

Charting the Next Five Years:

A Strategic Plan *for* Charleston School of Law

for the Five-Year Period, 2025 - 2030

INTRODUCTION

Charleston School of Law is nestled in a campus setting in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, acclaimed repeatedly as one of America's most treasured destination cities. The acclaim is well deserved.

The city is among the oldest in the nation, with a founding that dates back to 1670 when it was known as Charles Towne (in tribute to the then-serving monarch in Great Britain), later as the home to three signers of the Declaration of Independence and several principal drafters of the United States Constitution, as a critical battleground during the American War for Independence, as the site of southern secession and the siege on Fort Sumter, and for its rebirth in the 1980s as one of the South's most distinctive cultural, artistic, and historical jewels. Today, Charleston is many things – an important sea-port; a scenic harbor town; a graceful southern mainstay steeped in history and centuries-old neighborhoods and pathways; a cultural haven bounding with museums, restaurants, and theaters; a launching place for a myriad of water sports and boating activities; and an enclave of gorgeous beaches and golf courses of every type. By population, Charleston is now the largest city in the State of South Carolina and the 71st largest metropolitan statistical area in the country.

Charleston School of Law's arrival in 2003¹ marked the establishment of only the second law school in the State of South Carolina. Approaching its quarter-century anniversary, Charleston School of Law has much to celebrate—

- It received its provisional accreditation from the American Bar Association in 2006 and full accreditation in 2011;
- It assumed IRC Section 501(c)(3) status in 2024, and now awaits final action by the U.S. Department of Education on its application to complete its journey to a nonprofit law school;
- It has graduated more than 3,300 law students, who have gifted—while in school—more than 300,000 total hours in *pro bono* legal services to the local, regional, and national community, before going on to practice in 48 different jurisdictions;

¹ To be a bit more precise, Charleston School of Law actually traces its ancestry back to November 1825 when a group of Charleston lawyers formed *The Forensic Club*, for which they were granted a State charter to establish a “lecture-ship on the law.” By acquiring the transfer of this charter in 2003, the Law School succeeded to the original *Forensic Club*'s “dedication to the perpetuation of the law as a profession with the chief aim of providing public service.” Accordingly, Charleston School of Law lays ancestral claim to roots as one of the oldest law schools in the southern States.

- Each year, it receives many more applications than it can accept, and the credential profiles of its entering classes continue to grow;
- More than 73% of the current 1L class hails from states other than South Carolina, and those students hold undergraduate degrees from 119 different schools and call, as home, 30 different States and the District of Columbia;
- For years, it has been ranked in *The Princeton Review*'s "top-ten" for excellence in teaching and the classroom experience;
- Its moot court, trial advocacy, and transactional law teams compete across the country (and world!) with great distinction;
- Its students run more than thirty diverse organizations, including four different scholarly journals;
- It has sponsored at least one national symposium every year;
- Over the years, it has hosted campus addresses by legal luminaries, including: U.S. Chief Justice John G. Roberts and Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor; members of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, South Carolina Supreme Court, and South Carolina Court of Appeals; Deans Leonard Baynes, Erwin Chemerinsky, and Mikah Thompson; Professors Sotirios Barber, Nathan Crystal, Richard Epstein, Jeremiah Ho, Arthur R. Miller, and Jan Zglinzky; NAACP Chair Julian Bond and leading civil rights expert Armond Derfner; founder of the Equal Justice Initiative Bryan Stevenson; crisis special master Kenneth Feinberg; former JFK presidential advisor Ted Sorensen; U.S. House Member James E. Clyburn; U.S. Senators Ernest "Fritz" Hollings and Lindsay Graham; and ABC News Supreme Court correspondent and author Jan Crawford Greenburg.

Today, Charleston School of Law is known not just for the exquisite town it calls home, but as an institution unfailingly committed to an extraordinary classroom experience, orchestrated by a broadly-accomplished Faculty who embrace the School's special brand of "door-always-open," student-centered, "teacher-scholar" educational model. This special relationship between Faculty and the student body injects a tangibly different feeling to the classrooms, hallways, offices, and social spaces of Charleston School of Law.

