



# Law School Strategic Framework - Draft 2

## Introduction

In October 2023, Wake Forest Law began its strategic framework process by convening a Strategic Framework Committee comprising six faculty members and six staff members, and co-chaired by Professor Sarah Morath and Executive Director of Marketing & Communications Tara Ebrahimi. From October to December 2023, the Committee held six listening sessions and, through in-person, Zoom, and survey communications, collected more than 300 pieces of discrete feedback from approximately 100 students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Thirty-two themes emerged from that feedback, and those themes informed the nine strategic aims, and their corresponding action items, outlined below.

## Thematic Goal 1: Community of Learning

**We will be a diverse community of lifelong learners who encourage all to develop their full potential and make meaningful contributions to our complex world.**

## Strategic Aims

### Aim 1.1

**Attract, create, and promote a diverse and inclusive student body that is supported throughout their law school careers.**

### Existing Initiatives:

1. The Law School faculty, staff, and administration are committed to the success of students. At Wake Forest Law, students find attentive and accessible professors who use both traditional forms of teaching and [innovative instructional techniques](#). The school's curriculum is diverse, with students taking both doctrinal and skill-based courses. Additionally, a full-time academic success professional provides instruction for students needing extra support. [Small class sizes](#) allow students to get to know their professors well. The Law School's impressive bar passage rates (the Class of 2023 had a 92.31% first-time bar passage rate) and employment statistics (the Class of 2022 had a 96.0% employment rate) reflect the support students receive throughout their time at the Law School.
2. Wake Forest Law fosters diverse perspectives and an inclusive community. The Law School supports several student affinity groups including the Black Law Student Association (BLSA), Latinx Law Students Association, Public Interest Law Organization, Veterans Advocacy Legal Organization, and OUTLaw, the organization for LGBTQIA+ students and alumni at Wake Forest Law. These student groups organize networking, social, and learning events throughout the semester. For

example, the Federalist Society and the American Constitution Society hosted a [Supreme Court Preview](#) in Fall 2023. BLSA organized a panel titled, [Young, Gifted, and Black](#) as a way for students to connect with and hear from recent graduates. The Law School also works closely with the Office of Diversity & Inclusion to foster a sense of belonging among students.

**Action Steps:**

1. Create a broader range of online courses to enable upper-level students geographic flexibility and to help meet demands of future students.
2. Host a variety of workshops and trainings, collaborating with non-law experts to develop skills for the courtroom, boardroom, and beyond (e.g., communication and presentation skills, time management and self-regulation, media relations, AI applications, and leadership development).
3. Offer a “0L” (Law School 101) course for incoming students who identify as needing additional support during the summer before law school begins.
4. Partner with the School for Professional Studies to create joint degree programs and additional learning opportunities in Charlotte and elsewhere.
5. Enhance the existing Student Ambassador program to facilitate 1L integration into Wake Forest Law by providing mentorship and connection with upper level students.

**Aim 1.2**

**Develop robust experiential and extracurricular offerings for students during law school.**

**Existing Initiatives:**

1. The Law School currently offers eight clinics (appellate advocacy, environmental law and policy, intellectual property, medical-legal partnership, community lawyering, innocence and justice, trade and development, and veterans). Several were started within the last four years. In 2021, for example, the Intellectual Property Law Clinic was launched. In 2022, the IP Clinic became part of the [United States Patent and Trademark Office Law School Clinic Certification Program](#), and is now one of 59 participating law schools where students draft and file trademark applications at the federal level. Clinics like this allow students to engage with real-life clients on important issues, enabling students to [gain critical lawyering skills and do important work in the community](#).
2. The Law School’s director of field placement and externships, Malcolm Boyd, recently helped redevelop our general externship class in collaboration with the University’s Program for Leadership and Character. This included cross-campus engagement with faculty from other schools and departments to strengthen student learning outcomes.
3. The Law School hosts a variety of internal and external competitions, including the Wake Forest Law Competitive Trial Team Program, which recently competed in the American Association for Justice (AAJ) National Trial Competition Regionals and won the region—Wake Forest Law’s first AAJ Regional title since 2017.

