

Strategic Plan

2015-2020



Alexander Blewett III

SCHOOL OF LAW

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Mission and Values

The Alexander Blewett III School of Law at the University of Montana prepares students for the people-oriented practice of law by integrating theory and practice in a competency-based curriculum; serves as the academic legal center in Montana; and contributes to the development of national, state, and tribal law and legal institutions through teaching, scholarship, and service. In pursuit of this mission, the School of Law strives to:

- develop in its students the demonstrated ability to serve society as lawyers, to represent clients generally and in particular transactions, and to seek resolution of conflicts in appropriate forums;
- foster intellectual inquiry, knowledge of the law, fundamental professional skills, perspective on the role of law and lawyers in society, and the character and values necessary to serve society
- support scholarship and provide professional service to Montana, tribal governments and communities, the nation, and the international community;
- emphasize those areas of law significant to the Rocky Mountain West, including natural resources, environmental, and Indian law; and
- promote among students, faculty, and the profession a sense of community enriched by a diverse group of people devoted to freedom of inquiry and freedom of expression.

Strategic Plan for 2015-2020

As an academic legal community dedicated to a common mission, we adopt this Strategic Plan for the five-year term of 2015-2020. We convened faculty, students, staff and administration in the planning process, and we surveyed alumni and practitioners to draw on their perceptions of what makes the School of Law distinctive. We developed and will implement this plan in consultation with partners and recognition of our shared goals, including pre-existing action plans like the Diversity Action Plan and the Strategic Plan for the Program on Natural Resources and Environmental Law. We also recognize alignments between the goals of our plan and those of the University of Montana's plan UM 2020: Building a University for the Global Century. The resulting Strategic Plan reflects these shared goals while continuing to build upon and balance the institutional strengths recognized in our mission. In our dynamic environment, we commit to continuously assessing our progress on action items, as well as the direction of the Strategic Plan itself, throughout the plan term.

Commitment to Diversity

The Blewett School of Law shall promote and support a learning environment that encourages, enriches and respects the multidimensional aspects of diversity. Recognizing that the quality of legal education is enhanced by a diverse educational community, the School of Law is committed to recruiting and retaining students, faculty, staff and administrators capable of creating a safe, vibrant, diverse, engaging and intellectually stimulating learning environment. This educational environment reinforces and models the principle that diversity is an integral part of learning and the competent, people-oriented practice of law. Diversity includes, but is not limited to, differences based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation or background, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, economic class or status, points of view, or disabilities.

Goal 1 (Students):

Enroll, educate, and graduate diverse students with the intellectual and emotional capability to succeed at the School of Law and beyond.

This goal advances the centerpiece of the School of Law's Mission, to "prepar[e] students for the people-oriented practice of law by integrating theory and practice in a competency-based curriculum. This goal recognizes that the students are the reason we are here. Through this goal, the School of Law also furthers the University of Montana's Strategic Issue of Partnering for Student Success.

1.1 Strengthen recruitment and retention of capable and diverse students.

- 1.1.1 Increase scholarship resources to compete more effectively with peers in recruiting and retaining capable and diverse students.
Resources: Director of Development
Timeline: AY2015-2020
- 1.1.2 Build pipelines to recruit capable and diverse students to the School of Law based on subject matter areas and location, including the Montana University System and tribal and regional colleges.
Resources: Director of Admissions
Timeline: AY2015-2017
- 1.1.3 Support our students' academic success by expanding academic coaching to extend from admission through the bar exam.
Resources: Student Affairs Committee
Timeline: AY2015-2017

1.2 Emphasize and strengthen our students' connection with place and community.

- 1.2.1 Reserve time in the academic calendar to provide our students innovative experiences connecting them with place and community.
Resources: Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
Timeline: AY2017-2018
- 1.2.2 Provide resources to support travel for outdoor-based and community-based student experiences.
Resources: Director of Development Office
Timeline: AY2018-2019
- 1.2.3 Develop opportunities for our students to provide access to justice for underserved places and communities.
Resources: Associate Dean for Academic Affairs
Timeline: AY2015-2017

1.3 Connect our students to current and emerging career opportunities.

- 1.3.1 Ensure every student, every year, engages with an academic advisor to prepare our students to enter the legal profession.
Resources: Student Affairs Committee
Timeline: AY2015-2017
- 1.3.2 Expand Career Services staff to develop, identify, and share current and emerging job opportunities for our students and graduates.
Resources: Director of Career Services
Timeline: AY2015
- 1.3.3 Gather feedback from our graduating students about their experiences at the School of Law and their career plans.
Resources: Director of Career Services
Timeline: AY2016

