

To: S.J. Quinney College of Law College Council

From: Strategic Planning Committee

Re: 2025 Strategic Plan

Date: May 31, 2025

In summer 2024, as the S.J. Quinney College of Law marked 111 years of service to the State of Utah, Dean Elizabeth Kronk Warner challenged the College community to commence a strategic planning process that would shape the College's direction for the next several years. The challenge was significant in both meaning and scope. It afforded the College community an opportunity to engage deeply with each other and to reflect broadly on aims, values, and ambitions. And it came in the midst of rapid and multifaceted changes in both society and higher education: the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic accelerating shifts in how the world works, including in pedagogy and learning modality; fast-paced technological developments, especially artificial intelligence, transforming not only the practice of law but society itself; and a burgeoning population and growing economy remaking the State of Utah while international challenges continue to strain access to justice and the preservation of democracy worldwide.

Situating itself within, while also responding to, these tectonic forces is a tall order for any institution. It is a particularly vital endeavor for a law school that prides itself as being a living, caring community, one that seeks to serve the state, impact society, embody excellence, and fulfill its core mission of educating lawyers and law students who will become leaders within the profession and the world and who will defend the Constitution and rule of law. It demands balance and perspective: looking within while understanding what is on the horizon, nurturing the school's community while being willing to pivot and pursue new opportunities, charting a future course while leveraging existing strengths.

This memorandum summarizes the College's 2025 Strategic Plan, which has coalesced around four pillars:

1. *SJQ will enhance and strengthen genuine community and connectedness among the faculty, staff, and students.*
2. *SJQ will fully embrace and pursue our dual role as a nationally preeminent public law school that positively impacts society and serves our nation and the State of Utah.*
3. *SJQ will create, sustain, and support a vibrant alumni community.*
4. *SJQ will use collaborative, consensus-driven decisionmaking to advance key initiatives that will strengthen our excellence and national prominence and strengthen our financial position.*

The memorandum proceeds in three parts. It first summarizes the process used to create the strategic plan. It then overviews the core themes that emerged from that process. Finally, it details the four pillars of the new S.J. Quinney College of Law strategic plan. Several appendices provide further detail and document feedback received throughout the plan's development.

Summary of Process

To develop a new strategic plan, Dean Kronk Warner instituted two processes. First, she established an ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee comprised of students, staff, and faculty charged with representing views from across the College. Second, she engaged consultants from the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) to bolster the committee's work and help facilitate the strategic planning process. The consultants, Annette Clark and Susannah Pollvogt, brought wide perspective, deep knowledge of higher education, and extensive experience in strategic planning to the College's process, including past work in legal education leadership. The committee was comprised of eight members: Daniel Aaron (faculty), Natasha Carlton (staff), Valeri Craigle (staff), Lincoln Davies (faculty), Randy Dryer (faculty), Seth LaPray (student), Stephanie Peterson (staff), and Stephanie Warner (alumna). Professor Davies was asked to serve as committee chair. Dean Kronk Warner charged the committee and consultants with finalizing two or possibly three deliverables: a new mission statement for the College, a new strategic plan, and, potentially, a College of Law statement of shared values.

The committee identified three goals from the outset. The committee wanted its work—and thus, the strategic plan itself—to be transparent, collaborative, and consensus-driven. This approach was accepted with enthusiasm when presented to the faculty and College Council.

In developing the College's plan, the committee was also cognizant of, and sought to tether its work to, the university's recently launched [Impact 2030](#) strategy, aligning the College's efforts with those of the university as a whole.

Early on, the committee and consultants decided to divide their work by semester.

In the Autumn 2024 semester, two objectives were pursued. First, the consultants engaged in extensive, confidential interviews with every full-time faculty member and roughly 25 members of the College of Law staff, including the heads and members of key College departments (*e.g.*, student affairs, career development, marketing and communications, the library, information technology, operations). In all, the consultants completed 55 of these interviews, totaling more than 50 hours of interview time.¹ Second, the committee divided into two subcommittees. One of these subcommittees developed draft potential mission statements for the College. The other developed a draft statement of shared values. The whole committee then met several times to discuss these draft documents and adjust and refine them. Toward the end of the semester, the committee distributed these drafts to the College for initial feedback, including a survey instrument and a summary of the committee's and consultants' work to date. The committee also surveyed the College on preferences for additional engagement with the strategic planning process.

