Celebrating the human dimensions of the legal profession.
40 FACES, 40 STORIES

Large black-and-white portraits of Virginians who qualified for legal aid services are filling the halls of Richmond Law this year. The exhibit, which Virginia Poverty Law Center created to celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2018, is a powerful reminder for students of the human impact of the profession they are entering. “I love this exhibit because this is not a hypothetical,” said professor and library associate dean Roger Skalbeck, who was instrumental in bringing it to Richmond Law. “This is real life.” Read more about the exhibit on Page 4.
Dear friends,

Our alumni do some pretty remarkable work. Take U.S. Navy Reserve Rear Adm. Andrew Burcher, L’97, for example. He serves as NATO’s commander of submarines. Or Cassandra Emery, L’04, who leads a Richmond-area nonprofit. Matt Dahl, L’09, is a global threat analyst with a cybersecurity firm.

You might not guess that lawyers would hold these three positions. However, the skills and attributes that good lawyers bring to the table — a systematic way of thinking, a leadership mindset, and the ability to innovate — are the very ones that make our alumni successful in the many and varied roles that lawyers play.

Here at Richmond Law, we continue to provide the foundations of an outstanding legal education that will equip our students for practice — whether that’s commanding a submarine fleet or assessing cyberthreats. At the same time, we’re looking toward the future and the changing nature of legal practice by helping our students develop the habits of mind and character they need to be effective lawyers.

One manifestation of that work is the new Professional Identity Formation program that you’ll read about in these pages. As program director Janice Craft describes, professional identity formation is about guiding students in discerning their own values, strengths, and motivating interests in relation to their individual practice, the legal profession, and society. Through this program, our students become more self-aware — and self-directed — in the workplace.

Qualities like self-awareness — along with interpersonal skills, other-mindedness, and yes, a thorough knowledge of the law — are the hallmark of today’s exceptional lawyers. What’s exciting to see is that as our students prepare for the legal profession of the 21st century, they’re also helping shape it. As they explore the values and skills they’ll bring to bear in the professional realm, we can see a glimpse of the next generation of great lawyers. And based on my experiences with our students, I’d say that the future is bright.

Best,

Wendy C. Perdue
Dean and Professor of Law
FEAURES

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From third-year law students to senior associates, a growing number of legal professionals are moving toward career paths outside the law office and the courtroom.

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Self-awareness. Client-centeredness. Reflection. They’re qualities that make a better lawyer — and part of a growing movement in legal education.

22 Commanding presence
Navy Reserve Rear Adm. Andy Burcher, L’97, put his law career (mostly) on hold to serve a high-profile role with NATO.
When you’re in law school and cramming for your next exam, it’s easy to think of the law as simply text to memorize and cases to analyze. The 40 Years, 40 Faces photo exhibit at the Muse Law Library through the end of 2021 is a compelling reminder of the real people protected by those laws.

Stunning black-and-white portraits by photographer Glen McClure and accompanying text share the diverse stories of 40 clients served by the Virginia Poverty Law Center, a statewide nonprofit that seeks justice in civil legal matters for lower-income Virginians. The center supports Virginia’s nine local legal aid programs and serves as an information clearinghouse on such issues as domestic abuse, elder rights, housing, and education.

The VPLC commissioned the exhibit in 2018 to celebrate its 40th anniversary. As the police killing of George Floyd and similar events in 2020 elevated awareness of social justice issues, Roger Skalbeck, professor and associate dean for library and information services, recognized that the exhibit could engage students in conversations about inclusivity and inequality.

“I wanted to get in front of them the human story about the people they can serve, whether they work for a legal aid organization or engage in pro bono work after joining a tax and accounting firm,” he said.

A quick scan of a QR code reveals the moving story behind each portrait. “In class, students often hear hypothetical cases,” Skalbeck said. “I love this exhibit because this is not a hypothetical; this is real life.”

For example, in the library’s main entrance, students encounter Lisette, who was able to leave her abuser through a VPLC program called Legal Assistance for Victims-Immigrants of Domestic Abuse (LA VIDA). Outside of the career development office, passersby meet Ryan, an autistic eighth-grader who received the resources mandated by his individualized education plan after a legal aid program intervened.

“The exhibit is a reminder that no matter how much society may divide us in regard to economic status or skin color, we are all equal and all human beings,” said Charmaine Nyman, L’22. “Everyone deserves to be treated the same under the law and have equal access to justice.”

If the exhibit serves as a call to action, students can find information about the law school’s family law clinic, children’s defense clinic, and other outreach opportunities in a law-library display case. Said Skalbeck, “We hope students feel inspired to ask, ‘How can I make a difference?’”

—Kristin Baird Rattini
Future of policing

The killing of George Floyd and other high-profile incidents involving police — including, more recently, the pepper-spraying of an Army lieutenant during a traffic stop in Windsor, Virginia — formed a timely backdrop for an April Law Over Lunch CLE called “Policing Post-2020: Recipes for Review and Reform.” Professors Julie McConnell and Jack Preis spoke during the virtual event, sponsored by the Carrico Center for Pro Bono & Public Service.

McConnell has a distinctive perspective on the subject: She’s both a former prosecutor and a former public defender. Today, her primary focus is on children’s defense and juvenile justice. “We’ve got to stop using the carceral system to address our social problems,” she said. “We have refused to fund our social safety net for so long that we’ve been forced to use the criminal justice system in its place, and it has failed miserably.”

While McConnell discussed some progress in “front-end” reforms, Preis addressed how courts evaluate and punish police misconduct after it has occurred. A chief weakness in the system, according to Preis, is the doctrine of qualified immunity. To prevail in a civil suit against a police officer on a constitutional claim, the plaintiff must show not only that the officer violated their rights, but also that the violation was egregious.

A key takeaway from the session was the need for change at the systemic level. “A recurring theme that comes up when we talk about law enforcement reform is bad apples versus systemic issues,” said Tara Casey, director of the Carrico Center.

Preis borrowed from colleague and scholar Barry Friedman to address the need for a combination of policy change, legislation, and deterrent regulations to address reforms in a systemic way.

—Salua Kamerow, L’22

Remote justice

When the pandemic closed courthouses across the nation, many courts turned to technology in order to conduct hearings, trials, and other proceedings virtually. They may be on to something worth continuing even after the pandemic is over, said Renee Danser of Harvard Law School’s Access to Justice Lab. “I’m concerned that, post-pandemic, courts will replace all of the remote-justice strides they’ve made with ‘business as usual’ at the typical courthouse,” Danser said in a February presentation offered by Richmond Law.

Danser’s discussion of the advantages and pitfalls — as well as the constitutionality — of remote justice was one of seven sessions in “Emerging Technology and Law,” this year’s tech symposium sponsored by the law school’s Journal of Law & Technology (JOLT). Other sessions focused on blockchain and cryptocurrency, artificial intelligence, vetting tech providers, the future of the law post-pandemic, and women in technology law. The free virtual symposium carried CLE credits and was attended by more than 200 attorneys and law students. Speakers came from academia, law firms, and the corporate world. The sessions — more than five hours’ worth — are available at Richmond Law’s YouTube channel.

BEYOND THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Students who work in the Jeanette Lipman Family Law Clinic represent parents in child abuse and neglect proceedings — and, under the direction of clinic director Fallon Speaker, they also tackle a community engagement project aimed at inspiring long-term change.

This spring, for example, Tori Piviriotto, L’21, did a project on shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma and found that the relevant legislation is outdated. “The legal system is about 15 years behind the medicine,” Piviriotto said. Ellie Pittman, L’21, and Carly Wright, L’21, teamed up on a presentation to help educate parents “on how using substances and being a parent creates a risk for you to be involved in the child welfare system,” as Wright put it. The three students talk about their clinic experience in a short video at law.richmond.edu/features/.

STUDENTS ORGANIZE

Even during a pandemic, the Richmond Law community knows how to stay engaged. The latest addition to Richmond Law’s roster of student-run groups “serves to represent our South Asian student population through cultural events and networking opportunities.” The South Asian Law Student Association launched in spring 2021 with a celebration of the festival of Holi.

Richmond Law is home to more than 35 student organizations and affinity groups. Other additions to the list in recent years include First Generation Law Students, the Mindfulness in Law Society, the Older Wiser Law Students group, and the Sexuality and Gender Alliance.
Edward Douglas had been in trouble with the law twice before: two convictions on minor drug charges that resulted in probation. When he was convicted in 2003 for selling a fistful of crack cocaine to an undercover informant, it was his third strike. Under federal law, the judge had no choice but to send him to prison for the rest of his life.

Douglas ended up being freed in early 2019, thanks to new federal legislation called the First Step Act — and thanks to the efforts of the Decarceration Collective. An all-woman, not-for-profit law firm headed by MiAngel Cody, the Decarceration Collective specializes in winning freedom for prisoners serving lengthy sentences for nonviolent drug crimes. Cody and Douglas, along with criminal justice advocate Latonja Walker, spoke virtually at Richmond Law in February as part of the Emanuel Emroch Event Series; the hourlong presentation is available on Richmond Law’s YouTube channel. The work of the Decarceration Collective is the subject of a 2021 documentary, The Third Strike.