**Action Steps:**

1. Incorporate experiential learning into courses by partnering with the University's Center for the Advancement of Teaching and potentially benefiting from University-wide efforts to develop experiential learning opportunities.
2. Identify new ways to recognize student excellence in activities outside of the classroom (e.g., TAs, RAs, student organizations).
3. Promote student attendance at scholarly symposia by encouraging faculty to create assignments related to the symposia topics.
4. Increase student involvement in pro bono activities in the Winston-Salem community and beyond.
5. Leverage satellite Wake Forest University locations such as Wake Washington and Charlotte to increase experiential offerings such as externships.

### **Aim 1.3**

**Offer numerous opportunities for professional and personal development to ensure students can thrive in law school and their professional careers.**

#### **Existing Initiatives:**

1. The Law School offers several degree programs that allow for diverse career pathways, including joint degrees (e.g., JD/MBA and JD/Master of Divinity), and the school plans to grow its MSL, LLM, and SJD programs. The Law School is exploring a joint JD/Master in Public Health (MPH) degree with the School for Professional Studies in Charlotte.
2. Students are supported in their job search through Wake Forest Law's Office of Career and Professional Development (OCPD), which teaches first-year law students a required Professional Development course. Lunch-and-learns throughout the semester offer additional opportunities to hear from professionals about their post-law school journeys. For example, OCPD recently partnered with the North Carolina Bar Association (NCBA) [to educate students about opportunities in "legal oases" as well as general "smaller town" practice.](#)
3. Wake Forest Law provides programming and events for students to learn about and practice wellness. The Law School has a standing Wellness Committee, which offers programming such as mindfulness sessions. Also, the Wellness Committee, in collaboration with the NCBA, sponsored an event in Fall 2023 to discuss [wellness in the legal profession.](#) Additionally, the Office of Student Affairs organizes numerous wellness events throughout the year, including an entire "Wellness Week."

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Create certificate tracks for JD students in areas like Leadership, Environmental Governance, etc., to enhance marketability after law school.
2. Promote subsequent LLM degrees (tax, environmental, etc.) to 2L and 3L law students to highlight the variety of post-law school degree options.
3. Develop a career satisfaction survey to hear from alumni throughout their careers to better guide students about their professional paths.
4. Partner with University wellness experts to expand support and offerings to law students.

## **Thematic Goal 2: Community of Inquiry**

**We will foster a community of inquiry through research, scholarship, and creative work that transcends boundaries to address the challenges facing humanity and our world.**

### **Strategic Aims**

#### **Aim 2.1**

**Facilitate faculty scholarship by recognizing an expansive definition of scholarship, mentoring junior faculty, and celebrating scholarly achievements.**

#### **Existing Initiatives:**

1. Wake Forest Law faculty are recognized experts in their fields: environmental, torts, intellectual property (IP), reproductive rights, civil rights, administrative law, criminal law, international law, veterans law, and legal writing, to name a few.
  - They are regularly invited to speak at national conferences or deliver keynote addresses. For example, Professor John Knox, the [inaugural Special Rapporteur](#) on Human Rights and the Environment for the United Nations, was a keynote speaker at Case Western University School of Law's conference [Climate Change and International Law](#) in 2023.
  - They produce award-winning scholarship: Professor Marie-Amelie George's article "Exploring Identity" won the [Pace Law Emerging Scholar Award in Gender and the Law](#) in 2021. Professor Johnathan Cardi and Professor Gregory Parks received a [High Distinction Award from the National Civil Justice Institute](#) for their article "Do Black Injuries Matter?: Implicit Bias and Jury Decision Making in Tort Cases." Professor Sid Shapiro won the [2021 ABA Award for Scholarship in Administrative Law](#) for his book *Administrative Competence: Reimagining Administrative Law*. Professor Sarah Morath won the [Silver Nautilus Award](#) for her book, *Our Plastic Problem and How to Solve It*.
  - They are sought out by the media for interviews and commentary. For example, Professor Meghan Boone was recently interviewed by [CBS News](#) about a Texas federal lawsuit over mifepristone, while Professor Tanya Marsh has provided her funeral and cemetery law expertise for the *Washington Post*, *Rolling Stone*, *LA Times*, and other news outlets.
  - Several faculty are members of the American Law Institute—the nation's leading organization producing scholarly work to clarify, modernize, and improve the law—and have served as Reporters for the Institute's Restatement of Law projects. In fact, Wake Forest Law has the most Reporters of any law school in the nation.
2. The Law School supports junior faculty through formal and informal avenues. The Associate Dean for Research is responsible for, among other duties, organizing

