

Student Profiles

Jonathan Stuart: Finding his own direction

Rising third-year law student Jonathan J. Stuart is forging his own path. He is the first member of his immediate family to leave his home in the Bahamas to come to the United States, the first to graduate college and the first to attend law school. After watching his mother, whom he refers to affectionately as “Mummy,” and his father work tirelessly for decades, Stuart knew he had to pursue a new direction for himself.

Stuart’s mother has been employed with Scotiabank since graduating from high school. She works in the compliance department with attorneys who ensure the bank is following applicable rules and regulations. When he was younger, Stuart would often accompany his mother to her job and was inspired by their work.

“Growing up I would talk to these attorneys, and I thought it was really interesting stuff,” he said. “I found that they were real shakers in the company. They made stuff happen. I always liked that about the attorneys from her job and that’s what made me want to be an attorney. I felt like I could be a mover and a shaker.”

Stuart’s uncle, a practicing dentist and faculty member at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine, encouraged him to attend college in the United States, and more specifically in the South, feeling the atmosphere and culture here is most similar to the Bahamas.

“My uncle went to school up North and it was cold and you have to fend for yourself. There’s a different feeling [in the South],” Stuart said. “It’s friendly. People are always saying good morning; always recognizing people; looking them in the eye and treating someone like they’re a person, not just a means to an end.”

Stuart took his uncle’s advice and attended Valdosta State University as an accounting and finance major. He continued to branch out by joining the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, despite not knowing what a fraternity was. The experience put him out of his comfort zone in several ways, from meeting new people to trying ballroom dancing.

After graduation, Stuart decided to stay in the state he had come to call home and enrolled at Georgia Law. As a first-year student he joined the Davenport-Benham Chapter of the Black Law Students Association and recognized the benefits it had for himself and his classmates. He remained active in the organization and served as president during his second year, realizing he could help others who were also traveling in unchartered territory.

“[As president,] my responsibility is to work to make sure there’s a good community at Georgia Law for black students,” Stuart said. “Some students probably don’t have any family members who are lawyers. Some may be like I am, the only person from their family who even graduated from college. I want to be part of the support system for all of these people.”



Jake Weldon: A man of family and faith

Recent Georgia Law graduate Jacob A. “Jake” Weldon has always been a family man. He grew up in a close-knit family in Barnesville, Georgia, as one of four boys. By the time he was 12, he was working with his brothers and father in their family business, M&D Masonry.

After the events of Sept. 11, and with aspirations of eventually becoming an FBI agent, Weldon seized the opportunity to join the U.S. Marine Corps. As a ground intelligence officer, he served two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. One of the most rewarding aspects of his deployments was his ability to have a positive impact on local families.

“We opened a school in Afghanistan that the Taliban had closed for a long time. Within a few days it was full,” Weldon said. “Parents were getting threatened by the Taliban but they were still sending their kids to school.”

At the end of his military service, for reasons from technological glitches to budget cuts, Weldon struggled with a prolonged application process with the FBI. This became

Carol Williamson: An adventurer at heart

When talking with rising second-year student Carol L. Williamson, one of the first things she will tell you about is her love for adventure – whether that means taking a road trip to visit friends living in new cities or flying in a puddle-jumper plane to summit Mount Kilimanjaro while recovering from malaria.

The travel spark ignited during Williamson's junior year of high school, when she left her family and small private school in Savannah, Georgia, to live with a host family for a year in Rome, Italy.

The influential experience helped her choose her undergraduate major, international affairs. In her junior year at UGA, she was awarded a scholarship to fund an internship she would complete in Ghana through the university's Honors Program. During her month in Africa, Williamson worked on projects like helping the people of Ghana understand the rules of their new Constitution and setting up schools for freed child slaves.

Williamson's work in Ghana ultimately influenced her next adventure: teaching for two years in rural Hazlehurst, Mississippi, in the Teach for America program.

"Setting up the schools [in Ghana] really pushed me into applying for Teach for America [and deciding] that maybe I didn't want to go straight into law school," Williamson said. "I was really passionate about going back over to Ghana, or anywhere in Africa, and just helping. You see a lot and you think 'that's unfair.' Then I realized all the problems I saw there. ... There are equally terrible problems in the education system and for children growing up in America."

Williamson's job teaching introduced her to new challenges daily. After training an entire summer to teach third grade, she was told she would be teaching 125 sixth graders. While she considers herself to be an "English/history-person," she was instructed to teach math and science. There were also social barriers she would face.

"I had to learn to be comfortable talking about race with my students," Williamson said. "Just the fact that I was white made me an alien to them. I crossed a lot of cultural boundaries that I had never crossed before. ... I was out of my element, but by the end of my time there, [the entire school community] was my second family."

As her time teaching came to an end, Williamson applied to law school. Her parents, Georgia Law graduates J. Reid Williamson III (J.D.'85) and Wendy W. Williamson (J.D.'85), warned her about the heavy workload and long hours facing her in law school and a legal career. True to her character, the younger Williamson is rising to the challenge.

"My mom has always said I'm her 'adventurer,'" Williamson said. "I love to get out and try new things, whether it's going to a new restaurant or going to a new country, or meeting new people, trying something [new] or challenging myself. ... I always like to have something new on the horizon, and I'm aware of a learning curve. I'm not afraid to go out and know that I'll probably fail something at first and then figure it out."



a blessing in disguise as it gave him time to travel to Roatan, Honduras, where he met his wife, Sarah. The two were married 11 months later and welcomed their first daughter two years to the day after they met. Becoming a husband and father changed Weldon's plans.

"The FBI no longer had the same appeal to me," he said. "I thought I would be able to serve in a different capacity and be a better father and family man by starting my own law practice. That's been my goal in law school."

