

Lauren K. Valastro, J.D.
Lubbock, TX | lauren.valastro@ttu.edu

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Texas Tech University School of Law, Lubbock, TX

Frank McDonald Scholar in Business Law and Assistant Professor of Law: 2025 - present

University of Colorado Law School, Boulder, CO

Visiting Clinical Associate Professor & Entrepreneurial Law Clinic Director: 2024 - 2025

University of Denver Sturm College of Law, Denver, CO

Visiting Assistant Professor of the Practice of Law: 2023 - 2024

Louisiana State University - Shreveport, Shreveport, LA

Assistant Professor of Business Law: 2022 - 2023

Legalist, Inc., San Francisco, CA

Consultant: 2025 - present

Investment Counsel: 2022 - 2025

Diamond McCarthy, LLP, Houston, TX

Partner: 2020 - 2022

Senior Associate: 2018 - 2019

Kelley, Drye & Warren, LLP, Houston, TX

Associate: 2014 - 2018

Greer, Herz & Adams, LLP, Galveston, TX

Associate: 2012 - 2014

72nd Judicial District, Lubbock, TX

Judicial Clerk for the Honorable Ruben G. Reyes: 2010

EDUCATION

Texas Tech University School of Law, Lubbock, TX

- J.D., *Magna Cum Laude*, May 2012
- Comment Editor, *Texas Tech Law Review*, Vol. 44; Member, Vol. 43
- Class Rank: Top 15% (3.4 GPA)
- Recipient of Chancellor's Merit Scholarship for full law school tuition: 2009 – 2012

Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX

- B.A, Spanish and Political Science, *Summa Cum Laude*, with Honors, December 2008
- College Class Rank: 1st (4.0 GPA)

PUBLICATIONS

- L. Valastro, *Regulating Retirement Savings Roulette: A Framework for Evaluating Prudence of Cryptocurrency Investments in 401(k)s*, forthcoming in 63 SAN DIEGO L. REV. (2026).
- L. Valastro, *How Misapplying Twombly Erodes Retirement Funds*, 32 GEO. MASON L. REV. 421 (2025).
- L. Valastro, *Vindicating Retirees*, 41 GA. ST. U. L. REV. 257 (2025).
- L. Valastro, *Did the Superbowl Ad Curse Heighten Defined Contribution Plan Fiduciary Duties?: Deciphering the Legal and Ethical Landscape of Cryptocurrency Options in 401(k)s*, 57 U. MICH. J. L. REFORM 109 (2023).
- L. Valastro, *Projecting New Policy Proposals' Effects on Americans' Retirement Prospects*, forthcoming in 19 ST. THOMAS J. L. & PUB. POL'Y (2026) (invited contribution).
- L. Valastro, Essay, *Externships for Equity: Legal Education's Most Promising Tool for Improving Marginalized Students' Hiring Outcomes*, 13 TOURO J. RACE, GENDER, & ETHNICITY 168 (2024).
- L. Valastro, Comment, *Training Wheels Needed: Balancing the Parental Presumption, the Best Interest Standard, and the Need to Protect Children*, 44 TEX. TECH. L. REV. 503 (2011).
- L. Valastro (primary author) with B. Jackson & D. Young, *The Standard of Review for Natural Resource Damages (CERCLA) Settlements with Government Agencies Update*, L. SEMINARS INT'L (2016).
- L. Valastro (primary author) with B. Jackson & I. Gottlieb, *The Standard of Review for Natural Resource Damages (CERCLA) Settlements with Government Agencies*, L. SEMINARS INT'L (2014).

PEER REVIEW SERVICE

Served as requested peer reviewer for YALE LAW JOURNAL, Vol. 135: July 2025.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Professional

- DU Faculty Career Champion, nominee: 2023-2024
- LSUS Professor of the Year: 2022 - 2023
 - *This campus-wide award based on student submissions is the highest level of recognition achievable for teaching excellence and contribution to the university.*
- Super Lawyers Rising Stars: 2022, 2023
- Kelley Drye & Warren LLP's selected Associate Leadership Trainee: 2018
- Nominated for Texas Tech University Distinguished Alumni Award: 2014

Academic

- CALI Award (for highest law school grade) in: Legal Practice I, Constitutional Law Seminar, Advanced Immigration, European Union Law, Advanced ADR Clinic
- AmJur Award (for second highest grade) in: Taxation of International Transactions
- Highest Ranking Graduate Award for graduating first in college class: 2008
- Recipient of Presidential Merit Scholarship: 2005 - 2008
- Recipient of various departmental, Honors College, and study abroad merit scholarships

