



Northeastern University
School *of* Law

Strategic Plan

Northeastern University School of Law Strategic Plan

VISION

Northeastern University School of Law is a national and international leader in melding experiential education with a theoretical and practical understanding of the role of law in society and the ways in which law advances the public good.

We advance this vision through rigorous classroom and experiential learning, innovative disciplinary and interdisciplinary research and scholarship, and real world connections in service, scholarship and teaching.

CORE VALUES

While embracing the values of Northeastern University, the School of Law community has articulated the following specific core values:

1. We see law as a melding of theory and practice, each informing the other.

We are committed to experiential education as a critical means of teaching students to become effective lawyers and to appreciate the role that lawyers and law play in our society; we value the practice experience of our faculty and the ability of our faculty to bring practice and theory together in the classroom.

2. We care deeply about social justice.

We care about individuals and groups who are underrepresented, less powerful or subject to discrimination domestically and abroad; we are committed to pursuit of law as a vehicle to advance the public good; we seek innovative opportunities to pursue social justice; we aspire to educate lawyers who are concerned about injustice and mindful of opportunities to address it.

3. We are committed to diversity.

We see diversity as a broad principle (that includes ethnic, racial, religious, age, gender identity, sexual orientation and physical ability among students, faculty and staff), as well as the encouraging of diverse opinions and thinking within the NUSL community. In keeping with our concern for social justice, we are particularly committed to diversity that will promote a just and equal society, and to the expansion of opportunities for underrepresented minorities, both within the School of Law and in the broader world.

4. We are committed to the highest ethical standards and practices in all aspects of our work.

We expect students, faculty and staff to understand the fundamental importance of ethical practice, to follow the critically important ethical tenets of the legal profession, to be mindful of the welfare of others and to engage in pro bono work.

5. **We value cooperation, collaboration and mutual respect in all parts of our community.**

We look for ways to nurture one another's unique strengths and individuality, as well as ways to teach students the value of effective collaboration that embraces difference.

6. **We are committed to rigor and excellence.**

We value intellectual rigor and inquiry, critical thinking and vigorous exchange and testing of ideas; academic rigor in our teaching and in service to the community; rigor and excellence for students; excellence in the delivery of services to our students and to our graduates as well as in all other administrative functions; and rigor and excellence in our pursuit of new knowledge through research and scholarship.

7. **We believe that legal practices both reflect and construct social order and can be a platform for advancing change in society.**

We try to teach students to understand the underlying consequences of the rules of law, and we also endeavor to teach them how to be change agents through their deployment of legal skills.

MISSION

At Northeastern University School of Law, our mission is to fuse theory and practice with ethical and social justice ideals so that students understand what it is that lawyers do, how they should do it, and the difference they can make in the lives of others. We strive to produce lawyers who see the practice of law as a way to realize their goals, to find meaning and purpose in life, and to be of service to others in ways that are intellectually satisfying and personally rewarding.

We are committed to engaging with the world outside the University, to harnessing our individual and institutional energy to address societal challenges, and to expanding knowledge that advances our ideals through research and scholarship.

GOALS

GOAL 1: Build the best model of experiential legal education in the United States

Since 1968, the School of Law has built a rich multi-part program of experiential learning: Cooperative Legal Education (introduced in 1968); clinical courses (1979); first-year community projects (1997); and a wide range of simulation courses and community service opportunities.

Today, we create an initial sense of the world of law through Legal Skills in Social Context, a unique first-year program which provides basic skills training and creates "law office" groups of first-year students that provide direct service on a defined social justice project to a nonprofit or governmental agency. Our cornerstone Cooperative Legal Education Program then requires every upper-level law student to complete four full-time 11-week work placements under the supervision of a practicing attorney. Half of the students in each graduating class also take one of our clinical courses that provide hands-on training under the tutelage of full-time faculty members during their academic quarters. These experiences with "live clients" through courses and co-ops are enhanced through both simulation courses in legal practice and through a range of experience-based service activities that are undertaken by students, faculty and staff.