As the next chapter in this eventful journey opens, the Faculty of Charleston School of Law embraces the following strategic vision for the coming five years.



Charleston School of Law seeks to pursue:

- 1) Excellence as an institution that prioritizes rigorous classroom education and the practitioner's craft by providing the curricular and extra-curricular support necessary for students to be successful both as students and ultimately as professionals;
- 2) Teaching the practice of law as a profession, having as its chief aim providing ethical legal services to communities;
- 3) Research and the production of influential scholarship that improves the legal profession and education, furthers the rule of law, and promotes inquiry of legal issues;
- 4) A safe, nondiscriminatory environment that honors academic independence, encourages varying perspectives, and fosters collegial, collaborative, professional relationships among students, alumni, Faculty, staff, and the campus community;
- 5) Advancing and fostering relationships with peers and communities.



ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Strategic Planning Committee met regularly during the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years to discuss and build a draft five-year plan for the Faculty's consideration. That draft was circulated to the full Faculty on April 23, 2025. The Committee received Faculty reactions by email, by personal visit, and during extended conversations at three Faculty meetings. The draft was modified on several occasions to reflect the emerging Faculty consensus. A formal vote on the as-modified draft occurred on the morning of Friday, May 9, 2025, with the Faculty voting in favor of approving the text as the Law School's five-year plan for 2025-2030.

It is the intent of the Faculty that, each year during the five-year life of this Plan, the as-then-constituted Strategic Planning Committee will be tasked to:

- (1) assess the status of the achievement of the strategic objectives adopted herein, and
- (2) provide an annual report to the Faculty during each December's last Faculty Meeting on goals achieved and the status of progress towards achieving goals that remain pending.



THE STRATEGIC GOALS for Charleston School of Law, 2025 - 2030

STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 1:

Matriculating and graduating a well-rounded and well-qualified student body positioned to both pass the bar exam and obtain “gold-star” employment in the law: with the setting of metric targets to be considered in conjunction with revenue objectives.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Drafting Note: | <p>This strategic goal is intended to aid in pursuing paragraph 1 of the CHARLESTON SCHOOL OF LAW MISSION STATEMENT (as revised Spring 2025), namely:</p> <p><i>Charleston School of Law seeks to pursue:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Excellence as an institution that prioritizes rigorous classroom education and the practitioner’s craft by providing the curricular and extra-curricular support necessary for students to be successful both as students and ultimately as professionals; ... |
|-----------------------|--|



Charleston School of Law values its student-centered focus and is committed to providing students with valuable learning experiences that teach them how to become capable practitioners. The Law School also endeavors to provide a healthy environment that opens doors to student opportunities through extracurricular support and enriches their lives as professionals. The Law School will review both qualitative and quantitative metrics to monitor its effectiveness in optimizing classroom teaching and professional development.

To best pursue these strategic goals, the Faculty recommends prioritizing the following objectives:

1. ***Hire and retain highly qualified professors with varied practical and practice experiences and scholarly interests that will enhance students’ experiences in the classroom.***
 - Optimally manage the student-Faculty ratio (evaluated by reference to rankings of other institutions), with the goal of a year-to-year increase in ranking over the next five-year period.
 - Recruit adjunct professors to assist the full-time Faculty in teaching experiential and practical skills courses.
 - Emphasize legal and practical experience in the hiring of new full-time Faculty.

2. *Foster and uphold equal opportunities for students, Faculty, and staff.*

- Adhere to policies that foster and maintain an unbiased environment and equal access to opportunities for students, Faculty, and staff, without discrimination or segregation based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, political affiliation, or military status.
- Foster and maintain an environment that includes varying backgrounds and perspectives to enrich the Charleston School of Law community and thereby provide a more valuable learning experience for all students, Faculty, and staff.
- Continue and grow the “GRIT” (Growth through Resilience, Initiative, & Tenacity) scholarship program for students.

3. *Increase student entering credentials.*

- Target a consistent and continuing increase in the credentials of incoming students, specifically LSAT scores and GPA, over the next five-year period.
- Pursue an endowment that invites alumni and community stakeholders to consider funding scholarships as a recruitment resource.