CITATIONS, MEDIA APPEARANCES, & SELECTED SERVICE TO PROFESSION

- *Williams v. Shapiro*, No. 24-11192, 2025 WL 3625999, --- F.4th ---- (11th Cir. Dec. 15, 2025).
- *Milano v. Cognizant Tech. Solutions U.S. Corp.*, No. 20-cv-17793 (MEF)(SDA), 2025 WL 3002178 (D. N.J. Oct. 27, 2025).
- James Van Bramer, *Digital Assets Might Fit Differently in DC Plans Than Other Alternative Assets*, PLAN SPONSOR (Nov. 4, 2025).
- Chris Tobe, *Crypto as a Prohibited Transaction in 401(k) Plans – Target Date and Brokerage Windows*, COMMON SENSE 401K PROJECT (Nov. 3, 2025).
- Chris Tobe, *How Damages Are Calculated in 401(k) Plans*, COMMON SENSE 401K PROJECT (Nov. 3, 2025).
- Robert Powell, Jr, *These Trump policies put your retirement at risk. Here's how to plan for the worst.*, MARKETWATCH (Sept. 22, 2025).
- Utah v. Su, No. No. 23-11097 (5th Cir. 2024), co-signer to Amicus Curiae Brief of ERISA Law Professors and Harvard Law School's Emmett Environmental Law & Policy Clinic in Support of Appellees.
- Letter to Senate and House Leadership concerning the Department of Labor's final Retirement Security Rules (July 1, 2024), co-signer.

REFEREED PROCEEDING/SYMPOSIA

L. Valastro, *Defined Contribution Plans As Contracts*, to be presented at the Proceedings of the 15th Annual Employee Benefits & Social Insurance Conference, University of Kentucky Rosenberg College of Law, March 12-13, 2026.

L. Valastro, *Evaluating ERISA Fiduciary Relationships As Relational Contracts*, presented in the 2025 Texas Junior Scholars Faculty Workshop, sponsored by Baylor Law School, December 5-6, 2025.

L. Valastro, *Evaluating ERISA Fiduciary Relationships As Relational Contracts*, presented in the Texas Tech Faculty Colloquium, November 13, 2025.

L. Valastro, *Fees Are the Michael Myers to Your Retirement Savings*, presented in the 2025 Texas Tech Research Slam, sponsored by the Texas Tech Research and Innovation Hub, October 30, 2025.

L. Valastro, *Regulating Retirement Savings Roulette*, Proceedings of the 12th Annual Governance of Emerging Technologies & Science (GETS) Conference sponsored by the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law's Center for Law, Science and Innovation, May 19-20, 2025.

L. Valastro, *Defined Contribution Plans As Contracts*, selected for participation in the 2025 University of Kentucky Rosenberg College of Law Developing Ideas Conference, May 13, 2025.

L. Valastro, *Projecting New Policy Proposals' Effects on Americans' Retirement Prospects*, Proceedings of The Age of Trump: Projecting Policy and Legal Impacts of a Second Term, sponsored by The University of St. Thomas School of Law Journal of Law and Public Policy, April 11, 2025.

L. Valastro, *Courts Don't Understand Junk Fees Eroding 401(k)*, Proceedings of ERISA at 50: Employee Benefits at Crossroads Conference, sponsored by the Catholic University of America Columbus School of Law, the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan, and Boston College Law School, September 12-13, 2024.

L. Valastro, *Vindicating Retirees*, selected via double-blind peer review for participation in the Ninth Annual Civil Procedure Workshop sponsored by UC Law SF, its Center for Litigation and Courts, and the American Association for Justice's Robert L. Habush Endowment, May 31-June 1, 2024.

L. Valastro, *Should Claims Asserting Fiduciary Breaches be Arbitrable?*, Proceedings of the 13th Annual Employee Benefits & Social Insurance Conference, Texas A&M School of Law, April 5-6, 2024.

L. Valastro, *Externships and Equity: Legal Education's Most Promising Tool For Improving Marginalized Students' Hiring Outcomes*, Proceedings of the Touro University Journal of Race, Gender, and Ethnicity's The Promise of Educational Equity Symposium, March 21, 2024.