PRO BONO PITCH
People going through cancer treatment have had an especially hard time during the COVID-19 pandemic — and some of the challenges they face are ones that lawyers can help with. That’s the message of an article by Lisa Allen, L’18, in the February 2021 issue of Virginia Lawyer. Allen encouraged attorneys with expertise in a range of areas — employment, insurance, estate planning, and housing, among others — to do pro bono work for CancerLINC, a Richmond nonprofit that helps cancer patients with legal issues.

“Time you spend in your own field, in your comfort zone, helping clients who are too sick and too overwhelmed to advocate for themselves is deeply appreciated,” she wrote.

When she authored the article, Allen was a client services attorney at CancerLINC; she has since joined Carrell Blanton Ferris & Associates in Richmond, where she focuses her practice on estate planning, estate administration, and elder law.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS
The Hon. William Ledbetter Jr., L’62, served as a judge for more than three decades, including 18 years as a Virginia circuit court judge. After he retired, he donated copies of more than 200 of his opinions to his alma mater. Today the Ledbetter papers are housed alongside exam papers, law school memorabilia, and other alumni contributions in the Richmond Law archives, part of the Muse Law Library.

Ledbetter heard civil and criminal cases “running the gamut from adoption to zoning,” said Molly Lentz-Meyer, director of bibliographic services. Case topics include fraud, free speech, defamation, student discipline, and the knock-and-announce rule. Ledbetter died Oct. 6, 2020, at age 79.

LEGAL REFORM

Fresh look at three strikes
Today’s lawyers and legal business leaders face a paradox: On the one hand, the number of tools and technologies available to innovate legal services continues to expand; on the other, most efforts aren’t using them fully or appropriately—or are, but fail to produce measurable results.

In examining 39 of our innovation-related projects at a variety of law firms and other organizations, we found that the inability of most teams to innovate has little to do with a specific technique or technology. Instead, the problem has its roots in two critical knowledge gaps that persist across the legal market.

In most firms, the gap between the practice of law (what the firm does to make money) and the business of law (how the firm operates) is wide and generally unrecognized. This is a key reason every team working in this arena should have both legal and business talent working as one. Technology is just one example of this disconnect: In an internal survey at an AmLaw100 firm, 75% of equity partners/shareholders agreed with the statement, “My practice and practice group would benefit from further use of technology or innovative approaches.” However, when presented with the statement, “The majority of partners are familiar with our tools and technology,” only 13% agreed. In short, lawyers are craving more of what already exists in their firm. They just don’t know it, and nobody is making them aware of it.

The second knowledge gap results from the dominant law firm business model. Traditional services represent by far the largest part of the commercial market, and most firms’ operations, culture, and strategy are built to support the traditional model. Typically, when a practice group or team of lawyers seeks a new approach, exceptions are made to various standards and procedures to provide the partner(s) with what they want—the “exception-based approach.” Some partners want to advance beyond this, and as their experiments mature to more fully built and ongoing services, they need more tailored and sustainable support—the “integrated approach.”

With either approach, gaps between what the team needs and how the firm can support it begin to emerge. The attempts to change will put stress on firm operations. To succeed, firms need to predict, navigate, and mitigate this as best they can.

Practice groups and firms that take on this greater responsibility to understand the operating system and boundaries should find that their innovation efforts are easier and have a higher chance of measurable and sustainable success.
HOW MOMENTOUS WAS IT FOR VIRGINIA TO REPEAL THE DEATH PENALTY?

In my mind, it is the most significant death penalty development since 1972, when the Supreme Court invalidated capital punishment statutes across the country for a time. In part, Virginia’s repeal is momentous because it marks the first time a Southern state has abolished the death penalty. And in part, it’s momentous because even among Southern states, Virginia was exceptionally committed to executions. No state has executed more people than Virginia. No state executed faster once a death sentence was handed down, and no state matched Virginia’s success in defending its death sentences, which enabled it to convert death sentences into executions at a higher rate than any other state in the union. That’s a big deal.

WHY DID THE LEGISLATION FINALLY PASS?

The tipping point was the Democrats’ control of the state legislature and governorship, but a number of developments had been quietly laying the groundwork for decades. Advocacy groups worked tirelessly on public information campaigns. Family members of victims became voices against the death penalty. Virginia had adopted the punishment of life without parole, so we no longer needed the death penalty to keep people safe. And thanks to dedicated capital defenders, Virginia had not seen a new death sentence in a decade. By 2021, Virginia had only two people on death row. The death penalty in Virginia was pretty much dying out on its own.

YOU’RE WRITING A BOOK ABOUT LETHAL INJECTION. TELL US ABOUT IT.

I started with a question: Why can’t we get lethal injection right? We put pets down humanely every day, and we cut people open on operating tables without them feeling a thing. If we can use drugs to alleviate pain and ease the dying process outside the execution context, why is it so hard to do that here?

The answer turned out to be a book, and it boils down to the fact that we have certain assumptions about lethal injection — it’s backed by science, for example, and it uses medical professionals who know what they’re doing — and none of those assumptions are true. It’s been a fascinating project.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR CAPITAL PUNISHMENT?

I’m not so good at predictions. I never would have predicted that Virginia would repeal the death penalty in 2021 even five years ago. I can tell you the track we’re on now, and it is headed toward abolition, slowly but surely, state by state. Of course, it just takes something like a terrorist attack to bring it back, so it can turn in an instant. But if repeal happened in Virginia, it can happen anywhere. And everywhere.
PRO BONO

They’ve got answers

In more than 98% of cases in Virginia’s General District Court, at least one of the parties isn’t represented by a lawyer — and often, it’s because they can’t afford one. “The ‘access to justice’ gap in Virginia is huge,” said Joyce Manna Janto, L’89, the law school’s director of public and instructional services.

One initiative aimed at helping bridge that gap is Virginia Free Legal Answers, an online resource created by the Virginia State Bar in 2016 — and since the program’s inception, Richmond Law students have helped train the lawyers who donate their time to the program.

Low-income residents can go to virginia.freelegalanswers.org to ask about a range of civil matters — a potential eviction, perhaps, or an employment dispute — and a volunteer attorney will review and respond to their question. (The program is overseen by Crista Gantz, L’07, the state bar’s director of access to legal services.) Participating lawyers go through a training session first, and that’s where the law students come in: As part of the training, the lawyers look at questions being asked on the website, and the students research the answers for them. Said Janto, “The students have their laptops and their Lexis and Westlaw passwords ready,” giving them access to case law, books, treatises, and other resources.

The experience is part of Janto’s Advanced Legal Research class for 2Ls and 3Ls. “It’s not just a great learning opportunity for the students,” she said, “but a terrific networking opportunity as well.”

ACCOLADE

New graduation honors

Richmond Law faculty honored student contributions to the community in two new ways at the Class of 2021 commencement ceremony. The first Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award recognized the “potential to contribute to ending historical and enduring forms of subordination and structural inequality and justice.” Ka’turah Francis and Julia Ziegler (above), co-founders of the First Generation Law Students group, received this award.

The inaugural Racial Justice and Anti-Racism Advocate Award recognizes the potential “to contribute to ending structural racism, racial inequality, and other forms of injustice based on race.” Courtni Weaver, former president of the Black Law Students Association, and Christian Jones, former chair of the Student Bar Association’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee, were the recipients.

DEAN’S CHAT

Dean Wendy Perdue fielded questions from a student and a faculty member, respectively, in the first two installments of Three Questions with the Dean, a new online video series. In the debut on March 16, Student Bar Association president Katie Ryan Snyder, L’21, asked the dean to reflect on how COVID-19 challenged the law school, what the rest of 2021 holds, and how the pandemic will ultimately affect the legal profession. For an episode in conjunction with Law Day on May 1, Perdue answered questions from Henry Chambers, Austin E. Owen Research Scholar and professor, about the rule of law. The interviews are available on Richmond Law’s Facebook page (facebook.com/URLawSchool).
News media sought out Richmond Law faculty for their perspectives in recent months. Here’s a sampling:

**Los Angeles Times**

Professor Carl Tobias spoke with the *Los Angeles Times* about whether the Consumer Product Safety Commission should require Peloton to recall a product linked to a child’s death. “Practically all of the recalls of products which the CPSC has power to regulate are voluntary,” he said. “The CPSC probably should have more power to require recalls so that it can better protect consumers.”

**The Associated Press**

The Associated Press covered a Richmond Law virtual symposium on the “school-to-prison pipeline” in March. Panelist and Children’s Defense Clinic director Julie McConnell said the phenomenon became prominent in the 1990s. “We would automatically suspend and expel kids who got in trouble in school for very minor offenses in many cases,” she said. The article added: “McConnell said suspending minors results in higher rates of dropout, mental health problems, delinquency and substance abuse issues.”

**Bloomberg Wealth**

Bloomberg Wealth examined the relationship between Apollo Global Management CEO Leon Black and the late, disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, who received $158 million between 2012 and 2017 from Black for various “advisory services.” “What’s bizarre to me is having Epstein in any way in charge of your estate planning,” Allison Tait, professor of law, told Bloomberg. “He didn’t just leave this to his family office staff, who were likely highly competent.”

