

# Alumni Spotlight: Youndy Cook, Vice President and General Counsel, UCF

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**Update us on your current role.** I am vice president and general counsel for the University of Central Florida. As general counsel, I head up the legal team for UCF, and we serve the entire university and its related entities, such as the UCF Foundation and the UCF Athletics Association. **What is the most interesting trend in your industry?** The higher education industry is starting to address demographic changes that challenge the financial model of higher education, namely the nation's declining college-age population and the resulting impact on enrollment. An

additional challenge to the financial model is declining levels of state support for higher education. **What is your best memory of working at Carlton Fields?** Carlton Fields was my first legal job. I started as a summer associate and then worked as an associate in the labor and employment practice. My time with Carlton Fields helped lay a good foundation for my legal career. I was also fortunate to have some really interesting cases and visits to clients' work sites. I still recall and draw on bits of advice, both personal and professional, that I received from different supervising attorneys. **What keeps you motivated?** I appreciate a good challenge. When things are new and different, but allow you to apply learned skills, I find that very motivating. That's one of the things I enjoy most about my current role. **What advice would you give to attorneys considering a career in your industry?** Pack your patience. Higher education is a highly regulated industry, and there's a constant influx of new statutory and regulatory requirements. You have to work through those patiently and implement them in a rapidly changing environment while also managing resistance to change. **What do you enjoy doing when you are not working?** I enjoy traveling and planning trips. I went to Santa Fe last spring, and I'm looking forward to my next trip. I also enjoy hiking and try to keep to a regular running schedule. **What was your first job?** I was a data entry clerk one summer

for Louisiana State University's food service department. My big project was transferring all paper recipes to an electronic database. I typed hundreds of recipes that summer! **What image is the background on your computer or phone?** My computer background is a picture of the sunset in Malibu, California, from my last pre-pandemic vacation. **Name three things you couldn't live without.** Diet Coke, good sleep, and downtime. Self-care is vital.

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