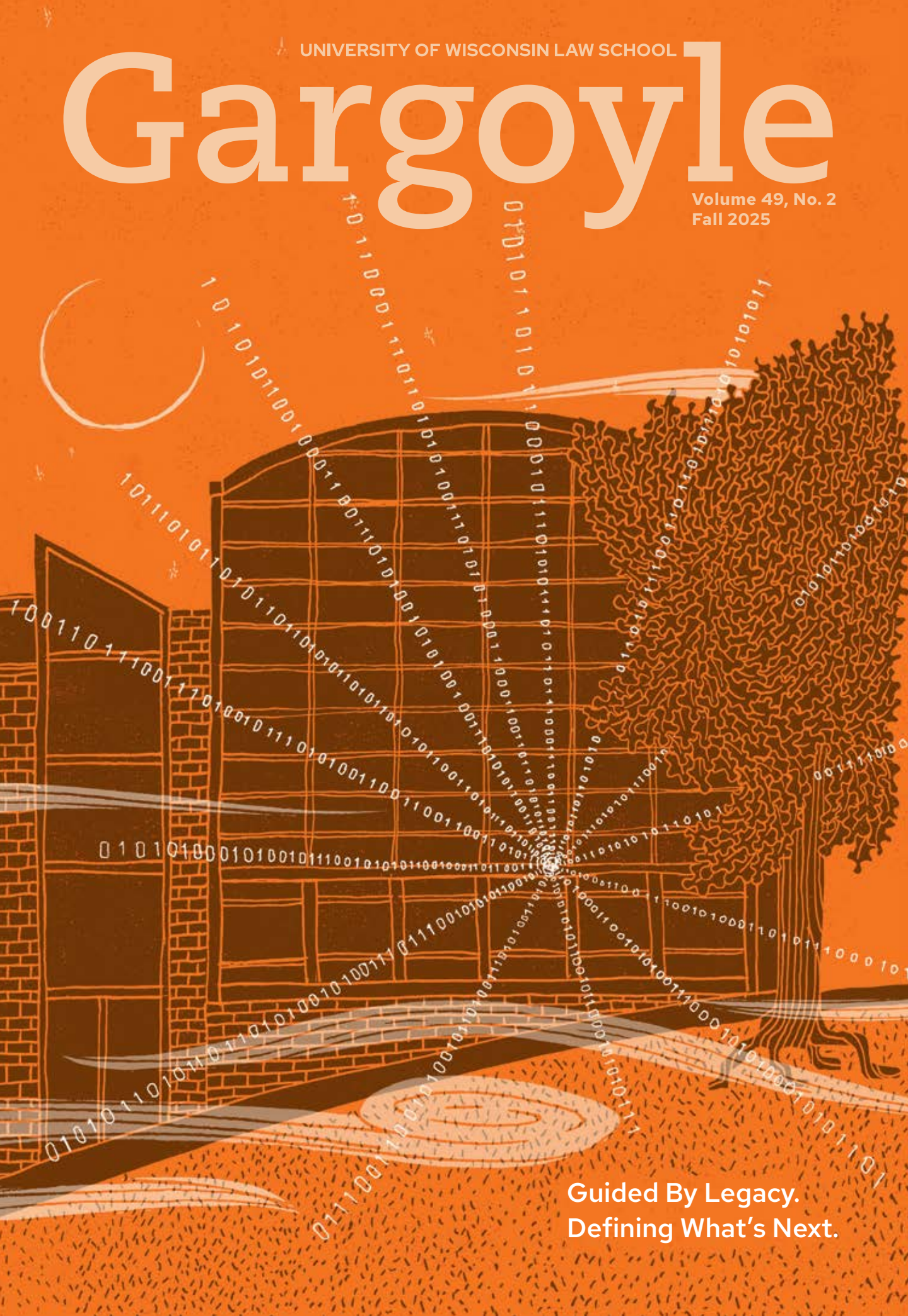
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LAW SCHOOL

Gargoyle

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Fall 2025



Guided By Legacy.
Defining What's Next.



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Gargoyle

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Why Gargoyle?

In 1963, when the existing Law School was demolished to make way for a new building, Dean George Young found and rescued a sandstone gargoyle from the rubble. This figure and its twin sat on the roof of the 1893 building for almost 70 years.

That rescued gargoyle, which is now permanently installed in the Law School's atrium, gives its name to this magazine, representing the indomitable strength and spirit of our University of Wisconsin Law School and its many graduates.



The *Gargoyle* is the alumni magazine of University of Wisconsin Law School, 975 Bascom Mall, Madison, WI 53706-1399. It is funded by private giving.



Dear Friends,

Welcome to another exciting edition of the *Gargoyle*. I'm excited to share with you all the wonderful ways University of Wisconsin Law School's faculty, staff, students and alumni are pushing boundaries and shaping the future of the legal profession.

The law changes with the world around us, and UW Law is committed to being on the cutting edge of innovation. With your support, we've expanded our faculty over the last several years so that we can meet the challenge of today and tomorrow.

The three most recent hires to our tenure-track faculty are great examples. This fall, we're pleased to welcome Professors Benjamin Sobel, Jason Reinecke and Paul Connell, who are poised to advance UW Law's leadership in the rapidly evolving fields of intellectual property and technology law, including the impact of AI. Their expertise will allow for collaborations with people across campus, accelerating the university's commitment to interdisciplinary partnerships that will increase our research impact. Professors Sobel and Connell are both part of Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin's Wisconsin Research, Innovation and Scholarly Excellence (RISE) Initiative, a campus investment made to address the



complex problems and opportunities raised by AI and other developments. We're excited to be part of this world-changing initiative.

This issue will also introduce you to Lawyers and Democratic Decline (LADD), a collaborative research project that brings together scholars studying the role of lawyers in countries experiencing democratic backsliding. The project is directed by our own Kathryn Hendley, Roman Z. Livshits & Theodore W. Brazeau Professor of Law and Political Science. Since its founding in 2023, LADD has already become a global network of scholars investigating the role of lawyers in resisting — and at times enabling — the rise of authoritarian regimes. Through collaborative research, comparative analysis and public events, LADD explores how legal professionals navigate repression, uphold democratic norms and negotiate their professional identity in times of political crisis.

Among the other gems in this edition are an exploration of the evolution of Legal Research and Writing here at UW Law as well as a dive into the work of our stellar faculty, including Kate Finley, director of the Frank J. Remington Center, and Joshua Braver, assistant professor of law. We also hear from several of our accomplished alumni, as well as a couple of our outstanding students. All are tremendous exemplars of our Law-in-Action mission.

We have so much more within these pages, but I'll close by expressing our profound appreciation to Jeffry '79 and Kristin Brown for their extraordinary commitment of $1 million to establish a new professorship. This gift represents not only a significant investment in the future of the Law School, but also a powerful endorsement of our mission to cultivate academic excellence, innovative scholarship and leadership in the legal profession. Their support will help us continue to strengthen our faculty — one of our highest institutional priorities — even in challenging times. Big thanks to Jeffry and Kristin for your partnership and belief in the pursuit of knowledge and the education of the next generation of lawyers and leaders!

And thank you to everyone else who supported the Law School over the past year. We depend upon the generosity of our alumni and other friends to keep the incredible opportunities we offer accessible to the next generation of lawyers — and help them become the leaders of tomorrow.

On, Wisconsin!



Dean Dan Tokaji

Bringing the Debate Into the 21st Century

Does Latin America have a distinct tradition of international law? In the early 20th Century, a group of scholars answered this question with a resounding yes.

"Their aim was to present the region as an equal partner to Europe and the United States in international relations," explained Evjue-Bascom Professor of Law **ALEXANDRA HUNEEUS**.

Latin America has been a pivotal site for influential and innovative developments in international law since the colonial era. Today, as the global order shifts, scholars and legal practitioners are grappling with the current restructuring and potential transformation of international relations — and what this means for international law in the region.

A volume recently co-edited by Huneeus, Alejandro Chehtman (dean and professor of law, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Argentina, and executive director of the Latin American Society for International Law) and Sergio Puig (chair in International Economic Law at the European University Institute and Evo DeConcini Professor of Law at The University of Arizona) brings this debate into the 21st Century. In September, the volume received the 2025 American Branch of the International Law Association Edited Volume Book of the Year Award.

The collection of essays brings together a group of highly regarded scholars to present a broad survey of Latin America's approaches and contributions, historically and presently, to the field of international law.

"The volume collects the most creative and influential voices writing about international law in the region, showcasing the region's contributions to international law and the role of international law in shaping the region's law and politics," explained Huneeus. "We began working on the volume in the depths of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is wonderful to have it out, and to have it receive the International Law Association (U.S. chapter) award for Best Edited Volume."

Discussing The Shadow Carceral State



PROFESSOR LISA WASHINGTON (above, left), alongside **PROFESSOR RENAGH O'LEARY,** co-chaired the 2025 Wisconsin Law Review Symposium, The Shadow Carceral State. The symposium touched on a wide variety of subfields and practice areas, including policing, immigration, education and family law. Professor Melissa Murray (above, right), New York University School of Law, gave the keynote.

