

## **STRATEGIC PLAN FOR ALBANY LAW SCHOOL**

### **I. Our Mission:**

Albany Law School educates and empowers tomorrow's leaders, engaged professionals, committed public servants, inspiring community change-agents, and creative problem solvers. We connect the classroom to the profession, government, and the community through experienced-based learning, engaged scholarship, and a robust network of alumni and supporters. Our students develop a sophisticated understanding of legal policy and doctrine, a broad range of professional competencies, and a deep commitment to justice and ethical values.

### **II. Our Vision:**

Albany Law School will be recognized as a student-centered community of learning that provides a rigorous, innovative program of legal and graduate education that responds adeptly to changing needs and opportunities. Learning at Albany Law School is a joint endeavor between students and faculty members, supported by staff, administrators, alumni, and the Board of Trustees. The law school offers Opportunity Pathways that attract students with a diverse range of interests and backgrounds and prepares graduates for extraordinary careers. Led by faculty scholars and teachers committed to advancing law and justice, our students will develop skills, knowledge and professional values to contribute to and lead in a global society. Our graduates will join a flourishing alumni community dedicated to the success of the law school, its students, and its mission.

### **III. Our Goals:**

Albany Law School will pursue its mission and seek to achieve its vision by committing to the following goals:

- [1] We will attract and retain a talented and diverse pool of students who are engaged learners prepared to succeed in today's complex and changing world.
- [2] We will provide a dynamic educational program that educates skilled, ethical, and visionary lawyers, professionals and leaders in their chosen fields.
- [3] We will cultivate and nurture a community of engaged teachers, productive scholars, exceptional practitioners, government leaders, and private and public innovators working together to provide a dynamic educational environment.
- [4] We will provide Opportunity Pathways to promote professional development and career success for all our students.
- [5] We will ensure that our financial, human, technological, and physical resources support our strategic objectives and competitiveness.

[6] We will strengthen and incentivize an institutional culture of professionalism, collegiality, intellectual curiosity, productivity, intercultural effectiveness, transparency, efficiency, collaboration, continuous improvement, and responsibility for outcomes.

#### **IV. The Plan: Opportunity Pathways**

Opportunity Pathways are a defining feature of our plan for Albany Law School. Drawing on our location, independence, and community, we will create Opportunity Pathways to inspire, support, and provide direction to our students as they explore and pursue substantive areas identified through market research as ripe with career possibilities. These Pathways will initially include business, tax and financial markets; civil and criminal advocacy; government, policy and public service; health; innovation and entrepreneurship, and public interest. Opportunity Pathways will shape recruitment strategies, inform our educational and mentorship programs, help us identify strategic partnerships, and culminate in professional pathways that connect students with employers and lifelong mentors.

Professional development of students will be at the core of each Opportunity Pathway. Having recruited students with backgrounds well-suited to success on the Pathways, the Law School will provide students a rich curriculum, clinical and field placement opportunities, faculty advisors, alumni mentors, peer affinity groups, and professional development training consistent with each Opportunity Pathway. Our Clinic and Justice Center, Government Law Center, Institute for Financial Market Regulation, Center for Excellence in Law Teaching, and our rich network of Alumni and supporters all will contribute to the professional development and opportunities afforded every Albany Law School student. Each Pathway will include a variety of substantive legal tracks, or concentrations, which will be available to all students. For example, a student might take courses in international law while pursuing any of the Pathways.

One measure of a law school's success is its ability to place students in their chosen fields upon graduation. Albany Law School is committed to using its Opportunity Pathways to optimize our graduates' competitive advantage and preparation to obtain employment in their chosen fields. We will work with every student to maximize opportunity for desirable career placement and professional and personal success.

The Pathways identified in this plan are not fixed or static. The Pathways will be assessed annually, and modified or replaced as needed, to ensure they are providing our students with the most rigorous and effective academic program, and are placing our graduates in the best position to succeed after law school in light of the current realities of the profession and the job market.

