutional Issues with Reading Brain Waves of Domestic Terrorism Detainees" was published in Volume 22 of the Albany Journal of Law and Technology. His article "The Rules Against Hearsay: Their Historical Development Reflects the Functioning of Human Cognition" in the Regent University Law Review.



**William Duffield '23** had his article "Rap and RICO: Examining When Constitutionally Protected Rap Music is Criminalized by the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act" published in the University of Denver Sports & Entertainment Law Journal.



**Sarah H. Nassar '23** had her article "To Be Loved or To Be Healthy: A Disabled Individuals Conundrum of Choosing Between Marrying Someone They Love or Continuing to Receive the Health Resources They Need" was published in the University of California, Los Angeles Disability Law Journal.

## FACULTY PUBLICATIONS

### Erin Archerd

Associate Professor of Law

*Online Mediation and the Opportunity to Rethink Safety in Mediation*, 52 Stetson Law Review (2022)

### Catherine Jean Archibald & Aman L. McLeod

Associate Professors of Law

*Putin's Version of History and Claims of Provocation: An International Law Perspective on Russia's Justifications for the Ukraine War*, 100 University Detroit Mercy Law Review 501 (2023)

### J. Richard Broughton

Associate Dean of Faculty Research and Development & Professor of Law

*Antisemitic Terrorism*, 27 Lewis & Clark Law Review (forthcoming 2023)

### Melissa Eckhause

Assistant Professor of Law

*Copyright Troll*, Elgar Encyclopedia of Intellectual Property Law (forthcoming 2024)

*Fighting Image Piracy or Copyright Trolling? An Empirical Study of Photography Copyright Infringement Lawsuits*, 86 Albany Law Review 111 (2022)

### Jelani Jefferson Exum

Dean & Philip J. McElroy Professor of Law

*The Most Perfect Union Protects and Serves Us All*, Afterword, *Protect and Serve: Toward a More Perfect Union of Police and the Public Good*, ABA Section of State and Local Government Law (American Bar Association, Spring 2023).

*Judge Frankel's Fifty-Year-Old Invitation to Reconstruct Sentencing*, 35 Federal Sentencing Reporter 234 (2023)

### Cristina D. Lockwood

Professor of Law

*Legal Ethics*, Chapter 22 in ICLE, *Michigan Basic Practitioner Handbook* (6th ed., 2023 forthcoming)

### Nicholas J. Schroeck

Associate Dean for Experiential Education & Associate Professor of Law

*The Exacerbating Role of Technological and Connectivity Challenges on Older Detroiters' Health in a Pandemic*, 13 Seattle Journal of Technology, Environmental & Innovation Law 1 (2023)(with Carrie Leach)

*Multi-directional communication between decision makers and environmental health researchers: A qualitative inquiry*, (co-authored with Dr. Carrie Leach, Amy J. Schulz, Susie Lawrence, Sharon Sand, Guy Williams, Oluwatosin A. Bewaji and Robin Fuchs-Young), *Environmental Hazards: Human & Policy Dimensions*

### Christopher R. Trudeau

Associate Professor of Law

*Learning from the Past: A Retrospective Analysis of Informed Consent Forms on ClinicalTrials.gov Before the Revised Common Rule*, 46 Law & Psychol. Rev. 189 (2021-2022)

*An Interprofessional Medical Malpractice Mock Trial: Event Evolution and Assessment of Efficacy*, 20 International Journal of Healthcare Simulation 1 (2023) (with Karen J. Dickinson, Wendy L. Ward, Robert Minarcin, Kathryn K. Neill)

View our Faculty

Publication page

[law.udmercy.edu/faculty-staff/recent-publications](http://law.udmercy.edu/faculty-staff/recent-publications)



## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

**Courtney Griffin Ph.D., ASSISTANT DEAN OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING**, successfully defended her dissertation in June 2023. Her dissertation is titled *Stories of Those Untold: Identifying Retention, and Graduation Obstacles and Solutions of Black Women at Four-Year Predominately White Institutions*.