Scholarly Roundup

DAVID SCHWARTZ'S "Mr. Madison's War on the General Welfare Clause" was cited in the majority opinion in *Medina v. Planned Parenthood*.

TOREY DOLAN filed an amicus brief on behalf of the Navajo Nation in *Louisiana v. Callais* on the constitutionality of race-conscious remedies under section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

"Integrating Tribal Law into the Legal Research and Writing Curriculum," co-authored by **BONNIE SHUCHA**, received two awards from the American Association of Law Libraries: the Outstanding Article - Long Form Award and the Paul Gatz RIPS-SIS Publication Award.

KRISTOPHER TURNER wrote "Law Library Partnerships" in "Law Librarian Practice: Challenges and Opportunities in Law Firm, Government, and Academic Law Libraries," published by Bloomsbury Publishing in August 2025.

BILL CLUNE'S new book, "Direito e Políticas Públicas nos escritos de William Clune," includes a collection of his writings translated into Portuguese, alongside new scholarship from Brazilian legal scholar Maria Paula Dallari Bucci.

Seifter Honored with Romnes Fellowship



MIRIAM SEIFTER was among 11 University of Wisconsin–Madison faculty honored with the H.I. Romnes Fellowship from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research for 2025-26. The Fellowship recognizes faculty with exceptional research contributions within their first six years from promotion to a tenured position. The award is named in recognition of the late WARF trustees president H.I. Romnes and comes with $60,000 that may be spent over five years.

Seifter is the Richard E. Johnson-Bascom Professor of Law and co-director of the State Democracy Research Initiative. She studies state and federal public law, with a focus on challenges affecting democracy at the state level.



CLINICAL IMPACT

DURING THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR, OUR CLINICAL FACULTY

184
ENROLLED STUDENTS

1,179
CREDITS TAUGHT

49,518
HOURS OF LEGAL WORK

IF THAT LEGAL WORK WERE BILLED AT $125/HOUR, OUR CLINICAL PROGRAM WOULD HAVE GENERATED

$6,189,750

Constitution Day Event Hosted by CSLD

In September, the Center for the Study of Liberal Democracy (CSLD) hosted a special Constitution Day lecture and reception featuring Professor Lee Strang (left), director of The Ohio State University Chase Center for Civics, Culture & Society. The event, which took place at the Pyle Center in Madison and virtually, explored "Can Originalism 'Get With the Times?'" This event was sponsored by University of Wisconsin Law School, the CSLD, the College of Letters and Science, The Jack Miller Center and the Tommy G. Thompson Center.
Photo by Ueda Photography



Taking a 'Second Look' at Excessive Prison Sentences

UW Law's Second Look Clinic, directed by Kate Finley, offers hope to Wisconsinites who face decades of incarceration.

As a young attorney working for the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands, Kate Finley found it striking when Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, a Congolese militia leader who was found guilty of conscripting child soldiers, was sentenced to just 14 years in prison. It made an impression on Finley, who was fresh out of Stanford Law School.

"I thought, 'Wow, you can be convicted of the most serious crimes — war crimes, crimes against humanity — and do less time than you would for a drug distribution case in America,'" said Finley, now a clinical associate professor and director of the Frank J. Remington Center at University of Wisconsin Law School.

After five years with the International Criminal Court, Finley decided that she could make a bigger impact back home as a public defender. Her next career stops took her to the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, the Vera Institute of Justice and Rutgers Law School before she joined UW Law in 2019. She felt an immediate connection to the Remington Center's mission.

"The Remington Center is so unique because it's been around for 50-odd years and exists specifically to serve people who have already been sentenced," Finley noted. "We have seven different legal clinics where students work with incarcerated people. I don't know of any other law school that has that many prison-based clinics."

At any given time, the center's clinics work on approximately 100 cases. Finley directs the Second Look Clinic, which helps clients who are serving excessive prison sentences. The clinic is especially

Learn more about Professor Kate Finley.

"During the 'tough on crime' '90s, judges across the country were sending people away for life or greater than natural life sentences, and in Wisconsin, the sentences for young Black men in Milwaukee were some of the most extreme."

– Kate Finley



needed in Wisconsin, she said.

"During the 'tough on crime' '90s, judges across the country were sending people away for life or greater than natural life sentences, and in Wisconsin, the sentences for young Black men in Milwaukee were some of the most extreme," she said. "The Second Look Clinic represents a number of people who received these extraordinary sentences and assists them in seeking release, via advocacy and litigation."

Some of the clinic's clients were teenagers when they were convicted decades ago and won't be eligible for parole for many decades, if ever, despite excellent prison conduct, records of program completion and very low risk ratings. Among the clinic's recent successes is the release of an elderly client who was freed after serving 53 years and who has since returned to the Law School to share his experiences as a jailhouse lawyer with students and to attend a Federalist Society debate. Another client, who was convicted at age 14 and then released after 25 years, found a full-time job and is working toward his bachelor's degree.

"Second look work can be challenging, but it is so powerful for students to be able to stand with their clients as they jointly seek a legal path to release — and even more moving to see a client get released and begin the process of rebuilding and making amends, and living a meaningful, law-abiding life," Finley said.

Finley also conducts research in the area of second look release, including a forthcoming article on the use of prison evidence. Second look statutes in many states direct judges deciding release petitions to consider prison conduct reports, programming reports and certificates as evidence of whether an incarcerated individual is rehabilitated, but these statutes largely ignore the realities of prison, Finley noted. To start, many prisons no longer offer programs that could be used to demonstrate rehabilitation. And prosecutors opposing second look release have argued that minor infractions, such as putting ice in a pitcher instead of a cup or having an extra piece of cheese on a sandwich, are evidence that an incarcerated individual won't abide by the law if released and should therefore stay in prison.

"This research is directly inspired by the work of the Second Look Clinic," Finley said.

Finley is proud to continue the Remington Center's legacy of providing impactful learning experiences for students, including those who don't plan to pursue criminal law as a career.

"Remington Center students have so many amazing opportunities to do really impactful client-centered legal work," she said. "Students might present an oral argument, negotiate with prosecutors about an innocence case, coordinate a restorative dialogue or draft motions to modify a sentence. They get the extraordinary experience of representing a person who may have no right to legal counsel otherwise and then providing them with really high-quality representation and — in some cases — students might be there to meet a client at the door to the prison and, almost literally, walk them home."

By Nicole Sweeney Etter



UW Law Faculty and Staff Updates

This fall, University of Wisconsin Law School greeted a number of familiar faces in different faculty and staff roles.

State Democracy Research Initiative has four new staffers:

Danielle Friedman, SDRI legal director. Friedman previously worked in private practice as a political lawyer, focusing on campaign finance, voting and election administration issues.

Bridget Lavender, SDRI staff attorney. Lavender most recently worked as a Skadden Fellow with the American Civil Liberties Union's (ACLU) State Supreme Court Initiative.

Melina Nguyen, SDRI program coordinator. Nguyen graduated last May from University of Wisconsin–Madison with a bachelor's degree in political science, geography and environmental studies.

Harrison Stark, SDRI senior counsel, director of special projects. Stark most recently worked with the Vermont ACLU affiliate, where he litigated civil rights and civil liberties matters in state and federal courts.



Our latest William H. Hastie Fellow is an alumnae, **Emma Shakeshaft '12.** She most recently served as senior staff attorney and researcher at the ACLU of Wisconsin. The two-year Hastie Fellowship has provided aspiring scholars with an outstanding opportunity to prepare for a career in teaching law since 1973.







Three faculty members have been elevated to associate dean roles over the summer:

BJ Ard is now associate dean for Research and Faculty Development. Ard has been teaching and writing at UW Law since 2018, with a focus on copyright, innovation and the intersections of law and technology.

"I look forward to supporting our world-class faculty as we engage with today's most pressing legal challenges," he said.

Susannah Camic Tahk, who served in the role for nine years, will continue to teach and research tax law.

Emily Buchholz is now associate dean for Experiential Learning. Buchholz joined UW Law in 2022 as the director of the Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic.

"UW Law has been a leader in the experiential learning field for decades," Buchholz said. "It's a privilege to work with and support our outstanding experiential faculty."

Ursula Weigold, who served in the role for the past six years, retired this year after 15 years at UW Law and a distinguished academic career in legal research and writing.

Emily Cauble is now associate dean for Academic Affairs. She has taught and written about tax law at UW Law over the past three years.

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to work with the rest of our academic affairs team and our faculty on continuing to offer our students an excellent legal education," she said.

Cauble, the Thomas G. Ragatz Chair in Tax Law, took over the role from Kevin Kelly '91, who's moved into a teaching professor role. Kelly has been on the Law School staff since 1998; he was appointed an assistant dean in 2000 and an associate dean in 2010.



Three new hires have joined our tenure-track faculty, all focused on the emerging issues of technology and artificial intelligence: **Paul Connell, Jason Reinecke and Benjamin Sobel.** Learn more about them on page 18.

