



ELON
LAW

In the Driver's Seat

GIA GASTER L'18'S REMARKABLE RISE WAS
INSPIRED BY THE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN
SHE ONCE TRANSPORTED TO SCHOOL.

Alumni News

SUMMER 2019

Bulletin

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN



Things are starting to look up in downtown Greensboro. Literally. Over the past year, we've seen the growth of several high-rise developments within two blocks of Elon Law:

- The Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts is on track to open early next year with a number of sold-out Broadway shows already on the schedule.
- Carroll at Bellemeade, a luxury apartment community, is filling fast, as are the rooms in the Hyatt Regency that opened as part of the same project just across North Eugene Street from First National Bank Field, home of the Greensboro Grasshoppers.
- And speaking of the Hoppers, "Project Slugger" – a nine-story, 110,000-square-foot office tower – broke ground in May adjacent to the ballpark.

That impressive list doesn't include "Carroll South of the Ballpark," a \$140 million project announced this spring by Roy Carroll, one of the most influential commercial developers in North Carolina. Plans for the 20-story tower include a new hotel, apartments, offices, and a parking deck. There's even a rooftop pool and bar.

Things are changing in downtown Greensboro. And that's great for Elon Law. We are situated in the very middle of a growing city, in a growing region, with North Carolina forecasted to be the 8th-most populous state by 2030 if current demographic trends continue. Combined with our innovative 2.5-year curriculum, our recent success on the bar exam, and our strong employment data, which demonstrates how we're on the upswing, there is every reason for optimism and pride in our law school.

Moreover, Elon University's forthcoming 10-year strategic plan, expected to be finalized in less than a year, may well make Greensboro a cornerstone of growth for graduate education. There have been conversations about the nearly two full city blocks owned by the university and how Elon Law could partner with, for example, existing business, communication, and health science programs on main campus that see opportunities here.

We are poised for big changes in the next few years. It's an exciting time to teach and learn law in Greensboro, and we're thankful for all that you, our alumni, do to be a part of our ongoing success as a law school with a difference in the heart of a vibrant city whose future, like our law school's, has never been brighter.

Luke Bierman
Dean and Professor of Law

Can you believe a decade has passed since Elon Law graduated its charter class?

Since then, members of the Class of 2009 have become established and successful private practitioners, prosecutors, judges, and business professionals. And they're far from alone. Today, more than 1,100 Elon Law graduates improve their communities and strengthen the profession with the values they've carried with them from our law school. What also impresses me is your commitment to preparing future Elon Law graduates. You serve as preceptors, residency hosts, moot court judges and speakers, and your philanthropic support is a critical and powerful demonstration of your belief in Elon Law.

To that end, please join me in welcoming Mallory Horne L'14 as the new president of the Elon Law Alumni Council President. Mallory is an associate attorney at Teague Rotenstreich Stanaland Fox & Holt, and she consistently returns

to Elon Law each year to serve in a number of capacities, including as a preceptor. If you would like to join the Alumni Council, the governing body for our Alumni Association, please email me at bcini@elon.edu for more information. And join me in thanking Andrea Davis L'12, our outgoing Alumni Council president, for her dedication and service to Elon Law.

I look forward to supporting you and am excited to see what the next year holds.



Barbara Cini L'11
Assistant Dean for Development



Support Elon Law programs and scholarships
at elon.edu/makeagift.



**ELON
LAW** | BILLINGS, EXUM & FRYE
NATIONAL
MOOT COURT
COMPETITION

SAVE THE DATE
Oct. 10-12, 2019

**The 10th Billings, Exum & Frye
National Moot Court Competition**

Mark your calendar and look for emails inviting you to judge oral arguments when more than 20 law schools visit Elon Law for the annual event.

NEWS



NOTES



From left: Assistant Professor Vanessa Zboreak, Assistant Professor Taled El-Sabawi, Assistant Professor Tiffany Atkins L'11 and Assistant Professor Kathy Conner

A WELCOME TO NEW ELON LAW PROFESSORS...