**Goal 1:** *We will attract and retain a talented and diverse pool of students who are engaged learners prepared to succeed in a changing world that is each day more complex and globally-focused.*

Albany Law School will approach its recruitment strategies in innovative ways to leverage our core strengths: our independence, our location, and our community. Using intensive market research to pursue strategic recruitment, we will expand the pool of applicants by strengthening our relationship with traditional applicant pools and developing relationships with new networks and communities both domestically and abroad. In addition, we will explore pipeline opportunities that reinforce Opportunity Pathways. Toward the end of attracting a strong and diverse student body, we will place a renewed emphasis on matriculating students who have already achieved successes, or who possess traits that correlate with success, including resilience, perseverance, confidence, responsibility and creativity, while also continuing to seek improvements in academic metrics. Once students are in the building, we will ensure they have a meaningful, cost-effective, and rewarding educational experience, which provides rich opportunities beyond the classroom.

#### **A. Strategic Initiatives: Attracting Students**

- Increase the number, quality, and diversity of applicants; seek students who demonstrate resilience, perseverance, creativity, confidence, responsibility, and a willingness to engage in the exciting and challenging task of becoming an excellent lawyer or pursuing excellence in law studies.
- Continue to seek improvements in academic metrics.
- Use Opportunity Pathways to develop new recruitment networks and strategies.
- Provide responsive and quality outreach and support to prospective/admitted students, their families, and various stakeholders.
- Use alumni community to personalize and broaden admissions pipelines and enhance relationship building throughout the enrollment management process.

#### **B. Strategic Initiatives: Retaining Students**

- Provide a rich array of student learning activities beyond the classroom.
- Encourage students to develop close relationships with administrators, faculty, staff members, and fellow students.
- Ensure a reasonable cost of education for all students at Albany Law School

**Goal 2:** *We will provide a dynamic educational program that educates skilled, ethical, and visionary lawyers, professionals, and leaders.*

The educational program at Albany Law has long excelled in preparing students to practice law. Structural changes in the legal market challenge us to reassess our program of legal education to ensure we continue to prepare our students for professional success on a broader scale. Our strong programs, talented faculty, and longstanding commitment to preparing students, provide a solid foundation on which to build a comprehensive competency-based educational program. Our new program of Opportunity Pathways supports and grows out of this tradition. Opportunity Pathways will ensure students achieve the knowledge and skills necessary for excellence in a fast-changing legal and professional markets by organizing student learning so that it is incremental, coordinated and comprehensive, features innovative capstone experiences, provides global context, and offers opportunities for all students to put classroom learning to work for real clients with real-world legal problems under the supervision of experienced faculty. Having attained and demonstrated the competencies necessary for effective professional practice, Albany Law graduates will enter the marketplace prepared to succeed and lead in their chosen careers.

A competency-based curriculum ensures students achieve the core knowledge and transferable skills necessary to succeed in a fast changing legal and graduate environment.

#### **A. Strategic Initiatives: Curriculum**

- Define and develop Opportunity Pathways throughout the educational program that are responsive to developments in the legal profession, the economy, and the global community, and to evolving student interests.
- Identify foundational competencies and implement a competency-based curriculum.
- Prioritize the instruction of effective writing across the curriculum and throughout the institution.
- Leverage strategic partnerships with regional, national and international institutions and community partners to advance Opportunity Pathways.
- Ensure experiential and clinical offerings advance Opportunity Pathways.

#### **B. Strategic Initiative: Bar Passage**

- Exceed median bar passage rate relative to our peer schools.

#### **C. Strategic Initiatives: Centers and Institutes**

- Align Centers and Institutes with competency-based curriculum, educational goals, and Opportunity Pathways.

- Ensure teaching, service, and scholarship of each Center and Institute advances Law School's mission.
- Encourage joint initiatives (or, perhaps, synergies) between Centers and Institutes and the academic program through capstone courses, policy reform projects, and networking opportunities for students.

#### **D. Strategic Initiative: Website**

- Align website with competency-based curriculum, educational goals, admission strategies and Opportunity Pathways.