One of the two new Legal Analysis, Advocacy, and Writing teaching faculty hires is also an alumnus, **Tony Lucchesi '00.** See more about him, **Hugh Dowell** and the program in ***Rewriting the Program*** on page 22.

THE THREE EMILYS With the promotions of Buchholz and Cauble, UW Law now has three associate deans named Emily. Emily Kite is associate dean for the Office of Professional and Career Development (OCPD), where she has been supporting students and alumni since 2013.

J. Willard Hurst Summer Institute: 'Thrilling' Tradition for Legal History Scholars

Every two years in June, the "spirit of the Hurst Institute" makes a lasting impact on 12 early career legal history scholars from around the world.

The two-week seminar held at University of Wisconsin Law School is guided by James Willard Hurst's commitment to mentoring and fostering an intellectual community through generous, rigorous, critical, detailed and engaged feedback.

Twelve fellows regarded as the future of the field of legal history engage in spirited discussions with each other as well as visiting senior scholars.

The summer institute is named for Hurst (1910-1997), generally recognized as the father of modern American legal history. He joined the UW Law faculty in 1937, taught for more than four decades and published over three dozen books and scholarly articles. Much like his students did, Hurst fellows walk away with invaluable experience because they are given the opportunity to receive feedback from a cohort of academics.

Michelle McKinley, one of the co-conveners for the 13th institute this summer, praised this intense, beneficial process.

"It is actually very hard to get this kind of one-on-one invested feedback beyond one's dissertation committee," said McKinley, Bernard B. Kliks Professor of Law at the University of Oregon. "Fellows are basically getting 14 committee members, peer reviewers, journal editors and manuscript editors all at once in the field of legal history that is far beyond one's own disciplinary expertise."

Additionally, the feedback comes from a wider-than-usual academic community. Many legal scholars often only discuss their work with peers in the same or a similar field of expertise. Feedback from peers across the academic community can open fellows' eyes to new perspectives they hadn't considered before.

John Fabian Witt, also a 2025 co-convener, believes these diverse perspectives are essential for full comprehension of the law.

"In the history of the law, different disciplinary perspectives have been complementary rather than rivalrous," said Witt, Allen H. Duffy Class of 1960 Professor of Law at Yale Law School. "Law is such a complicated, multifarious phenomenon that it takes all kinds to help us make sense of it."

Each of this year's fellows came to the institute looking to improve themselves and their work. The opportunities available at the Hurst Institute drew in many promising early career scholars.

Like Marco Basile, who came to the institute during a transitional period in his career.

Marco Basile: Preparing for the Future

This fall, Basile joined the faculty at Boston College Law School as an assistant professor. To prepare for this new role, he wanted to step back and think critically about the methods, objectives and responsibilities of legal history.

The former Alexander Fellow at New York University School of Law is a historian who researches U.S. public law in a global context; his work has been published in the *Virginia Law Review* and *Harvard Law Review,* among others.

Before entering academia, Basile worked as a litigator and clerked for Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the U.S. Supreme Court as well as two federal appeals court judges.

Basile said he was grateful for his peers' "challenging questions and constructive feedback" during the institute. This was all over the course of more than two hours of focusing on his draft paper on legal interpretation in the early United States.

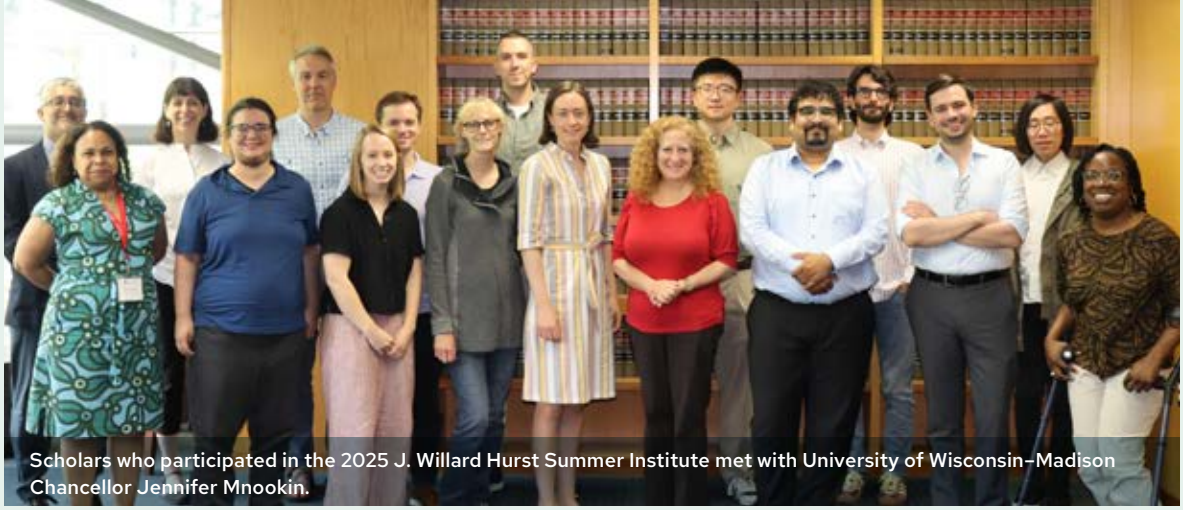
Additionally, Basile was able to make important connections with the other fellows.

"One of the best parts of the program was being folded into a new cohort of Hurst Fellows who can support each other as we advance in our careers," he said. "Getting to know the other fellows and learning from their work was one of the true highlights of the experience."

Du Fei, an assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma, agreed.

Du Fei: Looking for New Perspectives

Fei came to the Hurst Institute to broaden his understanding of history outside of his own regional



Scholars who participated in the 2025 J. Willard Hurst Summer Institute met with University of Wisconsin–Madison Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin.

field. He studies early modern and modern South Asia, focusing on the history of gender and Islam in South Asia's global connections.

The discussion experience he had with other scholars was extremely rewarding.

"It is always eye-opening to engage in this kind of boundary-crossing conversation," Fei said.

Some of the most important discussions revolved around a chapter in his current project, "Local Women, Global Histories? Gendering Economic Life, Law, and Islam in Early Modern Transregional India."

It made him rethink the division of the intellectual history of jurisprudence and the social history of legal practices — something he wished to expand upon throughout his book.

The experience was equally eye-opening for Britney Wilson.

Britney Wilson: Seeing The Law From a Different Angle

Unlike many of her colleagues, Wilson does not have a background in legal history. Trained as a lawyer, she came to the institute to "learn how to do history," though during her time she learned that there is no set way to do that.

A professor at New York Law School, Wilson is the founding director of the Civil Rights and Disability Justice Clinic. She worked previously as a staff attorney at the National Center for Law and Economic Justice, where she litigated federal civil rights class action litigation tied to excessive fines and fees, discriminatory policing and disability rights. Before that, she litigated a wide range of complex federal cases concerning racial justice issues at the national office of the American Civil Liberties Union's Racial Justice Program and at the Center for Constitutional Rights.

"I very much think like a lawyer, and what the Hurst Institute has been helpful in getting me to see is that the law is much more than what I might traditionally think of as the law," Wilson said. "The law is also customs, and it is constantly being shaped and contested; these are things I intuitively know, but it can be easy to forget when you are practicing on a regular basis."

Wilson's experience at the institute has not only allowed her to see the law from a different perspective, but it has also reintroduced her to her humanities side.

"I am a writer and my undergraduate degree is in English and so I think this experience is sort of reintroducing me to those concepts in terms of how I think about the law," she said.

It's "thrilling" to see how the program shapes new generations of legal historians who find a sense of community during an intensive, demanding two weeks in Madison, said Mitra Sharafi, Evjue-Bascom Professor of Law at UW Law School.

Mitra Sharafi: 'Always a good thing'

Sharafi has been involved with the Hurst Institute most years since 2005, when she was a fellow herself. In 2017 and 2019, she was the convener.

This November, Sharafi will become president of the American Society for Legal History (ASLH), which sponsors the Institute.

For herself, the panoramic view of the field of legal history allows her to catch a glimpse of the on-the-ground work of scholars researching many different times and places.

"I love it when two Hurst fellows working on completely different times and places — 17th Century Qing-dynasty China and the 20th Century U.S., for instance — realize that they are working on the same theme like judicial discretion," Sharafi said. "When this happens, fellows emerge with a new perspective on what fields and scholars they are in conversation with — and see their research from a broader and more comparative perspective. This is always a good thing, as it helps fellows better communicate their research findings to people outside of their sub-field."

By Kate Shucha

Carrying the Wisconsin Idea Forward



Growing up with a younger brother with Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcus (P.A.N.D.A.S), Mariah Bader 2L witnessed educational inequality firsthand.

While her family hired an attorney and fought for her brother's right to an equitable education, Bader quickly realized that many families can't do the same.

"Every day, students across the country face similar injustices to what my brother faced, and their families are left to navigate a complex and often unresponsive system on their own," she said. "I saw the emotional, academic and financial strain it placed on my family, and I never want another family to have to go through what we did."

Witnessing this process, Bader knew she wanted to pursue law and advocacy. In high school, she lobbied for a bill that would increase special education funding in rural Wisconsin. The bill didn't pass, but it was a turning point for Bader.

