

## **The RumbergerKirk Professional Development Series at Florida A&M University School of Law**

Florida A&M University (“FAMU”) is a historically black college and university located in Tallahassee Florida, with a law school campus in Orlando Florida. Several years ago, a FAMU law professor reached out to RumbergerKirk to explore ways that the firm could work with the law school and its students. Immediately, RumbergerKirk recognized a mutually beneficial opportunity because the firm already had an internal training program for associates and summer associates called, the Associate College. The Associate College provides training on a variety of topics from various litigation skills to business development and billing practice with which new attorneys and law students would not normally be familiar. During discussions with FAMU, it was determined that RumbergerKirk would offer similar courses from its Associate College to FAMU law students. The program has grown to offer much more and continues to evolve. Initially the sessions were in-person, but they went virtual during the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual format worked well and made it easier to invite outside speakers such as judges and RumbergerKirk clients to participate.

The Series has worked well for FAMU, its students, and RumbergerKirk. The series allows FAMU to provide its students with contact with local lawyers and professional development training outside of what law schools traditionally offer. The students who participate appreciate the learning opportunities and the contact with lawyers and judges who have participated. Based on feedback from the students and FAMU, the firm believes the Series is helping enhance the pipeline of diverse attorneys in the community. From RumbergerKirk’s perspective, the Series has helped the firm to develop additional relationships with diverse law students, and it has served as a pipeline for new hires. For example, this year, RumbergerKirk hired a FAMU law school graduate who had participated in the Series for all three years of law school.

Each year, FAMU and RumbergerKirk collaborate on what to offer as part of the Professional Development Series. The 2021-2022 Series will cover the following topics:

1. With Judges: Professionalism in the courtroom and the importance of good writing;
2. Associate Life: What to expect your first three years and securing clerkships;
3. In House career path and what clients expect from outside counsel;
4. Interviewing skills workshop;
5. Transitioning from government practice to private practice; and
6. Path to partnership: what does it take?