

DEI ANNUAL REPORT

At Iowa Law, we continue our hard work of bridging gaps and pursuing change in our community and beyond. We believe in transparency and celebrations of accomplishment, while continuing to focus our priorities in creating lasting change and impact. During 2021-22, we continued to make strides in creating, building, and expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion at Iowa Law. Through this report, we are eager to share our updates and plans for continuing work.

Neda Barrett

Senior HR Director and Director of DEI

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2021-2022 ANNUAL DEI REPORT

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Listening and Learning and Growing

This past year was yet another one of listening and learning, as we continued to work to ensure that everyone in our community feels seen and heard, while encouraging meaningful discussions and teaching. Tactics included launching new programs and courses and celebrating our students, faculty, and staff.

The Collegiate DEI committee implemented more of the action points found in Iowa Law's Anti-Racism Action plan. A subcommittee was formed to lead the creation of DEI awards. The subcommittee developed the criteria, the selection process, and the format to recognize individuals and groups for their contributions to DEI in the law school community. Through the work of this subcommittee, the awards were designed to recognize current full-time students and employees (faculty and staff) who have made distinctive contributions that improve diversity and inclusion at Iowa Law. The awards committee also focused on those who have developed or implemented an innovative program or activity to enhance diversity and inclusion at the college.

This year's honorees were Professor Mihailis Diamantis, Professor Daria Fisher Page, and Johnny Molony (3L student). Professor Diamantis was recognized for his innovative Across the Aisle program, described in more detail below. Professor Fisher Page was recognized for service as a mentor to many underrepresented students who describe her as a fierce and caring advocate. Johnny Molony was recognized for having enriched our classroom discussions and helped people develop respectful vocabularies when talking about issues and people in the LGBTQ+ community and beyond.

Another major initiative accomplished by the DEI committee this year was the inaugural annual College of Law Climate Survey, which was sent to all faculty, staff, and students. It was the product of listening sessions, planning discussions, and careful drafting. The climate survey was designed to provide a voice to students, faculty, and staff at the college. This coming fall the committee will analyze the results, which will inform culture and policy development, and over time will help us understand trends in the law school climate.

Notable Programs

Across the Aisle

One new program created this year was Across the Aisle, piloted by Iowa Law's DEI committee. The program seeks to bridge divides and bring people with different perspectives into conversation with each other, focusing on topics that may typically be more difficult to discuss. "The students, staff, and faculty who attended Across the Aisle made the events a great success. Their conversations were robust and respectful. They showed that Iowa Law is a place where deep disagreement can coincide with the mutual recognition that we are all doing our best to understand a complicated, far-from-perfect world," stated Mihailis Diamantis, the Iowa Law professor who organized the event. "My motivation was to promote a mutual understanding even beyond disagreement, to open a space for conversation and possibly even compromise."

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Justice 101

Iowa Law alums Crystal Pound (16JD) and Alexander Lodge (16JD) recently launched a new Justice 101 course at Iowa Law. The course teaches Fourth Amendment rights and equips students with the tools necessary to increase awareness among the community-at-large about what is allowed and prohibited during different types of contact with law enforcement. The goal was to teach law students how to convey that knowledge to young non-legal audiences. By understanding more about how these interactions are supposed to proceed, youth are more prepared to appropriately respond and participate in their defense.

One Community, One Book

Hosted annually by the UI Center for Human Rights at Iowa Law, the *One Community, One Book* program celebrated its 20th anniversary this year. This annual community-wide reading project invites campus and community members to read the same human rights-related text and participate in related activities, such as virtual book clubs, classroom visits, author keynotes, and webinars. Envisioned as a collaborative effort between the campus and community to promote human rights education through shared readings and conversation, the program serves as an innovative way to unite people of all ages and backgrounds while promoting community and world values.

The Needs and Why of DEI

Another first this year was an event called "The Needs and Why of DEI: Student Insight into DEI in the Classroom," an impactful event where Law students from various student organizations met with interested faculty to talk about what DEI in the classroom means to them. Alison Guernsey, one of the faculty members involved in the event, stated, "Having directly impacted students provide testimony about the need to have a greater DEI focus in both the law-school curriculum and pedagogy was a great step toward pushing the College of Law and its faculty to focus on gaining additional cultural competency."