"I felt a deep responsibility to help students like my brother," she said. "While I couldn't change the legislators' votes, I realized I could help the individuals as their attorney. I want to be the person who stands up for students with special needs and ensures their rights are protected, regardless of their family's resources."

Her undergraduate experiences at Carthage College confirmed her interest in law and advocacy. Through her involvement in Mock Trial and Phi Alpha Delta, Bader began to see what a life in law could look like. And interning at the Kenosha Clerk of Courts gave her an even closer look at the legal system in action, particularly during a time of heightened national attention following the shootings of Jacob Blake and George Floyd, and the Kyle Rittenhouse trial.

"I hope to be part of reshaping the educational system so that no family has to fight as hard as mine did just to receive the support their child deserves."

– Mariah Bader 2L

"Witnessing how the law could both reflect and influence social change reinforced my belief that law school was where I belonged," she said.

Bader initially considered University of Wisconsin Law School for its diploma privilege, which allows UW Law graduates to secure a license to practice law in Wisconsin without taking a bar exam. But what ultimately sealed her decision was the positive feedback she received from every UW Law alum she met, including Mark Richards '87, for whom she interned.

"Their reflections weren't just about academics," she said. "Every alum I spoke to talked about the strong sense of community, the support from faculty and how well the school prepared them for real-world practice. That genuine enthusiasm made it clear to me that UW Law isn't just a strong institution on paper; it's a place where students are truly supported."

At UW, Bader holds leadership roles in the Business and Tax Law Association and the Indigenous Law Students Association (ILSA), experiences which have broadened her skills and enriched her UW journey.

"Through the Business and Tax Law Association, I've deepened my understanding of transactional law and enhanced my organizational and leadership abilities," she explained. "Simultaneously, my involvement with ILSA has grounded me in community-building and cultural awareness. It's taught me the importance of creating space for underrepresented voices."

In July, Bader was named Miss Collegiate USA 2025, one of the most "empowering and transformative experiences" of her life.

"It gave me more than a crown or a title; it gave

continued to page 44

A Quest to Enact Meaningful Change

A year ago, Ben Willstein 3L was excited to serve as the first vice president of well-being for the Student Bar Association (SBA) at University of Wisconsin Law School, even if the duties and expectations were unclear.

Though the lack of structure could have been intimidating for others, Willstein, a double Badger with a bachelor's degree in political science, viewed it as an opportunity. His goal was to create more social spaces on campus for Law students to build community and break boundaries.

"Community building is very important to me," Willstein said. "Unfortunately, the environment in law school tends to lead to cliques, and those barriers can inhibit relationships, mental health and creative problem-solving. If two people are capable of collaborating on a project based on a shared interest but they never meet due to social anxieties, then to me, that's wasted potential. Conversely, if two people view themselves as opposed based on a few assumptions, they might discover they have common interests or goals if they are forced to work on a task together."



Whether it's through activities like volleyball or succulent planting, important connections are there; they just need to be made.

"The legal community is small, and we only have so much time to get to know our classmates," the Missoula, Montana, native said. "Who knows? A few years down the line, you might find yourself working with a former classmate on a case."

Two things Willstein introduced were a weekly wellbeing student newsletter — packed with events, resources and fun facts — and the Non-Alcoholic Programming (NAP) series.

With NAPs, Willstein and his fellow SBA members sought to create an alternative social option for students who don't drink alcohol, but one that wouldn't be exclusive to sober individuals.

A pirate-themed murder mystery party and rock climbing event are two very different examples of events that attracted a diverse mix of folks.

"... if two people view themselves as opposed based on a few assumptions, they might discover they have common interests or goals if they are forced to work on a task together." – Ben Willstein 3L

"It took a little coaxing to get in character for the murder mystery party, but by the end, it seemed like folks were really enjoying themselves," Willstein said. "And with rock climbing, you're really only competing against yourself, so it invites encouragement from others. It was so nice to see students encourage each other to get a hand or foot on the next hold or try a new route."

This year, Willstein is continuing with SBA leadership as 3L representative — while Byron Bushara 2L takes over as vice president. Willstein hopes to expand on interactive activities, especially ones that don't require being present at a specific time or place.

But building a community is more than just creating bonds with peers. Willstein believes it's the best way to make widescale change.

In 2020, he worked for the Biden-Harris campaign; he also consulted for the Planned Parenthood Action Fund. He said he enjoyed these experiences but envisions his path ahead as an advocate for economic justice.

Willstein is particularly interested in labor and employment law and antitrust law because of a dispute he and his coworkers once faced with their employer.

"It opened my eyes to just how much power employers exercise over their employees," he said.

By Kate Shucha



A 'Game Changer' for Estate Planning

Jeffry '79 and Kristin Brown establish endowed professorship fund structured as a gift of carried interest.

Giving back is important. It's a fundamental belief held by many, including Jeffry Brown '79 and Kristin Brown. It's also the motivating factor behind their establishment of the Jeffry (Class of 1979) and Kristin Brown Endowed Professorship Fund at University of Wisconsin Law School.

"This gift represents not only a significant investment in the future of the Law School, but also a powerful endorsement of our mission to cultivate academic excellence, innovative scholarship and leadership in the legal field," said Elizabeth Feist, senior director of development for the Law School.

"By establishing a professorship, Jeffry and Kristin are enabling us to attract and retain outstanding faculty — one of our highest institutional priorities," she added.

"I wouldn't be where I am professionally without the University of Wisconsin Law School," Jeffry said. "Wisconsin was really good to me, and it's a pleasure to make this kind of impact on the Law School and on the broader university and state."

The Browns' gift is structured as a gift of carried interest, which a private equity or venture capital fund manager receives.

The donated carried interest partnership units are illiquid, private market securities. The units are transferred to a donor-advised fund as a form of estate planning. This strategy allows the Browns to move assets with potentially high future appreciation out of their taxable estate, thus minimizing future estate and gift taxes for their beneficiaries.

The donation of private, illiquid securities is a fast-growing segment of estate planning — yet remains relatively unknown.

"Part of that is a result of how private markets have grown," Jeffry noted. "To put this into perspective, in the United States there are about half the number of publicly traded stocks today than there were in 1997. So where is the capital? It's in private equity and private credit."

This is also reflected in the changing makeup of investment portfolios.

"What's happened is a lot of people own private securities," he continued. "These could be partnership units in funds or direct investments in startups or real estate. They own these illiquid assets, and when it comes to estate planning time, some of these are quite problematic. In our case, carried interest can create huge amounts of phantom income."

Phantom income is income that is taxable to a person or business even though they have not received any actual cash. This creates a tax liability on "paper" gains with no corresponding cash flow to pay the tax.

When the Browns began estate planning, they first explored some of their "problem assets."

"First on the list were our private and illiquid securities," Jeffry explained. "In our case, because I was a founder at Dyal Capital Partners and we created perpetual no-end-date funds, the phantom income problem creates a perpetual problem for our heirs."

> "…we've taken this massively tax-inefficient asset and made it extremely tax efficient, and we also fulfill a key philanthropic goal: We can efficiently give this gift of carried interest to the Law School for a professorship." – Jeffry Brown '79

The Browns began looking for a solution and found there were surprisingly few options.

"But when we met Dominic Napolitano, we knew we had found something very special," he said.

Napolitano is the founder and president of National Charitable Endowment, a 501c public charity, which he started after recognizing the demand for an open architecture, donor-advised fund platform to serve the needs of sophisticated donors and the ability to hold large percentages of illiquid and complex assets. He's been in the alternative space for 40 years and is a leader in terms of figuring out what to do with problem assets, Jeffry explained.

"With Dominic's help, we've taken this massively tax-inefficient asset and made it extremely tax efficient," Jeffry continued. "And we also fulfill a key philanthropic goal: We can efficiently give this gift of carried interest to the Law School for a professorship."

This is exactly what people should focus on when donating, explained Napolitano.

"Jeff's a pioneer in this space," he continued. "It positively affects your adjusted gross income and all that accrues for the Law School. It's a win for the school and a win for the donor."

People "really shouldn't be freaked out about private or illiquid securities donations," explained Jeffry. "You just need to connect with National Charitable Endowment. They are absolutely the best in this space."

Private partnership interest or illiquid securities are a large part of people's investment portfolios, and they may not even notice it, he explained.

"If you think about the accelerator ecosystem that's grown up in Madison alone, everyone who's invested in those has been granted illiquid securities," he continued. "I guarantee there are people sitting on these illiquid securities who don't realize they can donate them."

It's a "game changer" for estate planning, he continued.

"On behalf of the entire Law School community, we extend our deepest gratitude to Jeffry and Kristin for their extraordinary commitment of $1 million to establish a professorship," said Feist. "Their visionary generosity will have a transformative and lasting impact on our institution. We are profoundly grateful for Jeffry and Kristin's partnership and belief in the importance of exceptional legal education. Their leadership and dedication set a remarkable example for others, and their gift will benefit our Law School for decades to come."

