



THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF LAW

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028

**TENNESSEE LAW:
LIGHTING THE WAY**





VISION

To be the premier law school in the southeast, distinguished by our influential scholarship, commitment to public service, and exceptional preparation of future lawyers to be ethical and skilled leaders within the profession.



GOAL 1

Educate and prepare students at the highest level to resolve legal problems, serve clients, promote justice, and be leaders in the profession and in their communities.

Engage in a comprehensive evaluation of the J.D. curriculum to ensure that class offerings provide the knowledge and skills our students need to graduate well-prepared to pass the bar exam and practice law in their chosen areas.

- Explore and implement any agreed upon changes to the first-year curriculum to ensure that students gain competence in foundational subject matter areas, as well as master the legal writing and analytical skills necessary to succeed in upper division courses and summer legal employment.
- Consider and implement any agreed upon changes to the upper-division curriculum, as informed by any changes to the first-year curriculum and anticipated changes to the Uniform Bar Exam.
- Review and refine the curriculum to confirm that we provide instruction that will prepare graduates for practice, with particular emphasis on evolving practice areas within Tennessee and the entire Southeast region.

Evaluate and make necessary changes to clinics, centers, and concentrations.

- Ensure that the Advocacy and Dispute Resolution and Business Transactions concentrations match student interest and the needs of prospective employers.
- Evaluate the Institute for Professional Leadership's curriculum to ensure that students can experience leadership education important to the formation of their professional identities and their ability to flourish as lawyers.
- Evaluate requirements for each concentration to confirm that they provide students with the knowledge and skills to make them proficient and competitive in those practice areas.
- Confirm that students are able to enroll in the necessary classes to complete the requirements for each concentration.
- Ensure efficient leadership transition in order to maintain the consistency and efficiency of the concentrations and the Institute for Professional Leadership curriculum.
- Expand clinic offerings to areas of need and impact, including in the appellate litigation area.
- Cultivate and expand the Clinical Fellows Program to provide training to lawyers who are interested in joining the legal academy and who can serve as supplemental instructors in our clinics.

Expand judicial clerkship, externship, field placement, and semester-in-residence opportunities for students throughout Tennessee and the Southeast, in particular.

- Strengthen relationships with judges in Tennessee, as well as with the federal judiciary in the Southeast region and beyond to enhance the opportunities for our students to pursue judicial clerkships.
- Establish and strengthen relationships with government offices and agencies, as well as private corporate entities to create increased opportunities for students to participate in externships, field placements, and semester-in-residence programs that can provide meaningful educational experiences and serve as promising avenues for future employment.
- Provide logistical support and distance learning opportunities to allow students to obtain required credit hours, while working outside of Knoxville in externships, field placements, and semester-in-residence programs.

GOAL 2

Strive to lead the way in conducting influential, collaborative, and innovative research that advances collective understanding of the law, supplies practical solutions to real-world problems, and leads to meaningful reforms to our local and national legal landscapes.

Raise the academic profile and reputation of the College of Law nationally and regionally by expanding and better promoting faculty research and scholarship.

- Establish and maintain a system for tracking citations to scholarship, and once a collective, rolling 5-year baseline is established, seek to increase those numbers.
- Track academic placements in law reviews and, once a rolling 5-year baseline is established, seek to improve those placements and numbers.
- Publish more frequently in popular, non-academic fora, such as trade presses, magazines, and blogs, so that faculty research is more accessible to a broader cross-section of influencers of public policy.
- Track and increase the rate at which faculty scholarship or scholarly-informed views appear in the media, including in op-eds, news stories, and television and radio broadcasts.
- Increase marketing of recent faculty scholarship through targeted communications and social media.
- Increase the rate at which faculty present their scholarship at regional and national conferences, especially in well-publicized venues, such as AALS- and ABA-sanctioned conferences.

Successfully collaborate with other colleges, departments, and scholars across campus.

- Increase engagement between College of Law and UT faculty in other colleges and departments to conduct research and produce scholarship in areas of common interest.
- Create incentives for faculty to engage in efforts to obtain external research funding.
- Increase the number of faculty who seek external funding to support their research, including through collaboration with UT faculty in other colleges and departments.
- Increase the number of faculty who teach, present, or guest-lecture across campus.

GOAL 3

Embody the Volunteer Spirit by providing education, legal assistance, advice, and leadership training to communities across Tennessee and beyond, and by actively pursuing and serving in public interest positions at the local, state, and national levels.

Increase public interest work and general community engagement by our students and faculty.

- Establish a flagship scholarship (full tuition, plus) for outstanding students who possess signature leadership qualities and a demonstrated commitment to public service.
- Assess current pro bono projects, including hours volunteered by students and faculty to establish a baseline for comparing and measuring our success in this area against peer and aspirational law schools, and increasing engagement in this space.
- Hire full-time, dedicated staff for access to justice and pro bono coordination and greater community engagement.
- Improve recognition and awards for students and faculty engaged in public interest work and other forms of community engagement.
- Increase interest among our students in pursuing employment opportunities to serve the public interest through work in local, state, and federal departments and agencies.
- Increase financial support for students who choose to engage in public interest work, in the form of stipends for summer employment and loan repayment assistance for long-term employment.
- Establish the Appalachian Justice Research Center.

