Capital University Law School Commencement

PRELUDE	*Quartet No. 3 in G Major*, W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)
PROCESSION	*Rigaudon*, Andre Campra (1660-1744)

Please remain seated during the procession.

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM	*The Star-Spangled Banner*, Traditional

Please stand, if able, for the National Anthem and Invocation.

INVOCATION	The Reverend Rachel Wrenn, Ph.D. Interim Dean of Trinity Lutheran Seminary
DEAN'S MESSAGE	Joseph K. Grant, J.D. Interim Dean and John E. Sullivan Professor of Law
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE	Jared R. Tice, Ed.D. President of Capital University
VALEDICTORIAN'S REMARKS	Parker T. Luse
RECOGNITION OF SPECIAL AWARDS	Interim Dean Grant
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS	Mitch Melfi, Esq., L'84
PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES FOR THE DEGREE OF JURIS DOCTOR	Interim Dean Grant
CONFERRING OF DEGREES	President Tice
A MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES	Erika Clark Jones '12, Trustee
BENEDICTION	Dr. Wrenn
ADJOURNMENT	Interim Dean Grant
RECESSION	*Spring*, Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

Please remain seated until the recession has ended.

The Procession

THE FACULTY MARSHAL
The procession is led by the faculty marshal, a senior Law School faculty member.

THE DEAN'S GROUP
The Dean's group includes the faculty marshal, the Dean, the President, the Provost, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, a member of the clergy, the class valedictorian, a member of the University Board of Trustees, and the commencement speaker.

THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION
The ascending tenure-track/tenured faculty ranks include assistant, associate, and professor of Law. Additional faculty ranks include professor of Academic Success, professor of Bar Studies, professor of Clinical Studies, and professor of Legal Writing. Members of the Law School senior administration hold the titles of assistant dean and director. The arrangement of faculty and administrators in the procession, however, does not reflect rank or title.

THE CANDIDATES FOR DEGREES
The students in the procession are candidates for the Juris Doctor degree.

Academic Honors

Graduates who excelled academically while at Capital University Law School earn one of three designations on their diplomas:

summa cum laude	3.600-4.000 GPA
magna cum laude	3.400-3.599 GPA
cum laude	3.200-3.399 GPA

Academic honors are noted when the graduate is presented for hooding and on the graduate's diploma and official transcript.

Candidates for the Juris Doctor Degree

† *Students expected to graduate in September 2026 after they have completed their final coursework.*

Gabrielle Acevedo-Mayo
Bryce J. Adkins
Hope Isabelle Alexander
Aubrey Erica Amaya
Michael Balor Appiarius
Sean Francis Arthur
Jazmine Barnes
Orion Barrett
Timucin S. Basel
Lourdes Isadora Bedalli
Melissa N. Blackford
Eric William Blackwelder
Dylan Michael Brewer
Ethan Michael Byrum
Molly Anne Carrier
Courtney Chappelear
Mikenna Kathryn Cimini
Kalene E. Close
Joseph M. Corrao
Jonathan S. Cowan
Alexandra Hope Cox
Grace Catherine Crouser
Nicholas J. Davis
David Elijah Dennis
Carli Diane Derda
Jillian Elizabeth Dewhurst†
Daniel Dinapoli
Brittany Renee Estrada
Corinne Elizabeth Niel Eutsey
Mara Elizabeth Fortkamp
Micah Samuel Fretz
Ariel June Geesey
Michael Andrew Graham
Annette Maureen Greenwald
Elise Ann Gucker
Rhea Gupta
Dalton Wallace Harshfield
Peter Eugene Heinisch
Troy Michael Henricksen
Elizabeth Sarah Herald
Caroline R. Hill
Robert Lee Holderman III
Kendra June Holley
Lindsey Anne Imhoff
Kyleigh M. Jester
Aubrianna P. Jones
Morgan Andreea Jones
Carter Judy
William Anderson Justice
Grace Ann Jennifer Kameka-Pinder
William Kammeyer
Gurleen Kaur

