# Our Law School

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Message from the Dean

The Common Law Section of the University of Ottawa’s Faculty of Law has grown from modest beginnings in 1957 to become a dynamic, bilingual, national and international leader. One of my first initiatives when I became Dean in 2018 was to launch a process to create the first-ever strategic plan for the Common Law Section. As we move forward in the next phase of our development, this Strategic Plan will guide, motivate and inspire us.

Developing this strategic plan allowed us to recommit to our core values and identify our priorities in the coming years.

I want to thank everyone who participated in this process and I look forward to reporting annually to members of the Common Law community on our progress as we move into the implementation stage of this plan.

Adam Dodek, LSM
Dean
Over the past 20 years, the Common Law Section of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa has become a national and global leader in many fields, including Aboriginal and Indigenous Law, Dispute Resolution, Environmental Law, Health Law, Immigration and Refugee Law, Language Rights, International Trade, Business and Human Rights Law, Law and Technology, Public Law, and Social Justice.

We house the Centre for Law, Technology and Society, the Centre for Health Law, Policy and Ethics, the Centre for Environmental Law and Global Sustainability, the Refugee Hub and the Public Law Centre. We are also home to the internationally renowned Samuelson-Glushko Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic (CIPPIC) and the Human Rights Research and Education Centre.

The only law school to offer a common law degree in both English and French, our Faculty is the most accomplished in the country. Ten professors are Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada; nine have received the Law Society of Ontario’s highest honour, the Law Society Medal; seven have been named to the Order of Ontario; and four have received Canada’s highest honour, the Order of Canada.
Common Law professors have also received awards from the Canadian Bar Association, l'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO), the Attorney General of Ontario, the Canadian Association of Law Teachers, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and many other organizations. Common Law professors are frequently nominated for Canadian Lawyer's Top 25 Most Influential Lawyers in Canada are often amongst those selected.

We are leaders -- leaders in research, leaders in the profession and leaders in our community. Our faculty members have held top positions with national legal and public organizations including the International Commission of Jurists, the Law Society of Ontario, the National Association of Women and the Law, l'Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Ontario (AJEFO), the Canadian Association for Legal Ethics (CALE), the Canadian Association of Law Teachers (CALT), the Canadian Council on International Law (CCIL), the Law Commission of Canada, the Law Commission of Ontario, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF).

We are an engaged Faculty. We have a strong culture of public engagement. On any given day, members of our Faculty may be seen testifying before a Parliamentary committee, providing expert commentary in the media or contributing to public policy debates on the issues of the day. We are the most-cited law faculty in the national media.

This engagement benefits our students. Our students can intern at the Department of Justice Canada, Global Affairs Canada, with individual Senators, tribunals, hospitals, start-ups and with lawyers and law firms.

We have built strong experiential learning opportunities for our students. We have Canada's most renowned mooting program and the name "Ottawa" has become synonymous with a culture of excellence and winning at international competitions. Similarly, CIPPIC is Canada's leading technology clinic and a global leader in advancing the public interest in this dynamic field. Our partnership with Canada's leading environmental
legal advocacy organization Ecojustice provides opportunities for our students to see how they can use the power of the law to defend nature, combat climate change, and fight for a healthy environment for all.

We have a strong bond with the legal community in Ottawa and a special relationship with the Supreme Court of Canada. Our students have unparalleled access to, and interaction with, the highest judges in the land. Since 2004, we have welcomed every new Supreme Court Justice into our community at the Faculty of Law.

We have come a long way since the Common Law Section graduated its first class in 1960 and its first graduates from the French Common Law Program in 1980. We look forward to continuing to move forward and to lead over the next five years and beyond.
Even before the launch of the formal process in the winter of 2018, much work had gone into this Strategic Plan. Former Dean Nathalie Des Rosiers held a number of brainstorming and planning sessions that set the stage. The discussions that occurred both inside and outside those sessions generated important discussions about the type of law school that we are and that we aspire to be. They were critical to the success of this endeavour.

