

To: Dean Kevin Washburn
From: Iowa Law Anti-Racism Action Committee (“Action Committee”)
Date: August 21, 2020
Re: Recommendations

On May 25, 2020, police officers in Minneapolis killed George Floyd. This act of violence, combined with similar events over many years, sparked protests against police brutality and in support of racial justice. Affirming the principle that Black Lives Matter, the movement spread nationwide, including weeks of daily protests here in Iowa City.

On June 13, 2020, you issued a statement on behalf of the law school in response to these circumstances. You said, in part:

Recent events represent a call to justice. We must rethink the ways systemic racism permeates our everyday lives. We must examine our institutions and ourselves and face difficult truths. We must make changes in the law, changes in society, and changes in our law school. As legal educators, we must dedicate ourselves more consciously to the mission of creating a more just world. These words today will be followed by concrete and affirmative steps. I invite our students, alumni, and all members of our community to hold my colleagues and me accountable to that commitment.

At the College of Law, we embrace social justice as our responsibility and we commit to making anti-racism an integral part of our work, in the classes we teach, in the clinical and advocacy work we undertake, in the scholarship we produce, in the decisions we make, and in our everyday interactions within and without these walls. We also dedicate ourselves to examine systems and processes throughout the law school—ranging from curriculum and alumni support to outreach and community building—in order to guard against institutional racism and implicit bias.

We have much to be proud of in our existing work, and we have many areas in which we can improve. We will commit resources to building a more diverse and inclusive law school community, specifically through targeted recruitment of faculty, staff, and students of color. We commit to creating spaces—both in and outside the classroom—for students to tell their stories, share their concerns, and know that their experiences, advice, and opinions matter to the decisions made in the Boyd Law Building. To be effective educators, we must listen to our students.

We pledge ourselves to this essential work.

You then constituted this committee to provide advice regarding how to make good on these commitments. Inspired by your words, the following faculty members, staff, and students agreed to serve: Associate Dean Adrien Wing (Chair), Aurora Arop (3L), Human Resources Director Neda Barrett, Professor Christina Bohannon, Assistant Dean Collins Byrd, Associate Dean Carin Crain, Meddie Demmings IV (2L), Professor Bram Elias, Gada Al Herz (2L), Associate Dean Emily Hughes, Dean Emerita Carolyn Jones, Faculty Services Librarian Amy Koopmann,

Professor Christopher Odinet, Professor Jason Rantanen, Professor Cesar F. Rosado, and Rachel Shuen (3L). In addition, two alumnae participated in some of the meetings -- Kayla DeLoach and Winnie Uluocha. You specifically asked us for recommendations on how to:

- *make the College of Law stronger;*
- *better serve our diverse and first-generation students;*
- *identify and suggest improvements in law school programs, activities, resources, curriculum, and policies to overcome obstacles to their success; and*
- *recommend programs and improvements that will help all our students become lawyers and leaders in service to a world that is increasingly diverse and yet has not fully unlocked the intrinsic value of that diversity.*

This memorandum is our response to that charge.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion” is the terminology used today to recognize human differences, provide opportunities based on people’s needs, and embrace all people and welcome them into a community. A full definition can be found in the more detailed portions of this report below. “Anti-racism” focuses on making conscious efforts to identify and eliminate racism by focusing on systems, structures, policies, and practices that are racially inequitable.

The Action Committee recommends that the law school engage in the following actions, as detailed further below, related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (“DEI”) and anti-racism:

Funding

- Increase the financial resources available to support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives at the law school, including: the recruitment of underrepresented students, staff, and faculty; curricular reform; and climate reforms

Leadership

- Create and immediately staff the position of Director/Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Global Engagement
- Create and support a DEI Alumni Council that will support DEI activities at the law school and be consulted in and informed about relevant law school decision making

Recruitment

- Act to significantly diversify students, faculty, and staff at the law school

Curriculum

- Encourage and support faculty in incorporating DEI topics into courses by providing teaching resources and helping faculty develop skills and techniques relating to teaching these topics
- Consider implementation of a diversity, equity, and inclusion course requirement to graduate
- Ensure orientation continues to address diversity, equity, and inclusion and racism by incorporating discussions about these issues every year

- Enhance academic support

Training

- Require annual training on diversity, equity, and inclusion and explicit/implicit bias for students, faculty, and staff to better prepare constituencies to deal with DEI matters
- Recommend that each faculty member annually attend a pedagogical training to develop skills and techniques relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom

Climate Reform

- Enhance mentorship for students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups
- Ensure students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups have information about DEI initiatives at the law school and are aware of avenues to address concerns
- Enhance financial and logistical resources for student DEI activities
- Identify and take concrete actions to make all students, faculty, and staff feel welcome in the law school

Placement

- Continue to support all initiatives that increase placement for students and graduates from underrepresented groups

Evaluation

- Develop and administer an annual climate survey to students, faculty, and staff
- Include a question on the annual faculty/staff evaluation form that asks what the employee has done to advance the university's mission to create an inclusive community
- Conduct a law school-level assessment of the extent to which DEI discussions are being incorporated in the classroom
- Conduct a DEI Committee-led routine assessment of all the recommendations contained in this report

IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AND ADOPTING ANTI-RACIST POLICIES

These recommendations concern DEI and anti-racism. To begin, we first define these critical terms.