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**ACCOLADE**

The Metro Richmond Women’s Bar Association honored Richmond Law’s Carole Yeatts for her “exceptional commitment to the personal, professional, and intellectual development of others.” Yeatts, director of career development for career advising and employer outreach, is one of two recipients of the 2021 Phoebe P. Hall Mentorship Award.

“Carole has unquestionably gone above and beyond anything that would have ever been required of her as ‘just’ my career adviser,” said Mary Margaret Hawkins, L’21, who submitted the nomination. “Because of her mentorship, I know I will pass on the value of having a good mentor and make the effort to mentor other young attorneys and law students one day.”

This recognition “was absolutely the highlight of my career,” Yeatts said. “It gives me joy to connect people; it gives me joy to put people together who either have common interests or common needs and then sit back and watch their relationship grow and develop.”

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**IN THE MEDIA**

Professor Carl Tobias spoke with the *Los Angeles Times* about whether the Consumer Product Safety Commission should require Peloton to recall a product linked to a child’s death. “Practically all of the recalls of products which the CPSC has power to regulate are voluntary,” he said. “The CPSC probably should have more power to require recalls so that it can better protect consumers.”

**EQUITY**

**Language aid**

Since 2018, visiting professor Susan Dudley has been supporting Richmond Law’s international students in her role as an applied linguistics specialist.

“I spent my last year of undergraduate school studying abroad because I was always fascinated by different cultures,” said Dudley. That curiosity, along with her passion for teaching, inspired her current career path; she went on to earn a master’s degree in TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages), and she’s working on a doctorate in education.

Dudley had worked with international students at other universities, but law students represented a new challenge. “It’s a great opportunity to work with a different community,” she said. “Legal writing and analysis can be unlike other English constructions” — it’s essentially “a different form of the English language,” she said.

Dudley works with students from diverse heritage languages, as well as native speakers of Korean, Chinese, Spanish, Swedish, Portuguese, and Arabic. While their linguistic challenges may differ, one of the most difficult parts of a student’s journey is to “understand what they don’t understand.” The next step is to recognize that differences exist between the way students convey legal knowledge in their heritage language versus English.

After meeting with her over a period of time, students learn to correct their own mistakes and take less time to review their writing. “The goal is for the student to no longer need my assistance,” Dudley said. “When this happens, I have done my job.” —Salua Kamerow, L’22
Chris Sullivan, ’17 and L’22, never knew that his mother, Sallyanne Sullivan, attended law school until he was in high school. “She passed away from breast cancer when I was 3,” said Sullivan, who grew up with his “very left-brain, chemical engineer” father, Mark Sullivan, outside Philadelphia.

“I was wondering why I always felt disappointment that I was not as good in math and science as my dad,” Sullivan said. “I always was more attracted to critical thinking, to reading, writing, argument, and reason.”

So when he came across an article that his mother wrote for the University of Dayton Law Review in her role as editor-in-chief, it struck a chord.

“I read it, and it was like looking in a mirror,” he said. “I could see myself doing this.”

Today, Sullivan is about to enter his third year of law school — and, following in his mother’s footsteps, he’ll take on the role of editor-in-chief of his school’s flagship journal, the University of Richmond Law Review.

The Law Review appealed to Sullivan because of the depth and breadth of scholarship explored in its pages. But more than that, Sullivan found that the Law Review served as a microcosm of what he valued most about Richmond Law. In his fellow staff members, he found a group of “goal-oriented, team-oriented people who take pride in the work that they’re doing.”

That community is one of the reasons Sullivan chose Richmond Law to pursue his legal education. After graduating from the University of Richmond in three years and spending some time with Teach for America, he returned to his alma mater.

“In law school, in general, there’s a mentality of competition and a cutthroat environment,” he said. “Richmond dispelled that immediately. It seemed like an environment that I not only could enjoy, but could thrive in.”

Today, Sullivan studies intellectual property and copyright law. But outside of academics, the Law Review is his primary focus. He approaches his year as editor-in-chief with a mix of “80% excitement and 20% terror,” he said. “I know it’s going to be a big responsibility.”

One of his major goals for his tenure is to further explore technological innovations to make the editorial process “more efficient, more productive, more enjoyable,” he said. During the pandemic, the Law Review adapted to digital editing in a remote world. Sullivan doesn’t want the lessons learned during that time to go to waste: “As bad as [COVID-19] was, it was still a learning experience. Adversity creates ingenuity and forces you to solve those problems.” That’s a mindset that will guide his leadership over the coming school year.

—Emily Cherry
FROM THIRD-YEAR LAW STUDENTS TO SENIOR ASSOCIATES, A GROWING NUMBER OF LEGAL PROFESSIONALS ARE MOVING TOWARD CAREER PATHS OUTSIDE THE LAW OFFICE AND THE COURTROOM. It’s no secret that those with a background in law are giving careful consideration to J.D.-advantage jobs. Opportunities in the public and private sectors continue to grow steadily; look no further than the in-house legal operations departments being created at companies — including at law firms. And, thanks to the rise of emerging careers, there’s even more work in industries that didn’t exist five or 10 years ago. From advocating cannabis bills to protecting data privacy, it’s less about what’s available in today’s job market and more about what you want to do with your law degree. “Consider the skills you got in law school that other people don’t have,” says Kathy Greenier, director of emerging careers at Richmond Law. “You can literally do anything.” (Greenier herself has a law degree that she’s used in three different J.D.-advantage roles.) As Matt Dahl, L’09, an intelligence analyst at the cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, put it: “Just because you go to law school doesn’t mean you have to be a lawyer. Your degree can be useful in other ways, and just as rewarding.”

Here’s a look at newer career paths chosen by six Richmond Law alumni — and advice for those thinking of doing the same.
TIP #1: 
MAKE THE DIFFERENCE YOU WANT TO SEE

Create social impact through the world of nonprofits.

When Cassandra “Casey” Emery, L’04, went to law school, she envisioned a career prosecuting child abusers and sex offenders. But after doing some pro bono work and becoming frustrated with dynamics of the system, she decided to shift her energy to policy and nonprofit work. “I felt like I could create more systemic change this way,” Emery said. Over the years, she became senior vice president for the Greater Richmond Chamber and executive director and CEO of YWCA of Richmond, where she was able to reach her goal of providing services for children and families in crisis.

Law school, said Emery, had prepared her to process information quickly so that she could make practical decisions about a given situation. In her current role as COO of Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond, she does just that: helps to identify short- and long-term organizational and community opportunities, helps steward the organization’s resources, and serves as the organization’s liaison to policymakers and administrative bodies. Emery also helps connect philanthropists to community needs such as COVID-19 response and affordable housing.

Working for various causes through nonprofits has forged an entirely different and more fulfilling path for Emery. “Don’t become too focused on where you think your career should be that you overlook opportunities that could provide significant growth,” she said. “Explore where things may take you.”
TIP #2: CONSIDER A SPECIALTY — LIKE CYBERSECURITY

Don’t have the right background? Try good old-fashioned networking.

Fields like cybersecurity can be harder to break into without a degree specific to the industry or any prior experience, but it’s not impossible. “A lot of people look at the industry and think that you need to be a computer scientist to get involved,” said Matt Dahl, L’09, a principal intelligence analyst at CrowdStrike. “But there are lots of different roles and opportunities for people who want to take the time to learn about it, find what interests them, and build connections with people in the industry.”

Dahl always wanted to get into national security law as a lawyer but wasn’t necessarily interested in pursuing the traditional law practice route to get there. So he reconnected with a friend in cybersecurity to find out more; Dahl was intrigued by what he learned and, after a short internship at a cybersecurity firm called iSIGHT Partners, was hired there. In 2012 he went to CrowdStrike as a senior analyst and legal counsel. (Those without any contacts can still find ways to network, Dahl said, even if it’s as informal as engaging with someone in the field on Twitter.)

At CrowdStrike, Dahl parses through feeds of data from customers in the private sector and looks for malicious activity — specifically, cyber-espionage — and then writes reports about his findings. There’s great satisfaction in his work — some of the threats he researches are ultimately the subject of federal indictments — and also a demand for it. More industries than ever need analysts like Dahl to protect sensitive information. (Look no further than the May 2021 cyberattack on Colonial Pipeline, which created a gas shortage frenzy and jump in prices.) The nature of the work is analytical, and Dahl said his law school background is ideal for that: “The way that you have to think in law school lends itself very well to this job and probably many other jobs.”
Kathy Greenier, director of emerging careers in Richmond Law’s career development office, focuses on cultivating opportunities in employment sectors for which law students and J.D.s have not traditionally been a significant portion of the applicant pool. What makes her an expert? She’s held three J.D.-advantage positions herself.

“After I finished law school in 2010, I started my career as the founding director of the Women’s Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union of Virginia, focused mostly on policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, and public education,” she said. “I then went on to found the organization’s Reproductive Freedom Project. I then moved into the consulting field as a senior consultant and practice manager at Floricane, a Richmond-based boutique organizational development consulting firm that serves mostly nonprofit clients.”

