

Howard University School of Law 2016 Strategic Plan

Howard University School of Law Mission

In 1935, Charles Hamilton Houston stated:

If [an African-American] law school is to make its full contribution to the social system, it must train its students and send them [into situations to apply pressure]. This does not necessarily mean a different course of instruction from that in other standard law schools. But it does mean a difference in emphasis with more concentration on the subjects having direct application to the economics, political and social problems of [African-Americans].

Our mission statement states:

Consistent with providing the professional leadership necessary to advocate and defend the rights of all, but particularly of African-Americans and other minorities, it is the Law School's mission to:

1. Educate and enable students to develop their highest capabilities and skills as lawyers;
2. Engage as an institution in the active pursuit of solutions to domestic and international legal, social, economic and political problems that are of particular concern to minority groups; and
3. Imbue its students with dedication to excellence and commitment to the solutions to those problems.

Howard University School of Law Vision

Our vision stems from our mission statement and goals. Our vision, in short, represents the implementation of our mission through our established goals. After establishing our mission statement, we have identified the following set of goals that will help us elaborate on a concise vision that flows with our mission statement. This elaboration forms the vision.

Holding fast to these commitments, this document represents a short-term plan to guide the School of Law through the next five years. While our mission has not changed, the environment for legal practice, legal employment, and legal education has shifted dramatically in the last decade. Accordingly, this plan charts our future course with these new opportunities and challenges in mind. In general, the plan proposes that the School of Law respond to changes in the legal market by emphasizing and leveraging the existing comparative strengths of the School of Law. This strategy will help us stay true to our mission as an institution of ideas and of scholarly inquiry; will help us carve out distinctive areas of comparative advantage over peer institutions; and leverage our limited resources.

HUSL Strategic Priorities

Priority 1	Priority 2	Priority 3	Priority 4	Priority 5	Priority 6
Academic Program	Student Experience	Faculty	Advanced Studies And Global Outreach	Administration	Alumni Relations and Development

Priority 1 – Academic Program

Goal #1 Increase Bar Exam Preparation and Bar Passage

- Increase our first-time bar passage rate.
- Reach a first-time bar passage rate at state average for each jurisdiction our graduates sit for the exam.
- Cull data regarding the topics in which students exhibit the greatest difficulty.
- Work with faculty and the Director of Academic Success and Bar Preparation on how to incorporate bar skill preparation across the curriculum, especially in areas in which students' exhibit struggle. Moreover, encourage the use of assessment mechanisms across the curriculum, including writing exercises.
- Consider making bar preparation courses mandatory for a section of the 2L and 3L class, including those who maintain below a set GPA.
- Consider making the academic skills course mandatory for a section of the 1L class, including those who scored below a set LSAT.

Goal #2 Enhance overall curriculum in the area of experiential learning.

- Increase the number of clinical and externship offerings.
- Consider broader curricular reform that inputs skills training components in all courses, including doctrinal courses.
- Consider more advanced skills offerings in the curriculum.
- Incorporate externship offerings more closely into the broader curriculum.
- Increase students' exposure to writing across the curriculum.

Goal #3 Rethink and reform the first year curriculum.

- Determine which first year courses should be semester or year-long, to eliminate Legal Methods as a stand-alone course, to expand the Legal Writing Program, to create a new first-year required course in statutory and regulatory interpretation, and to develop a course on HUSL and social justice.
- Evaluate our Legal Writing curriculum and suggest reform, if needed.
- Rethink and review HUSL's grade normalization policy.

Goal #4 Create or enhance specialized tracks or concentrated areas of focus.

- Use the Family Law Certificate Program as a model to increase the number of certificate or specialization programs, including, among others, entertainment and IP, environmental law, business law, ADR, civil rights.
- Develop a core set of graduate and joint degree programs, including a JD/MSW (social work), a Masters of Legal Studies program (focus on HR professionals), and a law and divinity program.

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Priority 2 – Student Experience

The strategic goals as they relate to students must walk a line between recognizing the challenges faced by students and how we can respond to them while acknowledging our limited resources. Thus, as a five-year plan, we should ensure that we outline achievable goals regarding student outcomes to minimize the possibility that we fail in achieving our goals due to resources or other issues outside of our control.