The process of creating a Strategic Plan was made possible through the commitment of a Steering Committee composed of Vice Dean Carissima Mathen (English Program), Vice Dean Yves Le Bouthillier (French Program), Vice Dean Peter Oliver (Research) and Assistant Dean Stacy Keehn (Career and Professional Development). As Dean, I chaired the Steering Committee. We were supported by Françoise Moreau-Johnson, Manager, Centre for Academic Leadership and Paul Turpin. Common Law student Sahar Mir JD 2020 provided superb technical support. Valérie Leclercq patiently translated the multiple drafts of the plan. Véronique Larose brought clarity and creativity to the formatting of the many documents involved in the process and to the organization of many of the creative sessions. Dany Chung assisted in organization and scheduling with her characteristic professionalism and good humour.

We held several plenary sessions for faculty and staff in April and October 2018 and in March and August 2019. Staff participated in a special retreat in November 2018. At several points in the process, we consulted online with students, staff and faculty. Students were invited to provide feedback both online and at a Town Hall in March 2019. Student feedback was critical. It is no accident that the Student Experience is our first strategic priority, with the greatest number of projects attached to it.

This is a strategic plan for the Common Law Section of the Faculty of Law at the University of Ottawa. The Civil Law Section is a separate faculty but we have a number of joint programmes. In particular, we jointly administer the graduate programme for Masters and Doctoral studies in law. In this strategic plan, you will find general reference to expanding and supporting the graduate program and its students but the particular priorities for this essential program will be set in the future through a joint process of the Civil Law Section and the Common Law Section.
MISSION

We are committed to excellence in the teaching of law, legal research, and service to the community, in both official languages.

VISION

We seek to create an enduring community among students, staff, alumni, and faculty, a place of prized social involvement and permanent learning. Together, we shall be at the forefront of the pursuit of justice and the resolution of difficult public policy dilemmas in a complex world.

In our Strategic Planning process, we identified a number of challenges and issues facing the Faculty as it contemplates how to adapt to best position students, faculty, staff and alumni for success. Legal education in Canada, and beyond, is facing significant uncertainty due to volatile employment markets and shrinking government support. This requires many law schools, the University of Ottawa included, to engage in serious and sustained reflection about the impact of both internal and external factors on its core mission.

In addition, the University of Ottawa faces challenges and issues that are unique to its mission, composition of faculty and students, and identity as the only bilingual common law faculty in the country.

In preparation for the Strategic Plan, we identified a number of internal “challenges” and several external “issues”.
CHALLENGES

Our challenges relate to both tangible and intangible factors that have proved to require greater attention to ensure smoother operations and better responsiveness.

A core challenge is how to position our unique mission. The mission is complex, seeking to promote the interests of Francophones residing outside the province of Quebec, while also supporting the national project of official bilingualism, and operating within multiple legal systems. All of this happens in Canada’s National Capital Region which intensifies some of these issues.

A driving force throughout this process has been the improvement of the student experience. We recognize that our students have their own challenges that are unique to this moment in legal education, and, indeed, the legal system as a whole. Much of the subsequent strategic planning was focused on how to respond to those needs. We also want to encourage a life-long attachment to the Faculty of Law after our students graduate.

We do not always have the systems in place to properly support those who study and work in the Faculty. Staff, faculty and students all do important work with the potential to effect real social change. Too often, rules and procedures are complex and static instead of nimble, and resistant instead of responsive. Systems deficits make it more complicated to develop the vibrant research community which our faculty expects and to which they can contribute immensely.

This leads to another chronic challenge, which is the physical infrastructure of the law faculty. We are running up against the limits of an older building, changes to which have not altered its basic structure and dated amenities. This very real infrastructure deficit impedes certain events and initiatives, and exacts a corresponding cost in morale.

A final internal challenge relates to communication. This extends to all members including faculty, staff and students. Lack of consistent means of communication is an impediment to implementing best practices in decision-making and also leads to incomplete knowledge of the things we are doing right.
ISSUES

Our issues relate to developments outside of the Faculty which have a profound effect on our programs.

One issue is how we leverage our considerable strengths to develop networks and partnerships locally, nationally and internationally to allow for the fullest achievement of our educational and research goals. We need to find ways to increase the impact of our work on other research, the legal profession, policy makers and the public. How can we disseminate our research and academic expertise to have more impact on other researchers, the profession, policy makers and the public?