**Cara Cunningham Warren, PROFESSOR OF LAW**, was awarded the 2023 Faculty Excellence Award from Detroit Mercy. Only one professor from across all schools and colleges at Detroit Mercy is given this award each year. She was also the 2023 recipient of the James T. Barnes Sr. Memorial Faculty Scholar Award. Each year, a full-time faculty member is selected based on their scholarship, teaching excellence, and public service.



**PROFESSORS Melissa Eckhause and Holly Christian** received Mission

Microgrants from Detroit Mercy to continue their work supporting Detroit area creatives and veterans through the work in their clinics.



## WELCOME NEW FACULTY



**Camesha F. Little**, Assistant Professor of Law

B.S.W. Baylor University

J.D. Texas A&M University School of Law

Professor Camesha Little joined the faculty at Detroit Mercy Law with many years of experience providing academic and bar preparation support to law students across the country. She was previously the Assistant Dean of Students and Director of Academic Support & Bar Programming at Gonzaga University School of Law and the National Director-West at Helix Bar Review.

**Courses Taught:** Property, Evidence, Transactional Drafting

*"I believe in the power of advancing legal education and the legal system through the vehicle of scholarly written work, among other clinical applications of academic work. I am excited about adding to the field in a way that helps to shift the legal landscape that we all live within. There is certainly great work to do, and I am up for the challenge."*

**Conrad Sturm**, Visiting Assistant Professor of Law

B.A. McMaster University

J.D. Nova Southeastern University College of Law

LL.M. University of Sydney

Professor Conrad Sturm joined the faculty at Detroit Mercy Law after many years of experience teaching law across the globe. He was the founding director of Qatar University Lawyering Skills Program, which was the first comprehensive legal skills program in the Middle East and received international recognition. Before becoming a professor, he worked in commercial litigation at an international trade law firm.



*"The opportunity to work closely with both American and Canadian law students and faculty, and to build on my background in both legal systems, is certainly one of the things that drew me to Detroit Mercy Law. With my Canadian law teaching experience, education, and upbringing, as well as my American law teaching experience, education, and personal ties, it is truly inspiring to have this opportunity at this law school in this location."*



**Adam Wright**, Visiting Assistant Professor of Law

B.A. Michigan State University

J.D. Harvard Law School

Professor Adam Wright joined the faculty at Detroit Mercy Law after many years working in the United States Attorney's Office in Cincinnati and San Francisco. He worked in both the civil and criminal divisions including the National Security & Special Prosecutions Unit and Organized Crime & Drug Enforcement Unit. His research interests include public corruption, white collar crime, and criminal procedure.

**Courses Taught:** Criminal Procedure Adjudication, Business Crimes, Criminal Law

*"I'm looking forward to working with a great faculty and getting to know a diverse student body. I'm excited that Detroit Mercy draws students with different backgrounds, interests, and goals. I'm looking forward to joining a faculty that is committed to preparing students to practice at the highest levels and make a difference in the legal community – here in Michigan and beyond."*

## NEW COMMUNITY MEMBERS



**Kimberly Batchelor Davis,**  
Assistant Director, Alumni Relations

Kimberly joined Detroit Mercy Law in December 2022. She has worked in social advocacy, community engagement and outreach, politics, and event management.



**Danijel Brooks,** Assistant Director, Financial Aid

Danijel joined Detroit Mercy Law in July 2023. He has many years of experience as a financial aid professional working in both the university and community college setting.



**Brittany Dawson,** Events Coordinator

Brittany joined Detroit Mercy Law in January 2023. She has many years of experience in event planning and marketing, including management of fitness centers in metro-Detroit.



**Karinne Orchanian,**  
Director, Career Services for Student Employment

Karinne joined Detroit Mercy Law in September 2022. Before joining the CSO, she practiced for seven years, including at a multi-state litigation firm.