The following definitions come from the 2019-2021 University of Iowa's *Excellence through Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan*; also <https://diversity.uiowa.edu/dei-definitions>)

DIVERSITY Diversity refers to all aspects of human difference, social identities, and social group differences, including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, creed, color, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual identity, socio-economic status, language, culture, national origin, religion/spirituality, age, (dis)ability, military/veteran status, political perspective, and associational preferences.

EQUITY Equity refers to fair and just practices and policies that ensure all campus community members can thrive. Equity is different than equality in that equality implies treating everyone as if their experiences are exactly the same. Being equitable means acknowledging and addressing structural inequalities—historic and current—which advantage some and disadvantage others. Equal treatment results in equity only if everyone starts with equal access to opportunities.

INCLUSION Inclusion refers to a campus community where all members are and feel respected, have a sense of belonging, and are able to participate and achieve to their potential. While diversity is essential, it is not sufficient. An institution can be both diverse and noninclusive at the same time, thus a sustained practice of creating inclusive environments is necessary for success. –

“Anti-racism” focuses on making conscious efforts to identify and eliminate racism by focusing on systems, structures, policies, and practices that are racially inequitable. “Anti-racism can be defined as some form of focused and sustained action, which includes inter-cultural, inter-faith, multi-lingual and inter-abled (i.e. differently abled) communities with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has racist effects.” (The Anti-Racism Digital Library, Louisville Seminary, <https://sacred.omeka.net/>).

According to the National Museum of African American History and Culture: “When we choose to become antiracist, we become actively conscious about race and racism *and* take actions to end racial inequities in our daily life. Being antiracist is believing that racism is everyone's problem, and we all have a role to play in stopping it.” (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>)

In 2019, people of color comprised approximately 19% of the student population at the law school.¹ To make the law school more attractive to people of color and other underrepresented individuals, prospective students need to see that the law school is working toward making things better for them through its current activities, initiatives, and students. Pictures and statements from students many years in the past are not enough. Current underrepresented

¹ See 2019 University of Iowa College of Law ABA 509 Report.

students also need to feel that the law school is their home, which means ensuring that they know that their needs are important and that their concerns are heard.

Ensuring that we have a diverse community is also critically important for the law school for more pragmatic reasons. Institutions and groups generate more ideas and better solutions when a diverse group of people is at the table. Each of these people can contribute their own thoughts, experiences, and unique perspectives to the task at hand—provided that they feel comfortable speaking. The law school is currently overwhelmingly white, and while there is a range of political ideologies and geographic backgrounds among the faculty, only 5 out of the 44 voting faculty are persons of color or of Hispanic descent. Of the faculty who have left for other schools over the last ten years, 5 out of 8 were Black or of Asian descent. This monoculture does not serve our students as well as it could, and does not prepare them to practice law in an increasingly diverse world. Indeed, no matter how non-diverse Iowa may be, many of our students will practice law in much more diverse communities. Our students will be better lawyers if they study law in a diverse community, in which people from backgrounds that have historically been repressed are willing to speak, and if they are taught by a more diverse array of law professors. And they will be more prepared to serve their clients and the nation if they understand and apply the fundamental principles of equity and inclusion, and can act in an anti-racist manner.

DETAILED DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following discussion elaborates on the specific recommendations contained in the executive summary.

Funding

A. Increase the financial resources available to support DEI initiatives at the law school, including: the recruitment of underrepresented students, staff, and faculty; curricular reform; and climate reforms

Both diversity, equity, and inclusion and anti-racism require action to implement, and action requires resources. In order to implement the recommendations below, it is necessary to devote more resources to DEI and anti-racism efforts at the law school. While these funds could come from an internal reallocation of resources where appropriate, we understand that being truly successful in these efforts will require raising additional funds. This funding could come from alumni and community fundraising, grants from external organizations, and applications for internal university funds, such as funding from the Public-Private Partnership (“P3”) program.

Of the action items specified below, additional funding for student scholarships is the most significant. Additionally, the law school’s resources for summer grant support for public interest work are substantially lower than peer institutions, thus limiting its ability to attract a diverse

array of students.² This disproportionately affects our capacity to attract students of color and first-generation students. It also limits the options available to students who do not have other funds available to support public interest work during the summer. This lack of funding is particularly harmful for students focusing on racial justice issues, where resources are often scarce.

Based on discussions within the Action Committee and with Assistant Dean Collins Byrd, we preliminarily estimate that to substantially compete with institutions whose admission profiles overlap with ours, we would need to increase the amount of money available for scholarships by about \$700,000 and summer grant money by tens of thousands of dollars, while also raising substantial additional money for the Bridge pipeline program. We recommend that the Dean charge the Director/Associate Dean of DEI and Global Engagement with estimating the amount of money that would be needed to substantially compete with our peers in these areas.