faculty exchanges among faculty. These exchanges allow Wake Forest Law faculty to present at other law schools and workshop their scholarly ideas. Faculty present at North Carolina law schools like [UNC](#) and Campbell, as well as schools outside of North Carolina, including the University of Richmond and the [University of Georgia](#).

3. The Law School celebrates the faculty's achievements through news stories, University communications channels, social media posts, and the *Jurist*, a magazine for Wake Forest Law alumni.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Increase incubator opportunities for scholarship development through internal presentations and informal workshops allowing junior scholars to receive supportive feedback and explore theories and observations before external presentations and publication.
2. Facilitate new opportunities for faculty to co-author with students, alumni, and non-law professionals.
3. Encourage faculty to share their scholarship in a continuing legal education (CLE) format (e.g., Legal Updates, Supreme Court Preview) to keep students and alumni informed about developments in the law.

#### **Aim 2.2**

**Facilitate student scholarship with impact and meaning through co-authorship with faculty, law review symposia, and advanced writing courses.**

#### **Existing Initiatives:**

1. The Law School offers students the opportunity to participate in one of three law reviews (*The Wake Forest Law Review*, *Journal of Business and Intellectual Property Law*, and *Journal of Law & Policy*). Each law review hosts annual symposia, which allow students to learn from and collaborate with experts outside of the Law School. For example, the topic for the upcoming symposium hosted by the *Journal of Business and Intellectual Property Law* is [Revolutionizing Wellness: Legal Frameworks and Implications Surrounding Regenerative Healthcare](#). The journal will partner with the Wake Forest Institute of Regenerative Medicine (WFIRM), home to the largest regenerative medicine facility in the world. As another example, the *Journal of Law & Policy* hosted a symposium in the fall on [Military Justice](#).
2. The law reviews also offer opportunities for students to write blog posts on emerging topics, such as the law surrounding "name, image, and likeness" in intercollegiate athletics.
3. Law students can further hone their persuasive writing skills through the [Appellate Advocacy Clinic](#), where students have the opportunity to write (and sometimes argue) appellate arguments before North Carolina courts and even the U.S. Supreme Court. In Spring 2022, students wrote an *amicus brief* for a pending U.S. Supreme Court case and attended oral arguments for the case in Fall 2023.

#### **Action Items:**

1. Enhance recognition of student writing through awards and publications, promotion of student work, and possibly a legal writing webpage on the Wake Forest Law website that highlights student writing.
2. Increase and support opportunities for publication with independent studies and co-authorship with faculty to continue fostering strong faculty-student mentorship as well as raise the visibility of scholarship coming out of Wake Forest Law.
3. Encourage students to write using a variety of communication forms (e.g., blog posts and op-eds) in advanced legal writing courses.
4. Facilitate submissions of student writing to various outlets, including national legal writing competitions.
5. Expand opportunities for student research assistant support.

### **Aim 2.3**

**Promote faculty and student scholarship beyond traditional academia to reach and engage broad audiences to ultimately contribute to the greater good and help improve understanding around society's most pressing issues.**