**Tracian Radway,** Circulation Assistant

Tracian joined Detroit Mercy Law in May 2023. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration and has previous experience in administrative support and public library services.

## PROMOTIONS



**Stephanie McCoy,** Head of Access Services

Stephanie joined Detroit Mercy Law in 2019 as the Night Supervisor & Research Services. She was promoted to Head of Access Services in 2023.



**Sunny Kerschenheiter,**  
Director, Signature Events

Sunny joined Detroit Mercy Law in 2018 as the event coordinator. She was promoted to Director of Signature Events in January 2023.



**Zachary Turk,**  
Director, Law School Information Technology

Zachary joined Detroit Mercy Law in 2007 as the Electronic Services Specialist in the law library. He was promoted to Director of Law School Information Technology in July 2023.

## FACULTY PROMOTIONS



**Cara Cunningham Warren,**  
Professor of Law

*B.A. Michigan State University  
J.D. University of Detroit Mercy School of Law  
LL.M. University of Toronto Faculty of Law*

Professor Cara Cunningham Warren joined Detroit Mercy Law in 2000. She was promoted to Professor of Law in 2023. She studies how legal and institutional structures can be created or reformed to resolve sovereignty, balance of power, and good governance questions.

**Holly L. Christian,**  
Director, Veterans Law Clinic &  
Assistant Professor of Law

*B.A. University of Dayton  
J.D. DePaul College of Law*



Professor Holly Christian joined Detroit Mercy Law in 2021 as the first Toni A. Wisne Foundation Veterans Clinic Fellow. She was promoted to Director of the Veterans Law Clinic and Assistant Professor of Law in 2023. Her research aims to provide insight and pose potential solutions to various legal issues facing individuals with disabilities. Specifically, she is interested in addressing the challenges that face current members of the military, veterans, children with disabilities and their families.



**Paula J. Manning,**  
Associate Dean, Student Learning &  
Assessment & Professor of Law

*B.S. University of California, Irvine  
J.D. Western State University College of Law*

Professor Paula Manning joined Detroit Mercy Law in 2021 as a Professor of Law and Assistant Dean of Academic Success. She was promoted to Associate Dean of Student Learning & Assessment in 2023. She is a nationally recognized expert on academic success, legal pedagogy, and the teaching of professional skills in law school. Professor Manning's research and other publications focus on incorporating positive psychology into the law school environment—to improve law student well-being and combat stereotype threat.

**Christopher R. Trudeau,**  
Associate Professor of Law

*B.A. Michigan State University  
J.D. Western Michigan University  
Thomas M. Cooley Law School*



Professor Christopher Trudeau joined Detroit Mercy Law in 2022 as a Visiting Associate Professor of Law. In 2023, he was promoted to Associate Professor of Law. He is an internationally recognized expert on clear legal communication, informed consent, and health literacy.



**I AM EXCITED TO  
BEGIN MY THIRD,  
AND FINAL, YEAR  
AS THE UNIVERSITY  
OF DETROIT MERCY  
SCHOOL OF LAW  
ALUMNI BOARD  
PRESIDENT.**

It is my pleasure, along with the Board of Directors, to represent the more than 9,000 alumni around the globe and connect with our many friends and supporters.

The Law School Alumni Board has had many successes over the past several years, including: creating and endowing the Detroit Mercy Law Alumni Board Endowed Scholarship; establishing a student mentoring program; ensuring that programs and services provided to our alumni meet their current needs by revising Alumni Board By-Laws, Committee Structure, and Membership; and hosting our annual networking event: Erin Go Law, which was so special this past year as it was our largest in-person gathering yet post-pandemic.

The Alumni Board looks forward to continuing to build upon these successes, and we hope you will join us in this mission.