METRICS: *How we measure our progress toward enrolling, educating, and graduating diverse students with the intellectual and emotional capability to succeed at the School of Law and beyond.*

- What percentage of our 3L class is satisfied or very satisfied with our student services?
- What percentage of our graduates who take a bar exam pass it?
- What percentage of our graduates find full-time, long-term professional jobs?
- What are the 25th, 50th, and 75th percentile LSAT scores of our entering class?
- How many resident, nonresident, Native American, and other minority candidates apply for admission?
- How many recruiting trips are faculty, staff, and students taking?
- How many scholarships of half-tuition or more do we offer our students, and how many are targeted toward student diversity?
- What is the average indebtedness of our graduates?

Goal 2 (Curriculum):

Deliver an exceptional and relevant legal education that prepares students for the modern workplace.

This Goal advances the School of Law's Mission to "prepar[e] students for the people-oriented practice of law by integrating theory and practice in a competency-based curriculum." Our curriculum's relevance to practice has long made the School of Law exceptional. However, we recognize that the legal profession is not static. To deliver an exceptional and relevant legal education, we need to continually explore what relevant means in today's practice and assess whether and how we deliver an exceptional and relevant legal education. Through this Goal, the School of Law also furthers the University of Montana's Strategic Issues of Education for the Global Century and a Dynamic Learning Environment.

2.1 Ensure our graduates possess a practical understanding of substantive and procedural law, including areas of law significant to the Rocky Mountain West.

- 2.1.1 Identify and map learning outcomes for a practical understanding of substantive and procedural law, including areas of law significant to the Rocky Mountain West.
Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2015-2016
- 2.1.2 Integrate and sequence substantive and procedural law in the required and elective curriculum to most effectively achieve our legal understanding learning outcomes.
Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2016-2017
- 2.1.3 Assess and analyze students' development of a practical understanding of substantive and procedural law according to our legal understanding learning outcomes.
Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2017-2018
- 2.1.4 Reinvigorate our innovative and comprehensive Indian Law Program.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2016-2017
- 2.1.5 Develop opportunities within the Baucus Institute and Blewett programs to provide legal leadership advancing our mission in areas of law significant to the Rocky Mountain West.
Resources: Dean & Acting Director of Baucus Institute
Timeline: AY2017-2018

2.2 Ensure our graduates are proficient in fundamental lawyering skills.

- 2.2.1 Identify and map the learning outcomes for proficiency in fundamental lawyering skills.
Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2015-2016
- 2.2.2 Study experiential learning methods, including clinical and field placement, and where needed, adapt our current methods to ensure our graduates are proficient in fundamental lawyering skills.

Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2016-2017

2.2.3 Integrate and sequence fundamental lawyering skills in the required and elective curriculum to most effectively achieve our lawyering skills learning outcomes.

Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2017-2018

2.2.4 Assess and analyze students' development of fundamental lawyering skills according to our lawyering skills learning outcomes.

Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2018-2019

2.3 Ensure our graduates recognize the character, values, and professionalism necessary to serve society as lawyers.

2.3.1 Identify and map learning outcomes recognizing the character, values, and professionalism necessary to serve society as lawyers, emphasizing access to justice for underserved places and communities.

Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2015-2016

2.3.2 Integrate and sequence the professional values in the required and elective curriculum to most effectively achieve our professional values learning outcomes.

Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2017-2018

2.3.3 Assess and analyze students' development of professional values according to our professional values legal learning outcomes.

Resources: Curriculum Committee
Timeline: AY2018-2019

METRICS: How we measure our progress toward delivering an exceptional and relevant legal education that prepares students for the modern workplace.

- What percentage of our courses integrate our identified learning outcomes for legal knowledge, skills, and values?
- What percentage of our courses sequence our learning outcomes effectively across the curriculum?
- What percentage of our courses are assessed according to our learning outcomes, and how effectively have we achieved them?
- What percentage of our students recognize substantial growth in legal knowledge, skills, and values?
- How many of our students' likely career paths have we mapped, sequenced, and assessed through our curriculum?
- What percentage of our courses apply substantial experiential methods?

Goal 3 (Faculty & Staff):

Maximize and leverage faculty and staff strengths to develop our teaching, scholarship, and service.

This Goal advances the School of Law's Mission to "serve[] as the academic legal center in Montana" and "contribut[e] to the development of national, state, and tribal law and legal institutions through teaching, scholarship, and service." Through this Goal, the School of Law also furthers the University of Montana's Strategic Issues of Partnering for Student Success and Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World.