¹ Jim Leipold, a senior advisor at LSAC, assisted Dr. Clark and Ms. Pollvogt in conducting the interviews.

In the Spring 2025 semester, the committee set to work developing its deliverables. The committee met most weeks of the semester, typically on Mondays, with an aim toward continuing to refine and revise its output based on ongoing feedback. The committee sought this feedback from the College community via six avenues. *First*, at each College Council of the semester, the committee presented draft documents and solicited input on the overall direction as well as the details of the drafts. The committee would then modify its documents to incorporate and reflect this feedback. *Second*, the committee convened four focus groups throughout the semester to receive input on overall directions and the draft strategic plan. These focus groups were open to faculty and staff. Roughly 35 faculty and staff members participated in these groups. Several staff and faculty members also reached out to the committee separately, and this feedback was incorporated into the committee’s memorialization of the focus group comments. *Third*, the committee met with the Belonging and Access Advisory Board for the duration of one of its weekly meetings, conducting that conversation as a listening session similar to the focus groups. *Fourth*, the committee held two College-wide listening sessions to which all students were invited, one in late February and one in early April, to receive feedback on the draft strategic plan. Seth LaPray, a student member of the committee and the 2024-2025 Student Bar Association President, convened and masterfully conducted these listening sessions. Professor Davies also attended as a listener; he was dismissed toward the end of each session so students could provide additional feedback to Mr. LaPray with no faculty in attendance. *Fifth*, the consultants met with Dean Kronk Warner to relay the aggregate themes of their confidential interviews and to receive her input on the draft strategic plan. Dean Kronk Warner provided the committee with comments on the draft plan as well as the narrative for the College’s academic enterprise plan that she submitted to the university provost in spring 2025. The Dean also provided some feedback on the draft plan to the committee chair, which he relayed to the committee. *Sixth*, the committee developed and administered a survey assessing strengths, opportunities, and potential directions for the College. The survey included both numerical ranking and open-ended textual answer questions. The committee sent the survey to all students, staff, and faculty within the College. The College’s communications and marketing department distributed the survey to alumni. The survey garnered 691 responses. Of these, 134 were J.D. or LLM students, 18 were MLS students, 33 were staff, 25 were faculty, 12 were MLS alumni, and 466 were J.D. alumni.²

The committee took all this feedback into account as it continued to iteratively modify and refine the draft strategic plan. The committee presented a revised plan in the April College Council meeting. Conversation in that meeting confirmed that the plan was nearly complete. During the meeting, the committee also presented two potential new S.J. Quinney College of Law mission statements. One of these had received broadest support during the committee’s December 2024 survey to faculty and staff; the College Council confirmed that this was the preferred statement. As part of its consultation process with the College, the committee determined that a finalized shared values statement would not be appropriate at this time. Instead, it included engaging in a set of structured conversations around College values as an action item in the strategic plan.

² Three respondents identified as employers. The survey instructed individuals who were both alumni and employers to identify as an alum.

The Dean reviewed and expressed support for the final strategic plan, mission statement, and this memorandum.

On April 30, 2025, the committee distributed a draft of this memorandum as well as the proposed strategic plan to College Council for notice and comment. In response, the Committee received two comments, both from faculty members. After deliberation and consideration of those two comments, the Committee supplemented one item in the focus group feedback document (Appendix I) and made a minor modification to one bullet point in the strategic plan. On May 23, 2025, the committee distributed the new mission statement (Appendix A) and the final strategic plan (Appendix B) to College Council for electronic vote. The College Council approved the mission statement by a vote of 26 in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstentions. The Council approve the strategic plan by a vote of 25 in favor, 2 opposed, and 1 abstention.

Overview of Themes

Throughout the strategic planning process, several major themes emerged reflecting strengths of, and challenges and opportunities for, the College.