4. *Increase the first-time pass rate on bar examinations through enhanced student support.*

- Target an increase in the Law School’s bar examination passage rate by 3% over the next five-year period.
- Commit to annually reviewing all available bar examination data to identify trends in student performance and areas for improvement.
- Collaborate with professors who teach bar-tested courses to provide targeted support and to strategize ways of enhancing overall performance.
- Incentivize graduates to increase participation in post-graduation bar preparation programming by 10% over the next five-year period.
- Increase collaboration between bar preparation and academic success departments with the Academic Standards Committee and the Curriculum Committee on an annual basis.
- Provide additional and continuing bar examination study materials and financial resources for all bar examination takers (such as furnishing students with cash stipends or scholarships while studying for their first bar exam).

5. *Evaluate and update first-year orientation, offered courses, and other programming opportunities to furnish students with tangible practical skills essential in their post-graduate employment.*

- Expand the professional identity formation program, offering students professional identity educational opportunities each semester that rely on both scholarly and practical experiences of the legal profession.
- Host workshops, discussion roundtables, and fireside chats that focus on issues related to the practice of law involving ethical concerns, featuring alumni moderators and,

when possible, qualifying for Professionalism Series graduation credit for attending students.

6. *Increase the “Gold-Star Employment” ranking.*

- Target an increase in the Law School’s “Gold-Star Employment” ranking of three ranking positions annually, with the goal to enter the top-150 within the next five years.
- Involve Faculty, staff, and administration in supporting student success, through internship and externship programs, clinical experiences, maintaining a relationship with the bar and bench through events and other CLE opportunities, mentorship opportunities, and other socio-emotional services through the Career Services Office and Student Affairs Office.
- Increase attention to on-campus interviews, career services, and networking events.
- Consider enlisting Faculty and staff to support student success and career services efforts as needed to facilitate a collegial and successful interview and networking atmosphere.
- Host at least one on-campus interview event and three networking events each year.



STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 2:

Continuing and Growing the Law School's Distinctive Emphasis on the Classroom Experience: *with continued prioritization of teaching excellence in recruiting and retaining teaching staff, and expanding the preeminence of the Faculty;*

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Drafting Note: | <p>This strategic goal is intended to aid in pursuing paragraph 1 of the CHARLESTON SCHOOL OF LAW MISSION STATEMENT (as revised Spring 2025), namely:</p> <p><i>Charleston School of Law seeks to pursue:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Excellence as an institution that prioritizes rigorous classroom education and the practitioner's craft by providing the curricular and extra-curricular support necessary for students to be successful both as students and ultimately as professionals; ... |
|-----------------------|--|



Among the most differentiating features of Charleston School of Law is its institutional priority to making the classroom experience extraordinary for students. This has become one of the most well established, well recognized, and widely communicated attributes of the Law School.

To best pursue these strategic goals, the Faculty recommends prioritizing the following objectives:

1. Enrich the personalization of the classroom and learning experience.

- Ensure that students are supplied with appropriate accessibility to classroom instruction.
- Enhance student satisfaction with academic advising services by increasing the availability of Faculty and administration to meet with students for advising activities.
- Facilitate out-of-class guidance and mentorship through a robust “open-door” policy of access to instructors and support personnel.
- Expand experiential opportunities that translate into practical skills to best enable the provision of excellent legal service.
- Create sponsorships with alumni and local stakeholders for experiential opportunities such as internal competitions, mock practice sessions, and state-wide competitions.
- Review the course catalogue regularly to ensure robust experiential class opportunities.
- Highlight and publicize the “designation” and “track” programming for students, including on the Law School's website and social media platforms.
- Integrate experiential teaching techniques in 1L classes.
- Assist students in other emerging legal areas that utilize practical skills, such as technology training.
- Design classroom and other learning spaces in a manner most conducive to instruction by inviting contributions from Faculty in creating new spaces and space redesigns.