#### **Existing Initiatives:**

1. In March 2024, the Wake Forest Law Review hosted The Future of Death Care in America Symposium at Wake Forest Law. The Symposium brought together leaders in the death care industry, academics, and influential reformers with their own distinct perspectives, but with the intention to find common ground to help ensure the protection of consumers and expanded consumer choice. The event was co-sponsored by the Cremation Association of North America, and more than 750 people attended in person and virtually.
2. In 2024, Professor Sid Shapiro's book *How Government Built America* will be published by Cambridge University Press. Working with the Law School's Marketing & Communications Department, the book will be promoted across a number of channels and to various media outlets to raise awareness around the book's timely and relevant theme of the importance of government throughout the history of the United States.
3. Wake Forest Law faculty have had more articles published with The Conversation (a nonprofit, independent news organization with which Wake Forest University has a contract) than any other school at the University.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Capitalize on faculty expertise around current events to respond and contribute to the discourse around critical legal issues arising in society via op-eds, essays, and forms of media that are more accessible than traditional outlets for legal scholarship.
2. Leverage existing faculty marketing and promotional materials, such as the "Expert Encounters" series, to create short, digestible content to make faculty research and scholarship more accessible to those outside the academy.
3. Develop new strategies to promote faculty and student work, such as podcasts, video vignettes, social media clips, and more.



4. Highlight the positive community impact of legal research and scholarship through real-world cases and events.
5. Develop an award or form of recognition for the best student/faculty co-authored work to both incentivize students to conduct research and write academic papers and to attract attention to the work being done at Wake Forest Law.

### **Thematic Goal 3: Community of Partnerships**

**We will build meaningful, mutual partnerships to honor our commitment to the well-being of local, regional, and global communities.**

#### **Strategic Aims**

##### **Aim 3.1**

**Engage, partner, and collaborate with Wake Forest Law alumni through impactful programming, initiatives, and events throughout North Carolina and beyond to help cultivate a robust, thriving Law School network.**

##### **Existing Initiatives:**

1. In January 2024, the Academic Excellence Program (AEP) launched a pilot Alumni Bar Coach Program (ABC Program), which connects recent alumni with 3L students as they prepare to take the bar exam. Thirty-one alumni signed up across multiple jurisdictions. Fifty-three current 3L students applied to participate in the program. Coaches and students were matched by bar exam jurisdiction and by practice area. Alumni provide mentorship, encouragement, and support for recent graduates of Wake Forest Law who are taking the bar exam for the first time.
2. The Branch Inn of Court, which promotes legal skills, professionalism, and ethics, provides a forum for judges, attorneys, and Wake Forest Law professors to learn from each other. The Branch Inn of Court, which meets six times per year, is one of the few Inns of the approximately 400 in the country that is housed in a law school.

##### **Action Steps:**

1. Create a formal mentorship program between students and alumni, as well as young alumni and older alumni, which allows mentees to learn from experienced lawyers and gain exposure to lawyers' daily lives and also maintains robust and meaningful alumni connection back to Wake Forest Law.
2. Provide additional pathways and tools for students to connect with alumni, including a searchable database of alumni by legal field.
3. Expand lifelong learning opportunities for alumni by collaborating with other schools and units at Wake Forest, including the Program for Leadership & Character, to create and market non-legal (or law-adjacent) continuing education opportunities (e.g., AI, leadership, public health).
4. Expand lifelong learning opportunities by enhancing collaborations with local/state bar members to offer and promote continuing legal education courses taught by

Wake Forest Law faculty, as well as offering online and in-person post-graduate programs or courses.

5. Facilitate alumni engagement and participation in pro bono activities by connecting them to student leaders (e.g., Pro Bono Executive Board, etc.).
6. Establish an Employment Committee within the Law Boards and Councils, which can support the Law School's Office of Career and Professional Development in helping students find employment.

### **Aim 3.2**

**Identify and implement strategies to more fully integrate with the University to break down silos; create new opportunities for students, faculty, and staff; and foster a stronger Wake Forest community.**

#### **Existing Initiatives:**

1. The Heirs' Property Project, housed in the Environmental Law & Policy Clinic, collaborates across the University by providing direct representation to heirs' property owners, building a pipeline of lawyers trained to manage heirs' property cases, and serving as a hub for research, learning, and interdisciplinary training on land rights issues in North Carolina. For example, undergraduate students work with law students to help trace family genealogies and land titles and deeds while Divinity School students help families navigate difficult family dynamics.
2. Wake Forest Law regularly partners on programming and events with the Andrew Sabin Family Center for Environment and Sustainability. In September 2023, the Sabin Center [hosted a delegation of young Indigenous leaders](#) from the Peruvian Amazon. Wake Forest Law welcomed the Indigenous leaders for a lunch workshop with Professor John Knox and Professor Scott Schang.
3. In October 2023, Wake Forest Law's Environmental Law & Policy Clinic partnered with the African American Studies Program and the School of Divinity to hold the Land, Power, & Justice Symposium, part of a continuing conversation about the struggle for autonomy on the land in North Carolina and across the United States.