Four new educators joined the Elon Law faculty this spring. **Assistant Professor Taled El-Sabawi** will teach property law and other offerings related to her scholarly interests in public health policies; **Assistant Professors Tiffany Atkins L'11** and **Vanessa Zboreak** will add to Elon Law's Legal Method & Communication Program; and **Assistant Professor Katherine "Kathy" Conner** began her role as director of residencies.

... AND A TRIBUTE TO THREE ELON LAW MENTORS

Three retiring Elon Law faculty members were honored in a May ceremony that lauded their commitment to student success and their contributions to the legal profession. Retired **Chief Justice James G. Exum Jr.**, **Margaret Kantlehner** and **Peter T. Hoffman** each received framed resolutions denoting the many ways in which their careers serve as a model for Elon Law students and alumni to follow.



Former federal prosecutor to deliver Distinguished Leadership Lecture

Preet Bharara, former U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and a New York Times bestselling author, prosecuted terrorists, drug cartels, arms traffickers, money launderers, insider traders, and corrupt public officials from 2009-2017. He visits October 10 for a 6:30 p.m. talk at the Carolina Theatre. Tickets are \$15 each and go on sale August 19 by calling the Carolina Theatre at 336-333-2605.



Vickery



Mitchell

Two alumni named to inaugural 'rising stars' list

The **Hon. Carrie Vickery L'09** and **Caitlin Mitchell L'Dec.'17** were among 30 honorees named this spring to North Carolina Lawyers Weekly's inaugural list of "Rising Stars." The list recognizes lawyers who have been out of law school for 10 years or less "and have already made a strong impact on the legal community." Vickery is a North Carolina District Court judge in Winston-Salem; Mitchell is an associate attorney at Young Moore and Henderson, P.A. in Raleigh.



A 'holistic' textbook on information law

Associate Professor David S. Levine has co-authored "Information Law, Governance, and Cybersecurity" with Sharon K. Sandeen of Mitchell Hamline School of Law. The textbook is the first of its kind to suggest a holistic approach for attorneys handling questions related to privacy, data breaches, government transparency and more.

Elon Law Review Symposium to explore judicial independence

**ELON
LAW REVIEW**

"Celebrating 150 Years of Nine Justices While Wondering About the Supreme Court in Contemporary America: A Symposium to Assess Judicial Independence in 2019" takes place September 27 from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. and features, among others, former presidential advisory David Gergen and Yale University's Akhil Reed Amar. The symposium is anticipated to count toward six hours of CLE through the North Carolina State Bar. Register in mid August at law.elon.edu/lawreview.

BY THE NUMBERS

85%

of graduates from the Class of December 2017 were employed in March when Elon Law filed its most recent employment summary with the American Bar Association.

STATUS

Bar Passage Required:	62
J.D. Advantage:	27
Professional Position:	6
Pursuing Graduate Degree:	1
Not Seeking:	2
Unemployed (Seeking):	13
Total:	111



TYPE



49 Law Firms	26 Business & Industry
11 Government	7 Public Interest
1 Clerkships – Federal	1 Clerkships – State & Local

LAW FIRM SIZE

251-500: 1	Solo: 3
101-250: 1	2-10: 36
51-100: 1	11-25: 4
	26-50: 3

From Bus Driver to Juris Doctor

By Eric Townsend

Gia Gaster L'18 barely graduated high school. It's not that she disliked learning - on the contrary, she enjoyed poetry, and she discovered a love of history - but printed words didn't make much sense.

Like many teenagers, Gaster recalls, she never sought help. She was embarrassed. Nor did anyone ever stop to ask if she might need a hand. No one seemed to notice her struggles. Gaster drifted through school in the 1980s thinking herself "stupid."

Three decades later, Gia Gaster would swear an oath to join the legal profession in North Carolina. And she certainly doesn't consider herself stupid. She instead lives with one goal as an Elon Law graduate: "I want to help other people find their own voices."