Elizabeth Kay Keller
Megan Anne Kennedy
Eric Kephas
Morgan Marie Klase
Brett Andrew Kodger
Andrew S. Koep
Jordan Marie Kulis
Wesley John Franklin Lamb
Gabriella Rose Lepof
Miranda Michelle Linscott
Skylar Renee Lord
Maia Kildare Luick
Parker T. Luse
Amanda Maryanne Ly-Hoang
John P. Lynch
Adi Netanel Mars
Isabella Marisa Matta
Sky Marie McCloskey
Isabella Rose McCluskey
Liam James McCrimmon
Michaela Ann Medich
Grant Eric Menke
Faith Lauren Mlachak
Jaime Lynn Montague†
Dylan Lee Moore
Colin Stuart Moorhead II
Kaitlyn Morales-Dyer
Nicholas Devin Morgan
Eli J.K. Mortimer
Alexa Marie Nicolozakes
Hana Nishikawa-Blackston
Joy Onuorah
Zion Sir Timothy Parks
Maria Raquel Perez
Benny Plessinger
Adam Charles Pohlabel
Ciara Polen
Jenna Hope Poling
Richard C. Porrello
Wade A. Price II
Ryan Stephen Quinn
Nicholas Stephen Rhodes
Kaitlyn Mackenzie Richard
Bill Riehl
Justin R. Rink
Tori Raquell Roberts
Joseph Peyton Rogers
Bethany Rose Sager
Nicholas David Sanctis
Edward S. Schoedinger
Hannah Celeste Seckman
Emily Rainey Sexton
Matthew David Shapiro
Tori Rae Sharlow
Makenzie Shiller
Luke Robert Six
Meghan Elizabeth Skeldon
Madison E. Snyder†
Bess Sommerfelt
Jonathon E. Sorrell
Nicholas Dimitri Soulas
Josie Katherine Spitzer
Mary Grace Stenson
Michala J. Stewart
Tiffany Adonia Thomas
Samantha Sue Troendly
Danielle Renee Underwood
Derek Lee Urban
Taylor Christine Vickers
Alexandra L. Walker
Avery Walker
Madelyn Elyse Walter
John D. Hamilton Wells
Leah M. Wheeler
Bryant S. Whitcomb
Christopher Richard Wilson
Alexandra Page Worthington
Kaleigh Lynn Young
Kiaira Daymar Zachary
Anna Ray Ziegler
Alexander Zydorczyk

2026 Commencement Awards

American Law Institute-Continuing Legal Education Scholarship and Leadership Award
Recognizes the graduate who best represents a combination of scholarship and leadership, the qualities embodied by the American Law Institute.

Ciara Polen

Dean's Award
Given to one or more graduating students to honor outstanding scholarship, leadership, and contributions to Capital University Law School.

Faith Lauren Mlachak

Order of the Barristers
An honorary society that recognizes student excellence in moot court, mock trial, and brief writing.

Ethan Michael Byrum
Mikenna Kathryn Cimini
Brittany Renee Estrada
Elise Ann Gucker
Carter Judy
Eric Kephas
Jordan Marie Kulis
Tori Rae Sharlow
Makenzie Shiller
Meghan Elizabeth Skeldon

Ron I. Friedman Memorial Service Award
Recognizes a graduating student who has actively contributed to the life of the Law School through extracurricular activities.

Aubrianna P. Jones

Roberta Mitchell Award
Recognizes a graduating student who has excelled in the Legal Clinic.

Lourdes Isadora Bedalli

Ambassador Award
Recognizes one or more graduating students who promote Capital's mission, values, and spirit.

Ariel June Geesey
Grace Ann Jennifer Kameka-Pinder
Makenzie Shiller

National Association of Women Lawyers Award

Recognizes an outstanding law student who exhibited motivation, tenacity, and enthusiasm; contributed to the advancement of women in society; promoted issues and concerns of women in the legal profession; and earned the respect of the dean and law faculty.

Tori Rae Sharlow

Public Interest Award

Given to one or more graduating students to honor outstanding public service to Capital University Law School and the surrounding community.

Nicholas David Sanctis

Pro Bono Legal Honors

Encourages and recognizes public service by graduates who have completed at least 50 hours of approved pro bono legal service. The graduates' names are listed with the number of pro bono hours completed.