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Identify new opportunities for joint interdisciplinary programs with other schools at Wake Forest and collaborate to eliminate barriers including facilitating cross-registration across schools and departments, expanding cross-appointments, and allowing cross-enrollment.
2. Expand opportunities for scholarship and research collaborations among faculty by incentivizing interdisciplinary collaboration across the University for all stages of scholarship—from idea generation through publication— by creating a database that showcases faculty research interests and identifies synergies.
3. Host programming and events at the Law School in collaboration with other schools and departments that are open to all members of the Wake Forest community, such as faculty lectures, a microfinance clinic for Law School and Business School students, discussion groups around law-related subjects, open houses for undergraduates to learn more about Wake Forest Law, and more.



4. Appoint a University liaison who will serve as a conduit to cross-campus integration and collaboration, contributing to or overseeing projects like a central calendar of events, increased communication between the Law School and other schools and departments, and incentivizing faculty to better integrate into the broader University by teaching first-year seminars, creating and teaching courses aimed at undergraduates, and other initiatives.

### **Aim 3.3**

**Build and strengthen Wake Forest Law's role as a critical partner in effecting change in the local, state, and regional communities through meaningful partnerships with other organizations and entities.**

#### **Existing Initiatives:**

1. [Teen Court](#), a simulated court program that gives first-time juvenile offenders an alternative to the juvenile justice system, is one of the programs of the Wake Forest Law Pro Bono Project. Through this partnership with United Way, the YWCA of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County, and the Forsyth County Court, Wake Forest Law students have the opportunity to serve as mentors and co-counsel for teen attorneys as they defend and prosecute juvenile first-time offenders.
2. In 2023, Professor Keith Robinson, an expert in patent law, collaborated with Professor Olga Pierrakos of the Wake Forest University Department of Engineering (Wake Engineering) to [pilot an innovative course](#) that paired a Wake Forest Law student with Wake Engineering students to work on a Capstone Design Project during which students “design, build, and test solutions that meet real-world client, user, and stakeholder needs, with a focus on how their work positively impacts the human experience in the spirit of Wake Forest’s motto [Pro Humanitate].”
3. Leveraging a grant from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC), Dr. Alyse Bertenthal created a new course in 2024: Special Topics in Criminal Procedure: Police Discretion, which integrates students into an ongoing research project that examines NCWRC investigative practices. The course offers an on-the-ground perspective of the criminal justice system covering concepts such as police investigations, the exercise of discretion, the regulation of law enforcement, and the everyday practices of stakeholders in the criminal justice system. Students conduct interviews, watch and analyze bodycam footage, and formulate policy recommendations, providing them with the opportunity to develop critical lawyering skills. The course provides a blueprint for experiential learning

#### **Action Steps:**

1. Conduct a community needs assessment with existing clients and partners in Winston-Salem to identify and address gaps in legal services through long-term partnerships and programs such as expanding clinics and supplementing pro bono work.
2. Host and promote free workshops on topics like environmental law and self-advocacy to educate and empower community members.

3. Organize regular events with local organizations both inside and outside of the Law School to foster community cohesion and implement strategies to participate more regularly in the community, including days of service for students beyond Foundations Week and time off for staff to volunteer.
4. Work with alumni who serve in leadership capacities in legal organizations, such as the Forsyth County Bar Association and Legal Aid of North Carolina, to identify opportunities for student and faculty engagement.
5. Create a formal Community Outreach Task Force comprising an appointed faculty/staff member and a team of student ambassadors with the directive to strengthen ties in the community through outreach, engagement, and programming, as well as collaboration with the University's Office of Civic and Community Engagement.