Born in Asheboro, North Carolina, to a mother who ran a daycare and a father who worked as a route salesman for a magazine publisher, Gaster moved to Greensboro as a toddler. The only child kept largely to herself but enjoyed music and writing poetry. She found it therapeutic as she struggled in the classroom.

In high school, Gaster would "pray that I wouldn't get called on because I didn't do the homework." She later took courses that emphasized composition, not comprehension, at Guilford Technical Community College but fell short of earning an associate degree in the early 1990s.

Newly wed to a high school sweetheart, Gaster instead accepted a job offer to drive buses for Guilford County Schools. She said she was on the verge of quitting when a transportation supervisor offered her a route for special needs children. It was a natural fit that lasted two decades, through the birth of a son and an amicable split with her husband.

"They are some of the most determined, strong-willed humans on earth," Gaster said. "I learned so much

about resilience and getting knocked down, only to get back up."

Gaster's career driving buses coincided with the rise of the Internet. At night after work, she would log on to chat forums and websites where she discovered others like herself. People who were thoughtful. People who wanted to learn. People who simply couldn't understand a printed page. She determined her struggle likely had a name: dyslexia.

Over time, without a formal diagnosis, Gaster gleaned tips that helped her develop her own strategies for reading. She'll be the first to tell you that she doesn't read fast. But she does read thoroughly. And she kept writing poems. Hundreds of them. All the while, she saw the struggles of her students - immigrants who couldn't speak English, victims of domestic violence, children bullied because of their differences.

"She loved driving special needs kids," recalls her son, Nicolas, today a sergeant in the U.S. Army. "Some weren't in the best situations with parents who weren't always responsible but when they were on her bus? They were taken care of."

If the children she drove to school could persevere, why couldn't she?

By 2012, Gaster was ready to reconsider a college degree. She typed "Guilford Tech" into a search bar and accidentally clicked on a "Guilford College" link where the college's website was highlighting its Peace and Conflict Studies program. Gaster never looked back.

The bus driver returned to school and immediately identified academic resources to help students succeed. She

"I learned so much about resilience and getting knocked down, only to get back up."

soon made the Dean's List and would graduate in 2016 from Guilford College near the top of her class. She already knew she needed a law degree to advocate in a way she believed would make the greatest impact on others.

Attending Elon Law wasn't without its struggles. It took Gaster two trimesters to begin to fully grasp some legal concepts and to start mastering the basics of legal writing. Her perseverance is what most impressed those who tutored her.

"It was intellectual honesty. It was personal honesty. There was no blaming others, no denial, no resistance," said Chuck Splawn, assistant director of the Office of Academic Success. "That is Gia. It's personal responsibility. It's 'what can I do to get better?'"

Gaster graduated in December in the top half of the class. She completed a residency-in-practice with Elon Law's Humanitarian Immigration Law Clinic and traveled to Manhattan with classmates as part of a UN conference on refugees. Then she cut back on social media, spent hours every day in the law library, and studied for the February 2019 North Carolina Bar Exam.

She was sworn into state and federal court on May 23, 2019.

"I think she'll end up doing something with either disability law or immigration, but I think she might one day also think about becoming a politician and making

a difference within the system," said Beth Kincaid, Gaster's fiancé. "She's eager to find a mentor to teach her how to get there."

On the chilly Monday morning after Commencement, Gaster walks up to #1438 in a Guilford County Schools bus parking lot.

The photos she would publish on her Facebook page show Gaster flashing a peace sign. She then climbs the steps of the small bus, marked with the familiar blue-and-white wheelchair designation, and settles into the driver's seat. Both hands grip the wheel.

Bus #1438 was the last bus Gaster drove for Guilford County Schools. And as she exits the bus one final time, thoughts already on the bar exam preparation that awaits, she wears the black robe and purple hood donned at Commencement.