Throughout the coming year, the Law School Alumni Board will lead several initiatives designed to raise funds as we continue to invest in the future of legal education at Detroit Mercy Law. A financial investment in current students will help mitigate their debt and provide tangible support as they navigate their future. We hope you will share your experiences by engaging with admitted students to encourage their choice of Detroit Mercy Law, serving on job-related panels, or mentoring current students.

We sincerely hope you will join us at an event, program, or lecture this academic year. The presence of alumni and friends means so much to the school. The members of the Alumni Board are here to serve you, and I invite you to join us for the exciting year we have ahead.

The Board and Council are looking forward to the upcoming year, and we are hoping to see many of you at events in and around the Law School.

**Kyle R. Dufrane '98**  
President  
Detroit Mercy Law Alumni Board

**2023-2024  
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**STANDING AT THE GATE OF  
 THE 2023-2024 ACADEMIC  
 YEAR, LOOKING AHEAD, I  
 SMILE WITH EXCITEMENT**

of a vision of a harvest moon enabling a collective of Detroit Mercy Law alumni to work long into the night for equal justice. My vision is inspired by knowledge of seeds generously planted by the Association of Black Law Alumni (ABLA) in the fertile fields of Detroit Mercy Law alumni and students this past year.

The seeds were planted in furtherance of the ABLA's mission to augment resources used to increase Black law alumni and student participation through fellowship, networking, mentoring and other activities at Detroit Mercy Law.

The ABLA has successfully tended the fields, establishing strong collaborative relationships with the Black Law Student Association (BLSA), the Hispanic and Latino Law Student Association (HILLSA) and the Student Bar Association (SBA) and other student groups. Those relationships were apparent by the large number of alumni, students, faculty and their families who attended the Third Annual ABLA Cookout, kicking off orientation weekend.

My vision is emboldened by the enthusiasm of a score of recent Black alumni to become new ABLA board members, bringing creative ideas to actively develop the next-generation leaders for Detroit Mercy Law's continuing crusade for equal justice, diversity and inclusion. The ABLA's unceasing pledge to the crusade is embodied in the selection of tools used to plant the seeds of opportunity depicted in our logo: Justice, Mercy, Scholarship and Power.

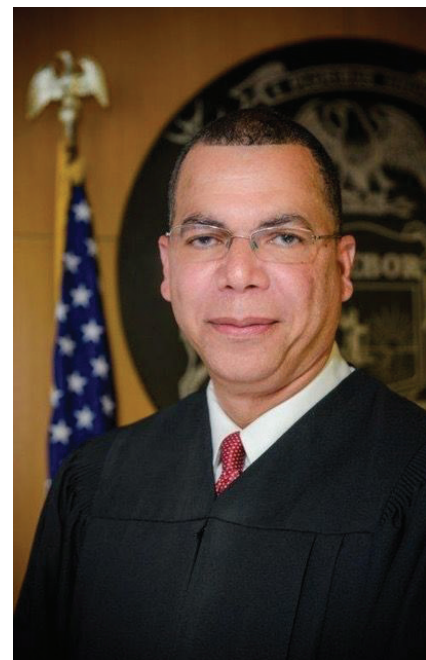
No matter the bitter winds that blow, history tells me to remain forever confident in the use of these tools; confident these enduring tools, in the hands of the Detroit Mercy Law's next-generation leaders, will forever preserve the fertile fields for a bountiful harvest of equal justice, diversity and inclusion. For these reasons I smile with a vision knowing of the great things to come.

Together We Rise!

**Hon. Terrance A. Keith '84**

President

Association of Black Law Alumni



# STUDENT ORGANIZATION LEADERS

## STUDENT BAR ASSOCIATION (SBA) EXECUTIVE BOARD



**Christin DewBerry**  
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**Jazmine Goode**  
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**Evelyn Galvan**  
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**Christina Sutov**  
Executive Director,  
Education, Advocacy & Outreach

## NATIONAL LAW STUDENT LEADERS



**Malak Tehaili, 3L**, is serving as Chair of the **American Bar Association Law Student Division Council**. The Chair is the chief executive student leader of the Law Student Division and its council. Chair is the highest-ranking national law student position in the ABA.