She says the key is leveraging the skills that law school trains you to excel in: listening, analyzing, and strategizing. That means talking to people in various fields and reading up on possible careers. Then, it’s time to take stock of your skills and passions.

The career development office is available to support alumni exploring J.D.-advantage and emerging careers. For more information, go to law.richmond.edu/career.

TIP #3: LOOK FOR AN ADJACENT FIELD
One possibility: Advocate for equity from outside a courtroom.

Wanting to get into civil rights and anti-discrimination work led Carley Dix, L’15, to her career in equity and compliance in higher education. “I could combine and address all of those interests,” said Dix, who is the Title IX and Section 504 coordinator and compliance officer at Davidson College in North Carolina. In her role, she coordinates institutional policies and procedures regarding discrimination based on sex, gender, or disability.

Although her job is rooted in making sure the school is legally compliant, she spends a lot of time fielding complaints or concerns, finding resolutions, and fostering a sense of community. “You’re not just bringing the legal substance to the table,” Dix said, explaining that being skilled in other areas — such as training, investigating, and mediating — is just as important as understanding laws and the needs of protected classes.

Dix’s clinical placements at Richmond gave some of that invaluable experience. At an education rights clinic, she learned how to be an advocate for both individuals and communities. In another placement, during her third year, she earned her mediator certification at the CMG Foundation, a community mediation center. There, Dix realized she wanted to pursue a legal-adjacent position. She loved having the basis and boundaries of the law, but also the freedom to be a little more creative in how the law is used. By doing this in a university environment, Dix can empower students and help them learn the skills needed to address issues such as equity — skills that they, in turn, can take into their communities and future careers. This, Dix said, creates a ripple effect of positive change.
TIP #4:
LEGAL OPERATIONS JOBS ARE IN DEMAND
Leverage your law expertise on the business side.

For David Esposito, '06, GB'09, and L'09, the draw to work at Capital One wasn’t necessarily about being in banking or financial services. He wanted to move away from private practice, where he had worked as a civil litigator for nearly five years, for the chance to use both his law degree and his MBA.

After serving as in-house counsel in Capital One’s litigation department for a couple of years, he transitioned into legal operations in 2016. Now, as director of legal operations, he manages the department like a business, asking — and answering — questions such as: Do we have the best technology to keep pace with the rapid changes in the industry? Do we have the right data to make strategic decisions? Can we be using our resources better? Because he’s in a highly regulated industry and dealing with customer data and finances, risk management is also a focus. But people with a legal background, he said, are already primed to evaluate risks and determine how to prevent and mitigate them.

Roles like Esposito’s have grown significantly and are even a popular hire for law firms. (Corporate Legal Operations Consortium, or CLOC, is a good resource for more information.) The position requires the skill to communicate and the ability to influence — essentially, to make your case. For example, the way that Esposito presents recommendations for a particular business problem is very attorney-like — he lays out all of the evidence so that it almost makes the solution obvious.

“Legal operations is everything associated with running a law department or law firm that’s not practicing law,” he said. “It’s also taking a more business-oriented lens than law firms or legal departments have often taken in the past.”

TIP #5:
EMBRACE ENTREPRENEURSHIP
There’s always time for a new beginning if the idea is good enough.

Early on in his career as a real estate attorney, Gary Piacentini, L’82, was doing some house closings for clients of the firm and noticed how disjointed the process was for a homebuyer — specifically, the number of people involved and how money was exchanged. So he came up with a more efficient idea: Offer the expertise and loans under one roof. By eliminating the extra players and the fees associated with them, the model could substantially reduce closing costs for borrowers. In 1997, Piacentini founded CapCenter mortgage and realty company.

“We’re really a professional services firm that happens to have money,” Piacentini said, explaining that CapCenter has in-house experts in real estate, law, and mortgages. With federal and state laws to navigate — the mortgage industry is one of the most regulated in the country — CapCenter has 20 lawyers on staff (including Matthew Jones, L’09, vice president of operations and legal).
What’s made the company thrive over the years, beyond a solid formula, said Piacentini, is a culture that’s highly ethical and client-centric — much like a very good law firm. Another reason for the success is Piacentini’s willingness to always evaluate a way of thinking he credits to learning the Socratic method during his first year of law school. “Ask the company, ‘What else can we do? What are we missing?’ instead of always thinking you’ve got the tiger by the tail,” he said.

He’s now spent more years as an entrepreneur than an attorney, but that time practicing gave him early confidence in making decisions as a businessperson: “If you get comfortable practicing law, you’re able to make decisions in gray areas and embrace the path forward.”

TIP #6: FOLLOW YOUR INTERESTS

Passions are becoming serious business.

Kristin Jordan, L’97, considered herself a quiet medical and wellness consumer of cannabis, but as the industry matured, she began to advocate for legalization. Jordan, a real estate attorney, also saw opportunity coming after New York passed the Compassionate Care Act in 2014. Through previous work with clients in the hospitality industry, she was familiar with the liquor licensing process and anticipated a similar process for medical marijuana providers and a new practice area. However, it never turned into a viable opportunity.

Still wanting to support the emerging cannabis industry, she sought new ways to educate herself and her community about plant medicine, social justice, and economic empowerment. She co-founded the Cannabis Cultural Association in 2016 to help marginalized and underrepresented communities in New York understand their rights and opportunities in the budding industry. CCA educates, in English and Spanish, about the plant’s benefits while advocating on bigger issues like criminal justice reform. She launched an events company called Mannada in 2018 to produce professional events for the cannabis industry, while also trying to build a cannabis law practice in a state with only five medical cannabis providers. In 2019, she joined Acreage Holdings, one of the world’s largest cannabis corporations, as its director of real estate; that same year, Forbes named her as one of the cannabis industry’s most powerful and innovative women. She now is the founder and executive director of the Asian Cannabis Roundtable, a networking organization working to advance Asian people in the industry.

“It’s so important for us to have a moral conviction about the policing of this plant,” she explained. Her commitment to the cause came to fruition in March when New York approved legalization — and, unlike other states, unveiled the most progressive bill ever with legislation for economic and racial equity to benefit people and communities impacted by the drug war. “When you find your passion, stick with it,” she said. “We finally have the opportunity to do this right.”

“When you find your passion, stick with it.”
Self-awareness.  
Client-centeredness.  
Reflection.

They’re qualities that make a better lawyer — and part of a movement that’s gaining popularity in legal education: professional identity formation.
WHEN CONSIDERING WHETHER TO represent a client, a lawyer takes many factors into account. They determine whether their skills are the right match for the client’s problem, in addition to matters of budget, timeline, and other logistical considerations.

But what happens when the client wants to pursue a course of action that, although technically legal, the lawyer finds morally repugnant? Perhaps a client in a divorce case wants to try to gain the upper hand by creating a needless custody dispute, or a client suing for damages in a liability case wants to prolong litigation just to drive up the opponent’s costs. The American Bar Association’s Rules of Conduct allow for an attorney to withdraw from representation under such circumstances — but what values guide the attorney in making that decision?

Lawyers and lawyers-in-training are tackling questions like these as they increasingly embrace the concept of “professional identity formation.” And the idea is gaining momentum in legal education. A new proposal by the American Bar Association would require law schools to offer professional identity formation to students. Law schools have begun launching their own special programs or courses in professional identity formation, and, in 2019, Richmond Law joined those ranks with the hire of Janice Craft. The former legal services director for the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Alliance heads the law school’s new Professional Identity Formation program, working in partnership with other faculty members to develop courses and experiential opportunities in professional identity.

What, exactly, is professional identity formation?

At its simplest, it’s the process by which a law student decides what kind of lawyer they want to be — not in the sense of “trial attorney” versus “real estate lawyer,” but what values and traits they intend to embody. Craft offers a more comprehensive definition, describing professional identity as a lawyer’s awareness of their skills, strengths, attributes, and motivating interests relative to the values, competencies, and conventions of legal practice.

“I tend to think of professional identity as that in-between space in decision making,” Craft said, “where a student, and later a practitioner, has to decide on a course of conduct that’s not explicitly prescribed by our ethical codes of conduct or our professional rules of conduct.”

Take, for example, a concept as simple as boundary setting. Rules of conduct call for lawyers to keep clients “reasonably” informed and to “promptly” respond to clients’ “reasonable” requests for information. But when a client calls an attorney at 11 p.m., it’s up to the attorney to decide whether to take the call, balancing personal priorities against professional expectations.

The ABA’s Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools address curricular requirements in Standard 303, which calls for law schools to provide “substantial opportunities” to students in the form of legal clinics, field placements, and pro bono services. The proposed amendment would add “the development of a professional identity” to the list of required offerings.