We face demands to expand access to programs, research and services, reaching a wider and more diverse audience. While we excel at social engagement and public policy formation, we need to be nimble and prepared to respond to upheavals in the law, the legal profession and society. We need a plan for how to take full advantage of changing models of legal education, exploit changing methods of delivering legal services, and draw on new technologies in our teaching, research, communications and student support.

Changing funding models for legal education are a continuing issue. This affects recruitment of faculty, students and staff which, in a highly competitive environment, is increasingly important.
Strategic Priorities
Strategic Goals

**Student Experience**
Enrich our students’ learning and professional development, and support their well-being.

**Teaching Excellence**
Encourage and support all faculty to adopt innovative and responsive teaching methods and content that enable students to achieve professional success, and prepare them for productive and positive engagement in their society.

**Reconciliation, Indigenization and Decolonization**
Respond to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by working with Indigenous peoples, nations and organizations to build respectful partnerships, support our Indigenous students and make the Faculty of Law a national leader in reconciliation, Indigenization and decolonization.

**Research Excellence**
Create a vibrant and influential research community and focus on impactful dissemination of our academic expertise to a wider and more diverse audience, leveraging networks and partnerships locally, nationally and internationally.

**Common Law Training in French**
Fulfill our unique mission to promote access to French legal services in Ontario and other parts of Canada outside Quebec; and promote bilingualism within the legal system.

**Community**
Connect with our alumni, the legal community and the broader public to expand and deepen attachment to the Faculty; increase opportunities for our students, faculty and graduates; and play a key public policy role in the wider community.
STUDENT EXPERIENCE

A. Student Wellness

We value wellness and will integrate it into all aspects of student support and life at the Faculty.

1. Hire a dedicated counsellor for all law students within the Faculty.

B. 1L Experience

We are committed to supporting students as they begin law school. We will work to coordinate the workload of 1L students, integrate them into the Faculty by ensuring key contact with full-time professors and better equip them to begin their legal studies by providing them with a solid introduction to the Faculty of Law and the National Capital Region.

2. Ensure that the vast majority of 1L courses are taught by full-time faculty members.
C. Experiential Learning

We will support our existing experiential learning opportunities and target strategic growth of opportunities in under-served areas including knowledge and advocacy in social justice, human rights, family law and Indigenous legal traditions to prepare students for the rapidly changing demands of the legal profession and to enrich their professional development.

3. Create an inventory of experiential learning opportunities at the Faculty in order to showcase best practices using the cutting-edge resources being developed by the University and develop new experiential learning opportunities in underserviced areas such as family law, Indigenous legal traditions and emerging areas of law.

4. Design and meaningfully implement land-based legal learning (urban and rural) and Indigenous legal pedagogy in reciprocal relationship with Indigenous communities and/or Nations.

5. Support and expand student participation in the Legal Writing Academy.

D. Reconciliation, Indigenization and Decolonization

We are committed to reconciliation, Indigenization and decolonization and we will recruit and support our Indigenous learners, by building robust cross-cultural, cross-juridical and decolonial understanding, competencies and excellence among our students.

6. Educate faculty and staff on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge, legal traditions and teaching methods into classrooms, moot court rooms, and other shared spaces.

7. Support the critical role of the Indigenous Learner Advocate in protecting and promoting the well-being of Common Law Indigenous learners, by building robust cross-cultural, cross-juridical and decolonial understanding, competencies, and excellence among our students.

“I will always remember my time as a JD student at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law. The academic rigour of law school and the friendships I developed have enabled me to grow as a person and for this I will be forever grateful.”

- Maria Lucas (JD 2019)
E. Grading

We undertake to conduct a comprehensive review of our academic regulations to modernize our grading scheme to ensure it continues to meet the needs of the Faculty and a rapidly evolving profession.

8. Review the current grading scheme and current grading profile and reform as necessary.

F. Course Selection

We undertake to examine our course selection process and technology.

