

FSU Alumni Association recognized exemplary graduates in annual Young Alumni Awards

BY: LAUREN SCHOENBERGER (MAILTO:LSCHOENBERGER@FSU.EDU) | PUBLISHED: NOVEMBER 8, 2021 | 3:32 PM | SHARE: 



(Backrow) From L to R: Justine Hecks, Katharina Reekmans, Ky'Eisha Penn, Lisa Primiani, Jesse Marks, Elexa Bancroft, Mike Mitchell, Suresh Narayanan, Nicholas Thomas (Frontrow) From L to R: Bethany Swanson, Dara Cohen, Madison Marks, Lauren Albaum, Alexa Cronin Sobek and Jordan Rogers

The **Florida State University Alumni Association** (<https://alumni.fsu.edu/>) recognized 19 young alumni for their significant contributions to their professions, communities and alma mater at the annual Young Alumni Awards on Friday, Nov. 5.

The Notable Noles program recognizes the outstanding accomplishments of FSU's alumni aged 35 or younger who have made exceptional achievements and significant contributions to his or her profession, community/society or the university through traditional channels or innovative approaches.

"I always say if you want to see the future of Florida State — look no further than our Notable Noles and Askew recipients," said Julie Decker, president and CEO of the FSU Alumni Association. "Within the brief time since their graduation from FSU, these individuals have personified our university's tradition of excellence through their dedication and passion to their fields. We are proud to highlight our best and brightest young alumni, who will continue to achieve outstanding feats built on a solid education from Florida State University."

The 2021 Notable Noles are:

Lauren Albaum (B.M. '11) executive director of Career Services, Florida Southern College

Elexa Bancroft (B.M. '09) director, Atlanta Music Education, LLC

Dara Cohen (B.S. '14) director of Regional Corporate Communication, MGM Resorts International

Liliana Guerrero (D.M. '20) director of Vocal Studies, Texas Lutheran University

Justine Hicks (B.A. '14) prevention specialist, Florida Department of Children and Families

Elizabeth Iskow (B.S. '14) cyber investigative intelligence lead analyst, Citibank

Sophia Khawly (B.S.N. '11) travel nurse practitioner, Comp Health

Taylor Knight (B.A. '19) Al Roker's executive assistant and associate producer/researcher, NBC News

Jesse Marks (B.A. '16) foreign affairs specialist, Department of Defense

Madison Marks (B.A. '13) director, Social Innovation Lab, Johns Hopkins University

Mike Mitchell (B.S. '13, M.S. '19) strategic initiatives manager, Office of Research Development, Florida State University

Suresh Narayanan (B.S. '08) Partner, Aerospace Quality Research and Development founder & CEO, Mustang Entrepreneurs, LLC

Ky'Eisha Penn (B.S. '13) staff attorney, Advancement Project National Office

Lisa Primiani (B.S. '10) director, Major Giving – Southeast, American Heart Association

Katharina Reekmans (B.A. '12) enrolled agent and Tax Analyst, Intuit

Jordan Rogers (B.S. '08, M.D. '12) emergency medicine physician, Alteon Health

Alexa Cronin Sobeck (B.S.W. '15) director of clinical services, Psychiatric Institute of Washington

Bethany Swonson (B.S. '13) chief of staff, Florida Department of Education

Nicholas Thomas (B.S. '18, M.S. '20) co-founder, The Extraordinary Kids Foundation, Inc.

Six of these Notable Noles were also presented with the **Reubin O'D. Askew Young Alumni Award**, the highest honor bestowed upon young alumni by the FSU Alumni Association. Named in honor of former Gov. Askew, this award recognizes his contributions to our state, nation and university. These young alumni continue Askew's legacy of outstanding accomplishments built on the foundation of their education from Florida State University.



The 2021 Reubin O'D. Askew Awardees are:

Jesse Marks (B.A. '16) A Fulbright Scholar, Schwarzman Scholar and Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellow, Marks currently serves as a foreign-affairs specialist at the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He previously served as a research fellow with the Jordan Center for Strategic Studies and Refugees International at the University of Jordan.

Suresh Narayanan (B.S. '08) is a board member and partner of Aerospace Quality Research & Development, which provides repairs, modifications and engineering services to aircraft. He is also the owner of Mustang Entrepreneurship, an aerospace investment and operations firm in Dallas, Texas.

Katharina Reekmans (B.A. '12) Reekmans is a partner in a full-service accounting and tax representation practice, Bright Tax Solutions, with offices in Florida and Texas, serving clients across the United States and abroad. She is accredited as a Tax Analyst and an Enrolled Agent, which is the highest credential for the IRS awards. Additionally, she serves as a tax analyst on the Intuit TurboTax Blog.

Alexa Cronin Sobeck (B.S.W. '15) As director of Clinical Services, Sobeck oversees a team of 30 employees and five departments, including social workers, psychologists, addiction counselors, expressive therapists and patient advocacy. In addition, she is responsible for the therapeutic group programming schedule for the entire inpatient hospital inclusive of nine psychiatric units.

Bethany Swonson (B.S. '13) As chief of staff for the Florida Department of Education, Swonson provides executive management and strategic leadership to the agency and the Commissioner of Education to implement the mission and goals of the state's K-20 education system which serves nearly 3.6 million students.

Nicholas Thomas (B.S. '18, M.S. '20) is a current medical student at the Florida State University College of Medicine. Thomas is the co-founder of the Extraordinary Kids Foundation Inc., a nonprofit that provides developmentally disabled children with personalized care. That same year, the foundation opened a prescribed pediatric extended-care facility in Lake Worth, Fla.

For more information on the Young Alumni Awards, visit alumni.fsu.edu/young-alumni-awards. (<http://alumni.fsu.edu/young-alumni-awards>)