L. Valastro, *Deciphering the Legal and Ethical Landscape of Cryptocurrency Investment in Employer-Sponsored Pension Plans*, Proceedings of the *Business Ethics and the Future of Work Symposium* sponsored by the American Business Law Journal, the Center for Ethics, Diversity, and Workplace Culture at Temple University, and the Center for Legal Studies and Business Ethics at Oklahoma State University, February 23-24, 2023.

SELECTED LEGAL EXPERIENCE

In-House Practice

- Evaluated and advised on risk of potential transactions, drafted contracts, liaised with internal and external clients and potential clients, negotiated deal terms, and played pivotal role in trebling investment deployment.
- Routinely advised CEO and CFO on strategy, major transactional matters, PR issues, and risk assessments.
- Led development of new, high-value investment arrangement with top U.S. firm.
- Created a high school exposure program in which students were able to complete a rigorous curriculum to gain exposure to legal concepts in private equity.
- Developed and oversaw an externship position in which a law student could experience real-world legal challenges in private equity.

Firm Practice

- Served as outside general counsel to various businesses, ranging from start-ups to several Fortune 500 companies.
- Responsible for assisting with corporate formalities, purchasing agreements, vendor agreements, licensing agreements, employment disputes, insurance renewals, reserve setting, contract management processes and systems overhauls, and implementation of corporate asset recovery programs.
- Led the systematic review and overhaul of executive and key employee compensation agreements and dispute resolution agreements.
- Drafted and revised employee handbooks, hiring policies and procedures, and job postings.
- Performed full scope of environmental transactional work, including assisting with compliance due diligence investigations, advising on effects of mergers and acquisitions, drafting risk allocation agreements, fulfilling reporting obligations, and acquiring permits.
- Represented mid-stream client before regulators and addressed novel issues involving tribal sovereignty in several of the largest Superfund Sites in the United States.
- First-chair trial counsel in fiduciary malfeasance and fraud claim. Obtained a total victory and award of all attorneys' fees in Texas state court, which was upheld on appeal.
- Second-chair representation of foreign airline against international competitor in a cross-border breach of contract and business tort case tried to a jury in New York state court. The case settled prior to verdict.

- Second-chair environmental jury trial (cleanup indemnity) to favorable verdict in Delaware Complex Business Court and created case law in successfully defending case on appeal.
- Represented litigation trustee of energy company asserting fiduciary breaches. Resulted in a multi-million-dollar AAA arbitral award for client.
- Represented corporate client in obtaining complete defense verdict in Washington State's largest environmental contribution suit ever, overcoming summary judgment motions.
- Appellate experience includes presenting oral argument in the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals and representing clients in the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, various Texas appeals circuits, and the Delaware Supreme Court.
- As a partner at a boutique firm, managed internal HR and staffing issues, external vendor contracts, financing, and all attendant complexities in running a small business.

COURSES TAUGHT / PROGRAM DEVELOPED

Business Entities: A study of business organizations (including partnership, limited partnership, and other unincorporated business forms) and business corporations; the factors affecting the selection of the form of a business enterprise; the nature of corporate entities; and the promotion, organization, activities, financing, management, and dissolution of business corporations. (Spring 2026 – in person)

Contracts: A study of the enforceability of promises, the creation of contractual obligations, performance and breach, the impact of the contract on the legal relationships of nonparties, and the examination of contract doctrine in three settings: personal service, sales of goods, and construction contracts. (Fall 2025 – in person)

Entrepreneurial Law Clinic: Through this Clinic for J.D. students, student attorneys provide legal services to clients in connection with their start-up businesses. Typical tasks include advising clients regarding choice of entity; forming corporations and limited liability companies; drafting shareholder and operating agreements; drafting employment, consulting and intellectual property agreements; counseling clients regarding trademark and other intellectual property strategies and prosecuting patents. Students also engage in a roundtable discussion where they present and analyze issues related to their client matters. Student attorneys also participate in a seminar focused on issues that transactional attorneys frequently address in working with entrepreneurs and emerging companies. In addition to client work, each student team completes a project that focuses on the local entrepreneurial community. (Fall 2024, Spring 2025 – in person)

Advanced Clinical Practicum: Through this Clinic for J.D. students, student attorneys can obtain an additional 1-3 credits to complete advanced legal work in the Entrepreneurial Law Clinic following prior successful enrollment and completion of a year in the Clinic. For each credit taken, a clinical student must complete a minimum of 50 hours of legal work under the supervision of the clinical professor. (Fall 2024, Spring 2025 – in person)