- Provide Faculty with appropriate access to technology for invigorating the classroom experience.
2. ***Enhance the Faculty’s classroom skills.***
 - Encourage collaborative sharing among Faculty.
 - Sponsor Faculty development programming designed to broaden knowledge of and comfort with differing instructional techniques, available classroom technologies, and best-practices of exceptional classroom experiences.
 3. ***Grow Faculty expertise and prominence.***
 - Assist in identifying opportunities for scholarship, speaking engagements, media opportunities, and organizational involvement and leadership.
 4. ***Hire new Faculty who possess practical experience and who are ideally suited to contribute to this institutional mission because they demonstrate the ability and desire to:***
 - Create an engaging, stimulating, challenging but accessible, and welcoming classroom environment for their students.
 - Impart to students real-world guidance on the realities of the practice of law as a professional occupation.
 - Emphasize ethical lawyering in class planning by incorporating both principles and practical guidance on how to practice responsibly.
 - Embrace the defining “open-door” approach to interacting with students.
 - Serve as mentors to students as they learn the law.
 - Commit to a collegial, collaborative working relationship with all members of the Law School community – students, staff, Faculty, and alumni.



STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 3:

Continuing and Growing the Law School's Focus on Research and Scholarship: *with continued emphasis on research support and services provided by credentialed librarian staff and trained law students.*

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Drafting Note: | <p>This strategic goal is intended to aid in pursuing paragraph 3 of the CHARLESTON SCHOOL OF LAW MISSION STATEMENT (as revised Spring 2025), namely:</p> <p><i>Charleston School of Law seeks to pursue: ...</i></p> <p>3) Research and produce influential scholarship that improves the legal profession and education, furthers the rule of law, and promotes inquiry of legal issues; ...</p> |
|-----------------------|---|



An integral part of Charleston School of Law is the research and scholarship process which is assisted by librarians through a variety of distinct services. These services focus on legal scholarship, promote inquiry into legal issues, and foster collaboration within the legal community.

To best pursue these strategic goals, the Faculty recommends prioritizing the following objectives:

- 1. Encourage the quality and relevance of legal scholarship through a rigorous curation and review processes.***
 - Organize symposia or speaker series on emerging legal issues for all journals to stimulate research in critical areas through works in progress or workshopping papers.
 - Improve the implementation of the system for tracking citations and impact factors of Faculty published works.
- 2. Attract and Retain top legal scholars to strengthen the Law School's research and scholarship capabilities.***
 - Develop a comprehensive Faculty development program to support ongoing and future research and scholarship.
 - Hire a Director of Institutional Advancement, to identify possible donors and develop key relationships to secure funding for bringing thought leaders and scholars across various legal specialties to campus.
 - When appropriate and available, consider consulting the School's Director of Institutional Research to assist Faculty in empirical research."
 - Establish an annual distinguished lecture series featuring prominent legal scholars by bringing people to campus to speak using the fireside chat model.

3. *Enhance the library staff and services as they support research and scholarship.*

- Continue to support and enhance Faculty individual research assistant training.
- Continue to provide financial support for and expand the Student Library Research Fellow Program.
- Review annually the digital and print collection for currency and in support of the Faculty scholarship and educational needs of the curriculum to ensure the collection aligns with the accreditation standards and institutional needs.
- Present Faculty candidates with resources and services that are available to support their research endeavors.

4. *Enhance scholars' and students' access to legal resources and research materials.*

- Continue to provide and enhance the library resources and services.
- Renew and expand MOU arrangements with local university libraries and Consortia for shared access to legal databases and collections.²
- Consider implementing a digital repository system for archiving and easy access to the institution's scholarly works and previously recorded on campus speakers.
- Coordinate annual updated and current Faculty profiles on SSRN, Google Scholar, and HeinOnline.
- Convert past Charleston School of Law speaker series from DVD for to a digital transcript and streaming option hosted online.
- Create an online resource of all Faculty scholarship and past presentation topics by subject matter listing to build in technical sophistication over the next five years.

5. *Establish partnerships with other law schools and legal organizations to facilitate resource sharing.*

- Expand state and county bar events through collaboration and co-sponsorship.
- Grow CLE and conference opportunities through presenting and hosting a topical speaker series.