Evaluate, develop, and expand the non-J.D. programs and offerings.

- Improve marketing of and significantly increase enrollment in the MLS and Graduate Certificate programs.
- Identify subject matter areas of focus for the MLS and Graduate Certificate programs and develop courses within those areas.
- Develop executive education courses to meet the needs of Tennesseans and others who would benefit from legal knowledge and leadership training in a specific area but who do not need or want a master's degree or graduate certificate.
- Establish guidelines for credit and compensation for faculty teaching non-J.D. courses.
- Offer courses to undergraduate students in areas of faculty expertise and explore the possibility of creating an undergraduate minor or major. Expand availability of research resources and assistance for the community.
- Increase the hours that the law library and in-person research assistance are available.
- Improve the law library's legal research resources that are specifically targeted at a non-lawyer audience.
- Develop a program of education and awareness for local community stakeholders, such as Tennessee public library systems and courthouse staff.

GOAL 4

Recruit and retain a diverse and highly talented group of students, faculty, and staff with varying perspectives and viewpoints, and cultivate a learning environment that is robust, engaging, and inclusive in working towards the ultimate objective of building a more just society.

Implement structures and practices that attract a diverse community of students.

- Implement early academic intervention and mentoring initiatives for middle and high school students to (1) expose them to law school and the legal profession and (2) develop the necessary skills, including critical reading, writing, and reasoning, to be successful in law school (e.g., TBA mock trial, debate, reading and writing programs, Street Law, CLEO, Upward Bound).
- Develop and implement a pipeline program with regional historically Black colleges and universities, as well as UT System institutions, to heighten interest in the College of Law and in the legal profession as a whole, among underrepresented groups.
- Implement recruitment strategies and practices that will maximize our ability to enhance diversity in all its forms at the College of Law.
- Explore the creation of concentrations in public interest law.
- Develop a first-generation program for students that leverages the significant number of alumni and faculty who were the first in their families to attend college and law school.
- Develop a plan to improve student-focused spaces within the College of Law building.
- Implement structures and practices that attract a diverse community of staff and faculty.
- Increase salaries of staff and faculty to levels comparable with those at peer and aspirational institutions.
- Implement strategies and recruitment practices to attract diverse faculty candidates outside of the AALS Faculty Appointments Register.
- Facilitate professional development and advancement opportunities for staff.
- Implement recruitment and retention strategies and practices that will maximize our ability to enhance staff and faculty diversity in all its forms at the College of Law.

Implement structures and practices that support a culture where everyone matters and belongs.

- Institute programming focused on intergroup dialogues that bridge cultural differences and encourage civil discourse.
- Obtain non-university funding to help support diversity programs and student affinity groups.
- Host more social events for students, staff, and faculty to build camaraderie and community.
- Develop a culture of real-time appreciation and recognition, including peer-to-peer recognition, where staff and faculty feel valued and celebrated for their efforts.

GOAL 5

Increase promotion of and awareness about the College of Law's vision, strengths, and achievements to raise our regional, national, and international profile.

Conduct a comprehensive review and evaluation of all communication and marketing efforts on behalf of the College of Law to assess the effectiveness of current strategies.

- Work closely with the Office of Communications to thoroughly examine the College of Law's existing marketing and communication efforts to determine an optimal approach moving forward.
- Consider engaging third-party organizations to help guide and coordinate a coherent and efficient review of all communications and marketing efforts.

Work to improve the substance and quality of specific platforms and points of contact, including the College of Law's website, magazine, social media strategy, and targeted communications.

- Move the Office of Communications, Marketing, and Public Relations to a dedicated and centrally located space within the College of Law.
- Appoint one "Communications" professional within each major hub or center (Admissions, Career Services, Faculty, etc.) to be a part of the Communications' "affiliated staff." This affiliated staff would have recurring weekly meetings with the Communications office in an effort to keep it apprised of all important events and news.
- Make changes to any public-facing materials to ensure the materials are coherent, consistent, accurate, and values-driven. Use consistent messaging and wording to better communicate our vision and values. Specifically, change the focus and maneuverability of the College of Law website to ensure that it better serves the various audiences that use it.
- Work on reforming communications coverage into the law library; create a better information-sharing relationship with law faculty and library professionals.
- Consider moving certain non-communications marketing tasks (student headshots, composites, etc.) into the domain of another office or professional.
- Assess the efficacy of mailers as a communication tool.

Grow the reach of the College of Law's marketing and communications efforts.

- Consider hiring additional full-time marketing, communications, and public relations professionals. Possible personnel additions could include, for example, a videographer/photographer, a social media/website professional (with oversight of student groups and activities), or a story-gathering/reporter professional.
- Grow points of contact with the College of Law's targeted audiences, including our social media presence, particularly with regard to current and prospective students.
- Consider instituting monthly spotlights of students, staff, and faculty.
- Enhance and expand media coverage for student organization activities.
- Consider increasing the types and frequency of targeted communications (digital and/or paper).