**Saurav Singh, 2L**, is serving as the President for the **North American South Asian Law Students Association**.

# CLASS NOTES

## 1970s



**The Hon. Maura D. Corrigan '73** had her portrait unveiled during a special session of the Michigan Supreme Court on June 14, 2023. As a

former Michigan Supreme Court Justice and the first woman in multiple prominent positions, she served as a leader and trailblazer throughout her distinguished career in many capacities. She is dedicated to advancing child welfare and has been recognized with many awards for her professional achievements.

**Alan Gershel '78** was appointed chairperson to the State of Michigan's Attorney Discipline Board.

**Jerome P. Pesick '78** received the C. Robert Wartell Distinguished Service Award from the Real Property Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan.

## 1980s

**D. Jennifer Andreou '85** was named a Michigan Super Lawyer.

**Matthew J. Boettcher '87** was named to the 2024 class of Best Lawyers in America.

**Michael S. Bogren '82** was selected by the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys to receive the 2022 Distinguished Municipal Attorney Award. He also was selected by Michigan Lawyer's Weekly 2022 Class of Leaders in the Law and re-elected as chairman of the board of Plunkett Cooney.

**Charles W. Browning '81** was named to the 2023 class of Top Lawyers in Insurance Law by DBusiness. He was also named a Michigan Super Lawyer.

**Mark S. Kopson '85** was elected President-Elect of the American Health Law Association. He was named to the 2023 class of Top Lawyers in Health Care Law by DBusiness and named a Michigan Super Lawyer.

**Scott K. Lites '85** was re-elected to serve on Plunkett Cooney's Board of Directors.

**David M. Moss '84** was named to the 2023 class of Top Lawyers in Personal Injury Law by DBusiness. He was also named to the Michigan Lawyer's Weekly Hall of Fame Class of 2023 and a Go To Lawyer in Negligence Law by Michigan Lawyers Weekly.

**Kenneth C. Newa '89** was named to the 2023 class of Top Lawyers in Insurance Law by DBusiness. He was also named a Michigan Super Lawyer.

**Matthew J. Stanczyk '86** was named a Michigan Super Lawyer.

**Julie Beth Teicher '82** was awarded the Barbara J. Rom Award for Bankruptcy Excellence by the Federal Bar Association for the Eastern District of Michigan. She was named by Michigan Lawyer's Weekly to the 2022 Class of Influential Women of Law.

**Mark L. Teicher '82** was appointed to the West Bloomfield Township Environmental Commission.

**Robert F. Wardrop II '80** received the Federal Bar Association of the Western District of Michigan Lion of Bankruptcy Award.

**Craig A. Weier '81** was awarded the Leonard R. Gilman Award by the Federal Bar Association of the Eastern District of Michigan.

## 1990s

**Ken Barnard '97** was elected to the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court in Kalamazoo County.

**Steven Bieda '92** was appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to the 37<sup>th</sup> District Court, serving Warren and Center Line.

**Philip M. Cavanagh '98** joined Plunkett Cooney as a senior attorney in the firm's Detroit office. He is a member of the firm's Government Relations, Public Policy, and Regulatory Compliance Practice Group.

**Andrea Chomakos '97** joined Bank OZK as the Chief Fiduciary Officer.

**A. Vince Colella '93** was named to the 2023 class of Top Lawyers in Personal Injury Law by DBusiness.

**John Joseph Conway '96** was selected to the Crain's Detroit Business list of Notable Leaders in Employment and Labor Law.

**Christian W. Fabian '94** joined Honigman LLP in the firm's Chicago office as a Partner in the Corporate Department.

**Annette Gattari-Ross '93** received the Court Administrator of the Year Award from the Michigan Court Administration Association.