Goal #1 Provide Excellent Job Placement and Career Planning

- Increase networking and connectivity opportunities between employers and students, especially those students not in the top of our class.
- Increase students' exposure to judicial clerkship opportunities.
- Enhance our students' marketability in certain fields by touting our areas of concentration (e.g., a criminal law track; family law track; IP track, etc.).
- Create a comprehensive plan to engage alumni in the career advisement of students.
- Develop a Career Services blog as a way to better communicate with students.

Goal #2 Enhance the Overall Student Experience

- Recognize that the most important student experience is quality teaching.
- Evaluate student concerns, including the delivery of student services, mentoring and advising, technology, and the law school environment at the end of each academic year. Thus, a student would complete three surveys before graduation.
- Create and implement a plan to prioritize, address, and help solve these concerns, especially concerning main campus issues.
- Have a strong customer service centered focus.
- Identify and evaluate resources to address mental health issues.
- Improve our systems for assisting law school students who are veterans.

Goal #3 Increase Mentoring and Advising for all Students

- Divide the entering 1L class into smaller groups assigned to faculty members. Each faculty member could have 8-10 students depending on how many faculty members participate. Each faculty member will mentor that group of students for 3 years.
- Continue to build and improve the alumni mentorship program. Ensure that each student is assigned an alumni mentor in his or her first year.
- Assist the law students' peer mentoring program.

Goal #4 Improve Communication to Students

- Develop a unified events calendar and a blog/news aggregator to inform students about events, programs, and job opportunities.
- Have a weekly hashtag on social media, including Twitter.

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Priority 3 – Faculty**Goal #1 Support teaching excellence and innovation that prepares students to be effective and ethical lawyers.**

- Ensure that the law school values innovative and effective classroom teaching.
- Require training to ensure professors are aware of and equipped with the latest pedagogical methods and uses of technology.
- Encourage and support interdisciplinary and collaborative research and teaching, particularly in cooperation with other schools and centers at Howard University.
- Adopt a salary structure that encourages the hiring and retention of excellent scholars.
- Adopt full-faculty status and a salary structure that encourages the hiring and retention of excellent Legal Research, Reasoning, and Writing professors.
- Reduce the Legal Research, Reasoning, and Writing professors' teaching workload.
- Encourage cooperation among faculty who teach the same subject or in the same subject matter area.
- Develop a Teaching Excellence Committee.
- Hire faculty who have a commitment to teaching excellence.
- Facilitate teacher training.
- Review current teaching schedules to consider the commitment to teaching excellence.

Goal #2 Foster the production of high-quality scholarship that reaches a wide audience and promotes the public good.

- Cultivate and enhance a community of scholarship by having increased funding, research support, and faculty exchanges.
- Expand the law library's capacity to support faculty research.
- Establish a foundation to support faculty research and development.
- Provide each faculty member with at least one research assistant.
- Reduce the teaching workload to facilitate an increase in scholarship.
- Have a meaningful post-tenure review process.
- Recognize scholarship to include more than journal articles.

Goal #3 Foster a Vibrant and Engaged Community of Teachers, Scholars, and Social Justice Community Servants.

- Institute a formal mentoring program for junior faculty.
- Increase opportunities for faculty discussions, engagement, and service.
- Develop a formalized methodology for collaboration with Howard University's other schools and colleges, e.g., School of Business, Education, Engineering, Social Science, and Engineering.

Goal #4 Foster the Production of Social Justice Projects that Promote the Public Good.

- Sponsor and support conferences and other academic gatherings that offer opportunities for the exchange of ideas.
- Bring prominent scholars and policymakers to campus.
- Support active participation by faculty members at conferences and in leading influential national and international scholarly and professional organizations.

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Priority 4 – Advanced Studies and Global Outreach

The Howard University Mission statement refers to a commitment “to the discovery of solutions to human problems in the United States and throughout the world. With an abiding interest in both domestic and international affairs, the University is committed to continuing to produce leaders for America and the global community.” The Howard University Vision Priorities include continuing Howard University’s “traditions of leadership and service to underserved communities nationally and abroad, expanding its international footprint and role in world affairs and extending its public service role through expanded engagement with local, national and international communities.” Similarly, the Law School is committed to these same ideals, as outlined in the following goals.

Goal #1 Assess and Evaluate the LL.M. Program.

- Consider how to offer additional revenue-generating programs.
- Gather data to determine the best approach to improve the program.
- Investigate the options for LL.M. candidates who want to remain in the U.S.
- Consider developing an emphasis on concentrations.
- Provide internship opportunities for LL.M students.
- Have an exit interview for each LL.M. student.