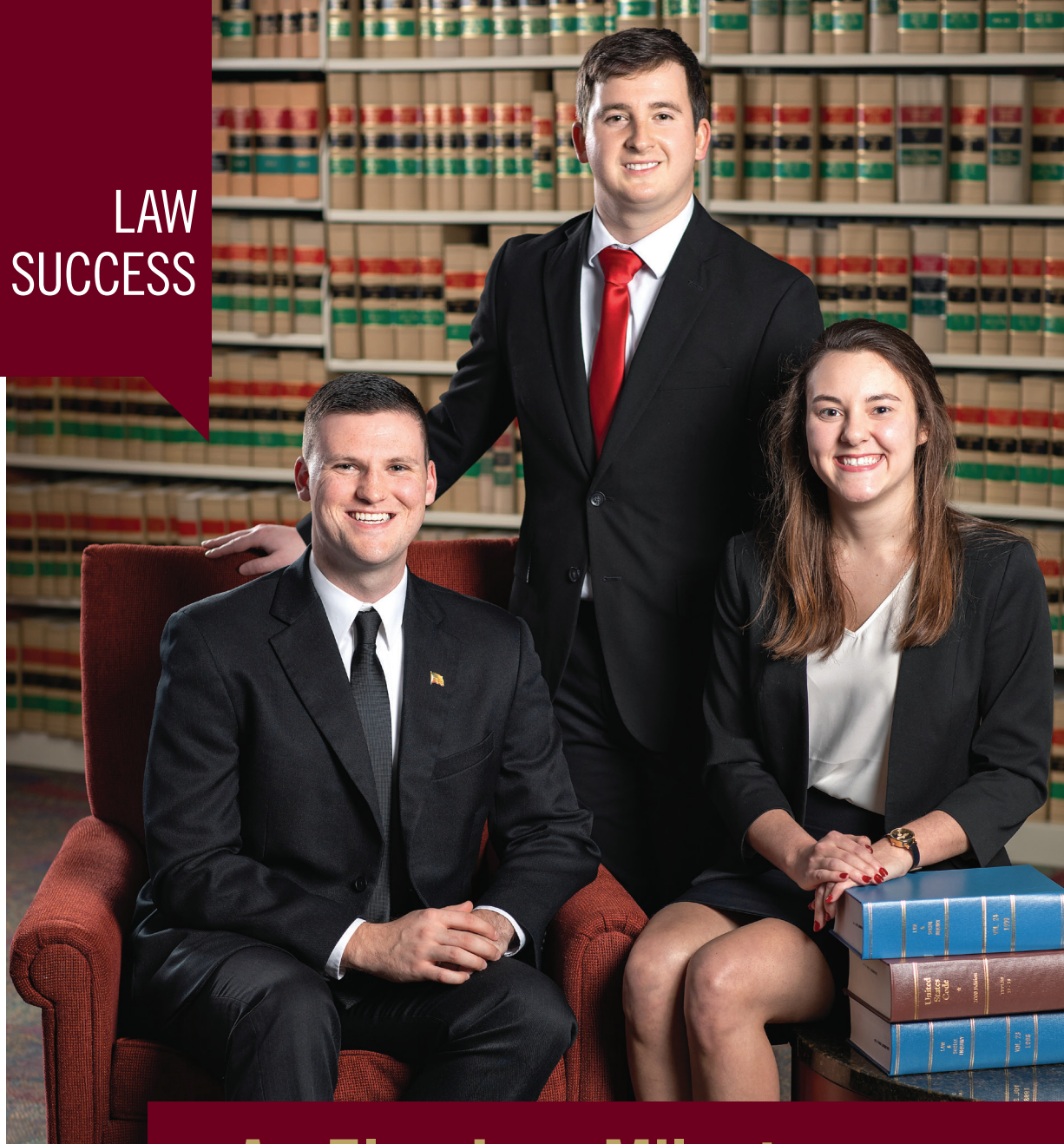
Later that day, Gaster shares a photo of her diploma in the Facebook group Pantsuit Nation to recap her journey and offer advice: "Never give up on your dreams. It's never too late, or too early, or too anything. Always live for your dreams, and for each other. We are all we've got!!"

Twenty thousand people liked the post. ■



"Never give up on your dreams. It's never too late, or too early, or too anything. Always live for your dreams, and for each other. We are all we've got!!"