The proposed change is part of a larger national movement that has its roots in medical education. Medicine “sort of bested us,” Craft said, in teaching identity formation. Professional identity also gets attention in other health care fields and in social work — areas that, not coincidentally, have a focus on customer service. Beyond developing an awareness of self, students who engage in identity formation “begin to internalize that ours is a service profession,” Craft said, “and they become very deeply client- and other-oriented.”
PROFESSIONALISM VERSUS PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Proponents of professional identity formation are quick to clarify its difference from the concept of professionalism. Professional identity formation is not a replacement for the professional responsibility course that’s already part of the law school curriculum. “Professionalism really refers more to the external norms and expectations of the profession,” Craft explained. “Professional identity formation is the flip side of that — the internal development of the professional.” If professionalism is an external rule of etiquette — say, deference to a judge in the courtroom — then professional identity is the internalized decision-making process over how to address a judge who, for example, persistently misgenders a client.

Professional identity also plays a role in areas like pro bono service and mentorship. “We have aspirational goals for pro bono service, but it’s not required of attorneys,” Craft said. Similarly, while the profession recognizes the importance of mentorship, no one is required to be a mentor. Through the examination of professional identity, a new lawyer might develop a better sense of why and how they want to contribute.

Professionalism and professional identity formation intersect in several ways at Richmond Law. Each year, dozens of students complete a summer public interest fellowship administered through the career development office. Craft now meets with the students to unpack their work; the idea is to talk about what the experience was like, what they learned about the profession, and how it affected the direction they were headed. Students continue that work through curricular and co-curricular offerings that open the door to self-reflection and self-assessment.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Craft dedicated the inaugural year of the Professional Identity Formation Program to the process of research and discovery. A team of Richmond Law faculty laid the groundwork for that study in the lead-up to Craft’s hire — work that included consulting with other schools that have created similar programs, as well as visiting the Holloran Center at the University of St. Thomas School of Law, a pioneer in emphasizing professional identity formation.

One of Craft’s first steps was to recruit a student advisory board to help inform curriculum development. Starting in the 2021–22 academic year, 1L students will have a required course in professional identity formation in which they’ll consider hypotheticals and examine the role of lawyers in society. They’ll also engage in what Craft described as “reflection and metacognition exercises — really thinking about how they learn best and how they most effectively integrate what they have learned.”

That course will lay the foundation. “One thing that’s critical for us is that identity formation is something that starts early and intentionally and continues throughout the law school endeavor,” Craft said. That means offering upper-level specialty courses, too, on topics such as professionalism, leadership, or the relatively new area of trauma-informed lawyering — best practices for working with clients who have endured a traumatic experience such as an abusive relationship, a flood or fire, or a death.

In addition to those courses, Craft anticipates that the core principles of professional identity formation — reflection, client-centeredness, and self-direction — will also be incorporated into existing courses. It doesn’t have to mean drastic changes to a professor’s teaching style; instead, it might be a slight adjustment in the phrasing of a question — asking a student, “If you were an attorney in this case, how would you frame this argument, and why?” Said Craft: “It’s about shifting the student’s perspective from, ‘What is the holding in this case?’ to, ‘How would I, as a professional, advocate on behalf of this client?’”

In some ways, professional identity formation is already at work in the classroom setting. “Even if we did nothing explicitly to inform students about what it’s like to be a professional, implicitly we are always telling students — by modeling behaviors, by talking about choices that people make,” said Laura Webb, professor of law, legal practice, who recently became associate dean for strategic initiatives. So, for example, “If I come in to class every day in sweatpants, I’m modeling for students what it means to be a professional in the legal world,” she said. It’s what’s referred to in legal education as the “hidden curriculum.” Webb explained, “One of the problems of the hidden curriculum is that because it’s not explicit, we sometimes inadvertently give students messages that we don’t intend to give them, like that it’s a good idea to wear sweatpants to work.”

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

In addition to coursework, another natural training ground for professional identity formation is experiential learning, where students put into practice the lessons and principles learned in class. The summer public interest fellowships are one example; others include legal clinics and externships. And, as with the summer fellowships, Craft wants students to “intentionally reflect” afterward, asking themselves what did or didn’t work for them and how they might do things differently. “Students occupy
the role of a professional in clinical and externship settings,” said Craft. “Now, let’s be intentional about examining that role.”

The professional identity program also intersects with the law school’s efforts to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. According to Craft, it involves thinking about how race and gender might affect the core competencies of lawyering. A 2016 study by the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) identified some of those core competencies; for example, an overwhelming majority of attorneys agreed that new lawyers must treat others with courtesy and respect. The study of professional identity formation might ask how race and gender stereotypes impact others’ perceptions of whether a lawyer is courteous or respectful. Craft offered an example: “If a woman joins a male-dominated firm and points to firm policies that appear less than inclusive, will a partner surmise that she is being disrespectful?” The issue is compounded, Craft said, for Black attorneys, who are up against “angry Black man/woman/person” stereotypes.

FROM LEGAL EDUCATION TO THE PROFESSION
Professional identity formation may sound all well and good as a component of legal education. But what does it look like when it comes time to execute in the professional field?

The 2016 IAALS study identified the “foundations for practice” — the “competencies, skills, and characteristics new lawyers need to be ready.” According to Webb, those skills — such as initiative, emotional intelligence, leadership, and problem-solving — make better lawyers. “It’s not just knowing the law or being able to draft a contract,” Webb said. “It’s all the other characteristics that make you a whole, effective lawyer.” It might seem like a straightforward concept, but the shift in focus from exclusively teaching legal doctrine to adding skills-based training is relatively new. And the end result benefits not just the lawyer, but the employer and the client, as well. Janet Hutchinson, the law school’s associate dean for career development, put it this way: “Students who come to work having the skills that they’re learning in a professional development course are going to be better off because they’re going to make better choices about the kinds of employment that are a good fit for them.” That, in turn, adds up to longevity in employment.

It’s also clear to Hutchinson that employers value those skills. She pointed to the way many law firms have created their own professional development departments, teaching professional competencies such as critical thinking, judgment, and collaboration to their lawyers. “If our students have a jump start on that,” Hutchinson said, “that can only be a good thing.”

A WELLNESS APPROACH
Professional identity discussions include a lot of talk about lawyers’ own values, strengths, and interests — which begs the question: What strengths or attributes are particularly helpful for a lawyer to develop? In other words, what does good professional identity formation look like?

Ren Warden, L’23, is a member of the Professional Identity Formation student advisory board that Craft created early on. “I think as a society we have this idea of lawyers being heartless,” Warden said — “that we as lawyers aren’t culturally sensitive or empathetic enough.” For her, empathy stands out as a core trait for successful lawyers. “We need to be able to relate to our clients,” she said.

“WE WANT STUDENTS VERY EARLY ON TO NORMALIZE THE CONCEPT OF WELLNESS.”

Webb sees it this way: A lawyer who has spent time developing professional identity might be more inclined to think about how they can be of service to a client and how they can make a contribution within the larger legal profession. “I’m not just drafting a contract,” she said. “I’m actually in some way serving justice. I’m representing you in a world where I believe people should be able to make promises to each other and those promises should be upheld.”

Another core concept of professional identity formation is empathy with one’s self, in the form of mental and physical well-being. Studies even suggest that wellness is linked to ethics. Said Craft: “We see attorneys run into ethical issues not because they’re inherently unethical, but because of burnout.” That burnout might take the form of unmet deadlines, missing a scheduled hearing, or even mishandling financial accounts. “We want students very early on to normalize the concept of wellness and to recognize wellness as essential to their professional success,” Craft said. Warden agreed: “The better we treat ourselves, the more efficient we can be for others, too.”

In many ways, that’s what the entire movement is about: becoming a better lawyer — a better advocate, a better employee, a better person — by fostering self-awareness.

Emily Cherry is assistant dean for communications and strategic initiatives at Richmond Law.
Commanding PRESENCE
Andy Burcher, L’97, begins a conversation about his work debunking the common misconception that working for the Navy Reserve is a part-time job. It may be for some, but what Burcher’s been doing for the past two years is very much a full-time responsibility: He’s in charge of submarine operations for NATO.

Burcher has spent his professional life as an attorney in the civilian world, practicing since 2006 at Walsh Colucci Lubeley & Walsh in Prince William, Virginia. But he’s also a 1988 U.S. Naval Academy graduate who has served for most of his career as a Navy reservist, rising over the course of two decades to the rank of rear admiral. For those not familiar with the often-complicated workings of the U.S. armed forces, the term “reservist” might confuse things, implying as it does little more than occasional weekend duties. But wearing an admiral’s two stars, managing many billions of dollars’ worth of strategic military assets, and commanding personnel from dozens of nations requires full-time attention.

Since taking a leave from the law firm to return to active military duty in 2019, Burcher has provided just that. In July, he wraps up a two-year stint as commander of NATO submarines and deputy chief of staff for submarines at NATO’s Maritime Command Headquarters (MARCOM) near London. From there, after a well-earned month off, he’ll return to reserve status and shift his focus back to clients in his firm’s litigation and commercial business group. It’s a jarring transition, swapping duties with massive geopolitical implications for the casework of commercial litigation and real estate proceedings. Burcher says he’s made it work by finding the common ground between the two.

“I like to say I treat the reserves like a client — a really good client,” he says. “It’s been the only client I’ve had straight through since 1999.”