By Kassandra Tuten





IN FOCUS *Connect and Celebrate*

In September, University of Wisconsin Law School hosted the 2025 Legal Education Opportunities (LEO) & Affinity Group Networking Event. The gathering brought together local attorneys, alumni, students, faculty and other friends of the Law School for an evening of connection and community. The LEO Program works to recruit and support students of varying identities, backgrounds and experiences, helping them succeed in Law School and beyond.

PHOTOS BY NICK WILKES

















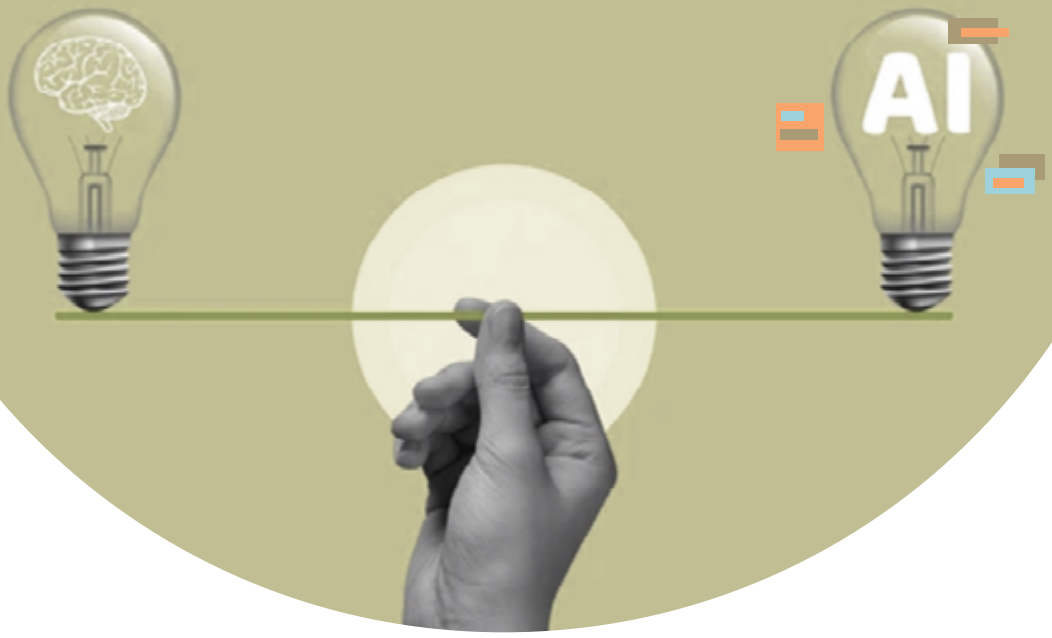






Fresh Scholars, **BOLD IDEAS**

BY KASSANDRA TUTEN AND JENNIE BROECKER



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LAW SCHOOL CONTINUES TO BUILD OUR FACULTY SO THAT THEY ARE NOT ONLY LOOKING AT TODAY'S LEGAL ISSUES BUT ALSO ANTICIPATING TOMORROW'S. THAT'S WHY THREE OF THE SCHOOL'S RECENT HIRES ARE FOCUSED ON THE EMERGING ISSUES OF TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING THE USES AND IMPACTS OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI).

"WE ARE THRILLED TO WELCOME Professors Paul Connell, Jason Reinecke and Benjamin Sobel, who are poised to advance UW Law's leadership in the rapidly evolving fields of AI and innovation," said BJ Ard, associate dean for research and faculty development. "These exceptional scholars ensure UW Law's place at the forefront of meeting the complex challenges and opportunities raised by AI, complementing our existing core of faculty leaders in IP, science and technology law."

Their expertise in AI and technology innovation is also crucial as UW Law joins in the university's commitment to accelerate growth, research and interdisciplinary partnerships across campus through RISE-AI, part of Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin's Wisconsin Research, Innovation and Scholarly Excellence (RISE) Initiative. It's designed to help address significant, complex challenges of importance to Wisconsin and the world through accelerated and strategic faculty hiring, research infrastructure enhancement, interdisciplinary collaboration and increased student and educational opportunities. Learn more about the Wisconsin RISE Initiative at rise.wisc.edu.



Not Just What We Know, But How: Paul Connell on AI, Curiosity and Real-World Impact

Paul Connell's scholarship is unique and multidisciplinary; and it's rooted in the Law-in-Action tradition.

Connell, who recently joined UW Law School as an assistant professor, explores the intersection of law, economics and AI to improve how we understand and implement legal systems. Using AI, he analyzes data to rethink how we produce and trust that legal knowledge.

"One thing I think is fascinating is how AI is going to affect not just what we know but how we know what we know," he explained. "There's a methodological aspect to AI that I'm particularly drawn to, especially with regard to how it will affect the practice of social science and the study of law. There's so much text as a product of law or as historical documents that can be accessed on a much broader scale than we used to be able to. But the precise mechanics of how AI works are important for understanding what we're actually looking at once an AI parses that data."

In his dissertation, Connell, who received his Ph.D. from Columbia University, studied econometric issues raised by the use of AI data in statistical analysis and deployed AI to unlock data for empirical research on securities markets and patenting dynamics.

"I find this subject matter compelling due to the real-world impact it might have," he explained. "Much of corporate law and securities regulation is important because there's so much money at stake that even small changes in the rules can make a big difference in market outcomes. So, it's extra important to get the rules right."

Connell is drawn to UW Law's multidisciplinary approach to scholarship, which aligns with his blend of academic training and experience as a legal practitioner. Before pursuing economics in graduate school, he worked in Capital Markets at Davis Polk and on the Equity Derivatives team at J.P. Morgan.

"One of the things I've always felt is that law doesn't occur in a vacuum," he said. "In order to really understand it, you have to get the social context that generated it and the society it's being used in."

To that end, Connell said it's helpful to have a vantage point that's not solely legal; it could be an economics or historical standpoint, or something else.

"The law is a starting point and then there's bargaining after that, with all the industry-specific norms that that entails," he added.

Connell hopes his students learn about more than just what's on the syllabus in his classes.

"A career in law is one of constant learning," he said. "The most important skill you can take away from law school is being able to teach yourself new things. There's always going to be new areas of law that are too specific or in the weeds for a law school class to capture. The law is also constantly evolving, so to stay current, you have to always be teaching yourself."

That's easier when you're genuinely curious about the subject, he added — and curiosity thrives when you have something that drives you.

"Maybe it's a subject-matter interest, a commitment to equitable social ordering or simply a desire to help someone," he said. "Finding that 'why' is important to launching a career in law, and I hope I can help inspire that in my students. Even — maybe especially — if it's something as wonky as how AI might mediate information asymmetries in financial markets."

Jason Reinecke, Coming Home: A Family Tradition, Revisited



For as long as he can remember, Jason Reinecke wanted to be a Badger.

He grew up in nearby Verona, and his family had strong ties to the university, with six of them — his father, mother, grandfather, aunt, uncle and cousin — all having graduated from UW Law School. His father, Dave Reinecke, also taught as an adjunct at the Law School for nearly a decade. (Among other courses, he taught trusts and estates.) Reinecke, who joined the Law School faculty as an assistant professor of law this fall, will be teaching the same class in Spring 2026.

"My family raved about their experiences at UW Law," said Reinecke.

His dream to be a Badger came true when he was admitted to the undergraduate program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering.

After graduating from UW, Reinecke attended Stanford Law School. He went on to work as a patent litigation attorney at Covington & Burling LLP, and to clerk for then-Chief Judge Sharon Prost on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. He then returned to Stanford to serve as an intellectual property research fellow.

While he enjoyed his time on both coasts, his heart remained in Wisconsin. His wish to return to the Badger State came true when he joined Marquette University Law School as an assistant professor of law. While he really enjoyed his time at Marquette, he couldn't pass up the opportunity to head home and re-join his alma mater.

"It is great to be an active part of the University of Wisconsin again," he said.

Reinecke's scholarship focuses on intellectual property law and innovation, with an emphasis on patent law. It's an area of interest spurred by his time as an undergrad.

"A couple friends and I came up with an invention and were thinking about forming a startup," he explained. "When we started looking into how we could monetize our invention, we participated in an innovation competition hosted by the university. We also looked into obtaining a patent. This experience got me thinking about different innovation policy levers (e.g., patents and competitions) and how they compared."

This intersection of law and innovation is an area that's especially important today, Reinecke said.

"Innovation is the leading driver of economic growth and increased living standards and well-being," he explained. "Innovation is what brings us new life-saving drugs, safer vehicles and better generative AI tools, among many other things. Legal policy levers, such as patents and tax incentives, are tools that we use to incentivize innovation. It's thus really important to tailor these legal policy levers as best as possible. Even small improvements to the law can, for example, save countless lives."

Reinecke's background in both practice and academia shapes the questions he pursues. It also impacts his teaching.

"In practice, I learned that courts don't always say what they mean or mean what they say," he explained. "Lawyers have to learn to read between the lines to figure out what's really driving judicial decisions. In my classes, I try to help students learn this important skill."

Reinecke said he's a "big believer that law school education should prepare students for legal practice."