**Goal 3:** *We will cultivate and nurture a community of engaged teachers, productive scholars, exceptional practitioners, government leaders, and private and public innovators working together to provide a dynamic educational environment.*

Given its relative size, the rich, varied experiences and skills of its faculty, and its deep ties to the legal, business, government, and nonprofit communities of the Capital Region and beyond, Albany Law School cultivates a community of commitment, innovation and excellence that permeates the educational program and intellectual life of the institution. Such a community encourages creativity inside and outside the classroom and in the production of meaningful scholarship. Being responsive to the needs of the broader community and our students encourages a seamless connection between the educational program and the practicing legal, business, government, and nonprofit communities.

As teachers, Albany Law School's faculty members bring vast expertise, experience and creativity to learning. Students are strongly encouraged to develop professional skills and knowledge in their field of study and to learn what it means to be engaged professionals, committed public servants, inspiring community change-agents, and creative problem solvers. Albany Law School also strives to instill in its students an entrepreneurial spirit. Whether they pursue private practice, business, advocacy, or public service, students will learn what it means to explore and expand opportunities, be entrepreneurial, and have the confidence to succeed and lead.

As scholars, Albany Law School faculty members demonstrate a level of excellence in scholarship that translates into an engaged body of work that makes an impact on our students and external audiences. Albany Law School recognizes the broad value of faculty scholarship, including its contribution to the intellectual life of the institution, the quality of the faculty's teaching and mentoring, the reputation of the school, and legal and policy reform efforts on local, state, national and international levels.

Albany Law School embraces the broader community in all sectors, connecting our students to practitioners in their chosen fields of study and career paths, and responding to input from the bench, practicing bar, and professional communities to ensure that our students are ready to practice upon graduation.

### **A. Strategic Initiatives:**

- Ensure engaged and excellent teaching is nurtured, incentivized and recognized.
- Encourage, nurture and support faculty engagement in scholarship that serves the profession, inspires students, influences policy dialogue and development, and energizes the intellectual life of the institution.
- Ensure all faculty provide meaningful service to the school, our students, and their professions.
- Facilitate quality communication and the exchange of information among Albany Law School's stakeholders: faculty, students, staff, trustees, alumni and other supporters.

**Goal 4:** *We will provide Opportunity Pathways to promote professional development and career success for all our students.*

Albany Law School is committed to the personal and professional advancement of our students and alumni, and this commitment begins at the time our students enroll in our academic programs. Through our Opportunity Pathways, we will ensure that our graduates are competitive and prepared to obtain employment in their chosen fields upon graduation. Through annual assessment of the Pathways, we will ensure that the initial Pathways remain relevant and effective and that new opportunities are added as appropriate.

### **A. Strategic Initiatives: Pathways to Careers**

- Implement a holistic professional development curriculum that begins during new student orientation and continues throughout our students' years at the law school.
- Develop a career continuum infused with professional skills training, experiential learning, clinical learning, and well-defined career pathways that lead to placement for our students.
- Engage with strategic partners to develop enriching internship opportunities and make important career connections for students upon graduation.
- Foster a culture in which Albany Law School students embrace responsibility for their career development.
- Assess annually the Pathways' effectiveness to allow for dynamic responses to evolving legal career opportunities.

**Goal 5:** *We will ensure that our financial, human, technological, and physical resources support our strategic objectives and competitiveness.*

Albany Law School is committed to using its resources to deliver the best legal and law-related graduate education possible. We boast an impressive educational environment seated in the state's capital, alumni and community members who support the school and participate in programs and initiatives at unprecedented levels, and a community of scholars, teachers, and staff who dedicate their careers to serving our students and the legal profession. The current challenge in law school enrollments requires us to think differently about how best to deploy our human, capital, financial and other resources. As we move forward, we must allocate resources in a strategic manner to ensure success of the strategic plan's goals and objectives.