6. *Expand the reach and impact of legal scholarship produced by the Law School.*

- Encourage increased involvement in AALS and other development programming for Faculty to engage with other members of the legal and scholarly community.
- Showcase annually the publications of Faculty and students from the Law School at an event in the law library that aligns with Charleston School of Law's board meeting and provides a networking opportunity with distinguished members of the legal community.

² The Law School currently has one MOU with the College of Charleston and is a member of the Carolina Consortium (<https://carolinaconsortium.charlotte.edu/>). Other potential MOU candidates include: MUSC; The Citadel; PASCAL (<https://pascalsc.libguides.com/c.php?g=768647&p=9299326>); and Museums & Archives.

- Provide financial incentives to Faculty for scholarly achievements.
- Establish a social media strategy to consistently promote and disseminate scholarly works.



STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 4:

Enhancing the Perception of the Law School and its Value Locally, Regionally, and Nationally: *with the objective of becoming a “go-to” destination for prospective law students considering education in the southeast;*

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Drafting Note: | <p>This strategic goal is intended to aid in pursuing paragraphs 4 and 5 of the CHARLESTON SCHOOL OF LAW MISSION STATEMENT (as revised Spring 2025), namely:</p> <p><i>Charleston School of Law seeks to pursue: ...</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">4) A safe, nondiscriminatory environment that honors academic independence, encourages varying perspectives, and fosters collegial, collaborative, professional relationships among students, alumni, Faculty, staff, and the campus community;5) Advancing and fostering relationships with peers and communities. |
|-----------------------|--|



Institutional perception remains a challenging but essential objective for enhancing the reputation of Charleston School of Law in broader circles. Accordingly, the Law School will pursue opportunities to broaden public awareness of the rich educational realities here and burnish its reputation locally, regionally, and nationally over the next five years.

To best pursue these strategic goals, the Faculty recommends prioritizing the following objectives:

1. ***Pursue added curricular program depth and obtain institutional accreditation by June 2028.***
2. ***Purposefully grow the Law School’s scholarship production to the point where the Law School can obtain full membership in AALS within the next five years.***
3. ***Improve roster salary attractiveness to new Faculty and staff candidates by raising salary bands against the market to ensure that compensation at the Law School is at least within \$5,000 of the comparable median for those bands.***
4. ***Identify, recruit, and enlist each year at least one “reputational or distinguished leader”—an individual of recognized local, regional, and/or national prominence—to visit or otherwise associate with the Law School for that academic term.***
5. ***Continue to enhance the physical spaces of the Law School to impart a growing sense of permanence and prestige.***

6. *Creatively explore ways to add to the Law School's "sense-of-arrival" by enhancing the approach to the entrance of 385 Meeting, the entrances into the structure, and throughout the hallways and connecting spaces of the building.*
7. *Host a permanent, on-site, well-stocked, and regularly-staffed bookstore to encourage and accommodate school pride among both visitors and community members (existing and prospective).*



STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 5:

Emphasizing stakeholder engagement: *in planning and executing outreach, to capture the unique opportunity arriving with the nonprofit conversion.*

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Drafting Note: | <p>This strategic goal is intended to aid in pursuing paragraph 4 of the CHARLESTON SCHOOL OF LAW MISSION STATEMENT (as revised Spring 2025), namely:</p> <p><i>Charleston School of Law seeks to pursue: ...</i></p> <p>4) A safe, nondiscriminatory environment that honors academic independence, encourages varying perspectives, and fosters collegial, collaborative, professional relationships among students, alumni, Faculty, staff, and the campus community; ...</p> |
|-----------------------|---|



The collaborative, welcoming community of Charleston School of Law is also one of its most unique attributes. This environment begins at open houses and continues through graduation as students work towards their educational and professional goals. This collaborative environment is evidenced by the growing number of student organizations that serve the local community and have developed strong relationships with members of the Charleston legal community, many of whom are alumni of the Law School.

To best pursue these strategic goals, the Faculty recommends prioritizing the following objectives:

1. Enrich relationships with alumni who may contribute both their time and financial support to the Law School, thereby increasing learning opportunities, employment opportunities, and real-world practical experience for students.