That's why he's no stranger to sharing his experiences as a clerk for the Federal Circuit or his time as a practicing litigator with his students.

"I learned several lessons — usually the 'hard way,'" he said. "I saw firsthand where practitioners are most likely to slip up. I like to discuss those with my students so that they'll be more prepared than I was."

Reinecke said he's "honored and privileged" to join UW Law School.

"It's an incredible school that is committed to providing an excellent legal education," he said. "It's difficult to describe in words how great it is to be back in Madison. So much has stayed the same. I've missed so many things, including Badger games, the Terrace, Ian's Pizza, Mickie's Dairy Bar and much more. I'm excited to have another opportunity to explore all that campus has to offer."

Benjamin Sobel: On Communication and Meaning



NOLI NOVAK

Benjamin Sobel's interest in copyright law came from his decades-long love of music...and a 2008 book.

Sobel, who joined UW Law School as an assistant professor this fall, plays jazz saxophone or other instruments almost every day. For his Harvard College placement test, he needed to write an essay based on text from Harvard Law Professor Jonathan Zittrain's "The Future of the Internet—And How to Stop It."

"I read the excerpt and was totally hooked," Sobel said. "At that time, I was seriously interested in music and literature, and I could see how new technologies were changing the way these art forms were created and disseminated. These changes were raising lots of hard questions: Whose creativity is encouraged, and whose gets discouraged? Who gets to control what others can create? Who pays, and who profits? Technology law looked to me like it was where those hard questions got hashed out."

Sobel was so hooked, in fact, that he asked Zittrain for a research assistant job as a sophomore. He got the position.

"I owe my career to that early, and very gracious, vote of confidence," he said, adding, "and, of course, to the support I received from many other generous mentors as well. It didn't take long after that for me to set my sights on a career in legal academia."

After attending Harvard Law School, Sobel sought "practical immersion" by clerking for Chief Judge David Barron and the late Judge Michael Boudin on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, and for Judge Pierre Leval on the Second Circuit.

"I couldn't have asked for better mentors," he said. "Clerking for these truly outstanding judges was an education not just in how the legal system works, but in how to be a judicious person and how to support younger generations of professionals."

Most recently, Sobel was a postdoctoral fellow at the Digital Life Initiative at Cornell Tech and an affiliate scholar at New York University's Information Law Institute. This time allowed him to pursue his tech-law scholarship in an interdisciplinary environment, in dialogue with computer scientists, information scientists, lawyers and philosophers. It also prepared him for his role at UW Law.

Sobel was drawn in part to Madison because his parents have spoken fondly of their time living here before he was born. (They even got married in the Capitol!)

His parents — Kathryn Woolard, a linguistic anthropologist who worked in Educational Policy Studies during her time at UW, and Joel Sobel, a game theorist — are profound academic influences.

"We obviously work in quite different disciplines, but we're all converging on similar questions about communication and meaning," he explained. "For instance, one of my newest papers uses semiotic theory to analyze the legal status of nonconsensual, AI-generated deepfakes. It may sound a little esoteric, but semiotics turns out to offer a clear way of explaining some of the regulatory challenges that deepfakes present. I never could have written that paper if it hadn't been for my mother's influence and expertise."

Sobel, who will be teaching copyright and property law this academic year, said the legal problems he studies tend to involve disputes about what information means, because technological advances transform how we communicate and how we interpret things.

"Fundamentally, today's novel communication technologies are changing and mediating how we interpret information," he said. "In the time of generative AI, for instance, it's no longer safe to assume that an image that looks like a photograph is in fact a photograph, nor is it safe to assume that lucid and persuasive text was written by a human author who reasoned through it word by word. These changes aren't necessarily good or bad — but they are changes, and they affect the legal significance of the information that we are constantly producing and receiving."

BY LEO BAROLO GARGIULO

Rewriting THE PROGRAM

Legal writing at UW Law emphasizes mentorship and growth so students can apply skills and approaches to succeed in many practical applications.

AS A CORNERSTONE OF LEGAL EDUCATION, LEGAL RESEARCH AND WRITING HAS BEEN TAUGHT AT UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LAW SCHOOL FOR OVER A CENTURY. BUT THE PROGRAM MAY BE UNRECOGNIZABLE TO MANY ALUMNI TODAY.

Over the past 15 years, what is now known as Legal Analysis, Advocacy, and Writing (LAAW) has evolved into a rigorous, interactive program with an expanded faculty of eight professors, all of whom have significant practice experience.

While the program has slowly grown since its first iterations over a century ago, the most significant elevation can be credited to the leadership of two of UW Law's leaders: Ursula Weigold, who retired this year as associate dean for Experiential Learning, and Margaret Raymond, who stepped down as dean of the Law School in 2020 but continues to teach.

Weigold arrived as the director of Legal Research and Writing in 2010, when the program was teaching legal writing as part of subject-matter classes. Together with Raymond, who joined in the following year, they completely restructured the program, reflecting a change in philosophy and methodology. The curriculum expanded from three to six credits (three for each semester), with a focus on teaching the process of legal research and writing rather than merely teaching how to write specific assignments. Full-time faculty joined the team, and they began teaching the courses' research component and drafting their own assignments.


Kim Peterson


Dustin Brown

"At the time not all law schools wanted to have a full-time legal writing faculty," said Kim Peterson, one of the faculty who joined the program at the time and LAAW's current director. "But by committing to hiring and training a group of full-time professional legal writing faculty, Dean Weigold and Dean Raymond fundamentally improved the legal writing program at UW Law and moved it to one of the top legal writing programs in the country."

The program and team continued to expand under Weigold's leadership, with regular meetings to standardize teaching and grading and with a continuous push toward experiential learning. In the last year, the program got a new name and a new suite to better reflect course content and serve students.

LEGAL ANALYSIS, ADVOCACY, AND WRITING PROGRAM

Today, the LAAW Program is a rigorous, immersive experience that begins on day one. It equips students with foundational skills that they will utilize throughout their education and careers.

"Legal analysis is the foundation of what a lawyer does," said Dustin Brown, teaching faculty in the program. "Clients hire lawyers to solve legal problems, and our class teaches students to do just that. These are the skills that students

need in every class, every clinic and every job."

First-year students take LAAW I and II, where they learn to analyze legal problems, conduct research in both traditional and electronic formats and draft a range of predictive and persuasive documents typical of law practice.

In the fall, students learn the conventions of effective legal writing, including how to structure legal documents, explain and support a legal analysis, and edit their writing for clarity and conciseness. They put these skills to the test through three objective memos, simulating what they would be given at a law firm. The instructors then carefully analyze and give detailed feedback to each paper.

The result is immediately palpable, as exemplified by Chloe Bartz 2L, who worked as a legal intern in Indiana last summer.

"Within my first four hours on the job, I was asked to draft a memo about the Open Door Law," she said. "Feeling confident on the first day of my internship to jump in, utilize a variety of sources and do not just a legal analysis of Indiana, but then compare it to Wisconsin and Illinois, and make a policy argument that went on to inform actions taken by a local city board is a direct result of the preparation I received in my 1L LAAW courses."

The spring course focuses on persuasive legal writing, as well as on oral presentation and advocacy skills. Students are also taught the ethics of advocacy, which explores how to argue effectively on behalf of a client while maintaining integrity as an officer of the court. Students write a trial-level motion brief and an appellate brief representing their client, while examining and preparing multiple shorter documents typical of law practice. To balance the focus on litigation, the course also introduces transactional drafting.

Upper-level students can continue honing their skills in seminars, clinics, doctrinal courses and specialized legal writing offerings.

TEACH THE PROCESS, NOT THE ASSIGNMENT

The guiding philosophy behind all LAAW courses is to teach the process.

"That means we don't tell students how to write a particular memo or brief, but we teach them how to think generally about legal writing," explained Peterson. "That way, when students conclude the legal writing program, they have the skills necessary to successfully research, analyze and write about almost any legal issue they encounter in practice."

This teaching is not limited to classrooms. Students are encouraged to meet individually with their LAAW professors in conferences that function like personalized workshops. Students taking LAAW I or II are required to attend at least one conference per semester, but the service is available to students from all levels.

Bartz, who frequently attended these conferences, said they were instrumental in building her confidence and a large reason behind her performance during her summer internship.

"One of the biggest hurdles I think 1Ls battle is knowing if they are on the right track," she explained. "We are constantly fighting the concern of: Did I understand the caselaw correctly? Will I be cold-called today? Did I cite that statute right? One-on-one conferences did a lot to alleviate that fear of the unknown for me and combat the constant feeling of wandering around a little lost and unsure in this type of academic landscape."

Izzy Oliver 2L also attended conferences frequently in both LAAW I and II.

"I found it incredibly helpful to talk through the cases to glean as much nuance as I could before I started writing," she said. "Judicial writing often does not mirror the necessary structure of legal briefs or memos. This can make it difficult to translate meaning and critical inferences from dense case law. I found that important legal nuance could be lost quickly if I started to write without a solid structural plan and a deep understanding of what the cases were saying. The line between dicta and holdings, binding and persuasive authority can be muddled quickly with poor research, lack of organization and a lazy read of the law."