This broad institutional commitment to experiential learning, to social justice and to the links between theory and practice is virtually unique in the legal academy. The 2007 Carnegie Report on Legal Education challenges every law school to integrate elements of theory and practice with the social-ethical dimension. We are at the forefront in pursuing these goals. We will build on our strong foundation, evaluating and strengthening the existing components of this rich program, through a three-part approach:

A. Investigate the pedagogy

We have a rich base of past experience and a strong interest in exploring the theoretical, cognitive and ethical aspects of our unique form of education. To pursue this inquiry, we will expand contacts with the legal academic community working on these issues, increase research resources through internal investment, work with Northeastern University experts and develop better information systems and data gathering. We will inform the world of what we learn through conferences and publications, while we bring our results home through continuous self-evaluation and improvement within our own program.

B. Integrate doctrinal and experiential learning

We will investigate, evaluate and adopt mechanisms that will lead to better integration of existing experiential learning opportunities (co-op, LSSC, simulation and problem-based instruction, clinics) as well as integration between these and doctrinal or theoretical learning in all legal fields. We will assist all students in articulating their goals and evaluating their progress. We will consider additional ways to achieve better integration through strategic alliances with other schools and institutions, while we also investigate the possibility of developing a “capstone” course or experience that melds theory and practice in the third year.

C. Enrich experiential opportunities

Experiential education provides our students with the opportunity to learn real skills, understand the role of law in society, confront the ethical challenges of the profession and learn to wield legal knowledge and skills to advance social good. Our students’ experiences are rich, but we can continue to improve, broaden and deepen these experiences. To that end, we will:

1. Build and refine co-op opportunities to meet our goal of providing a wide range of experiences in United States, international and transnational law, in all legal fields, in all regions of the country and the world. Alliances with other law schools, with governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and with private sector entities, will enrich this process. Continuous assessment of student experiences will enable us to constantly improve the quality of co-op experiences. We will, over time, provide a co-op experience in international or transnational law to every student interested in pursuing this path.
2. Define goals for clinical experiences, expand clinics as appropriate, including consideration of a transactional law clinical experience to balance litigation and research-oriented clinical courses.
3. Evaluate and continuously improve the possibilities for real world service in LSSC, clinics and elsewhere, so that students learn the connection between clients, law, social disparities and social change.

GOAL 2: Train the great and highly ethical lawyers of the 21st century

Northeastern's emphasis on experiential learning, collaboration and service nurtures and develops a special kind of lawyer. Our graduates are described as "trained for practice." We aspire to graduate lawyers who can hit the ground running and who then can soar; who are also self-reflective, highly ethical, humanist, courageous and who believe in giving back to their communities. Employers notice the difference.

We are committed to continuing to graduate lawyers grounded in our core values and well prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. As we move forward, our students and graduates must have a full set of tools to work in the ethically challenging, diverse and globalized world of law. In surveys, our students consistently report significant engagement with fellow students and faculty at rates above national law school averages. The same is true of their engagement with the challenges of diversity, the application of legal and professional ethics, and understanding the use of law in practice.

A. Build and support a diverse and talented student body

We seek to enroll students who are diverse, passionate, curious, energetic, tolerant, compassionate, smart and hardworking. Key variables for recruitment and admission include post-college experience and maturity as well as prior academic achievement and all types of diversity. We are committed to providing opportunities to pursue the law to members of minority groups that are underrepresented in our profession. Our success will be measured by our ability to consistently enroll classes that meet this broad range of goals. To achieve these goals, we must continue to seek the support of donors who will provide scholarship assistance to those students who would otherwise be unable to attend the School of Law.

Once recruited, we will nurture these students to become the great lawyers they are capable of being. In addition to a strong academic and experiential program, we will maintain and create administrative and faculty support structures that promote individual success, nurture collaboration, encourage experimentation and a willingness to take on new challenges, and engender cross-cultural understanding. We will bring the world into our community through speakers, programs and a diverse student group, including international students, and we will provide opportunities for students in interdisciplinary and culturally diverse settings outside of the walls of the law school.