**NICOLE N. GOODSON '97** was appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Circuit Court of Wayne County.

**J. Paul Janes '90** was re-appointed as vice chairperson to the State of Michigan's Grievance Commission.

**Timothy Kirwan '96** was appointed as the Judge of Oswego City Court.

**Jason C. Long '99** was named to the 2023 class of Super Lawyers and was elected Vice-Chair of the Real Property Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan.

**Kevin MacKenzie '98** joined Fishman Stewart PLLC.

**Pamela McClain '95** was appointed to Detroit Public Television's Board of Trustees.

**Dan McGlenn '91** was selected to the 2022 Class of Leaders in the Law by Michigan Lawyers Weekly.

**Dawn M. Patterson '95** was elected Chair of the State Bar of Michigan's Real Property Law Section.



**MICHELLE RICK '91** was awarded the Viano Spencer Leadership Award by the National Association of Women Judges.

## 2000s

**Jeffrey T. Goudie '03** joined Strobl PLLC as an attorney focusing his practice on business banking law, real estate law, and probate law.

**Blake Harden '06** was named to the Washingtonian's "Washington DC's 500 Most Influential People Shaping Policy" for his work in trade policy.

**Patrick C. Lannen '09** was named as one of the Go To Lawyers for business litigation by Michigan Lawyers Weekly. He was also named a Michigan Rising Star Lawyer.

**Courtney Lindbert '09** was named as a 40 Under 40 Attorney to Watch in Illinois by the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.

**Paulette Michel Loftin '08** was appointed as Oakland County's first Chief Public Defender.

**Kari L. Melkonian '08** was selected to the Federation of Defense & Corporate Counsel (FDCC).

**Brett J. Miller '05** was named to the 2022 class of Leaders in the Law by Michigan Lawyer's Weekly.

**Ellie Mosko '09** received the JBAM Volunteer of the Year Award from the Jewish Bar Association of Michigan.

**Brad Peri '09** was named to the 2022 class of Leaders in the Law by Michigan Lawyer's Weekly.

**Joseph Vernon '05** was named to the 2022 class of Leaders in the Law by Michigan Lawyer's Weekly.

**Latoya M. Willis '02** was named chairperson to the State of Michigan's Grievance Commission.

## 2010s

**Kyra Harris Bolden '14** was named to the 2023 Class of Crain's Detroit 40 Under 40.

**Gregory M. Bussell '17** returned to Fishman Stewart PLLC as an associate attorney.

**Ponce D. Clay '15** was named to the 2022 class of Leaders in the Law by Michigan Lawyer's Weekly. He was also elected to serve the State Bar of Michigan's District H, representing Lenawee, Monroe, and Wayne counties.

**Javon R. David '13** was named a 2023 Honoree for Influential Women of Law by Michigan Lawyers Weekly.



**JARED HENRY '15** was recently appointed by Governor Gretchen Whitmer to Manistee County Probate Court.

**Ahndia Mansoori '18** was promoted to Principal at Kitch Drutchas Wagner Valitutti & Sherbrook.

**Tanya M. Murray '17** was named to the 2024 class of Ones to Watch by Best Lawyers in America.

**Mark Nasr '10** was named to the 2023 Class of Crain's Detroit 40 Under 40.

**Nashara Peart '18** received the 2022 Richard J. Seryak Award for outstanding pro bono service.

**Kristina Robinson Garrett '10** was elected to serve as the Recording Secretary on the board of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Wayne Region.

**Nicholas W. Siewert '14** was named a Michigan Rising Star Lawyer.

**Kirsten J. Silwanowicz '11** was named to the 2023 National Association of Women Lawyers Rising List.

**James D. Stevens Jr. '17** was elected shareholder of Reising Ethington PC.



**LISA TIMMONS '13** received the Hero of Alternative Dispute Resolution Award from the State Bar of Michigan.

**Dina Zalewski '12** was named to the 2023 class of Up & Coming Lawyers by Michigan Lawyers Weekly.

## 2020s

**Michael Adams '23** joined Vandevveer Garzia, P.C. as an associate attorney.

**Mario Bozzo '23** joined Stikeman Elliott LLP as an articling student.

**Alexander Choi '20** joined Bodman PLC as an associate in the firm's Real Estate and Construction Law practice groups.

**Mackenzie Clark '22** joined Bodman PLC as an associate in the firm's Workplace Law practice group.

**Jailah Emerson '20** was elected to serve as Director of Programming on the board of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Wayne Region.