Faculty

Iowa Law Faculty Fellows

In February 2020, the University of Iowa College of Law reinstated the Iowa Law Faculty Fellowship. The program provides scholars and teachers with research opportunities, faculty mentoring, and career development, with the goal of increasing diversity in the legal profession. Iowa Law has successfully hired two fellows over the past two years, Phoebe Jean-Pierre and Christopher Mathis.

"Here at Iowa, I have found inspiring mentors who have taught me invaluable skills to enable me in my pursuit of legal scholarship and teaching," Jean-Pierre said. "This has been an incredible opportunity and I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at the University of Iowa College of Law. I look forward to the next step in my academic career. I have accepted a tenure-track offer from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University in Bloomington. I will be an Assistant Professor in the department of Business Law & Ethics."

"I am able to fine-tune my research agenda and teaching skills in a critical, collaborative, and transformative way," added Mathis who recently co-authored an article in the Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Education, the leading peer-reviewed journal on racism and race equality in education. "Learning and interacting with one of the finest faculty in the country is a one-of-a-kind experience. The community of intellectual support propels your scholarship and teaching to new heights. I am excited about all the possibilities that come from being at Iowa Law for two years." This coming fall, the faculty will search for our third faculty fellow.

Faculty DEI Committee

Iowa Law also created a new faculty DEI committee this year to work in conjunction with the school-wide DEI committee. The members of the faculty committee focused on creating and supporting opportunities for discourse and an exchange of ideas. The goal of their work was to facilitate a better understanding of ourselves, each other, and the issues and controversies of the day. The faculty committee has helped foster DEI with faculty and is currently working on developing a new DEI course for 1L students, which Iowa Law plans to offer in Fall 2023.

Alumni Connections

Alumni DEI Council

Last year, the University of Iowa College of Law announced the creation of an Alumni-led council, committed to bolstering diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Alumni DEI Council is a select group of Iowa Law's alumni who foster accountability in maintaining and increasing DEI efforts at the College of Law. Utilizing their skills, networks, and expertise, members of the Council develop, support, and advance DEI initiatives to carry out the Iowa Law Anti-Racism Action Committee's recommendations and strive to position Iowa Law's DEI efforts as a leader among law schools.

The inaugural group of Council members began meeting in spring 2021 with a kick-off call, implicit bias training, and its first business meeting. Tiffany Ferguson (96JD) led the group and formed two working groups to lead special efforts. One group focused on governance issues and the other big ideas. The groups met periodically during the summer of 2021. The big ideas group committed to two projects for the next year: coaching and Alumni office hours. Alumni office hours were held by Zoom on the last Friday of each month. While attendance varied, partnerships with student organizations made the last one a success. The Council is eager to reconvene these informal sessions with

students in the fall. For coaching, Council volunteers went through coaching training (3 sessions) and the inaugural matches were made in the late spring. After the pilot phase, they'll decide on next steps. The governance group is in the process of finalizing governance documents.

The Council held full-group meetings by Zoom in September 2021 and March 2022 and plans to meet again in Fall 2022.

Back to Iowa 2022

After two pandemic years, Back to Iowa was back in action. This longstanding program brings together current students with alumni and friends of the College of Law for two days of programming and social activities in Chicago. Thanks to Tim Ray (94JD), Holland & Knight hosted the event on both March 11 and 12. Alexis Walker-Dunham (3L) put together and led a terrific program with 20 students and 20 to 30 alumni and friends. Dean Washburn, Professor Mathis, and former Professor (now Provost at Columbia College) Marcella David joined the programming and discussion.

Iowa Law School Foundation

The Iowa Law School Foundation elected four new members: Winnie Uluocha (19JD), Sonya "Renee" Dotson (07JD), Robert "Andy" Anderson (76JD), and Bill Smith (71JD) in December. President Rob Youle (76JD) shared: "On behalf of the ILSF board, I want to recognize the Governance and Nominating Committee, and especially Committee chair Karin Nelsen (93JD) and vice chair Jim Sawtelle (91JD). Under Karin's and Jim's leadership, the Committee recommended a superb slate of candidates for election to the board, and I am confident our new directors will make positive contributions to our mission and the College of Law." Winnie was a key driver of development of the DEI Alumni Council and has helped to build funding for the Alexander Clark Jr. award. She will help drive the fundraising board to think through support for diversity initiatives. Renee has been a key supporter of BLSA and diversity initiatives.