It’s late April, and Burcher is in Norfolk, Virginia, sitting in a nondescript hotel room in his khaki Navy working uniform, recounting via a Zoom call how he’s balanced his parallel careers. His role at MARCOM took him to Great Britain, where he was stationed for most of the past two years, but the Alexandria, Virginia, native is ending his NATO stint back on (nearly) home turf, leading the evaluation process of the recently established Joint Force Command Norfolk — hence the temporary digs. As he talks about his time in the reserves and the temporary recall to active duty that brought international relocation and daunting responsibility, Burcher’s pride is evident.

That sense of duty dates to his days at Annapolis, Maryland, and it never really waned. He graduated from the Naval Academy in 1988 with a degree in mechanical engineering, then chose to fulfill his five-year active-duty commitment on submarines. He deployed on a succession of Los Angeles-class fast-attack nuclear subs, including serving on the commissioning crew of the USS Alexandria (SSN-757), named for his hometown. He later taught submarine tactics at the Naval Submarine School in New London, Connecticut.

These were the years immediately following the end of the Cold War, when military downsizing meant suddenly far fewer opportunities for career-minded service members. That very much included a submarine force focused primarily on the fading threat from the former Soviet Union: In the early to mid-1990s, the Navy’s submarine fleet was essentially halved. “There really weren’t jobs,” Burcher says, a fact that drove his decision to step away from active duty.
He switched gears, earning his MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1995, then returning to his home state to complete his law degree at Richmond. Not long after, as he was working to establish his own practice, another attorney who was serving in the reserves encouraged Burcher to consider signing on. He says the hardest part was digging out his dusty service records, joking that the excavation was reminiscent of the cavernous warehouse scene at the end of Raiders of the Lost Ark. Otherwise, Burcher didn’t need much convincing.

“I missed it,” he says. “I missed serving my country, and I missed doing something I’d trained 10 years to do.”

He was 32 at that point, busy with starting a family and establishing his law career, and it was impossible to predict how this new commitment would play out. But it felt good to scratch the itch — to put on the uniform and get to work in submarines again. “It demanded my time, it paid me, and it gave me a sense of satisfaction,” Burcher says. “Instead of having a hobby, like woodworking or something, the reserve essentially became my hobby.”

One weekend a month, two weeks a year, just like the old recruiting slogan said. It would be understandable for anyone in that situation to think that might be enough.

John Paul Jones remembers two things about the first-year student who took his civil procedure class a quarter century ago: He was impressed by Andy Burcher’s intellect, and he was struck by the former submariner’s height. “I remember that I looked up to him,” Jones says, “and I’m 5 foot 10.”

Jones, professor emeritus of law, is also a Navy veteran whose expertise includes maritime law. He hadn’t been in contact with his former student until recently — and, for him, seeing a longtime reservist in a high-level NATO command role was a surprise, one he correctly deduced would be best explained by the Navy’s increasingly integrated approach to its reserves.

As Burcher explains it, the post-Cold War era led to a switch in viewing the reserves less as a strategic force and more as an operational one — meaning “we’re now much more integrated with the day-to-day activities of the Navy. We like to say we provide strategic depth in a knowledgeable fashion, so we need to be involved on a day-to-day basis.”

That helps explain how a lieutenant serving part time could, over the course of 20 years, rise through the ranks to eventually earn a strategically vital and high-profile NATO command — officially, responsible for “operational tasking of submarines assigned to the alliance and support for multinational submarine safety.” For Burcher, it started with those weekend and annual two-week stints as a selected reservist, when he would be flown out to an aircraft carrier to coordinate carrier-submarine operations. Even as he excelled in his law career, becoming a shareholder at Walsh Colucci Lubeley & Walsh, he was earning promotions and four separate commands in the reserves.

In 2017, he was promoted to rear admiral, lower half, marking his selection as a flag officer — one of just 48 to hold the title in the 60,000-person Navy Reserve.

It was exciting, a huge honor — but also, Burcher admits, not exactly sustainable. “My duties greatly increased, so
I was doing about 180 days of time supporting the Navy at the same time I was billing 2,000 hours at my law firm,” he says. “I did that for a year and a half, even tried some cases. It was pretty crazy.”

Sanity prevailed when Burcher was asked to come on active duty, a move he says his firm made easy by supporting what would essentially be a 30-month leave of absence — although not a complete absence: “Even while doing this, I still stay connected with the firm,” he says. “You can’t just go cold turkey. You have to maintain relationships.” On Jan. 1, 2019, he went to the Pentagon for a six-month stint as vice director of Navy staff. That July, he relocated with his wife, Julia Riley, L’97, and their youngest son to London to begin his duties at MARCOM.

His role with NATO is at once expansive and simple. As Burcher puts it, “I am the person responsible for the operations of all submarines that are assigned to NATO.” By design, the alliance doesn’t have its own assets, relying instead on its 30 member nations, 24 of which have some maritime capacity, and 13 of which operate subs. Any submarine turned over to NATO in peacetime is Burcher’s responsibility, as is the planning of how the vessels are used, from strategy to deployment.

On both counts, there is plenty to consider: tension between NATO members and Russia, the continued growth of China as a global superpower, climate change opening new shipping lanes, and contested drilling areas in the Arctic. Burcher can’t be specific about much of it, of course, but even as he acknowledges the parallels between his chosen fields — litigation and warfare, forms of conflict with very different stakes — he emphasizes what he and his peers are working for. “Ultimately, the goal of NATO is to deter aggressive action,” he says. “If we never go to war, NATO has done a great job.”

How he’s accomplished that job has been dramatically altered by COVID-19. Before the pandemic, Burcher says he was away from his London headquarters “75% of the time” meeting with personnel from member countries. Pandemic-related travel limitations hampered his ability to build relationships with his professional peers, but he’s proud that NATO has been able to hold its biannual anti-submarine warfare exercises through the pandemic.

What travel he’s been able to do has been memorable — one trip in particular. In 2019, he was in Athens to meet with the Greek submarine force, a trip that included a private sunset tour of the Acropolis and, the following day, a spot aboard a Greek sub for a torpedo exercise. There, the Greek commander pointed out they were cruising over the sunken wreckage of ancient ships from the Battle of Salamis, fought between the Greeks and Persians in 480 B.C.

These are the moments he’ll miss when his assignment is up, moments he can’t re-create in a courtroom. But he has pride in his more typical work, and other moments are worth coming home for. With the family moving back to Virginia, his youngest son will have the chance to finish high school with friends, and the Burchers will be close to their oldest son, a student at James Madison University.

In April, the Burchers’ oldest child, a daughter, was wrapping up her senior year at North Carolina State University. His face showed a different sort of pride when discussing her; two weeks later, Burcher was scheduled to commission her as a Naval ensign. The future aviator began flight school in May. ■
Real estate law hits home

Professor Carol N. Brown is writing a book about real estate law, but it isn’t a dry text on the finer points of land use and ownership rights. The book weaves her scholarly work on property law with her family’s personal stories about the land they owned in an impoverished part of North Carolina.

Brown became fascinated with real estate law because of those stories. Her mother, one of nine children, grew up on a farm in Littleton, North Carolina.

“Her family was very poor, but they owned their own land, as opposed to being sharecroppers,” Brown said. “They were cash-poor, but they were never hungry.”

As each of the children was set to go to college, the family would cut down trees on the land to sell in order to scrape enough money together to pay the tuition. “I think poor people have always understood there’s something permanent and grounding in owning a piece of land and working themselves out of poverty.”

Brown, who has written three casebooks on property law, said writing a combination memoir/scholarly book is a new challenge. “It’s nice to pause and say, ‘How did I get here?’”

A graduate of Duke University School of Law, Brown has written scholarly papers in her specialty, including one in the *Iowa Law Review* that examined a 1992 case, *Lucas v. South Carolina Coastal Council*. That paper was cited recently in a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on state compensation for privately owned property. The high court ruled that when a government regulation deprives a landowner of all economically beneficial use of their property, it amounts to a total taking. Justice Clarence Thomas cited Brown’s paper in his dissent; Brown had found that in the 25 years since the *Lucas* ruling, the standard was only applied in a minute number of cases. (Regarding the mention by Thomas, she said, “I’m very glad he saw my article and found it worthy to cite.”)

Brown also enjoys teaching her students the universality of real estate law. While her property law course is a requirement for her students, many of them aspiring prosecutors, Brown wins them over with her passion for the subject and her knack for making it relevant to their everyday lives. And, marrying her academic interests with community service, she also volunteers as a board member for Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Virginia.

—Cristina Rouvalis
HAMITLON BRYSON released the 105th volume of his *Virginia Circuit Court Opinions*. He also published *Some English Law Reporters of Seventeenth Century Cases*.

JUD CAMPBELL’s article “The Emergence of Neutrality” was accepted for publication in the *Yale Law Journal*.

ASHLEY DOBBS presented on “Reckoning with our Past and Building for the Future” at the Association of American Law Schools Annual Conference on Clinical Legal Education. She also participated in the RVA Works Entrepreneur Accelerator Program, offering a training session in intellectual property and business law.