B. Continuously improve the academic/experiential program to provide foundational and transformative experiences for all students

We will provide a program that provides an excellent foundation to every student in the theory, skills and ethics of being a great lawyer. We will educate every student in the ways in which law affects and is affected by social norms and aspirations, as we constantly evaluate the depth and breadth of academic and experiential opportunities to ensure that we meet the changing challenges of the changing world. Integration of experiential learning opportunities and expansion of these opportunities in the international realm will assist in creating an ever-more challenging learning environment. We will seek collaborations with other NU colleges to build faculty in key interdisciplinary areas, as well as to increase opportunities for students to develop improved non-English proficiency. Joint degree programs with NU and non-NU institutions and relationships with institutions in other countries will also help us offer depth and variety in our curriculum. We will explore possibilities for distance learning as we expand these institutional relationships. At the same time, we will continue to review and improve the system for evaluation of students so that we and they have strong metrics for assessing success.

C. Support success beyond law school

Our commitment to our students does not end with the awarding of a degree. The success of our program can be measured initially by immediate post-graduate placement and bar examination rates of passage, and long term by the effectiveness and satisfaction our graduates report in their professional lives. As we improve our ability to communicate with graduates and to track key data internally, we will be able to assess both immediate and long-term success, increase our understanding of the job markets we need to develop and enhance our relationships with both co-op and post-graduate employers.

In order to maximize our graduates' success, we need to also maximize the choices they have in pursuing post-graduate employment in all legal settings: from federal and state judicial clerkships, to law firms and corporations, to legal services and nonprofit organizations, to government offices. This requires a two-pronged approach. First, employer connections and job development are a top priority. Improving the quality of student opportunities on co-op and defining pathways through our law school experience that lead to success will help this effort. Second, we will continue to seek support for loan repayment assistance for graduates who choose lower paid public interest and public service employment. This assistance comes from federal and state legislation, but also from the generosity of our alumni/ae and friends.

Finally, we will nurture a vibrant and connected alumni/ae community: student post-graduate success will be enhanced by developing alumni/ae networks and supporting online communities to assist students and graduates in finding placements and developing networks of their own.

GOAL 3: Be a national leader in key areas in which law affects the public good

Northeastern University School of Law is a recognized leader in promoting the law as a force for social change. The law school reopened in 1968 with the goal of training lawyers who make a difference in society. This institutional goal is manifest in our numerous graduates who are in leadership positions at institutions that focus on public interest issues – from poverty to public health to immigration to civil and human rights and civil liberties. It is also demonstrated in our faculty scholarship and service. Over time, our work has expanded from local (for example, domestic violence and poverty issues in Boston) to fully global (for example, the work of our Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy and of the Public Health Advocacy Institute). As we have evolved, we have maintained a focus on the way in which law functions to address disparities within societies, looking to advance the civil, economic and social rights and status of people who face extra challenges, whether in our local urban community or around the world.

A. Train all Northeastern School of Law students in the role of law in society, social change, and social justice

The goal of the School of Law is to train every student in the role of law in society and the capacity of law to be transformative – to effect social change. Rather than focusing on a few students in a segregated public interest program, we aspire to train all students to be capable of doing transformative work. To that end, we have a broad commitment within our curriculum to this training: first-year LSSC projects; the public interest graduation requirement; and a broad range of clinics, courses and community-based service and learning projects. We have a robust and constantly growing group of public interest legal employers who provide an extraordinary range of co-op opportunities for upper-level students.