**Michelle Gomes '22** joined Meyers Law PLC as an associate attorney focusing her practice on catastrophic personal injury litigation.

**Taylor Jacobsen '23** joined the Disability Law Group as a Veterans Law Attorney.

**Valmik Kelwala '23** joined the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney.

**Paulina Kennedy '20** was elected to serve as Director of Membership on the board of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Wayne Region. She also was awarded the 2023 Regional Leadership Award from the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan.

**Nicole Miller '21** was named to the Dearborn Heights Board of Review.

**Joy Mohammed '22** joined Ottenwess Law as an associate attorney.

**Brooke Nosanchuk '22** joined the Commercial Litigation Practice Group at Plunkett Cooney.

**Nichole Omilion '22** joined McKeen & Associates as an Associate Attorney.

**Reed K. Powers '22** joined Foster Swift Collins & Smith PC as a civil litigation attorney.



**KHAWLA RAHMAN '23** was recognized by the National Association of Women Lawyers as a 2023 Outstanding Law Student recipient.

**Xhesika Resuli '23** joined Dutton Brock LLP as an Articling Student.

**Effi Sidiropoulos '22** joined Collins Einhorn Farrell PC as an associate attorney in the firm's Appellate Practice Group.

**Emilio Sosa '23** joined Dalton & Tomich PLLC as an associate attorney.

**Julia Walczak '21** was elected to serve as Treasurer on the board of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan.

**Delaney Walsh '23** joined Lakeshore Legal Aid as a staff attorney working on the Counsel and Advocacy Law Line.

**Tenisha Wardford '23** joined Galloway and Collens PLLC as an associate attorney.

**Joshua Wilk '23** joined Clark Hill PLC as an associate attorney.



**Alexandria Taylor '11 & Rita Soka '22**

Alexandria Taylor '11 and Rita Soka '22 met when Taylor was an adjunct at Detroit Mercy Law teaching the Small Firm Practice Law Firm Program, which Soka was a student

in. After Soka graduated in 2022, the two decided to work together and form Taylor Soka LLP. “Alex exposed our class to different types of cases while obtaining knowledge and experience of what small firm day to day operation looks like,” Soka said. “In class, she offered to be our mentor and help guide us if we ever decided to go solo.”

“As my student, I knew Rita was destined for greatness and would blaze a trail for the next generation of lawyers, particularly women,” said Taylor. “This powerful partnership is an example of the excellence that is rooted in the Detroit Mercy Law community.”

**Courtney Williams '23** joined Clark Hill PLC as an associate attorney.

**Maya Younis '21** was awarded the National Association of Women Judges Florence K. Murray Award. She was also chosen to be a member of the Arab American Foundation 40 Under 40 Class of 2023.

**Rebecca Zarras '21** was voted Member of the Year by the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Wayne Region.

# REMEMBRANCE REFLECTIONS

## SISTER COLLEEN HICKEY (1933-2023)

Sister Colleen Hickey passed away on October 2 at the age of 88. She dedicated her life to her faith and her community. She undoubtedly had a positive impact on anyone who passed through Detroit Mercy Law during her service.

Sister Colleen joined Detroit Mercy Law in 1970 as the associate director of the law library. She served the law school and students for 41 years before retiring in 2011. She was dedicated to helping students in any way that she could, from helping them with their legal research to writing letters of recommendation. She continued to volunteer at the law school after her retirement. She also raised money for the Warming Center at the Saints Peter and Paul Jesuit Church, adjacent to Detroit Mercy Law.