Earning a law degree was far from easy for Weldon, as his wife and two daughters lived in his hometown with his family in middle Georgia while he commuted to Athens each week for class.

"If it weren't for my faith, I can say with 100 percent certainty I wouldn't have been able to do it. I think God gives us the strength to do what he's called us to do," Weldon said.

His faith also prompts Weldon to be influential in the lives of others. He and his brothers are leaders in the boys' Sunday school class at their church, and they participate in mission trips to Haiti to aid orphans impacted by the 2010 earthquake.

"I would encourage anyone to do that sort of thing," Weldon said. "It really puts things in perspective and helps you to appreciate the little things you have. When you can appreciate the little things, being happy and being content in any given situation, it becomes a lot easier."

Weldon dreams of starting his own law practice and is unsure about what his future holds. What he does know is this: "I want to be the best father and husband I can be. That's a constant as far as what I'll be doing. I've learned that we have our plans and God has his. I'm open to what he calls me to do."

—All profiles by Courtney Lee Brown

Georgia Law advocacy teams capture one national championship and have strong finishes in others

National Trial Advocacy Tournament

Georgia Law won the first ever National Trial Advocacy Tournament this past fall. Third-year students Garrett S. Burrell, Joshua H. “Josh” Dorminy, Whitney T. Judson and Ashley R. Wright teamed up to bring home the top trophy. Additionally, Dorminy was named as the best advocate of the final round, and Judson was selected for delivering the best closing argument in the preliminary rounds.



Representing Georgia Law in mock trial competitions during the 2014–15 year were: (l. to r.) third-year students Patrick Najjar, Josh Dorminy, Whitney Judson and Andrew Whittaker. Not pictured: third-year students Garrett Burrell and Ashley Wright and second-year student Meredith Gardial.

15th Annual William W. Daniel National Invitational Mock Trial Competition

Third-year students Joshua H. “Josh” Dorminy, Whitney T. Judson, Patrick A. Najjar and Andrew M. Whittaker and second-year student Meredith A. Gardial finished the William W. Daniel National Invitational Mock Trial Competition as finalists. The team was coached by Prosecutorial Clinic Program Director Alan A. Cook (J.D.’84) in this contest.

5th Annual Legal Ethics and Professionalism Moot Court Competition

Georgia Law finished as finalists in the Legal Ethics and Professionalism Moot Court Competition held in the fall. Third-year students Spencer E. Schold and Chelsea E. Ivey represented the law school in this tournament.



Third-year students Chelsea Ivey (left) and Spencer Schold competed in the Legal Ethics and Professionalism Moot Court Competition.

Andrews Kurth Moot Court National Championship

Third-year students Candace D. Farmer, M. Laughlin Kane and Alicia N. Luncheon completed the Andrews Kurth Moot Court National Championship as semifinalists. This invitation-only tournament is for the top 16 moot court programs from across the country (based on performances during the 2013–14 academic year), and our students prepared the third best brief of the contest.



Georgia Law’s Andrews Kurth Moot Court National Championship team included third-year students: (l. to r.) Candace Farmer, Laughlin Kane and Alicia Luncheon.

Florida/Georgia-Hulsey/Gambrell Moot Court Competition

UGA continues to dominate in the annual courtroom battle with the University of Florida. This tournament is traditionally held the Friday before the Georgia-Florida football game. Second-year students Aaron D. Parks and E. Keith Hall secured the win for Georgia Law this academic year. The law school’s overall record in the competition is now 21-9-2.



Continuing the winning tradition in the Florida/Georgia-Hulsey/Gambrell Moot Court Competition were second-year students Keith Hall (left) and Aaron Parks.



Oxford program tours U.S. Embassy in London

Students participating in the Georgia Law at Oxford Program spend a semester living and studying law at the famed university in Oxford, England. This year's students enjoyed a field trip and tour of the U.S. Embassy and other London sites courtesy of 1988 Georgia Law alumnus Kit Traub, minister-counselor for political affairs (acting) at the embassy (standing, second from right).

EJF funds seven fellowships

The Equal Justice Foundation granted seven fellowships this spring to Georgia Law students who have chosen to work in unpaid, public interest positions this summer.

First-year students receiving stipends were: Katherine G. Howard, Lesley A. O'Neill, Anna C. Stangle and Calvin A. Webb. Second-year students included: Bradley C. Bowlin, Kelly M. Sullivan and Joseph D. Summer.

The students will work in a variety of different posts across the country, including public defender offices in DeKalb County, Georgia; San Francisco, California; and New Orleans, Louisiana; as well as law centers such as the Federal Defender Program in Atlanta and Uptown People's Law Center in Chicago.

The Equal Justice Foundation is a student-run organization devoted to the promotion of public interest law. The goals of EJF include raising and distributing funds to law students who spend their summers working in the public interest arena, providing networking opportunities for students pursuing public interest careers, supporting other public interest organizations at Georgia Law and promoting the viability of public interest law careers.

EJF primarily raises funds for fellowships through its annual benefit auction, held each spring semester. This year's event, EJF's 30th, included both live and silent auctions.

Georgia Law teams perform well at regional Transactional LawMeets

Georgia Law had two teams representing the school in two different regional Transactional LawMeet competitions this academic year. Both returned to Athens after earning recognition among their peers for their drafting and negotiation skills.

Third-year students Katherine P. "Kate" Bell and Andy Shin and second-year student Chloe S. Ricke were named champions at the southeastern regional of the national negotiation tournament.

Additionally, third-year students Sarah C. McMahon and Chelsea G. Swanson and second-year student Lily D. Wilkerson captured the Best Draft Award at the southwestern regional.



Second-year student Chloe Ricke (left) and third-year students Kate Bell and Andy Shin teamed up to win the southeastern regional round of the Transactional LawMeet.

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