

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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