



Florida Coastal School of Law, Jacksonville, FL

[By Mary Waldron]

Merely a decade old, Florida Coastal School of Law (FCSL) is quickly earning itself a reputation to be reckoned with. Founded in 1996, FCSL received its accreditation in 2002 and led all other Florida law schools with an 81.9% pass rate on the July 2005 State Bar Exam; in February 2006, the school ranked fifth, with a 77.6% pass rate. This blooming and thriving law school recently moved to a new, five-story, 220,000-square-foot building with a 1,400-space parking garage. FCSL's talented and committed students and faculty, as well as its challenging program, demonstrate that this young school is off to a promising start toward a strong and successful future.

The school emphasizes an ideal of "student centeredness," which refers to "the state of mind that manifests itself in how [our] priorities are ordered," according to the school's website. This means that all students are entitled to clear answers regarding questions or concerns affecting them and timely access to the faculty members with academic or administrative responsibility. This commitment to student understanding and support reassures students that the school's top priority is for them to benefit and grow as young attorneys by seeking guidance and mentoring from the law school's experienced faculty, all of whom have "real world" backgrounds in the field of law. FCSL's faculty members have come from large urban law firms, as well as judicial, corporate, and governmental legal environments.

The school's Dean and Professor of Law, C. Peter Goplerud, III, stresses the importance of creating a balance of excellence in rigorous teaching, innovative use of technology in the classroom, infusion of skills training and multiculturalism into traditional courses, frequent student and faculty assessment with the option of feedback, and attention to students' needs and concerns.

Each prospective student wishing to apply to the school must submit an application (and a \$50 fee if the application is sent via mail-online submissions are free), two letters of recommendation, and a personal

statement discussing his or her desire to attend law school. Applicants must also be registered with the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS) and have completed the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). There is no application deadline, although applications are reviewed during the year preceding the term in which enrollment is desired. With a 36.8% acceptance rate, 500 to 600 students are accepted into FCSL each year, with the option to enroll in either January or August. Students are accepted based on undergraduate majors and their level of difficulty, as well as grades. LSAT scores and letters of recommendation are also important.

FCSL is dedicated to exposing its students to a variety of law disciplines with a series of accelerated courses, clinics, associations, and societies. Last year, the law school established the Center for Law and Sports, which offers students a comprehensive law curriculum focused on the ever-changing sports industry. According to the school's website, FCSL's Caribbean Law Clinic gives students the "unique opportunity to collaboratively work on legal issues referred by various attorney generals. Each semester the attorney general of a Caribbean nation, Bahamas, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago to date, or of Florida or Texas refers legal problems to the Caribbean Law Clinic for students from the participating law schools to research under faculty supervision." There is also a Mock Trial Team, which holds annual competitions at a local courthouse. Admission to the team is based on effort,

work, and performance. Other compelling school groups include the Animal Law Society, the Environmental Law Community Action Team (ELCAT), the Middle Eastern Law Students Society, the Sports and Entertainment Law Association (SELA), and the Sports Law Society.

Probably one of the most appealing aspects of Florida Coastal School of Law is its location. Because the school is situated in enchanting Jacksonville, FL, potential students may find themselves asking, "Am I searching for a law school or a relaxing getaway vacation?" Not only are the crisp blue waters of the Atlantic Ocean everywhere you look, but Jacksonville also operates the largest urban park system in the United States, with more than 337 locations on more than 80,000 acres! Additionally, Jacksonville's mild climate affords year-round opportunities for escape from the classroom; the region's warm weather is perfect for golf, tennis, boating, water sports, biking, hiking, wildlife sighting, and hanging out at the beach.

ON THE NET

Florida Coastal School of Law
www.fcsl.edu

City of Jacksonville, FL
www.coj.net

The American and Caribbean Law Initiative
www.fcsl.edu/acli