In our effort to expand and deepen the available options for students, we will:

1. Continue to expand the availability of high quality co-ops that focus on human rights, social justice, and public service, both within the United States and internationally.
2. Expand financial support for students who seek these co-ops in the form of both stipends and travel assistance.
3. Build and support service activities and links to the community through curricular and extracurricular activities that advance students' understanding of these issues.
4. Expose students to the vibrant work of legal activists through an active program of speakers and conferences, through visiting fellows and distinguished visitors, through an alumni/ae speakers' series, and through involvement in the continuing work of our institutes and programs.
5. Enhance the upper-level academic curriculum in domestic, international and transnational law to advance students' understanding of societal challenges and the role of law. In order to accomplish this, we will explore, build and sustain strategic alliances and interdisciplinary opportunities for students in a wide range of relevant areas, including public health, sustainable development, environmental policy and law, corporate governance and responsibility, and community economic development. We will also explore the possibility of building areas of concentration for JD students and developing certificate and graduate law programs that will attract and expand students' opportunities in these areas.

B. Establish Northeastern University School of Law as an intellectual and resource center in key area(s) of social justice/public interest/human rights law

The work of our faculty has already built a reputation for NUSL as a leading legal institution committed to using law as an instrument for advancing the public good. We have strong relationships with governmental and nongovernmental organizations as well as institutions of higher education in the United States and, increasingly, all over the world. As we move forward, we intend to leverage the dynamic, interdisciplinary work of faculty and graduates through conferences, speakers, forums and publications and to establish ourselves as a global leader in this arena. To that end, we will:

1. **Support innovative ideas and programs that have the capacity to play a leadership role in addressing societal issues.**

This will include providing administrative support and encouragement to the Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy; the Public Health Advocacy Institute; the Domestic Violence Institute; Civil Rights and Restorative Justice; and developing programs in sustainable international development, civil justice in China and other areas as they are spearheaded by the faculty. We will also continue to explore the creation of critical interdisciplinary initiatives with other academic units of the University, particularly in the areas of sustainability, health and security.

2. **Support research and publications in relevant areas by faculty and students.**

We will support the *Northeastern University Law Journal*; upper-level writing opportunities for students that expand opportunities for publication; faculty-run online SSRN journals; and we will provide support for faculty research, attendance at conferences, and cross-institution and interdisciplinary collaborations, as discussed under Goal 5 below.

- 3. Build and strengthen ties with governmental and nongovernmental organizations that strive to utilize law to advance the public good.**

To that end, we will explore and build on the existing relationships between faculty members or graduates and friends with these organizations. At home and overseas, we can build on faculty networks in the key areas of public interest or social justice law, strengthen these relationships, and consider formalizing liaisons with these organizations.

- 4. Bring together legal scholars with scholars in other disciplines, practitioners and activists to grapple with societal problems, building an interdisciplinary and multi-factorial conversation that will lead toward solutions to difficult societal challenges.**
- 5. Develop and enhance our web-based communication to develop online journals and resources, conferences and projects, thereby building NUSL's role and reputation as a clearing house on critical social justice issues.**

C. Address the special problems of urban communities facing economic, social and political challenges

The School of Law is committed to exploring the problems unique to urban settings and working on policy solutions to these problems. There is a focus in faculty scholarship on a host of disparity issues relevant to urban settings, and these concerns are also central to our curriculum. Many of the first-year LSSC projects and the urban-facing clinics of the School of Law – Domestic Violence, Poverty Law and Practice, Criminal Advocacy, Prisoners' Rights, Public Health – provide both service to the community and important learning experiences for our students.

Strong connections to community organizations and to nongovernmental and governmental co-op employers strengthen both the law school's capacity in urban problems and provide opportunities for students to understand the role of law in addressing societal problems. These connections already tie us tightly to area courts (the Domestic Violence Institute works closely with the Dorchester District Court, for example) and government attorneys offices; to legal services organizations including Greater Boston Legal Services, Mass. Correctional Legal Services, Shelter Legal Services and the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute; to advocacy organizations such as Massachusetts Advocates for Children, the New England Innocence Project, Mass. Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, Massachusetts CEDAW Project, the WAGE Project and the Victim Rights Law Center; to Boston area schools through the Marshall-Brennan Constitutional Literacy Program, the Pipeline Initiative and the Immigrant Workers Group (working with City Links in Cambridge public schools); and health care organizations including Boston Medical Center, the Boston Urban Asthma Coalition and Health Law Advocates. And this does not include many of the co-op employers with whom our students work during co-op rotations.