Below, we identify areas where the law school needs to dedicate additional resources to match peer institutions that we compete against for students:

- Substantially increase the amount of money available for scholarships
- Substantially increase the summer funding for public interest grants
- Provide funding for faculty to create or revise a course to address DEI
- Charge the Director/Associate Dean of DEI and Global Engagement, working in conjunction with the senior administrators, with determining the amount of additional funding that would be necessary for programs to be competitive with our peer institutions
- Allocate dedicated funds to the Director/Dean of DEI and Global Engagement for DEI initiatives
- Develop a sustainable funding source for the Iowa Law Faculty Fellows program
- Actively seek grants from organizations such as Law School Admissions Council, the American Bar Association, or the Association of American Law Schools that may be used to support DEI activities and initiatives
- Actively seek internal funding opportunities, including from the Provost's Office, for DEI initiatives
- Propose that the Provost restart and appropriately fund the racial and ethnic minority faculty hiring program
- Allocate funding for student organizations to use for DEI activities
- Increase funding for the Bridge program
- Seek funding to restart the Hubbard program, which was a summer pipeline program for college students
- Consider funding a program for students in need of financial assistance to assist with the cost of the bar exam and a bar preparation course
- Consider finding funding to change the Melrose house into a DEI Center

² For summer, 2020, the law school awarded an average of \$1200 per student who received funding. The amount of funding available at the law school for public interest grants for summer 2021 is likely to be half of the amount available for summer 2020 due to the effects of COVID-19. Minnesota's Minnesota Justice Foundation, for example, [provides awards of \\$5,500](#). The available evidence suggests that our summer funding is insignificant relative to other schools.

Leadership

A. Create and immediately staff the position of Director/Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Global Engagement

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are institutional goals and values that require hard work, coordination, and assessment to be fully realized at the law school. They demand effective leadership. Dean Carin Crain has expended great efforts to provide such leadership as Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Career Services, as has the joint faculty-student DEI Committee which was previously co-chaired by Professor Christina Bohannon and student Justin McCorvey. However, the demands of the Student Affairs and Career Services office are too many and too general, and the other demands on members of the DEI committee too great, to effectively institute the particular goals and values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The law school needs a dedicated DEI professional who can better focus on realizing those goals and values. Additionally, given the close relationship between diversity, equity, and inclusion and the law school's global programs, including our academic programs abroad and the various programs that it offers to international students, we propose that the new DEI officer also be responsible for the administration of these global programs. Additionally, because these students are from other countries, it is our responsibility to make them feel welcome. We must recognize that equity concerns also matter to students from other nations. In order to better guarantee accountability and the authority of this new position, the new Associate Dean or Director of DEI and Global Engagement should report directly to the Dean of the College of Law.

The responsibilities of the new Associate Dean or Director of DEI and Global Engagement should include:

- Coordinating mentoring at the law school, including the development of an effective mentoring process
- Engaging with the DEI Alumni Council
- Conducting an annual review of diversity, including key metrics and statistics such as diversity of speakers
- Providing guidance to ensure that the law school's website reflect DEI values
- Coordinating or driving many of the action items identified in this report.
- Conducting the evaluations identified in this report as appropriate
- Collaborating closely with the DEI Committee

B. Create and support a DEI Alumni Council that will support DEI activities at the law school and be consulted in and informed about relevant law school decision making

Alumni participation is vital in providing enhanced personal outreach to prospective and admitted underrepresented students and encouraging them to enroll at the Iowa College of Law. The law school should partner with a diverse array of alumni, as they can serve as global

ambassadors. Specifically, they can be important partners in the law school's strategic efforts around diversity and inclusivity; particularly when it comes to the recruitment and retention of students of color.

The Responsibilities of the DEI Alumni Council should include:

- Reviewing prospective DEI plans for feedback and suggestions on improvement
- Strengthening the network of alumni of color in key geographic areas by creating regional Alumni of Color Chapters
- Establishing identity-based affinity groups to connect alumni with the university and each other
- Mentoring prospective and current students at the law school
- Considering the creation of a Diversity Alumni Admissions Ambassador program to assist with recruitment of students
- Providing opportunities for alumni from underrepresented groups to provide feedback and input on engagement efforts
- Providing ideas and guidance for developing programs to recruit students
- Providing networking opportunities that allow alumni of color to connect with each other in an environment conducive to discussing their specific concerns.
- Seeking additional financial support for DEI-related activities and initiatives

In addition, the DEI Alumni Council should be consulted in and informed about relevant law school decision making.

Recruitment

A. Act to significantly diversify students, faculty, and staff at the law school

The goals outlined require significantly diversifying the students, faculty, and staff. To accomplish this task, we recommend the following actions:

1. Students

Increasing the pool

- Increase the potential attractiveness of Iowa to underrepresented students by improved marketing and communication about our "best value" education--a high ranking law program with great affordability
- Update the law school website to include a well-developed and easily accessible "Diversity" tab
- Continue mailing Credential Assembly Service (CAS) (formerly LSDAS) information to student of color candidates and review and develop in more detail the criteria used to contact them
- Support the Office of Admissions in finding creative ways to contact underrepresented students aside from CAS

- Expand outreach to more locations to reach more underrepresented students, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), the American Indian Pre-law Institute, and other programs and universities.
- Utilize Zoom or other technologies that may be useful to reach underrepresented students
- Increase the involvement of underrepresented students, faculty, staff, and alumni in recruiting efforts. Allocate funding for sending students to travel for recruitment purposes
- Enhance recruitment of Iowans from underrepresented backgrounds
- Increase international recruitment for all degrees
- Expand the reach and substance of the law school's pipeline Bridge Program generally