Ethan Michael Byrum	352	Madelyn Elyse Walter	74
Colin Stuart Moorhead II	262	Bethany Rose Sager	72
Ariel June Geesey	239	Michaela Ann Medich	71
Jonathan S. Cowan	210	Eric Kephas	67
Gabriella Rose Lepof	148	Hannah Celeste Seckman	65
Elise Ann Gucker	141	Tori Rae Sharlow	60
Mikenna Kathryn Cimini	130	Ciara Polen	58
Makenzie Shiller	124	Wesley John Franklin Lamb	57
Rhea Gupta	117	Sky Marie McCloskey	54
Courtney Chappelear	103	Amanda Maryanne Ly-Hoang	53
Nicholas David Sanctis	98	Taylor Christine Vickers	53
Timucin S. Basel	95	Maria Raquel Perez	52
Alexa Marie Nicolozakes	95	Tori Raquell Roberts	51
Gurleen Kaur	87	Hope Isabelle Alexander	50
Caroline R. Hill	86	Brittany Renee Estrada	50
Isabella Rose McCluskey	83		

Pro Bono Spirit Award

Recognizes a graduating student whose service embodies the true spirit of legal pro bono by devoting the majority of their volunteer hours to programs that provide direct legal assistance to indigent clients.

Jonathan S. Cowan

Excellence in Pro Bono Service Award

This award honors a part-time student who, despite numerous personal, academic, and professional commitments, demonstrated extraordinary dedication to providing pro bono service.

Courtney Chappelear

Commencement Speaker

Mitch H. Melfi, Esq., L'84
Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer
CommonSpirit Health

Mitch Melfi is the senior executive vice president and chief legal officer for Chicago-based CommonSpirit Health, created by the merger of Catholic Health Initiatives and Dignity Health. In his current role, Mr. Melfi provides oversight for legal services, including legal mergers and acquisitions, Enterprise Risk Management, corporate governance matters, and sponsorship.

At the time of the merger, Mr. Melfi served as the executive vice president, Corporate Affairs, and chief legal officer for CHI. He also held other positions for CHI, including senior vice president and general counsel, senior vice president and chief risk officer, and president and CEO of First Initiatives Insurance, LTD. Prior to CHI, Mr. Melfi was the vice president, associate general counsel, and acting general counsel for the Sisters of Charity Health Care System in Cincinnati, Ohio, until it merged with two other Catholic health systems to form CHI. Prior to his move to Cincinnati, Mr. Melfi served on the executive management team for Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, where he oversaw all legal operations.

Mr. Melfi has authored several publications, spoken on legal and risk management topics for lawyers, physicians, nurses, risk managers, and other allied healthcare professionals, and provided consulting services in various areas of risk management and loss prevention.

He taught at The Ohio State University College of Medicine and served as a guest lecturer at Capital University Law School. He serves on the boards of directors of several organizations, including health care systems, insurance companies, and internal audit firms.

Mr. Melfi received his bachelor's degree from The Ohio State University and his juris doctor degree from Capital University Law School.

The Faculty and Administration of the Law School

Daniel Baker-Jones, Law Reference Librarian
B.A., The Ohio State University
J.D., University of Cincinnati
M.L.I.S., Wayne State University

Danny W. Bank, Interim Executive Director of the Legal Clinic
B.A., State University of New York
J.D., Capital University

Robert Barnhart, Associate Professor of Law
B.A., Ohio University
J.D., University of Notre Dame

Shawn M. Beem, Assistant Dean for Professional Development
DEF, Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, France
B.A., University of Dayton
J.D., Capital University

Mark R. Brown, Newton D. Baker/Baker and Hostetler Professor and Chair of Law
B.S., University of Dayton
J.D., University of Louisville
LL.M., University of Illinois

Shawn Cleveland, Director of Regional Development
B.S.B.A., The Ohio State University

Charles E. Cohen, Associate Professor of Law
B.A., Harvard University
J.D., University of California, San Francisco

Margaret M. Cordray, Professor of Law
B.A., University of the Pacific
J.D., University of California, Berkeley
B.C.L., Oxford University

Lisa M. Diem, Assistant Dean and Chief Operating Officer
B.S., Anderson University
J.D., Ohio Northern University

Travis Eastham, Law Reference Librarian
B.S., The Ohio State University
M.Ed., DePaul University
J.D., DePaul University
M.L.I.S., University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Lauren C. Emptage, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and
Professor and Director of Academic Success
B.S., Central Michigan University
J.D., University of Toledo