Goal #2 Expand and Strengthen the LL.M. Program.

- Increase enrollment in our current LL.M. program.
- Improve and build the marketing of our LL.M. program, including enhancing contacts with embassies, building partnerships with foreign universities, and producing additional written marketing materials.
- Create a focus group of current LL.M. students to ask them how to improve the program.
- Consider the expansion of the LL.M. program to include a general and a specialized degree (where the specialized program is linked to our brand (i.e. global, civil and human rights or emerging economies).
- Invite an International Lawyer/Scholar of reputation in the field as a non-faculty visitor.
- Hire LL.M. program staff.
- Add two specialized courses for L.L.M. and J.S.D. candidates with internationally recognized (visiting) professors or lecturers.
- Consider a J.D. with Advanced Standing program for foreign lawyers.

Goal #3 Enhance our J.D. Students' Exposure to International Law.

- Offer additional courses in comparative or foreign law or increase students' opportunities to take such courses internationally.
- Offer distance-learning programs.
- Include international law themes into selected course content.
- Have a week of international service during Spring Break.
- Promote and increase participation in the South Africa program.
- Develop a student exchange program.
- Develop judicial clerkship program at the international courts.

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Priority 5 – Administration

Goal #1 Facilitate Training and Professional Growth for Staff.

- Promote a culture of professionalism and ensure awareness of the goals, mission, and objectives of the law school while fostering a continuous engagement in the operational and academic institutional goals among staff and administration.
- Respect staff for their work and commitment.
- Have strong customer service training.
- Increase the number of staff, when and as needed.
- Improve staff morale.
- Implement cross-functional training (learning the more detailed aspects of another position).
- Have more than one person in an office authorized to do activities for that office.
- Provide software training for staff and faculty.

Goal #2 Improve Operational Efficiencies and Accountability.

- Conduct a comprehensive operational review involving evaluation of the School of Law's organizational structure and a detailed examination of each function area to understand and document its mission, strengths, and opportunities for improvement.
- Value transparent processes and rigorous standards of accountability.
- Ensure that metrics and a commitment to transparency and accountability, are infused into every aspect of the law school's staffing, planning, programs, operations, and communications.
- Establish reporting dashboards and other methods that enable easy access to key information about administrative and business operations of the law school.
- Ensure the highest standards of transparency and access to information for reporting and publishing required metrics.
- Create scorecards to report on key activities to allow faculty and other stakeholders to monitor performance progress.
- Develop a long-term financial plan, to be reviewed annually, that accounts for, among other factors, labor trends, class size, and operating expenses.
- Establish a long-range planning committee.

Goal #3 Improve the Availability and Use of High Quality Information Technology.

- Redesign and update the School of Law website.
- Have one events calendar used by all constituencies (e.g. WordPress).
- Improve and enhance our classroom technology.
- Improve network capability.
- Upgrade the telephone system.
- Create a "rainy day fund" to repair and enhance the School of Law technology.

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Priority 6 – Alumni Relations and Development

Alumni engagement recognizes that the School of Law understands that our work begins with prospective students and continues when students become alumni. Law School Development advances the School of Law’s teaching, research, and public service by increasing the amount of financial support available.

Goal #1 Strengthen Alumni Engagement.

- Actively involve alumni participation, including in mentoring programs, career services programming, admissions recruiting, and special events.
- Create an alumni focus group to determine the best ways to engage alumni.
- Improve and update our alumni database.
- Develop CLE programs.
- Increase alumni teaching opportunities.

Goal #2 Increase Participation in Annual Giving.

- Set a goal to increase alumni annual giving to 10-12% each year.
- Create a goal of 100% law faculty contribution each year.
- Involve faculty in recruiting alumni for development/fundraising.
- Set class giving goals.
- Hire a dedicated law school alumni director.

Goal #3 Increase major gifts to support scholarships, faculty research, facilities, and the academic program.

- Create a law school 1869 capital campaign for 2019 (HUSL’s 150th anniversary).
- Continue to develop and enhance our major gifts strategy.
- Raise funds for at least one endowed faculty chair.
- Establish a signature scholarship program.
- Establish a civil rights center.
- Improve our communication with donors and prospective donors regarding contribution effects.