



# DIRECTION

UNIVERSITY  
OF HOUSTON  
LAW CENTER  
STRATEGIC  
PLAN



The University of Houston Law Center  
plays an influential role in the development  
of law and legal institutions.

We are resolved to further our record  
of success and achievement, and to build  
a strong foundation for the future  
of our school.

**U N I V E R S I T Y  
O F H O U S T O N  
L A W C E N T E R  
S T R A T E G I C  
P L A N**

The strategic plan summarized in these pages is a product of a major UH Law Center initiative known as Project Magellan. The plan sets a vision and outlines a series of priorities that will guide us for the foreseeable future.

It is a **plan** that draws upon the significant strengths of the school, including:

A **student body** whose academic qualifications have improved year after year;

A **productive and influential faculty** with diverse interests and expertise as well as a commitment to teaching excellence;

A **national reputation** in specialty programs such as health law, intellectual property law, and trial advocacy;

An **urban location** in the fourth-largest U.S. city that includes tremendous intellectual and financial resources and a vibrant legal market; and

**Highly committed alumni** who strongly support the Law Center with contributions of both time and funding.

**These strengths are the core of the UH Law Center**—and they constitute the foundation supporting the initiatives and action steps included in this strategic plan.

**OUR VISION:** To be one of the nation's premier public, urban law schools.

**OUR MISSION:** The mission of the University of Houston Law Center is to build upon the strengths of the nation's fourth-largest city by providing an affordable, top-quality legal education to the future leaders of a free society.

We will develop the professional lives of students and practicing lawyers through caring and challenging teaching of both theory and practice, cutting-edge research in a wide variety of disciplines, and active participation in the resolution of difficult issues facing the city of Houston, the state of Texas, the nation, and the world.







## A NOTE FROM DEAN NIMMER

Regardless of their size or complexity, all successful organizations share a common characteristic: they adhere to a simple mission, and they know how to leverage the basics of that mission into every one of their initiatives.

Our simple goal is to build the University of Houston Law Center into a truly great institution, and we have worked to articulate the specific ways that we will achieve that successful outcome. The Strategic Plan outlined on these pages gives us the invaluable framework that will help guide us toward our ultimate goal.

I want to thank the members of the Project Magellan committee for their commitment of time and energy that made our Strategic Plan possible. As we put our agenda into action, we are committed to measuring and reporting our progress, and being accountable for results.

A stronger and more successful Law Center will be taking shape in the months and years ahead, and I invite you to join us on our journey.



**RAYMOND T. NIMMER**

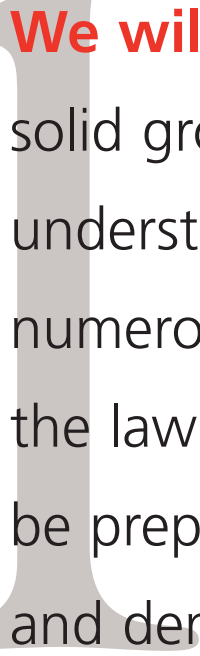
*Dean and Leonard H. Childs Professor of Law*





**OUR GOALS:**





**We will provide** our students with a solid grounding in legal theory, a deep understanding of ethical issues, and numerous opportunities to experience the law in practice so that they will be prepared to meet the challenges and demands of the legal profession.

We will challenge our students to sharpen their analytical and communication skills.

**a.**

**We will** regularly examine and adjust our curriculum to meet the changing needs of the profession in today's world.

**i.** We will provide our upper-level students with more interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

**ii.** We will strive to expand our clinics, externships, and simulations so that all students can avail themselves of at least one such opportunity for professional skills training.

**b.**

**We will** be more rigorous in setting standards and measuring achievement to increase the ability of our graduates to achieve personal and professional success in their initial positions and throughout their careers. At the same time, we will strengthen our academic support program so that every student has the opportunity to meet these more rigorous standards.

**c.**

**We will** enhance our legal writing program to meet the demands of the profession, and develop writing opportunities throughout the upper-level curriculum.