Increasing acceptances

- Enhance the Law Opportunity Tuition Fellowship Program by increasing funding and making it available to a larger number of students
- Expand the identifying questions used during recruitment to identify more nuanced information including a wider range of underrepresented intersectional identities, such as ethnic, racial, religious, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status
- Increase the Alexander Clark Fund for admitted students from underrepresented backgrounds and extend the benefits of this fund to prospective students who visit, even if they do not enroll
- Continue to allow current underrepresented students to attend recruitment events and otherwise connect admitted underrepresented students with current underrepresented students
- Host more Admitted Students Days and open houses
- Try to avoid scheduling conflicts between recruiting events and other events targeted at underrepresented students and alumni, e.g., Back to Iowa and Admitted Students Day

2. Faculty

- Ensure a commitment to diversity in hiring for all academic positions, including tenure track, tenured, clinical, legal writing, lecturer, and adjunct appointments
- Encourage the Dean to join with other deans to advocate that the Provost's office re-establish the Faculty Diversity Opportunity Program (FDOP), a fund to provide money for the hiring of racial and ethnic minority faculty
- Review existing faculty and staff recruitment policies related to equitable practices, and create a best practices document that all search committee members must review before serving
- Hire a second individual for the Iowa Faculty Fellows program
- Enhance student participation in the hiring process
- Mandate exit interviews that include climate questions, and utilize the information gathered to improve climate and recruitment efforts
- Consider the effect of biases in student course evaluations when relying on them in making hiring, promotion, tenure, and retention decisions
- Increase efforts to retain underrepresented faculty by ensuring that they are well supported and feel like they are a part of the law school community

- Celebrate and maintain strong connections with faculty of color who have left the law school to accept jobs at top-tier institutions or as deans or provosts by inviting them back to do presentations

3. Staff

- Review existing faculty and staff recruitment policies related to equitable practices and create a best practices document that all search committee members must review before serving
- State explicitly in all future job postings and job descriptions that the law school is committed to DEI
- Increase funding for advertising open positions and expand the reach of said advertising to a more diverse pool of candidates, including job boards that are specifically oriented towards people of color
- Elicit information from job applicants regarding their experience promoting DEI. Give weight to answers that indicate a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and engagement
- Mandate exit interviews that include climate questions, and utilize the information gathered to improve climate and recruitment efforts
- Increase efforts to retain underrepresented staff, such as through the creation of a supervisor training to create a climate of inclusion and mandate other DEI training for all staff

Curriculum

A. Encourage and support faculty in incorporating DEI topics into courses by providing teaching resources and helping faculty develop skills and techniques relating to teaching these topics

Law school faculty are in the best position to introduce students to the ways in which racism can be inherent in legal structures, to model constructive and welcoming behavior, and to discuss difficult topics in the classroom. However, institutional resources supporting these endeavors are limited or nonexistent. For example, while there are many teaching resources available to discuss issues of race and the law, it takes time and other resources to locate those materials and incorporate them into the classroom. In addition, faculty would benefit from an enhanced focus on skills and techniques related to teaching these issues. While law faculty are typically taught the law in law school, and often spend time honing their legal skills in practice, there is no formal training in how to teach, let alone how to address issues such as race, gender, and disability within the classroom.

The need to support faculty in teaching diversity, equity, and inclusion issues in the classroom is particularly great given that when these topics are taught poorly or without an appropriate understanding they can do as much harm as pretending that such issues do not exist. A goal of this training should be to help faculty create a classroom in which all feel welcome and encouraged to participate in dialogue about these issues.

The Action Committee makes the following specific action recommendations:

- Charge a faculty administrator with determining how to provide training to faculty on cultural competency and on how to facilitate challenging conversations in the classroom; this would include what such conversations involve, how to set up the classroom, and what to do in challenging situations
- Bring in consultants from law teaching organizations to talk about teaching issues involving diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Provide an incentive for faculty to address issues of systemic racism within the law
- Create an opportunity or sounding board, such as a workshop that is subject to expectations of confidentiality, that allows faculty members an opportunity to experiment and practice without judgment
- Support faculty in incorporating DEI issues into courses by having the institution develop a repository of specific, relevant materials for each subject-matter area
- Encourage informal faculty discussion about teaching DEI issues
- Provide support for faculty to use a diverse mix of guest speakers in classes, including a list of potential alumni speakers who are from underrepresented groups

B. Consider implementation of a diversity, equity, and inclusion course requirement to graduate

The law school is entrusted with the responsibility of educating and molding future leaders in the legal profession and future leaders in the community. With this responsibility, the law school cannot fulfill its duty or its core mission and values if it allows students to go through their entire education without confronting any of their implicit or explicit biases. While there are courses that already have a significant diversity, equity, and inclusion-related component, it is not guaranteed the students will take these courses to confront their bias or be in a first-year section where the diversity, equity, and inclusion component is emphasized. The goal of implementing a DEI course requirement is to ensure all students who graduate have been trained to represent ALL clients and participate in policy decisions where multiple perspectives are present. To do this they must have a course to confront and learn from their biases and personal worldview.

