

Symposium Committee Portfolio

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Expert Biographies



Karen Jones
Symposium Chair

Karen Jones serves as the Executive Director of Global and Graduate Programs at the University of Houston Law Center and is an adjunct professor, teaching courses in legal negotiation, negotiation in sports, and attorney communication and persuasion. She also coaches and judges mediation and negotiation competitions. Previously on faculty at Rice University, sports management department, head of the sports law concentration and program coordinator and director of the International Sports Law Center at T.M.C. Asser Instituut in The Hague, where she developed academic programs and served as the managing editor of the International Sports Law Journal. She teaches internationally, including at Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, International Sports Management & Business program. With over 17 years of leadership in global and Fortune 500 corporations, she brings expertise in program development, contracts, negotiation, and compliance. She holds multiple degrees and certifications from Columbia College Chicago, DePaul University, Southern Methodist University law school, John Marshall Law School, and KU Leuven. She has been an invited speaker at conferences around the world and published articles and book chapters on sports law-related topics. She received a Fulbright award (2022) and a University of Houston President's Circle Award (2025). She is active in professional associations and community service.



Julian Cardenas Garcia
Symposium Co-Chair

Professor Cardenas Garcia is a leading scholar in transnational petroleum law, international arbitration, and U.S.-Mexico legal cooperation. He directs UHLC's Center for U.S. and Mexican Law, promoting academic and legal exchange across borders. A former career diplomat for Venezuela and legal clerk in Paris, he has advised on major international disputes and served on the board of Venezuela's national oil company, PDVSA. He teaches and lectures globally—across Latin America, Europe, and the U.S.—on arbitration, investment law, and energy regulation. He holds advanced law degrees from the Sorbonne and UHLC and is fluent in Spanish, English, and French. Outside of law, he is also an award-winning violinist with international performances, including at Carnegie Hall and the Berlin Philharmonic.



Michele Colucci
Honorary

Dr. Michele Colucci is a member of the Bar in Italy and serves as a civil servant at the European Commission in Brussels. He sits on the FIFA Tribunal's Dispute Resolution Chamber, the FIFPRO Dispute Committee, and is President of the Council of the Court of Arbitration of the European Handball Federation.

He is the founder and honorary president of the Italian Sports Lawyers Association and established the Sports Law and Policy Centre. Dr. Colucci is the editor of the International Encyclopedia of Sports Law, comprising over 50 national monographs, and serves as Scientific Director of the Rivista di Diritto ed Economia dello Sport.

A former tenure-track assistant professor at the University of Salerno, he has lectured in sports law across leading universities and LL.M. programs worldwide, including in the U.S., Spain, Italy, Belgium, and Switzerland.

Dr. Colucci was instrumental in the creation of the European Commission's Erasmus + Sport Programme and recently co-launched the Seneca Programme, an international exchange for sports lawyers. He continues to advocate for youth engagement in sports and education through initiatives like "Schools in Movement" in his hometown of Avellino Italy.



Brian Michael Cooper

Brian Michael Cooper is a sports, M&A, private equity, and antitrust attorney at Greenberg Traurig LLP, where he advises on complex transactions involving mergers, venture capital, fund formation, and sports law. His legal work spans over \$1 billion in deals, including corporate governance, securities compliance, and cross-border transactions.

Brian brings 25 years of sports business experience, having served as president of the XFL Houston Roughnecks and the NGA G-League RGV Vipers, and as director of sports programming at DISH Network. He has led media rights negotiations, team operations, sponsorships, and branding strategies, and managed multimillion-dollar budgets in both professional and collegiate sports.

He holds degrees from Cornell University, Harvard Kennedy School, and Columbia Law School, and teaches sports law at the University of Houston Law Center. Brian serves on the boards of Positive Coaching Alliance (Texas) and Longitude (Rice) and is a frequent speaker on sports law and business. He has been recognized by LawDragon, Houstonia magazine, and the Houston Bar Association for his leadership and service.