**d.**

**We will** build on our historic commitment to teaching excellence.

**i.** We will continually improve our teaching skills and develop innovative teaching methods.

**ii.** We will encourage and support junior colleagues in their development of teaching skills and methods.

**iii.** We will recognize and celebrate our excellent teachers.



**We value** and seek to enhance  
a community of scholars who  
influence legal and public  
policy debates.

**a.** **We will** attract and retain a faculty of influential scholars and teachers.

**i.** We will consider scholarly potential as the primary criterion in our decision to hire faculty at the entry level.


**ii.** We will also seek to attract individuals at the lateral level with an established record of scholarship who can add depth to our faculty in areas where we have current or emerging strength or who can help us leverage the strengths of the region or our University.

**iii.** We will seek to increase the number of chairs and other honorifics as well as to develop a competitive compensation program for our faculty.

**b.** **We will** increase opportunities and incentives for our faculty members to increase their scholarly productivity, such as by maintaining flexibility in terms of course scheduling, leaves, and committee assignments for scholars who have demonstrated a prolific research agenda.

**c.** **We will** broadly disseminate our research and scholarship to the appropriate forums, including the business, legal and policymaking communities. We will host faculty directed conferences in pursuit of this goal.

**d.** **We will** support faculty initiatives to present research at conferences, to visit other law schools and to assume leadership roles in organizations such as committees of the Association of American Law Schools.



**We will develop** and maintain centers of excellence in areas of faculty strength and in areas that respond to the challenges confronting our society and draw on the resources of our region and our University.

**a.**

**We will** create or enhance programs and institutes where we have or are building faculty research strength.

**b.**

**We will** use the following criteria for establishing, expanding, and closing programs or institutes. A program or institute should:

**i.** Contribute either funding for a significant portion of its own support or an enhanced curricular experience for our students.

**ii.** Enhance the national or international visibility of our scholarship, as well as the national or international visibility of the program or institute's curriculum and service activities.

**iii.** Leverage the strengths of the region and the University.

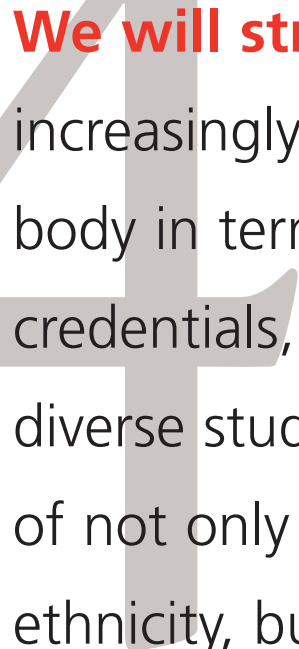
**c.**

**We will** increase the reach of programs or institutes by working more closely with other parts of the University or with colleagues at other institutions.

**d.**

**We will** maintain the strength of our graduate programs, which rely on our recognized areas of faculty expertise.





**We will strive** to admit an increasingly stronger student body in terms of academic credentials, as well as a more diverse student body, in terms of not only race, gender and ethnicity, but also geography and life experience.

**a.** **We will** raise sufficient scholarship funds and manage our scholarship budget in order:

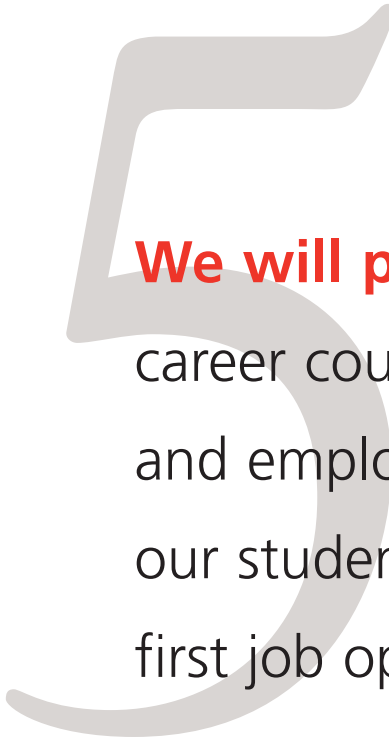
**i.** To attract and retain more top-caliber students of every background.