Strengths

It is clear that the College is performing well along multiple dimensions, as evidenced by the many strengths that stakeholders emphasized.

Curricular and pedagogical excellence. Perhaps most fundamentally, the College delivers an outstanding overall program of legal education, as demonstrated by the faculty's excellence in teaching, the ongoing development of legal clinics, and the breadth and depth of curricular offerings. Students particularly value the "intensive faculty feedback and attention that's a hallmark of our school," made possible in part by the smaller J.D. class sizes and high faculty-to-student ratio. Others praised the overall excellence of the school's teaching and curriculum. As one survey respondent wrote, "I truly feel like I received the best law school education because of the small class sizes. I had multiple professors take a personal interest in my success. That is what allowed me to succeed. Over anything else, PLEASE continue to keep class sizes small and hire those types of professors! This is what makes Utah Law special!" Survey data reinforce this conclusion. Asked whether "Utah Law's faculty are successful at teaching," the mean response was 2.85 on a 3-point scale where a score of 1 meant "disagree," 2 was "neutral," and 3 was "agree." On the same scale, whether the College "does a good job preparing students for a wide variety of legal careers" received a 2.54 score, whether it has a curriculum that "compares favorably to other top law schools in terms of its doctrinal rigor" received a 2.45, and whether the College "provides students with a legal education that compares favorably to other leading law schools in terms of value" received a score of 2.83.

Academic excellence in environmental/resource, health, criminal, and intellectual property law. Stakeholders noted particular strengths of the College in environmental and resources law (and attendant fields, through the Stegner Center), health law, criminal law, and intellectual property. The general sentiment was that these are fields that enhance the College's reputation and attract students, and that they are areas that should continue to be pursued and

leveraged to the College's benefit. Emblematic responses to the survey question "Which of Utah Law's programs and/or areas of expertise should the college prioritize in order to continue to be a national leader?" included "Environmental and Natural Resources Law program (Stegner Center)," "Health Law," and "Clinical programs for experiential learning." The word clouds included as Appendices K and L portray common responses to this question. Stakeholders also see continuing to pursue excellence in these areas as creating virtuous cycles that benefit the College. As one student noted, "There is no tradeoff between pro bono work and promoting areas of strength like Stegner or our national ranking."

Student-centered orientation and tight-knit student community. Stakeholders were particularly praiseworthy of the school's student-oriented approach to education and services and what students describe as a healthy, tight-knit student community. Students repeatedly noted that both the school's culture and small class sizes facilitate and help nurture this. Many students are attracted to the school for its close community, a longstanding facet of the school that both current and past students highlighted. As one student noted, "Community is what I value most about SJQ. We should treasure the connectedness our community creates. It's a good idea to focus on this in our strategic plan." Survey data also reflect this as a core strength of the College. In response to the survey question "How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall climate/environment that you experienced at Utah Law?," 85 percent of alumni were either "extremely" (52 percent) or "somewhat" (33 percent) satisfied, while only 8 percent of respondents were "somewhat dissatisfied" and only 1 percent "extremely dissatisfied."

Culture of caring and commitment to service. Part of what underpins the tight-knit student community is the College's deep culture of caring and general commitment to service to the state and the public. Stakeholders repeatedly underscored this aspect of the law school as one of its strengths. Throughout the confidential interview process with faculty and staff in autumn 2024, interviewees identified the College's "commitment to public service and a sense of striving for justice," a general approach of "care and kindness in interactions with others," a "welcoming, diverse, safe, and inclusive community," a "strong commitment by administration, faculty, and staff to students' mental health and well-being," a "pervasive culture of kindness," and its "culture of valuing public service, civic engagement, and using the law to solve social problems and provide access to justice" as bright points. Survey responses also reflected this, with students, staff, and faculty reporting a 3.89 score on a traditional Likert scale in agreement with the statement "I feel valued as an individual at Utah Law," and alums reporting a similar 3.85 score. To the statement "I was treated with respect during my time at Utah Law," alums recorded a 4.16 score, and current students, faculty, and staff recorded a 4.18 score. As one survey respondent noted, "I love the University of Utah SJ Quinney College of Law. The faculty and administrative staff should be recognized for their kindness and sincerity. Additionally, they should be recognized for the vision they have for their students and this school. . . . I appreciate our faculty and staff for pushing us to be our best while also treating us like humans."