- Foster communication with alumni and explore expanding the mentoring program.
- Grow the alumni association and communicate its meetings/events.
- Create an alumni database accessible to all alumni with current contact and practice information for networking purposes.
- Celebrate alumni for pro bono service and other exceptional achievements through storytelling in social media and other outlets.

2. Enrich relationships with the local Charleston and South Carolina Bar to promote collaboration between the Bar and the Law School.

- Continue to offer SC Bar CLE seminars at the Law School.
- Host events that can serve as CLE but also networking events on current legal issues.
- Continue sponsorships/participation in SCAJ and state bar conventions/events.
- Explore expanding externship and internship opportunities and collaborations with non-profits that presently hold events.
- Support members of the bar through library resources.

- Inform donors and potential donors of experiential opportunities that exist nationwide that they may want to sponsor.
 - Continue to build external collaborations with neighboring law schools for competition and collaborative opportunities.
3. ***Enrich relationships with the South Carolina judicial community and beyond, leading to more internships, externships, and judicial clerkships for students in the community, and opportunities to learn from the judges at Charleston School of Law.***
- Continue to promote judicial externships and the Judicial Observation and Experience Program.
 - Pursue hosting a Jurist in Residence.
4. ***Enrich relationships between the Faculty and the local legal community and the national legal academy to further the Law School's reputation through speaking engagements.***
- Foster relationships with other post-graduate institutions.
 - Increase visibility at conventions such as AALS and SEALS through Faculty presentations, service on committees, sponsorships, and receptions.
 - Identify local speaking opportunities for Faculty members.
 - Continue to emphasize excellent teaching to foster relationships with the legal community.



STRATEGIC GOAL NO. 6:

Better Aligning the Law School's Commitment to "Service" with the "Service" Vision We

Intend to Pursue: *by adjusting the mission statement, logo, branding, and substantive "service" goals such that the "service" we intend to pursue better matches how we are characterizing it.*

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Drafting Note: | <p>This strategic goal is intended to aid in pursuing paragraph 5 of the CHARLESTON SCHOOL OF LAW MISSION STATEMENT (as revised Spring 2025), namely:</p> <p><i>Charleston School of Law seeks to pursue: ...</i></p> <p>5) Advancing and fostering relationships with peers and communities.</p> |
|-----------------------|--|



Charleston School of Law will draw inspiration from successful programs and initiatives within the Law School that shine a light on our past and current commitment to service and implement additional opportunities to create synergies with our stakeholders within the profession. The Law School will also promote experiential and practical skills opportunities providing students with the goal of providing ethical and legal services to communities.

To best pursue these strategic goals, the Faculty recommends prioritizing the following objectives:

1. Focus on pro bono opportunities.

- Continue the commitment to the Law School's founding motto of *pro bono populi* while serving its current mission.
- Continue to require students to provide required pro bono service as a graduation requirement.
- Enhance the recognition of extraordinary pro bono contributions by students, through transcript notations, certificates, and graduation honors.
- Utilize social media to promote all the successes and student achievements.

2. Continue to integrate "public" and "service" into the Curriculum.

- Explore expanding current clinical opportunities (namely, the street law clinic, pro bono family law clinic, pro bono housing clinic, South Carolina Legal Services domestic violence clinic, criminal prosecution clinic, and pro bono child advocacy clinic).
- Explore expanding future clinical opportunities as resources become available (to possibly include a pro bono wills clinic, pro bono veterans law clinic, pro bono immigration law clinic, and small business clinic).
- Apply for and utilize local, state, and national grant money to improve clinical opportunities.

- Seek law firm sponsors and donors for assistance providing clinical offerings and supervision.
3. ***Enlist the legal community to participate in Law School events.***
- Encourage members of the legal community to coach advocacy teams, serve as oral argument judges, speak at professionalism series events, and act as mentors.
 - Partner with the South Carolina Bar Association to obtain pro bono and CLE credit for such volunteers.
 - Create cooperations with other non-profits to give students practical skills and mentoring opportunities.
4. ***Expand the existing experiential centers to offer legal services.***
- Consider increasing the budgets, operations and opportunities for the Center for Business & Transactional Law and Center for Trial Advocacy to serve both student stakeholders and outside community stakeholders.