Ryan Gauthier

Ryan is an Associate Professor at Thompson Rivers University's Faculty of Law. Ryan's research examines issues related to sports law, particularly in the areas of human rights and integrity. Ryan's PhD work examined violations of international human rights law by hosts of the Olympic Games, and the role of the International Olympic Committee in addressing those abuses. In recent years, Ryan has examined sports governance in Canada, risks to the human rights of e-sport competitors, and governance issues related to the public financing of stadiums. Ryan also compares North American and European approaches to sports law. Currently, Ryan teaches Tort Law, Sports Law, and Sports & Human Rights. In prior years, he has taught Legislation, Administration & Policy, International Law, Employment Law, and Human Rights Law. Ryan received his JD from Harvard Law School in 2010. Afterwards, he worked as an associate with the labour and employment practice of Heenan Blaikie, LLP, a national Canadian law firm. He completed his PhD at Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2015 and joined TRU Law in 2016.



Frank Hendrickx

Frank Hendrickx is a professor at the Faculty of Law, KU Leuven, specializing in labor, employment, and sports law. He holds a law and philosophy degree from KU Leuven, LL.M. from the London School of Economics, and a Doctor of Law from KU Leuven.

He teaches national and European labor law as well as sports law across multiple faculties at KU Leuven. Professor Hendrickx is the editor-in-chief of the International Encyclopedia of Laws (Wolters Kluwer) and the founding editor-in-chief of the European Labour Law Journal (Sage). He serves as President of the International Association of Labour Law Journals (IALLJ) and is a board member of the Belgian Association for Labour Relations. Previously, he served as President of the Belgian Association for Labour and Social Security Law (2016-2018). A widely published scholar, Professor Hendrickx has delivered keynote lectures at numerous national and international conferences. He regularly advises both governmental institutions and private organizations on labor and sports law matters.



Matthew J. Mitten

Matthew J. Mitten is a Professor of Law and the Executive Director of the National Sports Law Institute at Marquette University Law School. A leading scholar in sports law, he teaches courses on amateur and professional sports law, antitrust, and business torts. He has authored and co-authored several foundational sports law texts, including Sports Law in the United States (4th ed.) (Kluwer Law Int'l 2025). Matt serves as an arbitrator for the Court of Arbitration for Sport, the American Arbitration Association, and other major sports dispute resolution bodies, having handled over 70 sports cases. He has testified before the U.S. Senate and House committees on college sports issues and has spoken at over 200 conferences worldwide. He holds a B.A. in Economics from The Ohio State University and a J.D., magna cum laude, from the University of Toledo. His career includes private practice, academic leadership, and international teaching appointments. He is a past president of the Sports Lawyers Association and recipient of multiple awards for his contributions to sports law and ethics.



Jim Nafziger

James A.R. Nafziger holds the Thomas B. Stoel Chair as Professor of Law and Director of International Law Programs at the Willamette University College of Law. He was a Fulbright lecturer at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and the National and Olgontenger Universities in Mongolia in addition to visiting professorships at several universities in the United States. He is a Vice Chair of the International Law Association and a member of its Management Committee, having served as President of the ILA's American Branch. He is also Secretary of the American Society of International Law and a former Administrative Director of that organization as well as an Honorary President of the International Association of Sports Law. Professor Nafziger's extensive scholarship, beginning with the first-ever article on international sports law, has resulted in many published articles and several books on the subject. These include the Handbook on International Sports Law (co-authored 2d ed. 2022), Transnational Law of Sports (2013), and International Sports Law (2d. ed. 2004).



Rodrigo Ortega Sanchez

Sanchez received his law degree at the University of Buenos Aires, and an LL.M. in French Law and European and International Business at Paris University II. Sanchez is a special counsel at Beccar Varela. He advises on sports law, covering all stages, from conception to monitoring and development of sports contracts in general, focusing on the drafting and negotiation of federal rights transfer contracts, among other issues. Rodrigo has extensive experience advising European clubs in the development of subsidiaries of training centers in Argentina and advising football players in international conflicts related to the collection of owed amounts.

He has advised various clients, both local and international, on structuring football investments as well as on matters related to sports sponsorships. His experience also includes advice to private clients in the business between Argentina and France.



Wilma Shim

Wilma Shim is a Commissioner with the Alberta Human Rights Commission and a sports law instructor in the Faculties of Law and Kinesiology at the University of Calgary. She was named to the National Arbitration Roster and Safeguarding Tribunal Arbitration Roster for the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada in 2025. Wilma brings extensive sport experience as a past national team member, board member, and coach. Wilma holds an LL.M. in Sports Law from De Montfort University and a J.D. from the University of Calgary. Called to the Alberta Bar in 2011, she previously worked for Alberta Justice as a Crown Prosecutor and Barrister and Solicitor for a decade.