Upward trajectory and national prominence. Finally, stakeholders were quite positive about the school's climb in stature in recent years, reflected in higher national rankings, the College's increasing ability to attract top-caliber students and faculty, and commitment to excellence in research, including interdisciplinary research. Students refer to the College as "prestigious," "nationally ranked," "nationally prominent," and a "top" law school, and they see

the school continuing on that trajectory. Faculty and staff also see this rise as “a virtuous circle.” Stakeholders praise the College’s “culture of innovation and nimbleness, enhanced by proximity to the Silicon Slopes and a progressive judiciary,” reflected in part in newer programs, such as the MLS, launched seven years ago, and the new undergraduate minor, which will begin this fall. Indicative of this strength, alums of the College reported a 4.36 score in agreement with the statement “My experience at Utah Law had a positive influence on my professional growth.”

Challenges and Opportunities

Several overarching themes also emerged with respect to challenges and opportunities the College faces:

1. *Rebuilding and deepening community.* Perhaps the most prominent theme was a pressing desire to rebuild and deepen community within staff and faculty at the College. This was expressed as (a) a lack of connection, despite collegiality, among faculty and staff, (b) a strong desire of students to have more interaction with faculty and staff, especially through in-person engagement, office hours, and faculty participation in student events, and (c) concerns about potentially disrespectful treatment of staff by some faculty.
2. *Need for consensus around shared values.* Connected to this idea of community, stakeholders, especially staff and faculty, noted a lack of shared values among employees and ways in which this engenders disputes or fraught decisionmaking, such as around faculty hiring. Although there were common themes among the values that faculty and staff identified in their confidential interviews with the consultants, there was a sense that robust, structured work and open engagement to build a clear sense of shared core values would be beneficial.
3. *Need for focus in direction and strategic allocation of resources.* In various ways, both staff and faculty expressed a sense of burnout, high service loads, and concern that the College has been pursuing too many new initiatives without deliberate choice or strategic direction. Faculty and staff both hope that the College will strategically choose key, targeted programs it wishes to pursue and achieve excellence in those, rather than spreading everyone too thin. One stakeholder summed up the sentiment: “We can’t do everything. We shouldn’t try to.”
4. *Expanding and deepening alumni connections.* Another theme that emerged was interest in expanding and deepening connections with alumni. While the Dean and the development team have heightened efforts on this front in recent years, there is a sense that those efforts must be both continued and expanded, particularly for young alums, and that faculty and staff could help in this regard. A strong desire to build a greater sense of community among alumni emerged. Many survey responses from alumni identified alumni relations as an area of needed improvement for the College. Staff and faculty also hope for a tool to facilitate their connections with alums.

5. *Consensus-driven, collaborative decisionmaking, and greater communication and transparency.* A final prominent theme was significant interest in greater faculty governance and, in general, College decisionmaking that involves all stakeholders, is driven by consensus, and is transparent. There is a sense that this has been lacking in recent years, driven by several factors, including the fast pace at which new programs have been rolled out, some leadership choices, and a feeling among some that the university has become more top-down in decisionmaking generally. Staff identified programs that were created without their input, even though they must implement those programs. Faculty and staff want a greater say in the College's direction. A desire for more transparency and communication, including educating each other as to what is happening in the College, was prevalent.

Explanation of Strategic Plan

As noted, the committee developed the strategic plan iteratively over the course of the Spring 2025 semester. The committee used as a starting point a set of potential directions that the consultants derived from their confidential interviews with staff and faculty. As the committee engaged with stakeholders, including the College Council discussions, focus groups, student listening forums, and survey responses, the plan was supplemented, reshaped, and modified. The committee asked stakeholders to provide feedback not only on overall directions for the plan but also potential concrete action items and focus.

The final plan, which is included here as Appendix A, includes two core components. First, it features four strategic objectives the College should pursue in the coming years. Second, it provides consensus action items under each of those four directions. This final section of this memorandum provides additional explanation of each of the four pillars of the new Strategic Plan.

