

The School of Law and Southern at 159 – A Vision Statement

1. Vision

The School of Law seeks to be nothing less than the best small public law school in the country. Many things flow from that vision. For example, remaining small, and having a very favorable student faculty ratio, is the result of a conscious view of how best to deliver legal education. This vision recognizes that being small creates challenges, such as a small alumni base. The vision, however, implies the trade-offs are justified. The fact that the School of Law is public also, for example, communicates the desire to put at the forefront the fact that the School of Law was created to serve Illinois whether through educating its citizenry or serving its public. Legal education, however, is not just professional education. It is also graduate education and the future of the School of Law has to provide for the fostering of even more legal scholarship.

2. Mission

The School of Law has developed a comprehensive mission statement that focuses on the three bases of student preparation, legal scholarship and public service. A copy of the mission statement is attached.

3. Context

Many of the challenges the School of Law faces are well known in legal education and must be addressed. Globalization, technology, intellectual property, legal issues related to an aging population and the increasing debt load of students, for example, are challenges all law schools face.

Legal education, however, is going to change dramatically over the next 20 years in ways that we can not yet conceive. To remain viable, law schools will have to diversify, offer more and different products. We see this trend in more law schools offering Masters of Arts and certificate programs. Some of the changes will be even more profound. Take, for example, the fact that law schools are likely to lose their monopoly on producing lawyers through a 3 year graduate education. At least one university has begun an undergraduate law degree. Sometime in the not so distant future, a graduate of that program, or some other similar program, is likely to apply for an LL.M. program at a law school. The dean of at least one school offering the LL.M. has publicly stated that he would not turn that student away while at the same time accepting an undergraduate degree from Oxford. Once the person has an LL.M. he or she will be eligible to take the bar in most states.

This is all taking place in an increasingly competitive environment, often driven by rankings, which forces law schools to avoid negative differentiation through investment in things such as new facilities, new programs and increased scholarship support.

4. Challenges

The challenges that face the School of Law can be related to several factors that describe our school: the small size (and consequent small revenue), the age of the school, the size of its alumni base and its rural location. We are also confronted with challenges related to the changing nature of legal education as a whole. Each of the priorities the School identifies must address these concerns related to size, age, alumni base and location.

To compete effectively, we need to change our program, consistent with the mission and context in which we find ourselves. We must continue to offer a solid program of legal education. This requires expansion into areas in which we are weak and by changing our program. Intellectual property, for example, must be added to the curriculum. Given our location, however, we will not be able to use adjuncts as effectively as schools in less rural areas.

The absence of specialized programs also hurts recruitment of students. We will increasingly compete for students with urban schools with a plethora of LL.M. programs, new buildings and attractive part-time job opportunities. Our priorities must recognize this challenge

If we are to strengthen admissions, development, and reputation we must not only change programs, but we must work to overcome our geographic isolation. The document establishing the School of Law correctly anticipated that the market for lawyers in southern Illinois would be saturated by 1996. What it did not anticipate was that the attraction of a rural legal education had certain limitations. We face the reality, therefore, that, no matter how inexpensive we are, applicants are reluctant to go to a rural law school, particularly one that is neither ranked in the top 25 (e.g., Cornell, Washington and Lee) nor part of the state's flagship university. Indeed, SIU, Cincinnati, Louisville and Northern Illinois are the only non-flagship law schools with fewer than 400 students that are consistently ranked in the third tier or higher. Of these four schools, only SIU and Northern are in locations that have a population of less than 1 million people.

We are unlikely to move the School of Law to an urban area, but we cannot ignore the need to have a presence in at least one major metropolitan area. Without a large alumni base and without a physical presence it is virtually impossible to maintain consistent visibility in a geographic area. Visibility, however, is critical if we are to have prospective students think of us as a legitimate choice, if we are to have major donors give us money and if we are to have the bench and bar choose to hire our graduates.

Further, development is going to continue to be a challenge at SIU until the alumni base matures. We have made significant strides in raising money, but the reality is that our alumni base is too small and too young to allow for transformative giving.

Program development in the school must, to the extent consistent with law school values, follow the money. Health law does this in obvious ways. Intellectual Property has the potential to attract institutional support. Satellite programs in East St. Louis and Springfield give people in metropolitan areas a reason to support the School of Law while expanding its mission to serve Illinois.

The physical plant presents a significant challenge. Although the Lesar building has been attractively remodeled through private giving and internal reallocation, the building is simply too small too small and technologically limited to allows the School of Law to develop to its full potential. Its limitations are such that it is likely that there will be accreditation problems during the next sabbatical inspection cycle.

