



First and last name:

Benjamin Keown

VLS degree(s) and class year(s):

LLM'21

What is your vision for VLS in the next five years?

My vision for the next five years is to see the school continue on the trajectory of providing an excellent education that helps prepare the next generation of young lawyers for the practice of law.

What skills do you bring to the VLSAA to accomplish these priorities?

I would bring a practical application based on my experience as a career trial attorney. I am also the youngest County Chief Prosecutor in the 14th Judicial Circuit of Florida. This supervisory position along with my experience prosecuting a vast array of cases would give me an insight into the practical realities of the legal world and my goal is to help new lawyers succeed long term in a profession that can be difficult to break into.

How would you galvanize the energy and enthusiasm of alumni to increase participation in VLS events and giving?

I would want to show other alumni that the new lawyers graduating from VLS are not only prepared from a strictly academic setting, but that the students are also ready to handle the legal profession in all its facets. Beginning with a strong emphasis on internships and externships with firms and agencies that alumni are involved in. Also pushing for introductory professionalism and practical practice resources for students. Passionate students who have goals of seeking a better world through the law is a hallmark of VLS. While passion cannot be taught professionalism and resourcefulness in a real-world setting can make those dreams a reality.

List and describe your alumni service.

Panhandle Seminoles Club - Scholarship Chair, Florida State University

List your activities as a VLS student.

I was a distance learning student, so I was not able to take full advantage of activities of VLS. But I hope to provide examples of how distance learners can become involved more with campus.

List any appropriate professional and community activities, and please describe how that experience would serve you as a board member.

Holmes County Chief Assistant State Attorney - In my role as County Chief I supervise a junior attorney as well as numerous legal assistants and a full-time investigator. I also act as the chief liaison for all local law-enforcement regarding questions of law. I personally prosecute all felony level cases including murders, white collar crimes, sex, and drug cases. This experience provides a background of leadership and practical knowledge of the criminal prosecution world.

President - Panhandle Shrine Club: I have served twice as the president of my local shrine club. This involvement with a local charity that supports the Shriners Children's Hospital has emphasized my leadership characteristics as well as provided a basis for community involvement that I hope to share with the VLS community.

Scholarship Chair - Panhandle Seminoles Club: Has a scholarship chair for the Panhandle Seminoles Club I was responsible for vetting applicants for our annual scholarships. This includes reviewing applications, contacting references, reviewing transcripts, and if necessary, interviewing candidates. This involvement with academic institutions straight and level has given me an idea of the inner workings of the academic process.

Having reviewed the standing committees on the VLSAA Board, which committee(s) would you choose to serve on and why?

I can see my skill set the most valuable on either of the executive committee or the mentorship committee. I believe that I could assist with the strategic goals of VLS and use my experience to help VLS succeed into the future. Also, as I mentioned above my passion is for helping young lawyers succeed. I grew up from a very blue-collar background, but during law school I had a professor as a mentor to me as I progressed through school. I believe that mentoring students is imperative to a successful legal career.

Discuss whether you have the resources and ability to make the board a priority over the next three years.

I have the resources time wise to certainly make the board a priority. If the meetings are allowed to be attended by Zoom, I will certainly be able to attend every meeting. I live in Florida so while it would be difficult to travel on a quarterly basis to Vermont, I can make myself available with appropriate notice to be at all necessary meetings either by phone or by zoom.