1. *SJQ will enhance and strengthen genuine community and connectedness among the faculty, staff, and students.*

This objective seeks to address the strong desire among stakeholders to rebuild and deepen community within the College, particularly given that remote work has increased post-pandemic and the sense that a “critical mass” of physical presence may be lacking in the building. Students acknowledge that faculty fulfill multiple roles in their positions, and that some of those for both faculty and staff, such as writing or work that can be maximized when uninterrupted, warrants some schedule flexibility. Still, there is a yearning among students for greater in-person engagement with faculty and staff, for academic reasons but also for career guidance and participation in student social events. As one student said, “We definitely need more physical presence in the building. I like that this is listed here.” Said another, “What’s needed is building the underlying culture of community so that everyone, and especially faculty, want to engage with students. When they do, that’s what makes everyone love being here.”

Action items for this strategic objective thus include efforts to build greater community within the College. They recognize the need for flexibility but aim for a culture of regular physical presence for faculty and student-facing staff. The action items also acknowledge that staff and faculty should not be asked to do even more to build community, but rather, that bandwidth should be reallocated to facilitate and support this work.

Some concrete ideas offered in the strategic planning process to implement this objective include agreeing on common days where employees will be in the building, developing a consensus around what are key College events and an expected number of events that faculty will attend, moving the College retreat closer to the beginning of the school year, making College Council meetings more participative and utilizing them to have College units educate everyone on what they are working on, and creating an expectation that faculty will list regular weekly office hours in their syllabi. Additional ideas for implementation are included in Appendices F-I, which reflect College Council, student, and focus group feedback.

As a starting point, the committee recommends that the College engage in an inclusive, structured process to develop a set of shared common values for the law school, which should include the College's ongoing commitment to open dialogue and civil discourse, one that is welcoming to diverse viewpoints. Appendix C, which the committee and consultants prepared as an initial attempt at a draft values statement, might be useful in that process.

2. *SJQ will fully embrace and pursue our dual role as a nationally preeminent public law school that positively impacts society and serves our nation and the State of Utah.*

This pillar aims to build on the College's growing national prominence and stature as well as its longstanding commitment to serving the state and providing access to justice. The consensus view during the strategic planning process was that these objectives are mutually reinforcing; the stronger the College is, the more it serves the state, and vice versa. The committee recognizes that positively impacting society is a core part of what the university aims to do; the law school should be aligned with that objective. The action items included under this strategic direction aim to bolster the College's commitment in this regard.

The action items here also highlight the objective of continuing to attract top entering classes and nationally recognized scholars to the College, as well as to continue growing the College's clinical education program—both efforts highly desired by students. The College's service efforts should focus on access to justice and alignment and deepened connection with government and industry in the state.

Finally, this pillar's action items emphasize leveraging existing College strengths in support of this strategic objective, including through the Stegner Center and the Center for Law and Biomedical Sciences.

3. *SJQ will create, sustain, and support a vibrant alumni community.*

The aim of this objective is to deepen and strengthen the College's alumni community, beginning by creating more of a culture within the community. As one current student noted, "Alumni relations start with the culture in the school. Classes (of students) need to focus on this while we're here." Wrote one alum in response to the survey, "Utah Law needs to take a very serious look at how it engages alumna and career services. Despite working at big law for . . . years, I've never been asked to be a mentor, I've never been invited to speak at an event, and I've never had career services reach out to me. Connections are a big deal in our industry, and Utah Law should take a serious look at how it is stacking up to other schools on this front."

Action items for this pillar recognize that the College has increased alumni relations efforts in recent years, led by the Dean, and seek to bolster those efforts. They include a suggestion for retitling the development office and communicating that change, developing a tool that staff and faculty can use to connect with alumni, focusing on young alumni, and expanding ways that alumni can engage with the College.

They also include adding an MLS alum to the Alumni Board of Trustees, an effort that is now underway.