Corporate Practice Seminar: This professional doctoral level course examines legal practice in an in-house environment, including how to navigate the matrix of internal client structures, develop productive relationships with non-lawyer business counterparts, and solve problems to advance the company's strategic objectives. It also surveys a variety of concepts such as contract drafting pitfalls, risk management, understanding corporate operational units, managing outside counsel, and in-house affirmative recovery programs. This course coincides with the instructor's monitoring of student legal and law-related work experiences in which the placement is outside of the law school. (Spring 2024 – in person)

Corporate Externship Program (CEP): This professional doctoral level program provides students a unique opportunity to extern in-house at a company or in a law firm's transactional department exclusively serving corporate clients. This program includes the instructor's monitoring of student legal and law-related work experiences in which the placement is outside of the law school. Students may also participate in an accompanying seminar focused on the role of in-house and external counsel serving company clients. (Spring 2024 – in person)

Introduction to the American Legal System: This course is for international L.L.M. and Master of Law (MLS) students who have not previously had exposure to either the U.S. legal system or other common law systems. It focuses on the American legal system, including the three branches of government, federalism, the hierarchy of courts, and the anatomy of a lawsuit. Students draft legal documents, such as memoranda or briefs, and in doing so, learn about legal research, analysis, writing, and Bluebooking. Students also deliver oral arguments. (Spring 2024 – in person)

Defining Delta: Professionalism in Practice: This professional doctoral level course encourages the law student to examine and develop their professional identity as per the requirements of ABA Standard 303. This course coincides with the instructor's monitoring of student legal and law-related work experiences in which the placement is outside of the law school. Through externships, students obtain real-world working experience while establishing intentional learning goals and reflecting actively on what they learn throughout their experience. (Fall 2023 – in person)

Repeat Extern Field Work Course: This professional doctoral level course encourages the law student to more deeply examine and to continue to develop their professional identity as per the requirements of ABA Standard 303. This course coincides with the instructor's monitoring of student legal and law-related work experiences in which the placement is outside of the law school. (Fall 2023, Spring 2024 – in person)

Labor and Employment Law: This graduate level course examines the developing body of modern employment law. Topics include the at-will doctrine; ERISA; COBRA; OSHA; worker's compensation; sexual harassment; employer-sponsored benefits; employment discrimination laws; and other protective legislation such as FMLA and FLSA. (Fall 2022, Spring 2023 – online)

Legal Environment of Business I: This undergraduate level course surveys the structure and function of American legal institutions and their relationship to businesses. This course includes business formation; business conduct; how a business relates to, and resolves disputes with, its employees, its stakeholders, the public, the environment, the government, and other businesses; and how a business winds up. (Fall 2022, Spring 2023 – in-person and online)

INVITED PRESENTATIONS/LECTURES

- “Entity Formation in a Nutshell,” (guest speaker for CU Start Up Summer Program, 2024).
- “120 Years of Colorado Clinics,” (guest speaker at Colorado Lawyers Committee Board Meeting, 2024).
- “Negotiating Business Resolutions to Environmental Disputes,” (guest lecturer to University of Denver Sturm College of Law Environmental Law Clinic, 2024).
- “How I Write: A Panel Discussion,” AALS Externship Scholarship Committee Presentation (panelist, 2024).
- “How Regulation of Digital Asset Investments in Employer-Sponsored Pension Plans Could Disproportionately Affect Members of Underserved Communities,” Southern Academy of Legal Studies in Business Conference (presenter, 2023).
- “Ethical Issues in Sustainable Design: Understanding and Preventing Greenwashing” (lecturer at HalfMoon Education Seminars, 2020, 2021, 2022).
- “Energy & the Environment: An Insight into the Synergy of Oil, Gas, & Environmental Compliance” (panelist at South Texas School of Law Environmental Law Society, 2020).
- “Visible Invisibility” Panel (panelist at South Texas School of Law Women’s Law Group event, 2020).
- “Litigation Panel” (panelist at South Texas School of Law Hispanic Law Students Association event, 2020).
- “Energy Law: Nuts and Bolts – Environmental Issues” (guest lecturer at Texas Tech University School of Law, 2018).
- “Case Law Update” (presenter at Houston Environmental Law Section, 2017).
- “Surviving a Deposition for Business Professionals” (presenter at Texas Association of Environmental Professionals, 2015).
- “Preemption Issues in an Evolving Energy Market,” Conference of Western Attorneys General Energy Exports Summit (co-author, 2015).