9. Examine the course selection process and technology to address student concerns.
TEACHING EXCELLENCE

A. Faculty Recruitment

We have built one of the strongest faculty complements in the country. We will ensure that we continue to recruit new faculty in existing areas of expertise and in new and developing fields.

1. Develop a succession plan for faculty in priority areas that will be eventually impacted by retirements or career transitions and integrate into faculty recruitment and leadership development plans.

2. Implement an Indigenous Talent Recruitment Plan (including Indigenous faculty cluster hiring, affirmative action and equity group hiring proposals, development, and implementation).

B. Reconciliation, Indigenization and Decolonization

We are committed to responding to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), to supporting Indigenous students and to building respectful relationships with Indigenous communities.

3. Adopt Reconciliation, Indigenization and Decolonization Plan / Indigenous Pathfinder document to respond to TRC Calls to Action 27, 28, 42 and 50; and review within the term of the Strategic Plan.

4. Adopt and implement a Reconciling Relationships Report to support Indigenous student success (i.e. student mentoring, Indigenous student recruitment, Indigenous Affairs standards and processes training, Indigenous student retention initiatives).

5. Encourage faculty participation in Indigenous community education, building, activities, laws and legal order presentation and development, among other Indigenous matrix items.
C. Peer-mentorship Program for Faculty
We will support faculty career development.

6. Ensure that all new hires and pre-tenure faculty have a dedicated faculty mentor.

D. Graduate Program
We are committed to working with our partners in the Civil Law Section to strengthen and expand our graduate program.

7. Increase the number and variety of graduate courses.
A. Student Support and Experience

We will support our Indigenous learners and ensure all students are given the tools to succeed as culturally aware professionals.

1. Support the critical role of the Indigenous Learner Advocate in protecting and promoting the well-being of Common Law students.

2. Develop an Indigenous Space which allows for culturally informed activities, collective Indigenous community attendance and engagement, ceremonial and community specific activities, and teaching / sharing of Indigenous pedagogy.

B. Teaching

We will work to centre Indigenous legal traditions and perspectives within our curriculum, to ensure students have a firm grounding in the diversity of Canada’s founding legal orders and the law as lived, understood by and applicable to Indigenous peoples.

3. Implement Indigenous Talent Recruitment Plan (including Indigenous faculty cluster hiring, affirmative action and equity group hiring proposals, development and implementation).

4. Develop Indigenous legal knowledge programming including core JD courses, the development of specialties in Indigenous legal knowledge, and developing in-house education and resources for faculty, staff and learners.
C. Research

We will support cutting-edge scholarship and Indigenous pedagogies and research methodologies to address critical issues facing Indigenous peoples and communities.


D. Community

We recognize that our law school can and must play a leading role in the ongoing transformation of the legal profession and the broader community.

6. Build relationships with Indigenous Nations and communities, community members and territorial land holders to address meaningfully: the land which the law school sits on, the responsibility of the law faculty as settlers on Indigenous lands, the building and renewing of relationships with Indigenous Nations and peoples, the decolonization and Indigenization of existing course materials and curriculum, and the reciprocal, respectful and relational agreements and partnerships to be developed with Indigenous Nations locally and internationally.


“Beading circle goes beyond the creation of beautiful art to honour our learners. It is a space for law, the revitalization of Indigenous Legal Orders, and the development of Indigenous Legal Pedagogies. Most importantly, it is a space for community where we gather and learn together. Where community, grounded in trust-based, reciprocal relationships, is built.”

Advisor, Indigenous Relations and Indigenous Learner Advocate
RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

A. Support the Research Office and the Research Strategic Plan

We will build on our existing services by placing an additional emphasis on knowledge mobilization and internationalization.

1. Create a Research Advisory Board to assist in the implementation of the Research Strategic Plan and to support medium-to-long-term goals.

2. Create an operational problem-solving team to identifying and address research-related financial management issues.

B. Support and Expand Research Centres

We will support, enlarge and expand our existing research centres.

3. Ensure continuity for centres affected by the eventual relocation from the Brooks Building.

C. Internationalization

We will expand the range and reach of our research internationally.