Amanda Flinn, Collections & E-Service Coordinator
B.S., Ohio University
M.L.I.S., Wayne State University

Nathaniel Fouch, Assistant Professor of Law
B.A, Berea College
J.D., University of St. Thomas

Alicia Gilbert, Assistant Dean of Student Affairs
B.S., Bowling Green State University
M.A., Ball State University

Susan M. Gilles, Professor of Law
LL.B., University of Glasgow, Scotland
LL.M., Harvard University

Jennifer Goldson, Professor of Legal Writing and
Director of the Moot Court & Mock Trial Program
B.A., The Ohio State University
J.D., The Ohio State University

Joseph Karl Grant, Interim Dean and John E. Sullivan Professor of Law
B.A., Brown University
J.D., Duke University

Kevin R. Griffith, Professor of English and Professor of Legal Writing
B.A., Grand Valley State University
M.A., The Ohio State University
Ph.D., The Ohio State University

Gregory Hall, Assistant Professor of Law
B.S., University of Utah
J.D., University of Pennsylvania
Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania

Rachel L. Hampton, Professor of Legal Writing
B.A., University of Michigan
J.D., University of Michigan

Natasha Jack, Law Library Coordinator
B.S., The Ohio State University
M.S., Brown University
M.S., Syracuse University

Rachel M. Janutis, Geraldine Howell Professor of Law
B.S., Northwestern University
J.D., University of Illinois

Ashley Messick Jones, Pro Bono Coordinator
B.A., Denison University
J.D., Capital University

Paige Kohn, Professor of Legal Writing
B.A., The Ohio State University
J.D., Capital University

Daniel T. Kobil, Professor of Law
B.A., University of Toledo
J.D., University of Toledo

Anthony Marcum, Assistant Professor of Law
B.A., The Ohio State University
J.D., Rutgers Law School
LL.M., Georgetown University

Christine McIntyre, Professor and Director of Bar Studies
B.A., Adrian College
J.D., University of Toledo

Melinda S. Molina, Professor of Law
B.A., John Jay College of Criminal Justice
J.D., Rutgers University

Kari Murphy, Professor of Legal Writing
B.A., The Ohio State University
J.D., Capital University

Jason Paskan, Professor of Legal Writing
B.A., Ohio University
J.D., Cleveland State University

Amanda Ramey, Associate Registrar
L.M.T., American Institute of Alternative Medicine
A.A., Columbus State Community College

Emma K.F. Schulze, Assistant Dean of Admission
B.A., Miami University
J.D., University of Louisville

Catherine Segreto, Assistant Director of Admission
B.A., The Ohio State University

Katelyn Snyder, Assistant Director of Admission
B.S., La Roche University
J.D., Capital University

Mark P. Strasser, Trustees Professor of Law
B.A., Harvard College
M.A., University of Chicago
Ph.D., University of Chicago
J.D., Stanford University

Bren Sutter, Assistant Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
B.A., University of California, San Diego
M.A., New York University
Ph.D., Rutgers University, New Brunswick

Yvonne Lundwall Twiss, Professor of Legal Writing
B.A., Miami University
J.D., Capital University

Roxana Vatanparast, Assistant Professor of Law
B.A., University of California, San Diego
J.D., University of California, San Francisco
L.L.M., International University College of Turin & University of Turin
Ph.D., University of Turin

Melanie Williamson, Professor of Clinical Studies and Director of the Legal Clinic
B.A., The Ohio State University
J.D., Capital University

Jennifer L. Wondracek, Professor of Legal Writing and Director of Law Library
B.S., College of Charleston
M.L.I.S., University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
J.D., University of North Carolina

ACADEMIC HERALDRY

REGALIA

Since the 14th century, scholars have displayed academic achievement by wearing caps, gowns, and hoods. Gowns for the Juris Doctor display broad velvet panels down the front and three velvet bars on the full, round, open sleeves. The hood, worn over the doctoral gown, gives additional color and meaning to the academic costume. A black shell lined with the colors of the institution conferring the degree, in this case purple and white, the hood is bordered in velvet in the color of the field of study. The velvet trim in purple on both the gown and hood signifies the Juris Doctor degree.