SELECTED ACADEMIC SERVICE AND INVOLVEMENT

University

- Faculty Mentorship Academy Cohort Member: 2025 - 2026
- Advisory Board Member in The Nexus, Honors College at TTU: 2025 - present
- Invited to give LSUS Freshman Convocation Ceremony speech: 2023
- LSUS Academic Awards Convocation platform party member and name reader: 2023
- Advisory Board Member to LSUS Community Engagement Office: 2022

College

- TTUSOL Business Law Concentration Director: 2025 - present
- TTUSOL Professionalism Outcomes Committee member: 2025 - present
- Member of DU Rocky Mountain Collective on RPL: 2023 - 2024
- LSUS College of Business AASCB Compliance Working Group member: 2022 - 2023
- LSUS College of Business Ambassador for the JA 8th Grade Challenge: 2023
- LSUS Master of Public Health Administration Faculty Search Committee member: 2023
- Business Law Assurance of Learning Committee: 2022 - present
- Research Assistant in 2010 – 2011 for John Watts, *Tyranny by Proxy: State Action and the Private Use of Deadly Force*, 89 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 1237 (2014).

Department

- Revamped and reinitiated Sturm College of Law's Corporate Externship Program (that had been discontinued): 2023 - 2024
- Department of Accounting and Business Law Faculty Search Committee member: 2023
- Department of Accounting & Business Law Assessment Standards subcommittee member: 2022 - present
- Organized “Q&A with CPA and CFE Kathy McNamara and Melissa Parks” departmental event: 2022

ACADEMIC ADVISING AND MENTORING

- Faculty mentor for Texas Tech Law Review member's comment: 2025 - present
- Faculty mentor for Estate Planning Journal member's comment: 2025 - present
- Thesis reader for Texas Tech Honors College student thesis: 2025 - present
- Supervisor to two J.D. candidate research assistants: 2025 - present
- Supervisor to student clinic manager: 2024 - 2025
- Supervisor to L.L.M. candidate research assistant: 2024
- Supervisor to three J.D. candidate research assistants: 2023 - 2024
- Academic advisor to ten undergraduate students: 2023
- Academic advisor to seven undergraduate students: 2022
- Houston Bar Association Mentorship Program mentor: 2017 - 2022
- Texas Tech School of Law Bar Prep Mentor: 2015

SELECTED *PRO BONO* WORK AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Lubbock Area Bar Association, member: 2025 - present
- American Bar Association, member: 2012-18; 2025- present
- Academy of Legal Studies in Business, member: 2022 - 2023
- Alliance Française – Denver, member: 2020 - 2025

- Houston Association of Women Attorneys, member: 2016 - 2022
- *Pro bono* HVLA Indigent Legal Clinic: 2018 - 2020
- *Pro bono* representation of high-profile asylum case: 2018 - 2019
- Alliance Française – Houston, member: 2017 - 2019
- Texas Tech Honors College Advisory Council member: 2013 - 2018
- Texas Tech Honors College alumni representative at Red Raider Roadshows: 2013 - 2018
- Texas Tech Alumni Association, Houston Chapter, board of directors: 2014 - 2017
- Texas Tech Alumni Association, Gulf Coast Chapter, president: 2012 - 2016
- Texas Association of Environmental Professionals: 2014 - 2016
- *Pro bono* Veterans Legal Assistance Clinic: 2014

SELECTED ACADEMIC PARTICIPATION

- Law & Economics Center at George Mason University Antonin Scalia Law School, *Economics Institute for Law Professors*, selected participant: 2025
- CLEA Clinician Crew, participant: 2023 - 2024
- Clinical Legal Education Association, member: 2023 - present
- AALS Externship Faculty Partnering Program, partner: 2023
- Interrogating the Hidden Curriculum: Implications for Formation of Professional Identity, symposium attendee: 2023
- Rocky Mountain Academy of Legal Studies in Business Conference, attendee: 2022

SELECTED ADMISSIONS AND CERTIFICATION

- Admissions:
 - Supreme Court of Texas
 - Second Circuit Court of Appeals of the United States
 - Eastern District of Texas; Western District of Texas; Northern District of Texas; Southern District of Texas; Southern District of Texas, Bankruptcy; Western District of Missouri, Bankruptcy; District of Oregon; Western District of Washington
 - Various state and federal *pro hac* admissions
- Certification: Credentialed Mediator

LANGUAGES

- Fluent Spanish (CEFR C1/fully proficient)
- Proficient French (B2/advanced)
- Advanced Portuguese (B1/intermediate)