**ii.** To attract and retain students who will add to the diversity of the Law Center.

**iii.** That students from all socioeconomic backgrounds can attend without undue financial burden.

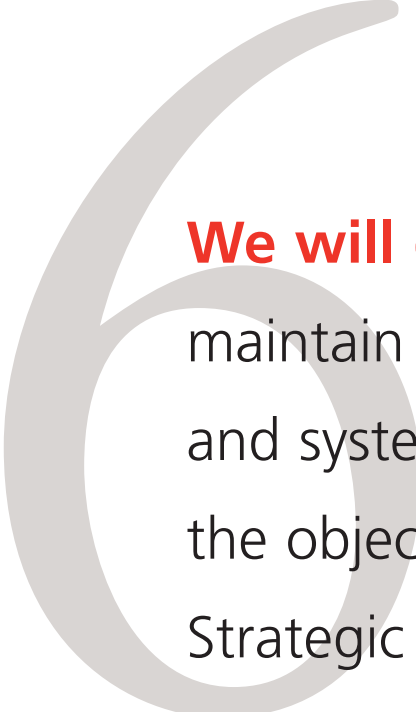
**b.** **We will** develop non-monetary methods of recruiting highly qualified and desirable students, such as guaranteed first-year summer jobs.

**c.** **We will** increase the involvement of faculty, students, and alumni in the recruitment process, to the extent not inconsistent with our goals concerning scholarly productivity and engagement with current students.



**We will provide** exceptional career counseling, placement, and employer service so that our students have excellent first job opportunities.

- a.** **We will** be among the two leading schools in Texas in terms of:
- i.** Employment at graduation and “nine months” placement at rates that are comparable to the leading Texas law schools.
  - ii.** The percentage of students who take first jobs as judicial clerks.
- b.** **We will** help those students who desire to take first jobs outside of Texas and obtain excellent positions in law firms (including AMLaw 200 firms), government, and public interest organizations throughout the country.
- c.** **We will** be the leading law school placing students and graduates in the Houston job market in all of the following sectors: law firms, government agencies, clerkships, and public interest organizations.
- d.** **We will** develop a loan repayment assistance program or provide other opportunities to facilitate the ability of our graduates to accept public interest or government positions.
- e.** **We will** continue to provide services of our Career Development to alumni.

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**We will develop** and  
maintain an infrastructure  
and systems to support  
the objectives of this  
Strategic Plan.

**a.** **We will** maintain a research library and information technology sufficient to support the research and teaching mission of the Law Center.

**b.** **We will** provide high-quality staff and research support for faculty members in their scholarship, as well as sufficient support for the curricular goals of the Law Center.

**c.** **We will** recognize that our ability to realize fully the goals of this plan may be dependent on our ability to construct a new facility. Until such time, we will make modest improvements in our current facility in accordance with our long-range facilities plan.

**d.** **We will** seek to sustain state, university, and private funding of the Law Center at a level that enables us to achieve the goals of this plan.

**i.** We will work to increase the amount of private giving to the Law Center to support the endowment of the Law Center, scholarship funds to accomplish our admissions goals, a loan repayment assistance program, and the unrestricted fund.

**ii.** We will increase the involvement of our alumni, including increases in the percentage of alumni who contribute to the unrestricted fund and in their participation in alumni functions and other events at the Law Center.



# MEASUREMENTS:

**PRIMARY METRIC:** Improvements in overall Law Center rankings as measured by major ranking systems.

### INITIATIVE 1

#### TEACHING

**STUDENT SATISFACTION**  
*with quality of teaching and education as measured by the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) or similar surveys.*

**IMPROVEMENTS IN**  
*individual teaching performance over time. Increased employer satisfaction with our graduates (as measured by surveys).*

### INITIATIVE 2

#### RESEARCH

**APPOINTMENTS SUCCESS** *in attracting new faculty in accordance with our goals.*

**REGULAR EVALUATION**  
*to determine whether entry-level scholars who were hired met our expectations.*

**SUCCESS IN RETAINING**  
*current productive scholars who receive other offers.*

**IMPROVEMENT** *in academic reputation as measured by major ranking systems.*

**RELATIVE IMPROVEMENT**  
*in quantity and quality of placement of scholarship (top 25 journals).*

**RELATIVE IMPROVEMENT**  
*in citation counts of articles or books produced by our faculty.*

**RELATIVE IMPROVEMENT** *in SSRN "hits" of articles produced by our faculty.*

**RELATIVE INCREASES** *in the casebooks written by our faculty and used at other law schools.*

**RELATIVE INCREASES** *in the number of treatises or university press books or similar publications authored by our faculty.*