While Sister Colleen worked in the library, her niece, Denise Hickey '95, who previously served as assistant dean for alumni relations at Detroit Mercy Law, enrolled at the law school. She worried about perceived favoritism from her aunt, but soon realized Sister Colleen treated everyone like her niece or nephew.



Photo of Sister Colleen Hickey with former Detroit Mercy Law Dean Lloyd Semple. Photo by John Meiu.



## PROFESSOR LEON LYSAGHT (1940-2022)

Professor Leon Lysaght joined the faculty of Detroit Mercy Law in 1980. He was instrumental in founding the Canadian & American Dual JD program. The Stewart & Lysaght Scholarship was named in honor of Professor Lysaght and Professor George Stewart, the other founder of the Dual JD Program. This scholarship supports exceptional Dual JD students each year.

His wife, Pamela Lysaght, was also a professor at Detroit Mercy Law. Together, the pair were a driving force behind curricular innovations that resulted in Detroit Mercy Law being named one of the top ten most innovative law schools in the country in 2009.

“Professor Lysaght was brilliant,” said Professor Cara Cunningham Warren. “It is amazing to think of the countless ways our students and institution have benefited from Leon’s vision and commitment.”

## REMEMBRANCE

With deepest sympathy to the family and friends of alumni who passed away from August 10, 2022 to September 1, 2023

MICHAEL J. ABBRUZZESE '68  
GERARD J. ANDREE '75  
MICHAEL C. AZAR '88  
NINA M. BACKON '01  
ALEXIS M. BECK '79  
MOISES J. BERMUDEZ '81  
DONALD R. BERSCHBACK '68  
MARTHA L. BLACK '80  
EDWARD F. BRASSEUR '11  
JOSEPH N. BROWN '61  
GEORGE E. BRUMBAUGH '74  
BRANDON S. BUCHANAN '01  
ALLAN D. CHISHOLM '51  
WALTER C. CLIFF '55  
ROBERT I. COULON '53  
RAYMOND CROWLEY '58

JOHN A. DE ROSE '53  
DAVID J. DEMPS '94  
WILLIAM M. DONOVAN '64  
GARY W. DOTSON '78  
JEANNE M. DUKE '05  
NOEL B. HABEREK '63  
JON S. HAINLINE '87  
PETER N. HILL '82  
CONSTANCE J. HOBSON '74  
GARY G. HOSBEIN '68  
PHILLIP D. HOWARD '80  
JOHN JACOBS '70  
CHRISTINE KACZANOWSKI '84  
STANLEY C. KAZUL '66  
STEVEN J. LEBOWSKI '82  
DAVID E. MCCRIGHT '79

DANIEL W. MCKELVEY '70  
WILLIAM J. MOORE '65  
THEODORE G. MUELLER  
EUGENE J. NASAL '70  
WILLIAM E. OLIVER '54  
THOMAS W. PAYNE '53  
PEGGY G. PITT '79  
ROBERT J. RENNELL '64  
LESLIE ROSE '53  
JONATHAN I. ROSE '69  
HARRIET B. ROTTER '75  
MARY T. SCHMITT-SMITH '79  
ROBERT H. SHIELDS '53  
ROBERT P. TREMP '59  
CHARLES L. WELLS '80  
ETTA B. ZIVIAN '80



University of Detroit Mercy School of Law  
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## ANNUAL SIGNATURE EVENTS

### FALL

Red Mass

McElroy Lecture on Law and Religion

### WINTER

DeWitt C. Holbrook Lecture on Social Justice

Black Law Student Association (BLSA) Vegas Night

Detroit Mercy Law Review Symposium

Commencement

**35,000**

HOURS OF PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES  
TO RESIDENTS OF DETROIT AND THE  
SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES PER YEAR

EDUCATING THE COMPLETE LAWYER