Wilma is a Senator at the University of Calgary and a Board Director with Sport Calgary, Alberta Lawyers' Assistance Society, Association of Women Lawyers and Federation of Asian Canadian Lawyers (Western).

She is an advocate for individuals with an intellectual disability and actively volunteers with Special Olympics, where she founded and head coaches the Special Olympics Calgary badminton program.



Carlos Hernández Vázquez

Carlos Hernández Vázquez is a professor in the Strategic Intelligence undergraduate program at Universidad Anáhuac in Mexico and the Founder and Director of NZAYA | Diplomacy, Rule of Law, Security & Intelligence, a consultancy focused on strengthening governance, security, and the rule of law across Latin America. He holds a master's degree in law enforcement, Security and Intelligence from the University of Buckingham (Chevening Scholar) and a Law degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

Carlos has over a decade of international experience with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the British Government, specializing in anti-corruption, anti-money laundering, cybercrime, and strategic intelligence. He has advised on legal and security frameworks across Latin America, Europe, and North America.

He is an active in several professional networks, including the Mexican Bar Association, the International Association for Intelligence Education (IAFIE), and the International Association on Cybersecurity. He also serves as an advisor to Mexico's Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Corruption Commission and is a member of the national Whistleblower Protection Working Group.

Student Biographies



Adam Burke

Adam is a graduate from the Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, holding a bachelor's in Business Administration and management. He is entering his second year of law school with the University of Calgary's Faculty of Law. Adam moved to Calgary in 2024 in hopes of pursuing his dream of working in Sports Law. During his first year in Calgary, Adam spearheaded the revival of the faculty's Sports and Entertainment Law Club. Additionally, Adam had the opportunity to do some data analysis for the local Calgary Hitmen hockey club.



Justin Cheap

Justin is a graduate of California Polytechnic University and is a rising 2L J.D. student at the University of Houston Law Center. He has previous experience in legal research and legal writing and is passionate in using his legal degree for the advancement of Corporate and Tax Law and Sports and Entertainment Law. Justin played soccer for over 15 years and has a passionate interest in pursuing sports law after graduation, therefore, became a student member of the 2026 World Cup Symposium team.



Chloe Tran

Chloe Tran earned her bachelor's degree in Public Health with a minor in Business from the University of Texas at Austin. Currently, she is a J.D. candidate at the University of Houston Law Center, where she received the LEX Award in March 2025. Chloe serves as the 1L Representative for both the Corporate & Tax Law Society and The Advocates. A lifelong sports enthusiast, she is excited to contribute to the symposium, bringing her passion for law, international affairs, and community engagement to the forefront.



Josh Nahmias

Josh holds a BA in Political Science from the University of Toronto and an MA in Political Science from Western University. Before starting at University of Calgary Faculty of Law, he worked at Ontario's Ministry of Energy for three years, most recently as a Senior Policy Advisor. Currently, Josh serves as the Vice President of Sports and Recreation at UCalgary's Society of Law Students. He is also the President of UofC's Energy Law Club. Outside of studying, He enjoys climbing mountains and playing squash. In addition to serving as the 1L Events Representative, Joshua also volunteers with PBSC's Hearsay Podcast Project.



Zahan Shokrehuda

Zahan is a 3L JD candidate at the University of Houston Law Center, where he serves as the External Vice President of the Sports & Entertainment Law Organization and Articles Editor for the Houston Business & Tax Law Journal. He has published multiple articles on sports law topics including NIL regulations, NBA collective bargaining agreements, and athlete compensation structures across different basketball systems. Zahan's passion for sports extends beyond the legal realm, as he actively plays basketball in recreation leagues, analyze NBA and NFL salary caps, and has completed multiple marathons. He brings in both his academic expertise in sports law and hands-on sports experience to help create impactful programming for our symposium.



Cassius Hernandez

Cassius is a 2L J.D. candidate at the University of Houston Law Center. He earned his B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Sports Management from Texas A&M University. His interests center on international law and governance, which he has explored through an EU-focused study abroad program. Cassius is a member of the Houston Journal of International Law and serves as a Research Assistant for the Law Center's Department of Global and Graduate Programs, contributing to projects on international law, sports arbitration, and legal education.