LAW SUCCESS



An Elon Law Milestone for Military Service

Jeff Porter L'18,
standing; Jesse
Peterson L'18 and
Sarah Trombley L'18

Three graduates from the Class of 2018 are starting their legal careers in service to their nation.

Jesse Peterson, Jeff Porter and Sarah Trombley were each accepted into separate military branches to serve in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, a legal system of commissioned officers who both prosecute and defend service members accused of crimes.

The trio represents the largest number of Elon Law graduates from a single class to accept JAG commissions immediately following Commencement, which took place in December for the three friends. All were active in Elon Law's Military Law Society and one completed a legal externship with the U.S. Coast Guard.

Made famous in pop culture by the Academy Award-nominated legal thriller "A Few Good Men" and the CBS television drama "JAG,"

ALUMNI NEWS BULLETIN

JAG lawyers throughout the military handle a wide variety of legal responsibilities: contract reviews, estate planning, employment law, and legal interpretations and advice to commanders and staff officers, among other tasks.

And the three Elon Law alumni could think of no better way to begin the practice of law.

Jesse Peterson L'18

U.S. Air Force JAG

President of the Military Law Society | Moot Court Board Member | Leadership Fellow

Previous military service: U.S. Army National Guard

"The JAG Corps offers an opportunity to gain significant litigation experience early in my career. Seeing as I am particularly interested in operational or national security law, being able to practice while stationed or deployed overseas offers an unparalleled chance to work in an operational environment at the forefront of these areas."

Jeff Porter L'18

U.S. Army JAG

Mock Trial | Elon Business Law Journal | Military Law Society | Federalist Society

Previous military service: U.S. Army

"When I first joined the Army as a paralegal I knew I wanted to do more, to be a lawyer and earn the privilege to serve within the JAG Corps. Aside from wanting to serve my country, being in the military is an honor and opportunity to better myself."

Sarah Trombley L'18

U.S. Navy JAG

Military Law Society | Moot Court | Academic Teaching Fellow | Advocacy Fellow

"My parents served in the Navy and they raised me with values they learned in the Navy: respect, integrity, and dedication. I was also drawn to the Navy JAG program because of the chance to use more of what I learned in law school, gain more hands-on experience, and travel the country and world."

DUTY TO NATION

Several Elon Law graduates are currently serving as military lawyers in the JAG Corps. They include:

Capt. Evan Freemyer L'16

U.S. Army
Stuttgart, Germany

Capt. Tara Scanlon L'May'17

U.S. Army
Fort Polk, Louisiana

Lt. Victoria Hinton L'16

U.S. Coast Guard
Norfolk, Virginia

Lt. Andrew J. Scott L'14

U.S. Navy
Naval Medical Center,
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

Capt. Jake Pryor L'13

U.S. Marine Corps
Marine Corps Recruit Depot,
San Diego, California

Maj. Steven Luke Spencer L'09

U.S. Air Force
Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota

Maj. Austin Ribelin L'09

U.S. Army

Lt. Diamond D. Zephir L'16

U.S. Air Force
Moody AFB, Georgia

CLASS NOTES



Justin Cohee L'10



Ian Dember L'11 with son, Michael



Lucrecia P. Johnson L'11



Christopher Avery L'12



Nicole Patino L'15 and Nicholas Duggins



Joshua G. Berggrun L'16



Seth Gerringer L'18



Sienna and Zayden Shah, children of Seema Shah L'09

2009

Seema Shah L'09 welcomed her second child, Sienna, on Christmas Day 2018, joining older brother Zayden. Shah is head of bank compliance training at Morgan Stanley in New York City.

Barron Thompson L'09 has announced his 2020 candidacy to serve as a North Carolina District Court judge in Randolph County.

2010

Justin Cohee L'10 has been promoted to assistant vice president at 1st Source Bank in South Bend, Indiana. Cohee joined the bank in September 2017 and handles complex wealth advisory services relationships.