5. Priorities

- Increase the academic success predictors for the entering class.
- Develop a Center for Health Law and Policy.
- Develop new degree and certificate programs, including and LL.M., a Masters in Legal Studies, and certificate programs in health law and policy.
- Develop a Center for Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer.
- Develop satellite programs in more urban areas, including Springfield and East St. Louis.
- Expand or replace the Lesar Building.
- Expand development activities.
- Increase support for grants and scholarships.
- Create chairs and distinguished professorships.

6. Summary

The School of Law seeks to be the best small public law school in the country, delivering an education program that bridges the professional and graduate models. While at the same time, it seeks to fulfill its reason for existence, public service. Whatever the School becomes by 2019, however, it will have to effectively deal with the challenges of size, age, alumni base and location.

Southern Illinois University School of Law
Statement of Mission
2000-01

Preamble

Southern Illinois University School of Law was founded as a public law school by the Illinois General Assembly to serve the public interest. At the time of its founding, the School of Law sought to serve the public interest by training its graduates to practice law principally in southern Illinois, a region with a critical shortage of lawyers. As the School has matured, the pressing need for lawyers in southern Illinois has largely been satisfied. Accordingly, the school's focus on serving the public interest is no longer limited to its original, primarily regional, focus. While the school continues to focus its attention on serving the public interest, today that mission encompasses providing a legal education for those who would otherwise be unable to afford it and educating law students in areas and careers that are traditionally underserved by other law schools. In this pursuit, the School of Law seeks no less than to become, and to be known as, one of the best small public law schools in the nation.

The achievement of this mission has three components. As presented below, they are:

- Fully preparing our students to enter the legal profession or other intellectually demanding work;
- Contributing to legal scholarship;
- Serving the legal profession and the general public.

A. Student Preparation

All of our graduates must have the basic substantive knowledge and legal skills to become competent to practice law, or to perform other work involving legal doctrine and skills, both at the time of graduation and throughout their working lifetimes. Thus, they should possess:

1. A broad knowledge of legal doctrine to serve as the foundation for the abilities to recognize legal issues, employ legal concepts, and build a strong body of substantive knowledge in their chosen future careers.
2. Knowledge of American legal institutions and traditions and the role of lawyers in our society, in concert with a recognition of the culturally diverse international environment in which lawyers interact on a daily basis.
3. A basic grounding in the essential skills required of a lawyer, with particular focus on those identified in the 1992 ABA report, *Legal Education and Professional Development—An Educational Continuum*, but also including a recognition of the growing importance of technological solutions in the practice of law.
4. A strong sense of professional responsibility and professionalism, marked by a commitment to what were identified as “Fundamental Values of the Profession” in the 1992 ABA report, *Legal Education and Professional Development—An Educational Continuum*.
5. The ability to integrate non-legal disciplines into their legal analysis.

A primary aspect of the school's mission is to provide a program sufficiently broad in scope that our students are introduced to these skills and qualities by the time they graduate.

B. Legal Scholarship

The School of Law, primarily through its faculty, must contribute to legal scholarship. Law schools are uniquely situated to perform this vital function, the only institutions specifically assigned to the task. In general, the legal profession does not pay scholars for pure, objective research. Therefore, law schools must do all within their power to foster legal scholarship. The School of Law seeks to do so by:

1. A personal commitment from faculty members to make legal scholarship a significant part of their work.
2. Institutional and administrative provision of time, facilities, tools, and other support and assistance for faculty engaging in scholarship.
3. According appropriate recognition for successful accomplishments in legal scholarship.

C. Public Service

As with legal scholarship, a law school is well-suited to provide to various segments of the public both law-related service and non-legal community service that is appropriate to the legal profession. Not only do such actions benefit the public directly, they also help to instill in students an understanding of the lawyer's larger role in society. This public service is primarily accomplished by the School of Law, both institutionally and through the actions of individual faculty members:

1. Participating in, promoting, and sponsoring efforts to improve the law, the administration of justice, and legal education; and
2. While acknowledging that the organized Bar itself has a responsibility for, and is active in, providing continuing legal education, educating non-lawyers in the law, and furnishing legal services to those unable to afford them, supporting the Bar's efforts by:
 - (a) providing continuing legal education to attorneys in the southern Illinois region;
 - (b) developing regional programs and other means by which non-lawyers can broaden their knowledge of the law;
 - (c) encouraging the provision of legal services to persons in the region who cannot afford them through existing channels, principally through the school's clinical program; and
 - (d) modeling community service by giving time and expertise in legal and other social service capacities that are appropriate to the legal profession.

Not all faculty will be engaged in public service activities at any given time, nor will all such activities necessarily occur on a continuous basis. But we must set a strong example if we expect our students to believe that public service is really a lawyer's inherent responsibility. Such activities are especially important and appropriate for a public law school.