All graduates are hooded during the commencement ceremony, most by members of the faculty. It is tradition at Capital to extend an invitation to any graduate to be hooded by a family member or mentor who also holds a Juris Doctor degree.

Some graduates wear stoles or cords with their regalia to represent the organizations they were involved with while in law school. Moot Court & Mock Trial advocates who have participated for two years wear a silver stole; those who have participated for one year wear a silver cord. The executive board members of the ACLU wear a blue-and-white intertwined cord. Women's Law Association members wear a lavender cord, and executive board members wear a white stole with purple trim. Criminal Law Association executive board members wear a black stole, and members wear a baby-blue cord. Environmental & Energy Law Society members wear a green cord. Members of the Black Law Students Association wear a stole made of Kente cloth. Hispanic Law Student Association members wear a cord in cyan, rose, and yellow. Executive members of the Student Bar Association Governing Board wear purple stoles, and board members wear purple cords. The members of the Capital University Law Review wear intertwined gold-and-white cords, and the executive and associate boards wear gold-and-white stoles.

MACE

The University Mace is carried by the Faculty Marshal in the processional and recessional. It was originally derived from a medieval weapon representing the need to protect and nurture the fragile search for knowledge. Over the centuries, it has become a symbol of order and authority. Today, the Mace has a place in many of the university's ceremonies, signifying the beginning and end of the event.

Capital University and Capital University Law School

Founded in 1830, Capital University is Central Ohio's oldest university, offering a personal, career-connected education in the heart of Columbus, Ohio. Grounded in its Lutheran heritage, Capital prepares graduates not only for their first profession but also for lives of service, leadership, and lifelong learning. Experiential learning is central to a Capital education. Students engage in internships, research, and partnerships across business, government, healthcare, private law practice, and the arts, connecting their academic experience to real-world impact.

Capital University Law School was founded in 1903 as part of a national program sponsored by the YMCA. Originally called the Columbus Law School, it was acquired by Capital University in 1966 and has since become one of the university's points of pride. The Law School has a long history of providing part-time and full-time students with access to and opportunities for a legal education.

Today, the Law School's part-time and full-time programs align with the University's commitment to helping its graduates lead lives of service, leadership, and lifelong learning. The Law School's practice-ready curriculum and experiential learning opportunities prepare graduates for successful careers in private practice, business, government, and nonprofit organizations.

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Steve Bahls, Chair
Jeff Thiele '95, Vice Chair
Marti Taylor '86, Immediate Past Chair
Dr. Jared R. Tice, President
Rev. Dr. Laura Barbins
Joy Bivens '99
Casey Campbell '98
Erika Clark Jones '12
Domonic DeLuca MBA '03
Tim Donovan L'81
Dr. Sean Gleason
Dale Klamfoth '74
Kevin Langholz '79
Jaclyn Lee MSN '18
Marty McDonald '00
Brian Prince '95
Rev. Dr. Niklaus Schillack TLS '98
Tyler Schleich '04, MBA '05
Kim Shumate
Bill Wiecher '85

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Lamont Wells	Network of ELCA Colleges & Universities
Steve Newman	Board of Counselors
Dr. Elizabeth Yoder '02	Alumni Advisory Board
Ashlyn Edwards	Student Government
Aubrianna P. Jones '23, L'26	Student Bar Association, Law School
Dr. Leigh Johnson	University Faculty Executive Committee

PRESIDENT'S CABINET

Laney Preston Alexander	Executive Assistant to the President
Dr. Darrell Bailey	Director of Athletics & Recreation
Jon Geyer	Associate Dean for Community Responsibility and Success
Dr. Leigh Johnson	Chair of University Faculty Executive Committee
Bill Mea	Vice President for Business & Finance
Dr. Keirsten Moore	Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs
April Novotny	Vice President for Advancement
Dr. Liam O'Loughlin	Chapter President, Capital University AAUP
Dr. Tanya Poteet	Board Secretary
Stephanie Sanders	Vice President for Strategic Enrollment and Marketing

ALUMNI EXECUTIVE BOARD

Dr. Elizabeth Yoder '02	President
Marc Mobley '05	President-Elect
Sara Ireland '14	Secretary
Nancy Gibson '91	Immediate Past President