To further this goal, we will:

1. Continue to evaluate and expand co-op and service opportunities for students that will serve the local community and assist these communities in addressing problems arising from social, economic, health and other disparities.
2. Focus on providing service to underrepresented populations through our clinical courses, first-year social justice projects and faculty-led institutes.

3. Build on and expand interdisciplinary opportunities for teaching and research with the Bouvé College of Health Sciences in urban public health; with the College of Criminal Justice in race and justice; with the College of Business Administration in community economic development; and with the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs in social science and law.

GOAL 4: Pursue translational and interdisciplinary research that will impact societal challenges

Research and scholarship are central parts of faculty life and institutional commitment within the School of Law. Northeastern law faculty engage in a broad range of scholarly endeavors, ranging from highly theoretical research on law and social theory to very concrete projects designed to directly effect social change. There is a decided focus on impacting social disparities. Faculty scholarship is frequently interdisciplinary, integrating a broad range of scholarly disciplines (including history, philosophy and the social sciences). Faculty productivity is high. At the time of the last Self Study conducted for the American Bar Association reaccreditation in 2006, we found that, over the preceding three years, our small faculty had produced more than 160 articles, book chapters, reports and books.

The purpose of interdisciplinary research is to expand knowledge beyond narrowly tailored specialties and explore the intersections of knowledge at which public policy aspects of law are frequently best illuminated. The need to move research beyond the academy and address societal issues requires that emphasis be placed on translational possibilities. Thus, our research emphasizes applying legal theory to real world problems.

In order to expand and strengthen the interdisciplinary and translational nature of our research, we will:

A. Promote and strengthen institutional interdisciplinary connections

We will engage beyond the School of Law to forge strategic alliances with other faculty and departments within Northeastern University as well as with external institutions that further the possibilities of addressing societal needs through interdisciplinary endeavors.

Within Northeastern University, we will think creatively about opportunities that will expand the breadth and scope of our interdisciplinary and translational scholarship. These opportunities are particularly important with four other colleges: the College of Business Administration, with which we have identified four potential areas for collaboration (social entrepreneurship and community economic development; international trade and emerging markets; corporate governance, ethics and social responsibility; and intellectual property); the College of Arts and Sciences, with which we have an existing partnership in Law, Policy and Society; Bouvé College of Health Sciences, with which we hope to become partners in the development of public health and law collaborations; and the College of Criminal Justice, with which we have an existing partnership to address issues of race and justice. These collaborations offer important possibilities for interdisciplinary work. Future interdisciplinary collaborations will be tied, whenever possible, to the three research themes of the University: sustainability, health and security.

When possible, we will pursue interdisciplinary faculty hiring in key areas of collaboration in order to strengthen these alliances, advance integrative thinking across disciplines, maximize the potential for scholarly collaboration, and engage in research that will have societal impact.

Collaborations with other institutions will strengthen and expand these possibilities. Deepening our relationships with our outside partners (which currently include the Heller School for Social Policy and

Management at Brandeis University, Vermont Law School and Tufts University School of Medicine) will be an important focus. This may be achieved through creating more tangible links between law school faculty and faculty at our partner institutions. Further development of external alliances should be undertaken based on their potential to enhance existing program resources and fit with strategic goals. These opportunities should not be limited to academic institutions, and may include nonprofit, governmental and corporate partners.

In addition, pursuing possibilities for global collaborations will assist in broadening opportunities for groundbreaking interdisciplinary and translational research that crosses international borders. Faculty will drive this process as we build on the existing international relationships of individual faculty members to develop stronger institutional ties with an international network of scholars and institutions, including negotiated institutional relationships with institutions outside the United States.