**INCREASE IN THE NUMBER**  
*of faculty who assume leadership roles in organizations such as committees of the Association of American Law Schools or who present papers at conferences.*

**INCREASE IN THE NUMBER** *of faculty who visit or present papers at top 50 schools.*



### INITIATIVE 3

#### SYNERGY

**RECOGNITION** of our centers of excellence in various ranking systems.

**THE EXTENT** to which the criteria set forth in this goal are used as we create, expand, or disband centers.

**INCREASED SATISFACTION** of graduate students, as measured by LSSSE or similar surveys.

### INITIATIVE 4

#### ADMISSIONS

**RELATIVE IMPROVEMENTS** in median LSAT and GPA scores of entering class as compared to peer schools.

**IMPROVEMENTS** in diversity in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, and geography to reach the level of other urban, public law schools in the top 100 schools measured by major rankings systems.

**IMPROVEMENTS** in academic qualifications of international LL.M. students.

**IMPROVEMENTS** in the relative value of our education as determined by comparing average debt load with median starting salaries.

### INITIATIVE 5

#### CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**INCREASE** in student satisfaction with first job opportunities as measured by LSSSE or similar surveys.

**RELATIVE IMPROVEMENTS** in placement rates as compared to other leading Texas law schools (Texas, SMU, Baylor).

**INCREASE** in the number of employers that recruit our students.

**INCREASE** in judicial clerkship placements. Increase in job placement rates with large law firms in Houston as compared to other Texas law schools.

### INITIATIVE 6

#### RESOURCES

**INCREASE** in faculty and student satisfaction with the resources of the library (as measured by LSSSE).

**INCREASE** in the financial initiatives set forth in 6(d) on p. 19.

**INCREASE** in the percentage of alumni who contribute to the unrestricted fund.

**INCREASE** in the percentage of alumni who participate in alumni events.



**MOVING FORWARD:**



*We were honored to be members of the committee that led the development of this strategic plan and its unanimous approval by our faculty.*

*Under the leadership of Dean Nimmer, we have begun to implement a number of the initiatives in the plan, particularly in the areas of admissions and career services. At the same time, we are developing baselines to help measure our progress and report our results to the community.*

*We are poised to take the next significant step: launching a fundraising effort that will let us implement important initiatives relating to student scholarships and faculty hiring and retention. Our community has always been generous in its support of the UH Law Center, and we believe that our strategic plan will help renew confidence in the future of our school.*

*We look forward to working together to make our vision a reality.*

**PROJECT MAGELLAN COMMITTEE**

**SETH CHANDLER  
VICTOR FLATT  
LONNY HOFFMAN  
PETER HOFFMAN**

**JOHN MIXON  
DOUG MOLL  
TOM OLDHAM  
NANCY RAPOPORT  
IRENE ROSENBERG**

**SPENCER SIMONS  
SONDRA TENNESSEE  
RON TURNER  
TERESA WATTS**



## THE PROCESS

THE STRATEGIC **Plan** OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON LAW CENTER IS THE PRODUCT OF AN INCLUSIVE EFFORT LAUNCHED BY DEAN NANCY RAPOPORT AND THE PROJECT MAGELLAN COMMITTEE THAT INCLUDED FACULTY, STAFF AND A CONSULTANT EXPERIENCED IN STRATEGIC PLANNING. TASKS INCLUDED INTERVIEWS WITH ALL FACULTY MEMBERS, KEY STAFF AND LEADING ALUMNI TO BUILD A SOLID UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCHOOL'S STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES; AND RESEARCH TO CONFIRM THE UH LAW CENTER'S POSITION RELATIVE TO OTHER SCHOOLS ON A VARIETY OF BENCHMARKS. A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH FACULTY, STAFF, STUDENTS AND ALUMNI HELPED THE PROJECT MAGELLAN COMMITTEE FINALIZE THE MAJOR GOALS AND INITIATIVES INCLUDED IN THIS DOCUMENT, ALONG WITH METRICS TO ASSESS RESULTS.

*The Strategic **Plan** was unanimously approved  
by the faculty on April 21, 2006.*





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