

### **COLLABORATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

My priority for research is to better understand and to advance collaborative dispute resolution and its philosophy of cooperative problem-solving. I am a leader in the collaborative process movement, serving as the Florida Academy of Collaborative Professionals' Outreach Committee chairperson and as its Vice President. I am also the recent past-president and a current board member of West Florida Collaborative Law, my local consortium of collaborative professionals. The collaborative process is an alternative dispute resolution method that employs an interdisciplinary team of professionals and neutral experts. Primarily used in family law, the collaborative practice method has recently found a place in other practice areas, such as business transactions and probate.

Collaborative process scholarship has emerged in waves: an introduction in the 1990s and again in the mid-2000's, and now, the light shines on implementation and practical matters. Publications have reiterated general overviews, ethics, and development of the Uniform Collaborative Process Act. The UCPA's adoption, as well as the growth of the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals, state organizations, and local practice groups have led to a recent spike in academic interest. Many issues await more in-depth discussion, such as application in other practice areas, access to justice, and issues of law office management. The topic is so important that the American Bar Association's Section of Dispute Resolution includes a Collaborative Law Committee and a recently formed Task Force on Conflict Prevention Techniques. Yet, the only "research" has been self-conducted by collaborative practice groups via post-case surveys. The movement needs independent research.

Every law school should have a collaborative law course, if not a clinic. Barry University's Dwayne O. Andreas School of Law, in Orlando, offers an excellent example of a commitment to the paradigm shift. Other law schools have recently offered collaborative law courses, including Harvard University, University of Richmond, University of Maryland, University of Miami, and Pace University. Collaborative law courses are essential to professionalism, as I argue in my recently published article, *Florida Family Law Bounds of Advocacy: A Mandate for Collaborative Practice?* 43 Nova L.R. 1 (2019). A condensed version was published in *The Summation*, a journal of the Escambia Santa Rosa Bar Association. I am currently working on a paper, regarding discrepancies in concepts of informational transparency and strategies for how a multi-disciplinary collaborative team can reconcile sometimes inconsistent professional standards.

Because collaborative dispute resolution is emerging in other practice areas, I would like to develop and implement a pilot program for collaborative process in education matters, such as for due process requests under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and student or teacher disciplinary issues.

### **DIVERSITY ISSUES AND LEGAL SKILLS**

In addition to collaborative dispute resolution, I will prioritize research and writing on diversity in the legal profession (including law schools) and how legal skills or legal process courses might better serve the increasingly diverse student body. I am especially intrigued by recent trends of persons with diverse neurological conditions achieving success in colleges, graduate schools, and the legal industry. For example, the Florida Bar recently admitted a young woman who is within the autism spectrum, but meanwhile, the Florida Bar also this year settled a law suit because it treated persons with a history of mental health or substance abuse problems differently from other applicants. The plaintiff was a veteran who suffered from anxiety and depression.

Though the term "neurodiversity" is controversial, the reality is that academia is experiencing a trend of rising numbers of students diagnosed with these sometimes hidden conditions, such as autism, migraine, schizophrenia, major depressive disorder, and ADHD. It is not a stretch to say that few law professors are equipped to manage the variety of accommodations these learners need. Meanwhile, the lack of consensus in definition, along with objections to labels by some neuro-divergent individuals, impedes research and understanding. I would like to study these issue and work with special education professionals to develop new pedagogies for the legal skills classroom. This work would be an excellent opportunity to collaborate with other colleges across a university or even with sister institutions.