In rethinking how we use our resources, we are guided by several principles. First, Albany Law School is committed to the effective management of existing resources to maintain the quality of the educational program. Second, we are committed to seeking additional financial resources so that we can enhance our educational program, invest in our students, prepare students for the increasingly global nature of 21st century law practice, expanded need for law-trained professionals, and otherwise achieve our strategic goals. Third, our commitment to a student-centered institution requires that we pay particular attention to the learning and teaching environment, including opportunities to use innovative technology to enhance student learning, stakeholder engagement, communications, efficiency of operation, and maximization of human resources.

#### **A. Strategic Initiative: Financial Resources**

- Initiate a Capital Campaign focused on building a robust scholarship endowment to attract a highly qualified and diverse student body, support faculty and the academic program, address student debt concerns, and provide resources to law school initiatives that enhance the Opportunity Pathways
- Reduce tuition dependence by exploring alternative revenue opportunities; explore non-degree programs and initiatives such as on-line learning, certificate and CLE programs; and expanded part-time programming.

#### **B. Strategic Initiative: Human Resources**

- Assign resources to meet institutional needs, including use of experts to improve information technology infrastructure.
- Recruit and retain faculty to ensure continued excellence of the academic program and success of Opportunity Pathways.
- Provide meaningful training and professional development for faculty and staff.

### **C. Strategic Initiative: Capital Resources/ Physical Space**

- Optimize the learning environment to reinforce engaged learning, the splendor and functionality of the campus, and our investment in technology  
Assess needs of the physical space to facilitate innovate educational and revenue generating opportunities.
- Restructure classrooms to facilitate team and skills-based learning
- Leverage extra space to advance the Law School's vision and develop strategic partnerships

### **D. Strategic Initiative: Technology Resources**

- Explore and engage consultants, collaborators, and educational experts to ensure technology infrastructure facilitates institutional mission, including innovation in educational programming.
- Conduct GAP Analysis.
- Explore opportunities to develop an On-Line Learning Center aligned with one or more Opportunity Pathways, engage students and alums, and create new distribution channels/markets.
- Invest in adequate technological resources to achieve vision.
- Launch newly configured website/portal that anticipates and meets student, faculty, and staff needs.

### **E. Strategic Initiative: Library Resources**

- Maintain, develop, and focus the human and collection resources of the Schaffer Law Library in support of foundational competencies, curriculum restructuring, faculty research and all teaching and learning activities.

### **F. Strategic Initiative: Marketing & Communications Resources**

- Redesign the website and marketing pieces to reflect Albany Law School's brand in a manner consistent with the strategic plan
- Develop and implement a social media plan that engages faculty and students to enhance Albany Law School's brand and complements recruitment strategies
- Facilitate media training session with faculty members to build issue experts and broaden outreach with local and national media



- Enhance communication between faculty and marketing and communications staff to ensure that staff are aware of (and can market) faculty expertise

**Goal 6:** *We will strengthen and incentivize an institutional culture of professionalism, collegiality, intellectual curiosity, productivity, intercultural effectiveness, transparency, efficiency, collaboration, continuous improvement, academic freedom, and responsibility for outcomes.*

Much of our budget is invested in resourcing faculty and staff whose responsibilities include providing an excellent legal and law-related graduate education to the next generation of engaged professionals, committed public servants, inspiring community change agents, creative problem solvers, legal professionals, and leaders. To that end, the Law School is committed to fostering a culture that embraces professionalism, productivity, transparency, efficiency, collaboration, academic freedom, and continuous improvement as key tenets for success. Together these values will contribute to a culture that encourages and supports robust advocacy and scholarship, and the integration of scholarship and teaching throughout the curriculum.

In addition to the cultural attributes already included, we acknowledge that for this strategic plan to be successful in meeting its goals, all constituencies have specific responsibilities. To ensure the success of the endeavor, we agree to hold one another accountable for those areas of the plan for which each constituency has responsibility.

**Strategic Initiatives:**

- Support and nurture a professional, productive, transparent, collaborative, multiculturally aware, collegial and continuously self-reflective culture throughout the institution.
- Invest in professional development of all faculty, administrators, and staff.
- Provide feedback and evaluation for all faculty.
- Provide feedback and evaluation for all administrators, and staff.