4. *SJQ will use collaborative, consensus-driven decisionmaking to advance key initiatives that will strengthen our excellence and national prominence and strengthen our financial position.*

The final pillar of the new Strategic Plan seeks to simultaneously pursue, and weave together, four vital objectives: making the College's decisionmaking more transparent and collaborative, focusing College efforts on strategic initiatives rather than spreading resources too thin, responding to external societal shifts while building on existing strengths, and continuing to strengthen the College's financial position.

Action items under this pillar reflect the multidimensional nature of these goals. They ask the College to increase transparency and communication, utilize collaboration and consensus-driven approaches in decisionmaking going forward, revisit and potentially sunset programs using those processes, and focus on key programs that will move the College forward strategically and financially. Consensus within the College seems to reflect that two such initiatives meriting resources and continued focus are the MLS program and the nascent undergraduate program. By contrast, stakeholders repeatedly identified the Spring

to D.C. program as one that should be revisited, and the Dean has now initiated a reassessment of that program with a call to interested faculty and staff who would like to participate in the reevaluation. Stakeholders also sometimes mentioned a Korea program as one that might be revisited; however, no such program has yet been developed, and the College administration has committed to engaging in collaborative, transparent decisionmaking if one is formally proposed.

This pillar includes action items to augment financial and other support for faculty scholarship and the dissemination and support of that research. There is a sense that, even though the faculty includes nationally prominent scholars, the level of support provided for their work has fallen behind national and peer standards.

Areas of strength that should continue to be pursued and invested in include environment/resources law, criminal law, intellectual property, and health law.³

This pillar's action items identify key areas of hiring need as including legal writing, technology/AI, and constitutional law. Students consistently and vigorously expressed support for additional legal writing hires. One student explained, "The need for another hire in legal writing should be bolded, underlined, flashing, and with an arrow pointing at it. Our legal writing classes are too large now. Students need more attention and intensive feedback." Said another, "Add a siren to the need for more legal writing professors. It's totally needed here." The survey results indicate that hiring in and developing curricular programming that will equip students to grapple with technological changes reshaping society and the legal profession also are among the most pressing external challenges the College faces. On the three-point disagree, neutral, agree scale, survey respondents gave a 2.97 score to the statement "Lawyers today need to possess skills they can adapt to the changing legal profession" and a 2.95 score to the statement "Lawyers today need to enter the workforce with competency in technology." Alums and employers gave the statement "Technology is changing how attorneys practice law in modern society" a 2.89.

Finally, a prominent theme that emerged through the strategic planning process—a theme that connects this pillar as well as the plan's second pillar—is significant appetite for additional experiential, practical, and clinical education. While the College has invested deeply in building out its clinical program in recent years, pressing further in this direction is warranted. Again and again, the need for more practical education arose in both student and alumni responses to the survey, as shown in Appendices P and Q. In response to the question "In what ways would you suggest that Utah Law add to its curriculum to better prepare sought-after professionals and future leaders?," one student's answer was emblematic: "More practical courses that actually prepare students for real jobs. Currently, pre-trial practice, trial advocacy, and contract drafting are the only

³ While specific legal areas are mentioned here, these are not listed to convey decisions about where the College should hire. Those decisions will be made after further faculty discussion and consultation with the Dean.

really practical courses offered. If Utah Law wants to be the leading powerhouse law school in the mountain-west, then we need to offer courses and programs that actually make Utah Law students desirable by local, regional, and national firms.” Echoed an alum, “SJ Quinney . . . needs some direction as to what employers are actually seeking in students and future attorneys. Things have changed dramatically in the last 5 years and it seems the school is not quite as responsive as it could be to those needs. . . . We don’t need researchers and writers (though they need those skills). We need critical thinkers who are comfortable interacting with people and making decisions. . . . Young attorneys need to not just be smart but soon be capable of taking ownership of projects. . . . New graduates are lacking something basic. Work with students on taking written/product deliverables from A to B. Not just a final exam or one large paper. Make law school a little more responsive to what working in the legal field actually looks like.”

Conclusion

We would like to thank the many students, staff, faculty, and alumni who participated in the strategic planning process. The strength of the plan is a testament to the commitment of everyone in the S.J. Quinney College of Law to the school, each other, and the special community we all share.