The Action Committee makes the following specific action recommendations:

- Require a set number of credit hours of DEI courses before graduation
- Charge the DEI Committee and Curriculum Committee with identifying a set of criteria for a course to qualify as a DEI course
- Create a new course that provides a survey of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the law

C. Ensure orientation continues to address diversity, equity, and inclusion and racism by incorporating discussions about these issues every year

The initial days and weeks of a law student's experience in law school set the tone, expectations, and much of the framework for that student's law school experience and professional formation. In order to better guarantee that diversity, equity, and inclusion goals and values remain at the forefront of our students' development as lawyers, we include DEI discussions in students' *Orientation and Introduction to Law and Legal Reasoning*, which is the law school's orientation

program. The professors teaching in this orientation program work closely with the Dean of Students to coordinate academic and non-academic orientation components. For example, in the past several years, orientation has included implicit bias training, bystander intervention training, and a discussion of free speech, as well as historic and cutting-edge cases.

The law school should continue to provide DEI discussions during orientation, including:

- Diversity, equity, and inclusion-related case law,
- DEI-related lawyering, and
- Other DEI discussions important for students' overall professional formation

D. Enhance academic support³

Underrepresented students, especially students of color, face substantial obstacles before, after, and during law school that may affect their ability to perform at their best. The law school should institute an Academic Support Program with a race-conscious focus that helps students from underrepresented backgrounds overcome barriers to academic success and places them in equitable standing with their peers who do not face these barriers. This support should be proactive instead of remedial. It should not solely target students identified as low-performing; instead, it should focus on removing the barriers to success students from underrepresented groups face before the negative consequences are realized. As such, this program should mainly target students in their first semester of law school, and then ensure students from underrepresented backgrounds have follow-up support throughout law school specific to their needs. The Action Committee recommends:

- Charge a faculty member with developing a program to provide academic support for students from underrepresented backgrounds that meets the objectives of the above description

Training

A. Require annual training on diversity, equity, and inclusion and explicit/implicit bias for students, faculty, and staff to better prepare constituencies to deal with DEI matters

The goals outlined in your letter require training to ensure all constituencies have annual exposure to appropriate education concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion, and other issues. To that end, we suggest the following:

- Require at least one annual *Building University of Iowa Leadership for Diversity* (BUILD) course (<https://diversity.uiowa.edu/build-program>) for all faculty and staff. The law school will send out regular monthly notifications for BUILD opportunities
- Hold annual college-wide diversity-focused training and information events

³ Source: <https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1312&context=rrgc>

- Require an annual cultural competency training for students, faculty, and staff
 - In addition to requiring unconscious bias training for all members of hiring committees, also require it for all faculty, staff and, students who are part of recruitment efforts
- B. Recommend that each faculty member annually attend a pedagogical training to develop skills and techniques relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the classroom**

The faculty should recommend that every faculty member annually attend a training on how to create a classroom environment where all students feel welcome and able to discuss issues relating to underrepresented groups without imposing inequitable burdens on members of the group whose position is being discussed.

- Charge a faculty committee with studying whether to recommend that every faculty member annually attend a pedagogical training to develop skills and techniques relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion

Climate Reform

A. Enhance mentorship for students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups

It appears that our current mentoring programs for students, faculty, and staff are underutilized. Moreover, it seems that mentorship more typically occurs informally, which might mean that some groups and individuals might not be receiving the mentorship they need to better excel in law school and in their professional and work life. The law school needs to proactively and consciously design, implement, and assess mentorship programs that benefit all its students, faculty, and staff.

Some of our current formal mentorship programs include:

- The 1L mentorship program offered to all incoming students
- Student organization mentorship programs
- The Iowa State Bar Association's diversity mentoring program
- Faculty mentors for faculty who are pre-tenure or not yet on a long-term contract
- Faculty who are assigned a group of 1L advisees

We identified the following problems with our mentorship practice.

- There are too many options and the options confuse students
- Mentor-mentee matches do not always work
- 1L's generally do not know what kind of mentor they want or need
- Law students may change their career plans by their second year, thus requiring a different mentor
- Information coordination problems among mentors lead to repetitive or inconsistent advising
- No training is provided to mentors

- Students show a lack of interest in the Iowa State Bar Association’s diversity mentoring program

In light of these problems, we suggest the following action items:

- Coordinate the mentorship programs and matching assignments
- Enhance the 1L faculty mentorship program
- Support Amy Best, the Director of Admissions, who will be taking over the ISBA diversity mentoring program to, among other things, improve student interest
- Faculty mentors should advise students on networking, including helping students identify other good mentors
- Provide training and resources on how to be an effective mentor

Other action items unrelated to the problems already mentioned:

- Create an alumni of color mentorship program for current students and consider starting it as early as possible in the law student career, if possible before the 1L year begins
- Recognize effective mentoring, such as through awards for both faculty mentors and external mentors, such as alumni and ISBA mentors
- Recognize student organizations for demonstrated mentorship

B. Ensure students, faculty, and staff from underrepresented groups have information about DEI initiatives at the law school and are aware of avenues to address concerns

1. Incorporate a diversity tab on the main header of the law school webpage with links to relevant events, initiatives, student organizations, and action plans

The law school has consistently aimed to increase the diversity of the student, faculty, and staff. One simple way to demonstrate that the law school is taking its lack of diversity seriously is to have a diversity tab in the main header of the law school webpage. This can signal to prospective students, faculty, and staff that there is work being done and will continue to be done when it comes to increasing diversity. It can also provide resources for underrepresented students to better access programs and materials related to their needs. This page can also be used to showcase the work of current students and alumni in the field, allowing for better communication among both parties for collaboration.