FACULTY AS A RESOURCE

The team, directed by Peterson, includes seven other full-time LAAW faculty, with each professor teaching two classes of 17 to 19 students. Each instructor writes their own assignments every year, and they all meet weekly to ensure the classes are consistent while learning from each other.

Each faculty member has excellent academic credentials and significant real-world experience, with most having over 10 years of practice.

"Hired faculty are engaging and good attorneys, and once they join, they learn how to teach and make the content interesting," said Peterson.

"My colleagues are all passionate about law, writing and teaching, plus extremely committed to creating an exciting, hands-on experience for our students," Brown said. "Sitting in a room and talking about legal

writing for two hours may not be most people's idea of a good time, but our department meetings are a riot — we actually look forward to them! We are constantly arguing, laughing and brainstorming."

To some students, these hand-picked faculty often function as a resource beyond questions on legal writing.

"Yes, they care about propagating good legal writing. But more importantly, they are teaching because they care about the students and fostering the next generation of lawyers," said Oliver. "They want to see each student succeed, often putting action to words by writing letters of recommendation as students apply to internships and clerkships."

Many LAAW professors also have an open-door policy that extends beyond a student's time in their course.

"This level of student engagement is a unique and beautiful quality about the UW LAAW faculty," added Oliver.

The two most recent additions to the team happened over the summer: Tony Lucchesi '00 and Hugh Dowell. Lucchesi spent many years working as a staff attorney for the Wisconsin Court of Appeals, and Dowell has worked as a judicial clerk for the Ohio Supreme Court and in the Alaska Attorney General's office.

"Their extensive experience working within the judicial system will give students unique insight into what judicial clerks and judges find useful in a legal brief and will help students analyze and write about the law with precision, accuracy and clarity," Peterson said.


Tony Lucchesi


Hugh Dowell

In addition to teaching students, LAAW faculty are also advancing the field.

Faculty regularly present at national conferences and









The new LAAW suite in 4370 is welcoming to students, who often frequent the space before or after office hours or even use it for study groups.

contribute to scholarship on legal pedagogy. They've been invited to lead writing workshops for law firms and have developed several tools for both students and other legal writing instructors, such as the Citation Bootcamp (a video series introducing law students to legal citation) and the Legal Hypotheticals Archive (a searchable database summarizing a range of hypothetical assignments that have been used successfully in legal writing courses).

REVAMPED LAAW SUITE

Until last year, the LAAW faculty were scattered across four floors of the Law building. Now, thanks to Dean Dan Tokaji's vision and support, they are all together in the newly built suite 4370.

"This is the first time in the almost 30 years I've taught here that all of the legal writing faculty are in the same area," Peterson said. "Being in the same space allows us to talk more often so that we can communicate teaching ideas, ask each other questions about how we teach particular concepts and, in the end, I think this open communication makes us better teachers."

The new space, in many ways, represents the Law School's commitment to continue investing in legal writing. It advances the strengths the program has developed over the past 15 years: a team of full-time faculty passionate about teaching legal writing, who welcome and connect with students and guide them to become lawyers with the skills to succeed in any circumstances.

The efforts of the faculty don't go unnoticed by the students.

"What stands out to me is how the whole of the LAAW faculty managed to prepare students for a variety of different employer expectations while also embodying the general theme of the department and profession as a whole: There is no one way to be a successful legal writer," said Bartz.

FOSTERING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEGAL SCHOLARS

The first few weeks of law school can be intimidating and overwhelming for students.

"Students for the most part have no idea what they are doing and are looking for ways to stay grounded amidst the whirlwind," said Oliver.

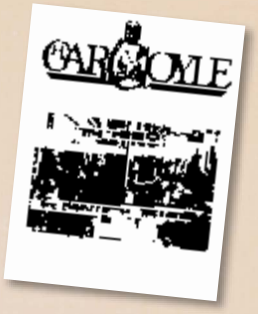
Oftentimes, they seek this grounding from their professors.

LAAW courses are among the first classes law students take, and their smaller sections make their professors particularly accessible. Oliver remembered visiting her LAAW professor when she was feeling particularly lost.

"While her office was a place to discuss Boolean searches, cases for upcoming assignments and legal memo structure, it was also a place I could let my guard down and be honest about difficulties," she recalled.

Legal writing classes can also help students organize their thoughts and build confidence in their skills. Oliver compared the process to stained-glass artisanship.

"Just as a stained-glass window comes together piece by piece as the artist solders glass together, each section of a legal memo or brief comes together as the writer strings sentence after sentence," she said. "As I read through my final memo for LAAW I, I could see each sentence fitting snugly together as if I was soldering glass. It was quite amazing."



FROM THE BEGINNING

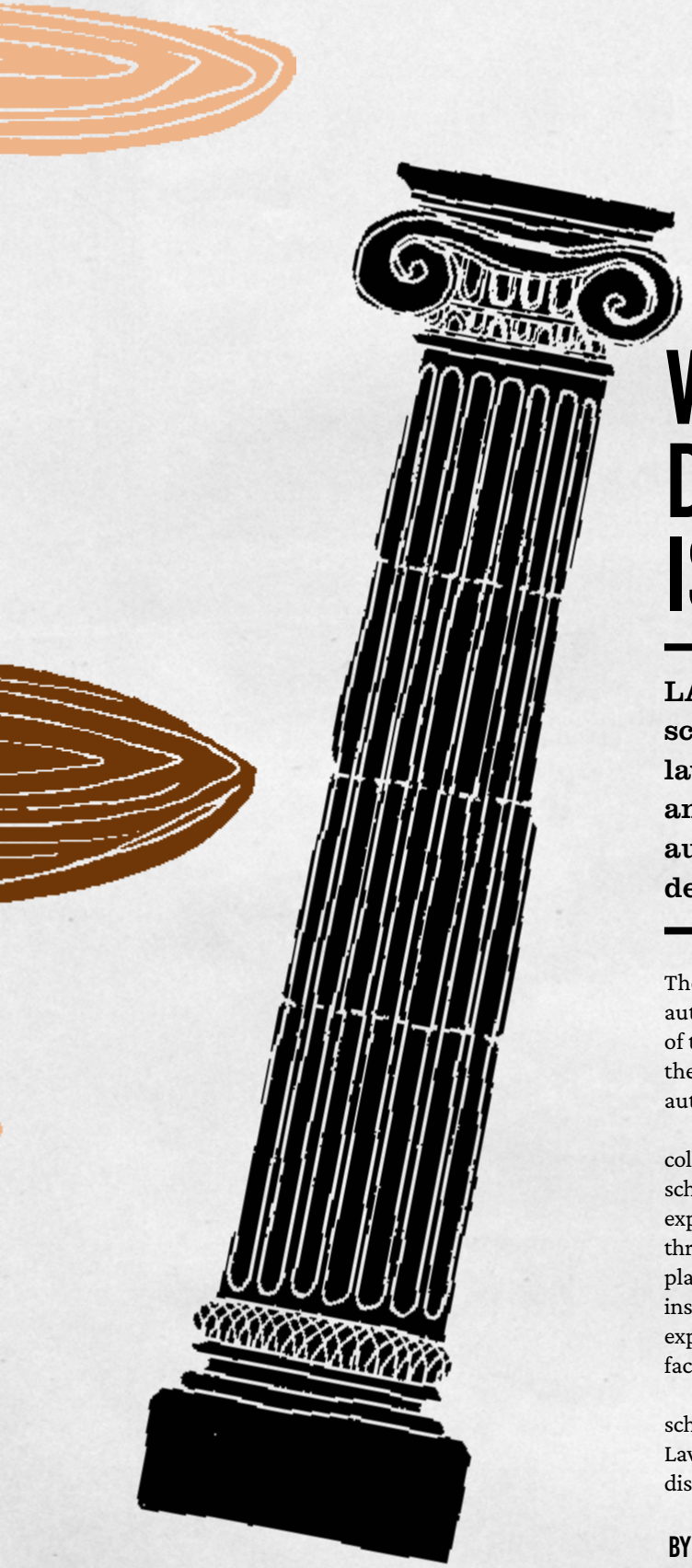
A 1981 ISSUE of the ***Gargoyle*** (Vol. 12, No. 3) attributes the first semblance of a required legal writing program to a one-credit course in "Briefmaking," listed in a 1914-15 academic year Law School Bulletin. The course was renamed to "Legal Bibliography" in 1921-22 and remained relatively unchanged until the early '50s.

In 1954, the course was split into two semesters for a total of two credits, and with the names "Legal Writing (a)" and "Legal Writing (b)," with a new emphasis on legal analysis and problem solving. These were then fused into the single spring semester three-credit course, "Legal Writing," in 1971, but with the understanding that the fall semester would still include legal bibliography exercises. At this point, the course was taught by second- and third-year law students, and it was one of the few law courses with letter grades, often seen as less rigorous than other courses, which received number grades.

Look back and read the 1981 issue.

In 1994, the course was once again split into two (Legal Research and Writing I and II), but now with adjunct professors teaching writing and library staff teaching research. Additionally, the courses were graded like other substantive classes, signaling their growing importance.





