

Biography

Professor Michael S. Vastine



Professor Vastine joined the faculty of the St. Thomas University College of Law in 2004. He serves as Director of Clinical Programs and directs the Immigration Clinic. His practice and research focus on immigration litigation, particularly regarding the deportation consequences of criminal convictions and the due process rights of immigrants.



Prof. Vastine has shaped the Immigration Clinic's practice to include zealous defense work before the Immigration Court, in which students argue novel issues of law and present robust factual defenses at trial, in matters ranging from deportability and discretionary relief for crimes, to applications for asylum based on fear of foreign persecution, and the constitutional and case-specific arguments for clients to be released from immigration (administrative) detention. The docket also includes representation of immigrant victims of crimes and domestic violence, as well as complicated applications for naturalization of former Clinic clients. A long-time devotee to the merits of clinical legal education as the best vehicle for training future attorneys in the "best practices" of law, Professor Vastine also serves as a leader within the College of Law's Clinical & Externship department, identifying, developing, and supporting "experiential" programming in which law students have their first forays into the practice of law.

Professor Vastine has a significant presence in the immigration advocacy community, in both litigation and public service. He has argued several cases before the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, including *Donawa v. United States Attorney General*, which barred the treatment of Florida drug offenses as the equivalent of federal crimes for the purposes of deportation, and argued before the Florida Supreme Court in *Hernandez v. State*, establishing the procedural rights of Florida immigrant criminal defendants to

receive constitutionally sufficient representation of counsel regarding the immigration consequences of their crimes. He has regularly served as amicus curiae counsel in high impact appellate cases, on behalf of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and numerous non-governmental organizations, in forums including the Board of Immigration Appeals, State supreme courts, various United States Circuit Courts and the United States Supreme Court.

His place in the legal community led to election to ten years of service in AILA, including the 2018-2019 term as President of the South Florida Chapter, during which the Chapter received Platinum recognition for its outstanding and comprehensive training, mentoring, outreach and congressional advocacy, as well as then-novel Diversity and Inclusion initiatives. He has served on various national committees of AILA, including the Amicus Curiae Committee and the steering committees of the Federal Litigation Section and Law Student Division. A sought-after public speaker, Prof. Vastine has presented at some 200 conferences and served as Chair of several others, including the national 2020 AILA Immigration Court Conference (on defense practice) and the 2021 AILA Federal Litigation Conference. In 2013, AILA honored Professor Vastine with its Elmer Fried Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Also a leader in the community of educators, Prof. Vastine has served various roles, including Chair, of the Membership, Outreach and Training Committee of the American Association of Law Schools (AALS) Clinical Section. He is a frequent presenter at local, state, regional and national meetings and conferences of clinical legal educators, including several iterations of the national AALS Conference on Clinical Education.

Professor Vastine holds a B.M. from Oberlin Conservatory of Music, an M.M. from Temple University and a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center.