JESSICA ERICKSON gave the keynote address at the Chicagoland Junior Scholar Conference on “Teaching and Thriving in 2020.” She was a panelist on Institutional Shareholder Services’ 2020 Stewardship Week discussing class action recoveries and presented her upcoming paper, “Coalitions Building Among Plaintiffs’ Attorneys in Securities Class Actions,” at New York University’s Law & Economics Workshop in November.


MEREDITH HARBACH presented on “The New Parens Patriae” for the department of law at Leiden University in the Netherlands. In addition, her reflection on Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg was published in the *University of Richmond Law Review*. Harbach was quoted in a *New York Times* article about co-parenting during a pandemic.

JAYES HOLDERNES joined Jacob Tingen, L’12, and James Williams, L’19, in a virtual conversation on taxation for streamers via Tingen and Williams’ Twitch channel, Team Gavel. Hayes also hosted a remote CLE on “The Intersection of Domestic Violence and Tax Controversies” with Terri Morris, L’20.

CORINNA LAIN testified on the proposed Virginia bill to abolish the death penalty and provided commentary to Al Jazeera English about her hopes for the Biden administration’s approach to the death penalty. She authored a comment for the *Washington and Lee Law Review* on Virginia’s decision to repeal the death penalty.

KURT LASH’s latest project, *The Reconstruction Amendments: Essential Documents*, was published by the University of Chicago Press. The two volumes bring together, for the first time in one place, the original documents relating to the framing of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments.

DA LIN’s article “The Banker Removal Power” was accepted for publication in the *Virginia Law Review*.

JULIE MCCONNELL presented on major changes in the sentencing updates of minors for the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and was a moderator for a webinar on education and incarceration offered through Germanna Community College. She also joined the Richmond YWCA’s Courageous Leadership forum as a guest panelist.

KRISTEN OSENGA joined the Ricochet podcast to discuss vaccine regulation in a post-Covid-19 world. Osenga was also the moderator for a virtual session on works in progress at the Federalist Society Annual Faculty Conference and was a presenter at a works in progress session as part of the University of Akron IP Scholars forum.

NOAH SACHS’ article “Toxic Floodwaters: Strengthening the Chemical Safety Regime in the Climate Change Era” was published by the Columbia Journal of Environmental Law. He presented on the same topic at the University of Utah’s annual water law workshop. Sachs was the lead commentator on SCOTUSBlog regarding *U.S. Forest Service v. Cowpasture River Preservation Ass’n*, about whether a major natural gas pipeline could cross the Appalachian Trail.

DORON SAMUEL-SIEGEL facilitated a session on critiquing student work for the Legal Writing Institute Critiquing Workshop.

KEVIN WOODSON’s article “Entrenched Racial Hierarchy: Educational Inequality from the Cradle to the LSAT” is forthcoming in the *Minnesota Law Review*.

NEW FACULTY

VINCENT CHIAO will join the faculty in 2022 as the Haynes Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies, a shared appointment with the Jepson School for Leadership Studies. An expert in criminal law and criminal justice, Chiao comes to the University of Richmond from the University of Toronto Faculty of Law.

DANIELLE STOKES will join the faculty in 2021 as assistant professor of law. She comes to Richmond Law from Syracuse University College of Law, where she served as a faculty fellow. Stokes teaches and writes in the area of environmental law. Her undergraduate degree is from the University of Richmond.
We want to hear from you.

Send us your note via the “Submit a Class Note” link at lawmagazine.richmond.edu; email us at lawalumni@richmond.edu; contact us by mail at Law Alumni, University of Richmond School of Law, University of Richmond, VA 23173; or call 804-289-8028.

1960s

EBB WILLIAMS, R’61 AND L’64, and wife Gayle Williams, W’61, celebrated their 60th anniversary in December. They married while still undergraduates. After a honeymoon in Williamsburg, Virginia, the couple returned to Richmond to take final exams. After graduation, Ebb entered the University of Richmond School of Law while Gayle taught third grade at Tuckahoe Elementary School. When Ebb graduated from law school, the couple and son Kevin moved to Martinsville, Virginia, where Ebb began the practice of law, which has extended almost 57 years. They welcomed daughter Christa Gayle in 1969. The couple has a granddaughter, Kathryn Conley, born in 1991. The 2020 Marquis Who’s Who in American Law featured Ebb in an executive spotlight.

1970s

DALE PITTMAN, L’76, was inducted as a fellow of the Virginia Law Foundation. Dale is in private practice in Petersburg, Virginia.

THEODORE L. “TED” CHANDLER JR., L’77, and wife Laura Lee Chandler, W’74, enjoyed a bareboat sailing vacation out of Tampa, Florida, in December.

JACK SUTOR, L’77, has published a novel in two parts and a collection of short stories. The Ice Meadows (Part I) and Lovers in a Small Café (Part II) is a novel about a trial lawyer and clergyman who contends with evil and adversity as he strives to be loyal to his family and his professional and vocational oaths. Both are published under the author’s pen name, Edmund Burwell. The short stories, titled Thanksgiving, are about how people treat one another in a chaotic world and are published in Jack’s own name. All three are available from Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

1980s

GEOFF MCDONALD, L’89, is founder and principal of Geoff McDonald & Associates, a Richmond-based personal injury law firm with nine attorneys. Richmond Times-Dispatch named the firm to its “2020 Top Workplaces” listing. “It is our mission to create a work environment that encourages professionalism, fosters productivity, enhances client service, and fulfills the career goals of our attorneys and staff,” Geoff said.

1990s

OWEN I. CONWAY, L’91, has joined Herndon Law in Glen Allen, Virginia. His practice areas include criminal law, traffic, estate planning, estate administration, and guardianship and conservatorship matters. Sheryl Herndon, L’96, is the owner of Herndon Law.

RICK KLAU, L’96, was appointed by Gov. Gavin Newsom as California’s chief technology innovation officer.

KRISTINE DALAKER KRAABEL, W’92 AND L’97, co-authored Reflections on the Making of the Modern Law of the Sea with the late Ambassador Satya N. Nandan, a key negotiator for the United Nations on the law of the sea and ocean law treaties. Kristine says, “Nandan’s reflections and wisdom could not be more timely or important. It was a great honor and privilege to work with Ambassador Nandan to bring this book to fruition, and I hope it will serve as a worthy contribution to the literature.”

2000s

RITA DAVIS, L’00, was selected as the Richmond Law commencement speaker for the Class of 2021. Rita is chief counsel to Gov. Ralph Northam.

RAMONA LEIGH TAYLOR, L’00, has distinguished herself in two realms. In her legal realm, she received a promotion to senior assistant attorney general for the Office of the Attorney General of Virginia, serving in the education section, where she represents various educational institutions, including the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Richard Bland College, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. In her film realm, her screenplay Stone’s Compass was a finalist in the Virginia Film Office’s 2020 Virginia Screenwriting Competition, and her screenplay Blind Justice will be showcased at the Cannes Film Festival in spring 2021.

The HON. TYNEKA FLYTHE, L’02, was recently elevated to an eight-year term on the Newport News Circuit. She previously served on the Newport News General District Court.

The Virginia General Assembly elevated the HON. JACQUELINE MCCLENNEY, L’03, to the Virginia Circuit Court. Jacqueline had served on the City of Richmond General District Court since 2015.

JACKLYN BRUCE, L’05, was named to the inaugural Henrico Citizen Advisory Board.

ADAM R. MORDECAI, L’06, joined Morrison Mahoney as a partner in its Manchester, New Hampshire, office. Adam represents businesses, insurers, and individuals, with a particular emphasis on defending personal injury claims, resolving employment matters, handling insurance coverage issues, and litigating construction disputes on behalf of contractors, subcontractors, and project owners.
Richmond Law alumni

Spiders are everywhere. We celebrate Richmond Law alumni with this look at when living alumni graduated, where they live, and more. Need to update your information? Let us know at lawalumni@richmond.edu.

WHERE ALUMNI LIVE

There is no statute of limitations when it comes to learning — just ask the HON. LUCRETIA CARRICO, W’76 AND L’78.

She started college at William and Mary in 1960, but marriage and parenthood soon intervened. A decade after her son was born, Carrico returned to school, enrolling in Westhampton College to finish her degree.

“The kids saw Mom studying; in fact, we’d all sit down and study together,” Carrico said. She earned a degree in political science and — despite the small number of women in the legal field in the early 1970s — enrolled at Richmond Law. She acknowledges the “profound influence” her father, longtime Virginia Supreme Court Chief Justice Harry Carrico — namesake of the law school’s Carrico Center for Pro Bono and Public Service — had on her choice of career. After graduation, she spent a few years working in a corporate law department and then set up a private practice, handling everything from traffic violations to death penalty cases before being appointed as a general district court judge.

“It’s been so interesting,” she said. “You really never stop learning.”

Mandatory retirement in 2013 did little to slow her down. She soon got involved with a program to implement evidence-based decision making in the criminal justice system. The initiative, sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections in partnership with the Center for Effective Public Policy, offers a collaborative and innovative approach to criminal justice reform.