- Incorporate a diversity tab on the main header of the law school webpage with links to relevant events, initiatives, student organizations, and action plans

2. Ensure students, faculty and staff of color are aware of avenues to address their concerns

Students, faculty, and staff may face discrimination, both explicit and implicit, in a number of settings. In order to improve the law school’s climate, it is important that community members are aware of the opportunities that exist to report these issues.

Existing resources include:

Students:

- Dean Crain as a point of contact for concerns
- The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD) reporting options:
<https://diversity.uiowa.edu/report-concern>
- The Office of the Ombudsperson at the University level:
<https://ombudsperson.org.uiowa.edu/>
- The law school's Ombudspeople
- The University's Campus Inclusion Team (CIT)

Faculty/Staff:

- Neda Barrett as a point of contact for concerns
- The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity (EOD) reporting options:
<https://diversity.uiowa.edu/report-concern>
- The Office of the Ombudsperson at the University level:
<https://ombudsperson.org.uiowa.edu/>
- The law school's Ombudspeople

We recommend that the law school:

- Provide incoming students with consolidated, summary information about resources available to address harassment, implicit or explicit discrimination, or other negative experiences at the law school or within the larger university community
- Provide the above information in the recommended diversity tab on the law school's website
- Add the above information to the student handbook
- Provide new faculty and staff with information about avenues to address negative experiences at the law school or within the larger university community
- The dean should send a message to all students, faculty, and staff at the beginning of the academic year that discusses the value the law school places on welcoming all of its community members and that outlines the options available to address their concerns, including the resources outlined above

C. Enhance financial and logistical resources for student DEI activities

Student organizations are an important way for students to interact with one another and build affinity groups. One limitation of this system is that not all student organizations currently have an active faculty advisor. All student groups should have a faculty advisor who is appointed by the Dean after consultation with the student organization's leaders and the faculty member nominated by the student group. No student group should have a faculty advisor to whom the leaders of the group object. In addition, someone should annually review the student groups to ensure that all student groups have a current faculty member as their advisor. Faculty advisors should be responsible, in part, for helping provide continuity from year-to-year. In addition, it would be beneficial if faculty advisors talk to one another to discuss norms and the types of assistance they can provide to student groups.

In addition, the law school should actively support DEI efforts by student groups. This could be done by identifying a dedicated funding source beyond University of Iowa Student Government funding to pay for activities and speakers invited by student groups, especially when this furthers DEI. In addition, student groups could be enhanced by giving them a purpose beyond bringing in speakers and mentoring. We suggest the following:

- Review and enhance the student organization faculty advisor system, including ensuring that every student group has a faculty advisor
- Encourage faculty advisors to help provide continuity from year-to-year
- Create a mechanism to allow faculty advisors to discuss how they provide support to their organizations and exchange ideas
- Dedicate a law school funding source for student groups to support DEI efforts
- Provide a list to all students of student organizations, student group leaders, and faculty advisors, either posted on the website prior to the beginning of classes or emailed to all students

D. Identify and take concrete actions to make all students, faculty, and staff feel welcome in the law school

1. Develop and educate on norms for people to make other people to feel welcome in the classroom and building

The law school brings hundreds of students, staff, faculty and others, all mostly strangers to each other, into a dynamic and intense academic, professional, and social experience. Individuals from all walks of life, from around the country, and the world are expected to equally partake in this experience and contribute to it. In order to better guarantee this experience to everyone, the law school must work hard to make sure that everyone it invites to this experience feels they are an essential and important part of it. Therefore, we expect that the law school should work on a number of things that can have a large impact on making the law school's space and experience welcoming to everyone, including:

- Raise awareness of how often students, faculty, and staff of certain genders, race, nationality, and other backgrounds speak and are recognized in the classroom and outside of the classroom
- Raise awareness among all members of the law school about the fact that talking about one's religion, cultural or racial background can be more taxing for that person than for people not of that religious, cultural, or racial background, and act with that recognition in mind when asking someone to speak about their religious, cultural, or racial background in and outside the classroom
- Make an effort to ask students, faculty, and staff on how to pronounce their names
- Encourage use of inclusive email signatures
- Make special efforts to recognize the achievements of faculty of color, who are often overlooked by the overall community
- Encourage faculty to take a moment in class to address and recognize racial, gender, and class dynamics in a particular subject

- Encourage faculty to make an effort to acknowledge students for their academic and professional achievements outside of the classroom
- Consider how co-curricular course membership is selected and ensure that all students have equal access to all learning opportunities
- Be more inclusive in our food choices, especially for major events, such as cookouts and end-of-semester celebrations
- Create a bigger, more welcoming “Spiritual Space” for students whose faiths require observance during the day, e.g. Muslim students who pray five prayers a day. Make the space welcoming and accessible, including convenient access to ablution necessities.