3.1 Develop tools and feedback to enhance full-time and adjunct faculty members' teaching skills.

- 3.1.1 Identify the elements of excellent teaching for all the types of courses we offer.
Resources: Faculty Development Committee
Timeline: AY2016
- 3.1.2 Develop resources both within the School of Law and across campus to support excellent law teaching, including opportunities for mentoring and collaborating.
Resources: Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
Timeline: AY2016-AY2017
- 3.1.3 Integrate the identified elements into an effective teaching evaluation process.
Resources: Faculty Development Committee
Timeline: AY2017-AY2018

3.2 Promote and build faculty members' areas of subject matter expertise.

- 3.2.1 Ensure that our faculty workload policy values the time necessary to develop subject matter expertise through scholarship and service.
Resources: Faculty Development Committee
Timeline: AY2015
- 3.2.2 Create a shared pool of trained research assistants to support scholarship.
Resources: Director of Law Library
Timeline: AY2016
- 3.2.3 Provide resources and remove barriers for faculty to maintain and strengthen their connection to practice.
Resources: Faculty Development Committee
Timeline: AY2016

3.3 Promote and support staff members' professional development.

- 3.3.1 Identify professional development training courses and programs that will enhance the skills of staff.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2015
- 3.3.2 Provide release time and resources for staff to attend regional and national professional development courses, conferences, and job specific training events.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2016
- 3.3.3 Consider for regular nomination staff members for any University awards or recognition where warranted.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2015-2020
- 3.3.4 Support and assist in the development of career ladders for staff members seeking advancement within the UM system.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2016-2017

METRICS: *How we measure our progress toward maximizing and leveraging faculty and staff strengths to develop our teaching, scholarship, and service.*

- What percentage of student evaluations rate instruction as effective or highly effective?
- How many annual publications, citations, and downloads does faculty scholarship produce?
- What percentage of faculty are connected to practice experiences through professional service?
- What percentage of faculty participate in national conferences annually?
- What percent of staff participate in professional development training annually?

**Goal 4 (Community Engagement):
Extend and deepen the School of Law's engagement with our communities.**

This Goal advances community engagement in pursuit of the School of Law's Mission, both serving the local and larger communities around us, and drawing on these communities to benefit our students and scholarship. Through this Goal, the School of Law also furthers the University of Montana's Strategic Issue of Discovery and Creativity to Serve Montana and the World, a Dynamic Learning Environment, and the Planning-Assessment Continuum.

4.1 Execute an integrated outreach plan across media platforms to tell the School's story.

- 4.1.1 Refine our story.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2015
- 4.1.2 Identify how, where, and to whom we tell our story.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2015
- 4.1.3 Coordinate how the administration, faculty, staff, and students tell our story across media platforms.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2015
- 4.1.4 Professionally assess how effectively we tell our story.
Resources: Strategic Planning Committee
Timeline: AY2016, AY 2018, AY 2020

4.2 Engage schools, governments, businesses, and organizations inside the School of Law.

- 4.2.1 Catalog experts at schools, government agencies, businesses, and organizations to engage in our teaching, scholarship, and service, as well as admissions, curriculum, placement, development, and outreach.
Resources: Dean
Timeline: AY2015
- 4.2.2 Share and coordinate opportunities to engage the cataloged experts in our teaching, scholarship, and service inside the School of Law.
Resources: Associate Dean of Academic Affairs
Timeline: FY 2016
- 4.2.3 Develop resources to support these opportunities for engagement with external experts inside the School of Law.
Resources: Director of Development
Timeline: AY2016

4.3 Engage with schools, governments, businesses, and organizations outside the School of Law.

4.3.1 Share and coordinate opportunities to engage the experts cataloged in 4.2.1 outside the School of Law.

Resources: Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

Timeline: AY2016

4.3.2 Develop resources to support these opportunities for engagement with external experts outside the School of Law.

Resources: Director of Development

Timeline: AY2016

4.3.3 Engage every faculty member every other year in presenting at least one School of Law CLE across Montana to showcase our various areas of expertise.

Resources: Dean

Timeline: AY2015-2020

METRICS: *How we measure our progress toward maximizing and leveraging faculty and staff strengths to develop our teaching, scholarship, and service.*

- How effective is the School of Law in accomplishing its mission, according to the Board of Visitors and Clinical Board of Visitors?
- How many hours of community service and pro bono legal services are provided by the faculty, staff, and students?
- How many community events does the School of Law and its students host annually?
- How many CLE and other public presentations does the faculty make annually?
- How many media and social media hits and followers does the School of Law receive?