B. Deploy the resources of the School of Law to encourage research and scholarship

Continued productivity requires that resources be deployed to foster and reward achievement. The law school promotes research with in-house stipends for faculty research. Faculty scholarship can also be enhanced by external funding. We will actively seek external funding and work with offices within the University to assist faculty in these endeavors. We will also seek assistance from donors to expand the available resources for faculty initiatives.

C. Build a national and international network of scholars

Our network of scholars is fostered through building external relationships and supporting faculty in their efforts to make connections with fellow scholars. Institutional relationships, as well as individual faculty collaborations, should be seen as pathways to enhance the stature of the law school, enrich the learning of our students and provide faculty with strong interdisciplinary and international collaborative relationships.

We will continue to enhance our relationships with other Northeastern University colleges as well as external academic partners through active faculty collaborations that may include joint teaching and colloquia as well as research. In addition, efforts will be made to build academic relationships with institutions outside of the United States. The Program on Human Rights and the Global Economy is a focal point for encouraging relationships with scholars internationally, and should continue to play such a role as it develops in the future. University joint interdisciplinary hiring, and additional law faculty with a focus on international law, will serve as a catalyst for further enhancing our scholarly network. Our two Social Science Research Network journals provide an opportunity for our faculty to distribute their scholarship to scholars around the world and provide a platform for scholars outside of Northeastern to distribute their work. These journals should be promoted as vehicles that enhance the academic life of the law school.

GOAL 5: Build the NUSL national and international community and reputation.

The School of Law has been described as a “hidden gem.” As we pursue our goals of excellence and leadership in all these areas—experiential education, public interest law, the training of great lawyers, and research that addresses societal challenges—we need to make use of our faculty, alumni/ae and the networks and scholars and practitioners who work with us to improve and expand our visibility and reputation.

A. Improve our communications and outreach

We will make ‘telling our story’ an institutional commitment, building a communications plan with consistent and cohesive messaging in all media to all audiences – from improving our website to refining print communications, and through reaching out to those who currently do not know us as well as to our closest employers, alumni/ae and legal peers. We will strengthen our focus on institutional advancement, engaging alumni/ae to get the word out about the unique aspects of NUSL through active engagement with our program through the admissions/recruitment process, employer development and participation in workshops and presentations. Faculty will be encouraged to participate in conferences; in particular, we will support faculty efforts to reach new and different audiences, and we will encourage the publication and presentation of faculty research.

B. Build a national and international community

Our community is strong, with loyal and interested alumni/ae, participating co-op employers which are increasingly geographically diverse, and faculty who are scholar-teacher-activists in a wide range of critical areas. We have reached out through all of these constituencies, but there are many opportunities that remain to be pursued.

ALUMNI/AE: Because of our emphasis on collaboration and teamwork, NUSL alumni/ae have unusually strong feelings of connection to their peers and their law school. Building relationships with the alumni/ae community will encourage alumni/ae engagement with the school, benefiting the school qualitatively through improving resources in mentoring, employment and expertise for our students, and supporting our development efforts. Specifically, we will develop a stronger alumni/ae network and mentoring program and work across departments to develop stronger alumni/ae ties for purposes of fundraising and student and post-graduate employment.

CO-OP: Our co-op program is built on deep links between the legal community and our school, particularly in the Boston area and in the public service world. We will continue to build on and expand the existing employer and lawyer network for student co-op employment in a way that strengthens these links and brings more employers into our community.

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: Stronger links between the law school and other schools, including those within Northeastern University, will be necessary to support expanded student opportunities and our increasingly global focus. As discussed elsewhere, we will work to develop strong ties with both domestic and international law schools, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and private sector groups, in order to build our network of scholars and increase co-op and employment opportunities for our students.

CONCLUSION

Achieving our institutional goals is a synergistic process. The strength of our law school lies in the collaborative process that characterizes every aspect of our program and community. As we move forward in achieving our goals, we will rely on the feedback and counsel of those on our campus, as well as our graduates who can share their experiences as they put their legal education into practice. Always, we keep in mind the transformative power of law — and the lawyers we train — to ease the burdens of inequity, to resolve conflict and to create social change.

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