2. Provide funding and enhance formal recognition for students working on uncredited diversity initiatives

The law school relies heavily on students who work on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives throughout their time in law school. To work on DEI initiatives and be a law student, they must sacrifice time that could be used studying or advancing their legal careers in other ways. They should therefore be provided funding by the law school. Additionally, they should be provided formal recognition that can be included on their resumes.

The Action Committee makes the following specific action recommendations:

- Create awards recognizing contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion that students receive during law school
- Publicize the awards that are granted at graduation
- Encourage faculty to allow research assistant credit for working on DEI initiatives

3. Recognize cultural, ethnic, and religious holidays, including enhanced programming

The law school community comes from a diverse array of groups that celebrate various cultural, ethnic, and religious holidays. Enhancing the programming related to how these celebrations are currently observed at the law school and at the university level would be beneficial to the whole community. Therefore, the Action Committee proposes that the law school:

- Better identify major cultural, ethnic, and religious dates, such as the lunar new year, in the list that is circulated to students, faculty, and staff
- Publicize existing events
- Expand commemoration of other such important holidays
- Provide funding for food to encourage students to attend these events
- Review the University’s Bmindful tool calendar before scheduling events

3. Ensure that speakers come from a diversity of backgrounds

Every year, the law school invites speakers for various programming, including by the Intellectual Life Committee, student groups, centers, and journals. To enrich our academic programs and further our mission, it is important that those speakers represent a diverse set of opinions and backgrounds. Therefore, we propose that:

- All students, faculty, and staff who invite speakers to campus make a conscious effort to invite from a plurality of perspectives and backgrounds
- All students, faculty, and staff who invite speakers provide a statement of how they considered diversity in their selection

4. Review the diversity of speakers who are invited to speak at the law school

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee or the new Associate Dean/Director of DEI and Global Engagement should collect all diversity statements from organizations or individuals who invite speakers to the law school and provide an end-of-the-year report. Changes could be proposed, if necessary, to better promote speaker diversity.

5. Encourage and incentivize all students, faculty, and staff to participate in DEI work

Participation in DEI activities should not be solely the responsibility of people from underrepresented groups. The Action Committee therefore recommends:

- The law school publicize DEI events more widely
- Faculty and staff should encourage general student participation in DEI efforts
- Make DEI work part of the annual performance review process for faculty and staff

6. Continue and enhance support for students with disabilities

Roughly 15% of the world’s population experience a disability of some kind. Yet, we live in an “ableist” society where the needs of disabled community members are often overlooked, despite advances. People with disabilities experience poorer health outcomes, lower levels of education attainment, higher rates of poverty rates, and higher levels of unemployment than those without disabilities. The law school must be cognizant of the challenges faced by those living with a disability and take affirmative steps to ensure that they succeed in law school. Therefore, we propose that:

- The law school should conduct a survey about its efforts to accommodate community members’ disabilities
- The DEI Committee or the Director/Associate Dean of DEI and Global Engagement should analyze the survey and develop a plan of action to address any concerns

7. Enhance pro-bono activities that assist underrepresented communities

Participation in pro-bono activities is an American Bar Association standard for law schools. Pro bono legal work is important because it provides a benefit to members of the community that otherwise would not be able to access legal services. It also provides professional development opportunities and a chance to gain valuable experience. As part of that responsibility, these activities should be designed to reach underrepresented constituencies. Therefore, the Action Committee proposes:

- The law school’s *Citizen Lawyer Program* expand its opportunities to work with marginalized groups, such as persons of color, those with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ individuals

8. Design interactive programs such as Outward-Bound type programs that build community

Participation in interactive, collective events can build community. Creating activities including outdoor programs brings people together. Therefore, the Action Committee proposes:

- The DEI Committee and Director/Associate Dean of DEI and Global Engagement encourage and design the relevant programs for students, faculty, and staff

9. Publicize the program that provides funding that allows faculty to take students out to coffee/lunch

Faculty and student interaction outside the class can enhance a sense of community. Therefore, the Action Committee proposes:

- Encourage faculty to utilize the program in order to get to know their students better, and for students to get to know their fellow students better
- Consider creation of monthly “coffee with the Dean” to discuss issues that students might be facing

10. Enhance seeking out the perspectives of a diverse range of people (students, faculty and staff) when engaging in major decisions

Diversity, equity, and inclusion require not only that the law school attracts more underrepresented students, faculty, and staff, but also adapt its structure so that those underrepresented voices are effectively heard. Therefore, when the law school needs to make major decisions, such as are teaching in person or online during a pandemic, redistributing resources (implying that some programs and organizations might lose out in relation to others), make major investments, change the curriculum, among others, the law school should seek the feedback of faculty, staff, and students. Therefore, the Action Committee proposes:

- The law school should conduct surveys or host town hall meetings (in person or virtual)
- The law school formally adopt a policy that it will seek input from students, staff, and non-voting faculty members in faculty decision making, when relevant

Placement

A. Continue to support all initiatives that increase placement for students and graduates from underrepresented groups

Placement in a legal job is a major part of why many students attend law school. Other students may want a legal background as they intend to pursue other types of careers. As the law school is national in scope and reputation, most Iowa graduates do not stay in the state. Unfortunately, some underrepresented groups may have trouble in the local and national job market due to the various types of discrimination they may face. The problems manifest in all aspects of the profession including in clerkships, big firms, and other types of jobs as well as continuing throughout their careers. The law school has had excellent placement rates of over 90% for its new graduates in legal jobs each year. The initiatives involved to achieve these results include faculty, staff, students, alumni, and prospective employers. Alumni may also continue to seek out the services of the law school at later stages of their careers. Therefore, the Action Committee proposes continuing and supporting the following initiatives that increase placement for students and graduates:

- Charge the Judicial Clerkship Committee to increase and diversify the cohort of clerkship applicants and increasing funding to career services for this purpose
- Continue participation in the ABA Judicial Clerkship Program “JCP” which introduces law students from groups underrepresented in the legal profession to the process of seeking and the benefits of completing a judicial clerkship. For the past two years, the College has supported this program by sending both law students and a staff member to the program
- Continue emphasis on and participation in judicial clerkship pipeline programs such as Just the Beginning, Judicial Internship Opportunity Program, and Law Clerks for Diversity
- Continue to include programming regarding clerkships (and specifically the value of clerking for first-gen and students of color) in orientation
- Continue to publicize and support student participation in job fairs and conferences developed to increase diversity within the profession
- Continue Career Services’ outreach to affinity groups to engage in conversations about legal employment, including a focus on topics such as job seeking, salary negotiations, and mentorship throughout students’ professional careers

Evaluation

A. Develop and administer an annual climate survey to students, faculty, and staff

The law school does not currently conduct an annual climate survey to identify whether activities, practices, and other factors make students, faculty, and staff feel welcome. While the University of Iowa conducts an annual survey of its employees, this information is of limited value in driving law school decision making. In addition, while some information is available through the annual Law Student Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE), this information is expensive to obtain and is not specifically designed to help improve the law school climate.

The law school should develop and annually administer its own climate survey. The survey should ask questions such as what the law school could do differently to make students feel more welcome. The survey should be administered at the beginning of each spring semester. In designing the survey, attention should be given to intersectional identities, including racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds; gender identity; and sexual orientation while avoiding the personal identification of any student. The law school should also consider conducting an exit survey of students. Specifically, we suggest the following:

- Charge the new Associate Dean/Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Global Engagement, or appropriate committee or personnel, with developing and annually administering a climate survey
 - Provide the results of the climate survey to the senior administrative staff and the DEI Committee
 - Provide a summary of the results to the law school community, including students, faculty, and staff
- B. Include a question on the annual faculty/staff evaluation form that asks what the employee has done to advance the university's mission to create an inclusive community**

Faculty are evaluated on their teaching, scholarship, and service. They submit an annual report on these issues to the Dean as part of each faculty member's annual review. However, there is no question relevant to diversity, equity, and inclusion specifically. Yet, the University Mission provides, in part, that the goal of the University of Iowa is "to educate students for success and personal fulfillment in an increasingly diverse and global environment." Additionally, the university's Operations Manual elaborates on this by affirming that "[b]ecause diversity, broadly defined, advances its mission of teaching, research, and service, the university is dedicated to an inclusive community in which people of different cultural, national, individual, and academic backgrounds encounter one another in a spirit of cooperation, openness, and shared appreciation."⁴ We note that there is a DEI question in the staff evaluation form, which may require updating. Therefore, the Action Committee proposes:

- Add a question to the annual faculty evaluation form that asks what the employee has done to advance the university's mission to create "an inclusive community in which people of different cultural, national, individual, and academic backgrounds encounter one another in a spirit of cooperation, openness, and shared appreciation."
 - Review and consider revising the DEI staff question accordingly and make staff and supervisors aware of its existence in the current online review form
- C. Conduct a law school-level assessment of the extent to which DEI discussions are being incorporated in the classroom**

⁴ <https://opsmanual.uiowa.edu/governance/university-iowa/purpose-and-mission?fbclid=IwAR0YuwU5Aq0uuJ3OcDJvusCPgm3RtQkuwQZPEQf51zadIHgtxvc8g0IXm4>

In order to know what is happening across all courses, an annual assessment is needed to determine the extent to which DEI issues are incorporated into classes. The purpose of this assessment should not be for purposes of evaluating courses or instruction but instead to understand the extent to which the institution as a whole is addressing these issues.

- Charge a faculty committee or the Director/Associate Dean of DEI and Global Engagement to annually assess the incorporation of the discussion of DEI issues into the classroom across the law school
- Charge the Curriculum Committee, in consultation with the DEI committee, to consider whether to allocate one of the law school's ACE questions to address diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Provide a report of the results to the dean, faculty, leadership team, and DEI Committee
- Provide a summary of the results to the law school community

D. Conduct a DEI Committee-led routine assessment of all the recommendations contained in this report

It is tantamount that any and all diversity, equity, and inclusion-related information obtained through the aforementioned evaluations and surveys be given to institutional actors with authority to evaluate them and provide follow-up. Without such authority and accountability, the law school will be unable to chart its progress. Ultimately, the diversity committee and the Director/Associate Dean of DEI and Global Engagement should provide their assessments and recommendations to the Dean of the College of Law, who can then chart specific steps to take with the approval, if required, of the faculty.

- Charge the DEI committee and Director/Associate Dean of DEI and Global Engagement with conducting routine checks on all the recommendations in this memo