Carrico — now a grandmother and great-grandmother — continues to share her legal knowledge with middle and high school teachers in the Justice in the Classroom program of the Richmond-based John Marshall Center for Constitutional History and Civics.

“The times call for educational programs like those offered by the center so that students and others can better understand the history of the rule of law and its importance to our country,” she said. “We encourage attorneys and judges to visit classrooms to share with students about law and the courts. Kids love this interaction.”

—Debbie Juniewicz
79 YEARS OLD AND STILL PERSUADING

When then-cadet BARRY STEINBERG, R'63 AND L'66, informed his ROTC commanding officer of his post-graduation plan to go on active duty, the answer he got was not at all what he expected.

"He told me, ‘That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard you say,’” Steinberg recalled. “Then he asked me if I had ever thought about going to law school.”

Steinberg had not.

His commanding officer then explained the query: “You argue about everything, and even when you’re wrong, you’re very persuasive.”

That January day at the University of Richmond proved to be life-changing. His next appointment, at the insistence of the commander, was with the dean of Richmond Law, during which he was conditionally admitted to law school. His mom was delighted that he chose law school over his early 1960s, pre-ROTC career of choice. “I wanted to be a professional folk singer,” Steinberg said, smiling.

Steinberg's penchant for persuasion did more than guide his career path — it laid the groundwork for his role creating the Army’s Environmental Law Division in the mid-1980s. Standing up a new division meant convincing the Secretary of the Army of the need for environmental legal expertise.

“I had a 45-minute briefing ready, and 15 or 20 minutes in, the secretary stopped me,” Steinberg said. “He said, ‘Colonel, how many people do you need?’ I told him 17. He said, ‘Approved.’”

While Steinberg retired from the Army in 1989 as a full colonel, he continues his work in environmental law as a partner at Kutak Rock LLP in Washington, D.C. Now 79 years old, the father of four and grandfather of nine still regularly deals with issues ranging from water contamination and unexploded ordnance to the impact of global warming. His children regularly question him about out-right retirement.

“I tell them if I found something I’d rather do, I’d go do it,” he said. “But I like what I do, so why stop?”

—Debbie Juniewicz

The National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) recognized U.S. REP. BEN CLINE, L’07, for his leadership and support of independent colleges and universities. Barbara Mistick, NAICU president, said Ben “serves a rural district where a dozen private, nonprofit colleges and universities are the lifeblood of their communities. During his first term in Congress, he has demonstrated a keen understanding of how important each institution is as a social and economic driver to the cities and towns where they are located.” Ben said that coming to Congress to represent the 6th Congressional District of Virginia, he knew “one of my policy focuses would be on education, particularly higher education, because I have the honor of representing over 20 colleges and universities in Virginia.”

A Veterans Affairs blog selected PATRICK CROCKER, L’07, as its Veteran of the Day. Patrick was commissioned in 2007 and served in the Army’s judge advocate general corps. He served in multiple legal positions at Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Fort Belvoir, Virginia; and Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He deployed twice to Bagram, Afghanistan, and later served with the 101st Airborne Division as an operational attorney and Task Force ODIN as a command judge advocate. Patrick continued to serve as an appellate defense counsel in the U.S. Army Reserve while pursuing an MBA. He said his work as a lawyer in the military gave him the opportunity to practice operational law and the law of armed conflict, “which opened up many doors both inside and outside the military. … Whenever you have commanders and leaders, you need good lawyers giving sound advice and a range of options to enable those commanders to meet their objectives and accomplish their missions.” Patrick left the military in 2020 and is now a Dallas-based senior associate in the health industries advisory practice group at Strategy&) the strategy consulting business unit of PricewaterhouseCoopers. He is married and has two children.

2010s

CHRISTOPHER TOWERY, L’11, is deputy general counsel for United Community Bank in Greenville, South Carolina, supporting the general counsel with overseeing, planning, organizing, and directing the legal staff and outside counsel. He also evaluates legal and policy matters affecting the bank’s activities and supports merger and acquisition activities, capital transactions, finance and treasury matters, and litigation. He previously was partner in the capital markets practice group at Womble Bond Dickinson. “Providing legal and strategic counsel to banks and financial institutions has grown to be my professional passion,” Christopher said. “I am thrilled to join an already distinguished in-house legal team and work together with all parts of the bank to support the mission and vision of the organization.”

Adjunct professor DANIELLE B. KENT, L’15, coached a Richmond Law team to a second-place finish in the American Association for Justice Student Trial Advocacy Competition. Danielle practices at Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen in Richmond.

2020s

NICOLE GIBSON, L’20, started a position with the Petersburg Public Defender after completing her Bridge to Practice Fellowship in the same office. “Everyone I work with has been such a great mentor,” Nicole said. “You’re on a team of people who want to help you learn.”

In his role as Media & Democracy Program Fellow at Common Cause in Washington, D.C., JONATHAN WALTER, L’20, focuses on broadband access, media consolidation, platform accountability, and net neutrality. He started this new position after completing a Bridge to Practice Fellowship with Public Knowledge.
AN ENCOURAGING WORD

For SHAJUAN MASON, L’01, her calling to help children in need doesn’t stop at the courtroom door. The attorney from Matoaca, Virginia, who has often represented children and served as guardian ad litem, has been known to seize moments at grocery stores, cookouts, and even the side of the road to offer children a positive, encouraging word.

“That’s something that never stops with me,” she said. “Wherever I am, if there is a need, I address it.”

After getting her J.D., Mason earned a master’s degree in social work from Virginia Commonwealth University so she could better serve her young clients in district, circuit, and juvenile courts.

“I learned very quickly it is impossible to effectuate change in a child’s life without also addressing the family dynamics,” she said. “You see how it’s all connected.” She sometimes drew on her community connections to assist those families with jobs, housing, and other vital supports.

Her community ties landed her a 2017 gig as a criminal legal analyst for an episode of the TV series Fatal Attraction. The episode, titled “Ruthless Rivalry,” recalled the 2014 fatal shooting of a 19-year-old girl in a Richmond neighborhood where Mason had family connections. “I was able to provide local insights and a personal touch the show wouldn’t have had otherwise,” she said.

After pivoting from the courtroom to the classroom in 2020, Mason is an assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice at Virginia Union University. At Richmond, she is both a student working toward a Master of Divinity degree and an assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice. The real-life scenarios she shares from her 18 years in the courtroom resonate with her students, as does her encouragement to accomplish their goals and follow their dreams.

“I like being able to shape and grow young minds,” she said. “I’m playing mother in the guise of a professor, and that is fun.”

—Kristin Baird Rattini
Richmond Law put a spotlight on mindfulness for alumni at Reunion Weekend. Aubrey Ford, a Richmond trial lawyer and certified mindfulness teacher, led a virtual session about the practice. The following is an edited, condensed excerpt of some of his remarks:

As lawyers, we follow a paradigm of resolving problems. Usually, people come to us with a problem of some type — at least as a litigator, that was always the case for me. I can remember that about my third year [of practice], I realized that I had 110 active cases going on simultaneously. One day, I thought I would keep track of the number of phone calls that I had when I was not out in court. On the day I did, it was 52. Many of you might be able to relate to that with everything you’ve got going on from family to work, to deadlines, to everything else.

Mindfulness can be very helpful in dealing with these stressful issues and anxiety. With lawyers, I have to assume that there’s some degree of skepticism. What is this mindfulness? How in the world could this be any use to me? From my perspective, mindfulness is being intentional about our attention. We place our attention in various places and tend to change it about every eight seconds, often unconsciously. I liken mindfulness to going into a dark room with a flashlight. You intentionally move the flashlight and point where you wish to illuminate.

Mindfulness is not really a relaxation technique. I do feel calm, and diminishing stress is a manifestation of it — but that’s not really what it’s about. It’s really more a self-awareness practice that comes from managing one’s attention. The focus is being in the present moment, out of your head and observing experiences that you confront without judgment. It does tend to radically reduce one’s level of anxiety and enhance one’s focus.

The essential inquiry is, “What is happening now? And how am I with it?” The questions themselves provide some freedom because when you are worried about the brief that is due tomorrow and you haven’t begun it, or when you are worried about the conflict you’re having with your husband, it feels like those worries are all of you, that they surround and encompass you. But through this practice, you begin to see that’s not true. That worry or fear is just a thought, and you can relate to it in any way that you choose. That choice is freedom and the path a different way of living.

What benefits do we get from mindfulness? I think a lot of them are self-evident. There is a reduction in stress. There’s also improved focus. This is the reason, I think, that hundreds of law firms — large law firms — are doing this. As a lawyer, you can clearly see the benefits. As a sister, brother, husband, you can see the benefits of this. You have a calmer demeanor in the midst of tension and anxiety. You have enhanced attention. You have the capacity to listen more deeply and equanimity in the face of difficulty.
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— Hector Quinones, L’23
Dean’s Opportunity Scholar

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Classmates elected Zanas Talley, L’21, front row right, as the student speaker at commencement exercises in May. “What this past year has shown us is that life is something to be cherished,” he said. “We have a duty, my friends, not just to serve justice but to be good, to do good, and to help others do good, too.”

Photograph by Kim Schmidt