2011

Ian Dember L'11 and his wife, Olga, welcomed a son, Michael, on March 11, 2018. Dember is a counselor at law at Dember Law, LLC in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

Samantha J. Gilman L'11 has relocated to Boston after accepting a role as a director

at Vynamic, a healthcare management consulting firm focused on five interwoven sectors of healthcare.

Lucrecia P. Johnson L'11 has started serving as chair of the Washington Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division. The founder of LPJ Legal, PLLC in the nation's capital was honored in May by the outgoing chair "for zealous advocacy, community leadership, a voice of influence for civil rights, human rights and justice."

2012

Christopher Avery L'12 has been recognized as a Board Certified Specialist in Consumer Bankruptcy Law by the North Carolina State Bar. Avery works on the Foreclosure Prevention team at Legal Aid of North Carolina.

Whitney Butcher '09 L'12 made partner last year at Whitley Law Firm in Raleigh, North Carolina. She is also on the Plaintiff's Steering Committee for the national Smith & Nephew Birmingham Hip metal-on-metal artificial hip litigation.

2015

Nick Livengood '12 L'15 has joined Weatherspoon & Voltz LLP, a Raleigh commercial real estate law firm.

Nicole Patino L'15 married Nicholas Duggins on Feb. 6, 2019. Patino is an attorney for The Law Offices of Fred T. Hamlet in Greensboro and the couple lives in Asheboro, North Carolina.

2016

Joshua G. Berggrun L'16, an attorney at McCarthy, Lebit, Crystal & Liffman Co., LPA in Cleveland, has been named to the Cleveland Jewish News and Ganley Subaru of Bedford's second annual list of "12 Under 36: Members of the Tribe" regional leaders.

2018

Seth Gerringer L'18 accepted a position as an associate attorney with Goins Law in High Point, North Carolina, where he practices real estate law.

A new president, a new mantra: 'Be positive'

Mallory Horne L'14 brings a simple philosophy to her new role as president of the Elon Law Alumni Council: strengthen the value of diplomas bearing the name Elon University School of Law.



"That piece of paper," she said in late June, pointing to her own diploma on the wall of her law office, "is only worth what we make it worth."

Horne takes the helm this summer of a council that helps coordinate alumni activities, participation, and philanthropy for the 1,100-plus graduates of Elon Law. As president, she intends to strengthen communication channels, better engage students, and forge stronger connections with Elon University's Office of Alumni Engagement.

Bridging the geographic divide with main campus will help Elon Law alumni expand their own professional networks, leading to new opportunities – and new referrals. She also wants Elon Law alumni to have a better sense of the good things happening at their law school alma mater.

Horne served as president of the Women's Law Association and the Innocence Project, and she was a Dean's Fellow and a member of the Mock Trial Team. After graduation, she joined Teague, Rotenstreich, Stanaland, Fox, & Holt, PLLC in downtown Greensboro, focusing her practice on estate and trust litigation, general fiduciary litigation, insurance defense litigation, insurance coverage litigation, and business litigation.

Fall 2019 Calendar

September 27: Elon Law Review Symposium on Judicial Independence, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.

October 10: Former U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara, Distinguished Leadership Lecture presented by The Joseph M. Bryan Foundation, 6:30 p.m. at the Carolina Theatre

October 10-12: 10th Billings, Exum & Frye National Moot Court Competition

October 25: Presentation of the 2019 Leadership in the Law Award, in coordination with N.C. Lawyers Weekly, 6:30 p.m. at the Greensboro High Point Marriott at PTI Airport

December 15: Commencement featuring remarks by Chief Justice Cheri Beasley of the Supreme Court of North Carolina, 11 a.m. in Alumni Gym on main campus



Stay Connected!

We welcome your questions and ideas at lawalumni@elon.edu.



LinkedIn

Go to LinkedIn, search for **"Elon Law Alumni"** and join the group! Also follow us on Elon Law's official LinkedIn page.



Facebook

The Elon Law Alumni Group:
facebook.com/groups/ElonLawAlumni
The law school's Facebook page:
facebook.com/ElonLaw



Twitter

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Instagram

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ELON LAW Alumni Association

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