Signature Events

Kenyan Delegation

The Center for Human Rights (UICHR) and its collegiate home, the College of Law, hosted the first in-person foreign delegation to visit the University of Iowa since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. From September 25 to October 10, eleven members and staff from Kenya's Judicial Service Commission spent time on campus and around the state. The commission participated in capacity-building training led by Iowa Law faculty members, met judicial counterparts in Iowa, and enjoyed numerous cultural events. It also provided valuable experiences for Iowa Law students who had the opportunity to meet and work with Kenyan visitors during their visit.

"It struck me while talking with the Kenyan Judicial Service Commission that while we may live a half of a world away, we have more in common than we have differences," Anjie A. Shutts, president of The Iowa State Bar Association shared. "They, like the state of Iowa, struggle with rural access to justice, affordability of legal services, and training young attorneys."

MLK Lecture

In January, Camille deJorna and Steff Reed joined us for a virtual lecture, co-sponsored with the UICHR on "[MLK's Dream. Living our values: A conversation between a mother and son from the movement.](#)" DeJorna served as director of law admissions from 1995-2001 and some of her friends established the Camille deJorna Opportunity at Iowa Law fund to help recruit and retain students of color.

Black History Month

Iowa Law and UICHR hosted three events in February to recognize Black History Month.

- Clarence Otis, former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Darden Restaurants, gave a virtual lecture on "Becoming an Effective Leader...Especially When You're Black."
- Paul Gowder, former Iowa Law faculty member and current professor at Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law, discussed his latest book, [The Rule of Law in the United States: An Unfinished Project of Black Liberation](#).
- Evangeline Mitchell (97JD) gave a virtual screening of her award-winning documentary short "BECOMING BLACK LAWYERS" followed by a question and answer session.

Student Engagement

The College of Law is home to more than 30 student organizations with diverse objectives. New student organizations are being created every semester to provide space and a platform for the changing needs of our students.

Students at Iowa Law have been very active within their groups and have been great examples of leadership. Group leaders are constantly working in collaboration, hosting several events throughout the semester that everyone well enjoys. Members and leaders have a long-term commitment ensuring and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts inside and outside the classroom as law students and future lawyers.

A returning event this last Spring 2022 semester was The Iowa Law Cultural Showcase, featuring food, fashion, arts, and other items that reflected cultures including those in Nigeria, China, Puerto Rico, India (South Asia) and South Korea.

In August 2020, Iowa Law welcomed its most diverse class of students. Those students are soon-to-be 3Ls and have proven themselves leaders not only at Iowa Law but in national organizations. Four Iowa Law Students traveled to Washington DC to take part in Justice Jackson's confirmation process on March 21, 2022. The story was picked up by [Iowa Public Radio](#). Those students included:

- Avery Brown (23JD) who was named Midwest Black Law Students Association (MWBLSA) Member of the Year (February 2022) and was the 2021-22 Director of Membership for MWBLSA. She was recently elected to the National Black Law Students Association as a 2022-23 member-at-large.
- Cassandra Erbynn (23JD) who served as the 2021-22 Regional Director of Alumni Affairs for MWBLSA and was elected to the National Black Law Students Association as a 2022-23 member-at-large.
- Stella Nguepnang (24JD) who was elected 2022-23 Sub-Regional Director 3 for the MW BLSA (serving BLSA chapters in IA, IL, MN, and WI).

What's Next

We are motivated by the important work that lies ahead of us. We will continue to build on programs and practices that have belonging as an area of our future focus. Our plans will include learning from the climate survey to achieve measurable results that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion at the College of Law. We are prepared to keep growing and changing culture to create a more respectful, inclusive environment and prepare our graduates to enter the world fully equipped to handle challenges and opportunities.