

## **For Immediate Release**

### **UH Law Center to Host International Symposium on Legal Challenges of the 2026 FIFA World Cup**

**HOUSTON, March 5, 2026** — As the world counts down to the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the University of Houston Law Center will convene international legal experts, policymakers and sports governance leaders for a timely exploration of the event’s far-reaching impact. The event, [“From Kickoff to Consensus: The 2026 FIFA World Cup and North American Cross-Border Cooperation,”](#) will examine how the global sports event is reshaping cross-border trade, labor standards, human rights oversight and regional cooperation across North America. This year’s FIFA competition will be the first men’s World Cup jointly co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the U.S.

The two-day international symposium will be held March 13-14, 2026, in the John M. O’Quinn Law Building. It will focus on legal and institutional challenges created by multinational mega-events held at the same time as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) begins its critical five-year review, accompanied by trade and other negotiations.

“The 2026 FIFA World Cup is more than the largest sporting event ever hosted across three nations, it is a defining moment for sports governance in North America,” said Karen Jones, executive director of UHLC’s Global and Graduate Programs. “Mega-events expose how institutions actually function under pressure: how labor standards are enforced, how commercial rights are regulated, how governments coordinate across borders, and how human rights commitments move from principle to practice.”

#### **Program Highlights**

There will be a fireside chat “Law at the Center of the Game: FIFA, the World Cup and Cross Border Governance” with Lynn Carrillo from the FIFA Law Division and the keynote “From Global Governance to Local Implementation: FIFA’s Communication Strategy for the 2026 World Cup — The Mexican Perspective,” will be presented by Alejandra Márquez González, deputy coordinator with the Federal Government Coordination Office for FIFA Mexico. There will also be several presentations interspersed over the two days, offering in-depth analysis and discussions covering four key tracks:

- **Session I: Legal and Institutional Frameworks.**

**Moderator:** Karen Jones, UHLC

- **Alberto Ugarte**, The Soccer Boom in North America: How the 2026 World Cup Redefines Cooperation, Good Governance, and Transparency in Professional Leagues
- **Alina Gamboa Combs**, Regional Governance in North America: Local Responses to Global Pressures in the World Cup Context

- **Session II: Trade, Labor and Mobility.**

**Moderator:** Julian Cardenas, Director of the Center for U.S. and Mexican Law, UHLC

- **Cato Willems**, Women in Football: Equality and Labor Rights from a European Perspective
- **Rodolfo Rueda Ballesteros and Santiago Isusi Jiménez**, Mega Sporting Events and International Collaboration: The 2026 World Cup as a Catalyst for Regional Integration in North America

- **Session III: Human Rights, Ethics and Dispute Resolution.**

**Moderator:** Matt Mitten, Executive Director, National Sports Law Institute, Marquette University Law School

- **Karen L. Jones**, From Symbolic Compliance to Enforceable Oversight: Human Rights Due Diligence and the 2026 FIFA World Cup
- **Frea de Keyzer**, The Reach of EU Law in Sport Arbitration: Reassessing the Boundaries of Lex Sportiv

- **Session IV: Technology, Media, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure.**

**Moderator:** Brian Michale Cooper, Greenberg-Traurig LLP

- **Guillermo Mendoza**, Toward the Construction of a North American Intelligence Community Beyond Security: Trade, Investment, and Technology – A Mexican Perspective
- **Dionne Koller**, Sportswashing and American Law
- **James Gengaro**, Money Over Meaning: Infrastructure, Procurement, and the Cost of the Game

The goal of the event is to create a comprehensive forum to examine whether government structures, in sports and trade, are resilient, transparent and effective, Jones said. There will be plenty of networking opportunities during the two days.

“This symposium is for anyone invested in the future of global sport, international law, or North American cooperation, this is a conversation worth having — and a room worth being in,” Jones said.

**WHAT:** “From Kickoff to Consensus: The 2026 FIFA World Cup and North American Cross-Border Cooperation,” a two-day international symposium.

**WHERE:** The John M. O'Quinn Law Building, 4170 Martin Luther King Blvd., Houston, TX 77204.

**WHEN:** 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. CT, March 13 and 14, 2026

For more information and to register, please visit: [From Kickoff to Consensus: The 2026 FIFA World Cup and North American Cross-Border Cooperation](#)

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**About the University of Houston Law Center**

The University of Houston Law Center (UHLC) is a dynamic, top-tier law school located in the nation's 4th largest city. It is ranked #9 among U.S. law schools for return on investment (ROI) by LawCrossing. UHLC's Health Law, Intellectual Property and Information Law, Legal Writing Program, and Part-time programs rank in the U.S. News Top 15. It awards Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees, through its academic branch, the College of Law. The Law Center is more than just a law school. It is a powerful hub of intellectual activity with more than 12 centers and institutes that fuel its educational mission and national reputation. UHLC is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.

**About the University of Houston**

The University of Houston is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized with a Phi Beta Kappa chapter for excellence in undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city and one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions in the country, UH is a federally designated Hispanic- and Asian American-Serving institution with an enrollment of more than 47,000 students.