5. Create an internationalization strategy for the Faculty that aligns with that of the University and that will allow us to consolidate and expand our existing links with our international academic partners.

D. Graduate Studies and Research

We will enhance the graduate program and increase the quality and number of graduate students.

6. Develop a research funding strategy and culture to recruit excellent graduate students and provide them with opportunities to present their research.

“For 20 years, our university has been a global leader in intellectual property and technology law, ethics and policy for the benefits of Canadians and the world. Our researchers are leading Canadian conversation on innovation policies and our digital future, helping to shape a more inclusive digital society.”

- Florian Martin-Bariteau
  Assistant Professor of Law and Technology
  Common Law Section
  Director, uOttawa Centre for Law, Technology and Society
COMMON LAW TRAINING IN FRENCH

A. Teaching

We will strengthen, enrich and diversify our program offerings in French.

1. Ensure that the vast majority of 1L courses in the « Programme de common law en français » are taught by full time professors.

2. Identify best practices and encourage a greater synergy between programs, by offering bilingual courses and courses on legal writing in English and French, facilitating teaching in both programs by Faculty members, improving communication to students in the English Common Law Program about the option of taking French language courses, and seeking to expand the “Certification in Common Law in French” (CCLF) program by entering into partnerships with other law schools.

3. Increase the number of internships in French in government, law firms, and other organizations in the National Capital Region and elsewhere.

B. Research and Knowledge Mobilization

We will enhance our research and knowledge dissemination in French.

4. Increase the number of publications and maintain financial support for publication of volumes in French by the professors from the « Programme de common law en français ».

5. Organize workshops in French on media relations and the use of new technologies.
C. Community

We value the expertise of graduates from the « Programme de common law en français », « Programme de droit canadien », National Program, and « Certification de common law en Français ».

6. Continue to support the development of continuing learning education for Francophone and Francophile lawyers in common law provinces (pratiquO).

“Being one of the few Franco-Saskatchewanian students at the Faculty, the Souper Français is such a great opportunity to meet other Franco-Saskatchewanian lawyers now living in the National Capital and to share our experiences!”

- Sydney Goldstone, 2nd year student in the joint program, Bachelor of Social Sciences, Political Science and Juris Doctorate
COMMUNITY

A. Alumni Engagement

We will greatly strengthen alumni engagement and affiliation with the Common Law Section by creating programs and supports for alumni, especially recent graduates.

1. Create a Dean’s Advisory Council with representation across the country and internationally to connect alumni to the life of the Common Law Section and to create a mentorship network for alumni.

B. Championing and Supporting our Staff

We recognize the critical role that staff play in supporting our students and our faculty members. We will engage and support our staff as valued members of our Common Law community.

2. Expand professional development opportunities and create a leadership development program for staff.

C. Public Policy Engagement

We will continue to contribute to the development of public policy in the wider community.

3. Take a leadership role on public policy issues and expand student internship opportunities in order to support engagement by students and faculty members in the development of public policy at the international, national, provincial and municipal level.
D. Working with the Community

We will be an active participant in the legal and broader community of which we are a part to increase opportunities for our students and graduates, expand access to justice and promote law reform.

4. Expand partnerships with Parliament, legislatures, Justice Canada, and other departments and agencies including exchanges, student internships and courses.

5. Develop and expand partnerships with « l’Association des juristes d’expression française de l’Ontario », the County of Carleton Law Association, the Ontario Bar Association, the Indigenous Bar Association, law firms, public agencies, Indigenous communities, organizations and agencies (i.e. Native Women’s Association of Canada, Assembly of First Nations, Paaktuuit, Inuit Tapirisat, and Metis Nations of Ontario and Canada), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other bodies.

6. Work with the judiciary and legal groups to expand the use of the Ian G. Scott Courtroom and plan for its redevelopment in a suitable dedicated law/ceremony-space when it is relocated.

“The Ian Scott Courtroom has been instrumental in bringing the practice of the law directly to the eyes of the students. It brings to life cases that they read on paper and generates a whole set of inquiries that would otherwise not have arisen if not for the observation of law in action.”

- Professor Jamie Liew, Faculty of Law, Common Law Section