WHEN DEMOCRACY IS CHALLENGED

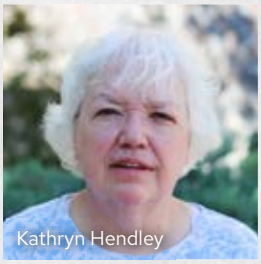
LADD fosters a global network of scholars investigating the role of lawyers and judges in resisting — and at times enabling — authoritarianism in contexts of democratic backsliding.

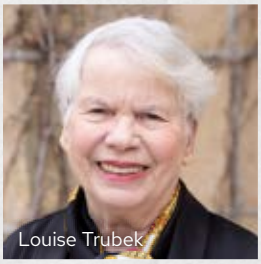
The evolution away from democracy toward authoritarianism is visible in virtually every corner of the world. Also becoming visible are trends in the opposite direction as resistance grows to these authoritarian efforts.

Lawyers and Democratic Decline (LADD) is a collaborative research project that brings together scholars studying the role of lawyers in countries experiencing democratic decline or already in the throes of authoritarianism. Lawyers of all stripes play a central role in these processes as well as in the institutions of authoritarian regimes. Their training and experience provide them with tools either to resist or facilitate the transition to authoritarianism.

Making sense of this process requires input from scholars across the globe who share Wisconsin's Law-in-Action approach, despite having a variety of disciplinary homes. To that end, LADD has created

BY KASSANDRA TUTEN | ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIKE BASS


Kathryn Hendley


Louise Trubek


David Trubek

"Once we saw the need for LADD, my wife, UW Clinical Professor Emerita Louise Trubek, and I approached Professor Hendley about building the project."

–DAVID TRUBEK

a community that includes scholars who study the experience of the United States, Brazil, China, Egypt, Hungary, India, Poland, Russia and Ukraine, noted Kathryn Hendley, director of LADD and Roman Z. Livshits & Theodore W. Brazeau Professor of Law and Political Science at University of Wisconsin Law School, which is the academic host of LADD.

The impetus for the project came from UW's Voss-Bascom Professor of Law and Dean of International Studies Emeritus David Trubek.

David was studying how democracies unravel. He invited Hendley, whose research focuses on legal and economic reform in the former Soviet Union, to write a chapter to a forthcoming edited volume on backsliding democracies about the resistance of Russian lawyers. She contributed the chapter, but her conclusion was more complicated: Russian lawyers weren't resisters in the traditional sense of agitating for systemic change. Instead, they worked within the system to defend and free those targeted by the Kremlin by taking advantage of mistakes made by police.

LADD emerged in mid-2023 as a spin-off from another project called Global Resistance to Authoritarian Diffusion (GRAD), which was a general survey of all forms of resistance. GRAD is based at Transnational Law Institute at the King's College London and supported by a consortium of institutions, including the FGV Law School in São Paulo and UW Law School.

"GRAD had a significant amount of material on resistance by lawyers, and looking it over, we became convinced that there could and should be a resistance project focused exclusively on lawyers," David explained.

He gathered a group at the Harvard Law School Center on the Legal Profession for a one-day workshop, where researchers shared stories of legal professionals navigating fragile democracies in the U.S., China, Brazil and Russia.

David asked Hendley to lead the project because she was "the senior person at UW involved in resistance studies," having played a role in GRAD and the study of lawyers in Russia, he explained.

"Once we saw the need for LADD, my wife, UW



"It would launch research on lawyer resistance to authoritarianism, a growing concern, and it would help strengthen International Legal Studies…this kind of support will be all the more necessary if threatened cuts to international programs materialize."

– LOUISE TRUBEK

Clinical Professor Emerita Louise Trubek, and I approached Professor Hendley about building the project," David explained.

Hendley agreed, and the Trubeks pledged $140,000, payable over two years, to get it started.

For the Trubeks, the gift had two goals.

"It would launch research on lawyer resistance to authoritarianism, a growing concern, and it would help strengthen International Legal Studies, which David had founded when serving as dean of International Studies," Louise said. "This kind of support will be all the more necessary if threatened cuts to international programs materialize."

LADD has since become a global network of scholars investigating the role of lawyers in resisting — and at times enabling — authoritarianism in contexts of democratic backsliding. Through collaborative research, comparative analysis and public events, LADD explores how legal professionals navigate repression, uphold democratic norms and negotiate their professional identity in times of political crisis.

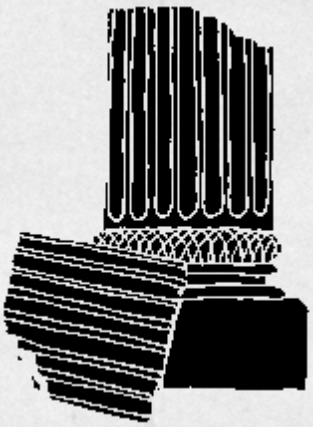
Today, LADD hosts a vibrant website (ladd.law.wisc.edu) that tracks threats to the legal profession worldwide and gathers cutting-edge scholarship on democratic decline. It has also convened international symposia, including a gathering at Indiana University in early 2025 that was co-sponsored by the *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies,* and a forthcoming conference at UW Law in 2026 that will be co-sponsored by the *Wisconsin International Law Journal.*

SHAPING THE LITERATURE

A literature has emerged about the reasons why some democratic systems have been devolving into authoritarianism, said Hendley.

Many of these studies focus on the tactics of populist leaders in their electoral campaigns. Other scholars explored the use of legal tools in this process, such as amendments to the constitution, reforms to courts and other legislative changes, she explained.

"Although the training of lawyers makes them key players in such developments, they had not been studied systematically," she added. "LADD aims to bring lawyers into the picture."



"In almost all backsliding or authoritarian countries, judges have found themselves on the front lines. They are called upon to resolve cases in which policies aimed at consolidating authoritarianism are challenged. Sometimes they are attacked personally. Studying their responses and comparing them across geographic borders promises fruitful results."

– KATHRYN HENDLEY

LADD encourages scholarship on all lawyer roles, looking at all forms of action and inaction and at all types of lawyers — from criminal defense lawyers to prosecutors and corporate lawyers to human rights defenders. The goal is to identify factors that influence their behavior and to map patterns that are common across geographic borders and/or political systems.

It's tempting, she said, to limit the investigation to the activist lawyers who are working to resist authoritarian-leaning policies.

"But in many countries, these constitute a relatively small percentage of all lawyers," she said.

In countries undergoing transition, lawyers are engaged one way or the other, though many opt to sit on the sidelines.

"We want to understand what encourages them to sit on the fence," said Hendley. "And we're also interested in the lawyers who are helping implement policies that undermine democracy. These often include prosecutors and government lawyers who share the political philosophy of the leaders."

Recently, LADD added judges as a focus of study. The change wasn't much of a leap, said Hendley.

"In almost all backsliding or authoritarian countries, judges have found themselves on the front lines," she explained. "They are called upon to resolve cases in which policies aimed at consolidating authoritarianism are challenged. Sometimes they are attacked personally. Studying their responses and comparing them across geographic borders promises fruitful results."

The change was made at the suggestion of Richard Abel, Michael J. Connell Distinguished Professor of Law Emeritus and Distinguished Research Professor at University of California, Los Angeles School of Law and an active participant in LADD.

In 2024 and 2025, Abel wrote a series of books focused on chronicling the Trump administration's actions and policies and their impact on democratic principles. His scholarship also analyzed the movements and community efforts that arose in resistance to these policy changes and weighed their success.

"Courts played a central role in that struggle," he said. "I found extraordinarily strong correlations ($p = 0.00001$) between whether federal judges were

"We're hoping to stimulate research on the role of lawyers in societies in which democracy is under fire and in societies where authoritarianism is already entrenched."

– KATHRYN HENDLEY



appointed by Democratic or Republican presidents and whether they upheld or struck down the Trump administration's actions, in cases involving elections, immigration, the COVID-19 pandemic and federal prosecutions of Trump himself."

By contrast, Abel found no significant correlations in cases challenging the 2020 election after the votes had been counted. He has continued to follow the role of courts in challenges to the second Trump administration.

Hendley hopes to continue to build the content of the LADD website to attract more scholars to affiliate themselves with the project.

"LADD is designed to transcend the differences among law schools and related social science departments," she explained. "We hope all those interested in our agenda will join us."

And they will continue to organize events that highlight the research of LADD scholars, she said.

"We're hoping to stimulate research on the role of lawyers in societies in which democracy is under fire and in societies where authoritarianism is already entrenched," Hendley explained.

That includes law students.

"As they think about topics for their law review notes, we hope LADD-related ideas will rise to the top of the list," she said.

At its core, LADD hopes to make the scholarly community and general public more aware of the critical role played by lawyers in turbulent political environments.

"We're studying the role lawyers and judges play when democracy is challenged," Hendley added. "Regardless of a scholar's geographic specialty, there is a tendency to generalize — to assume that lawyers and judges elsewhere engage in similar behavior when faced by similar challenges. Our work to date has illustrated that their responses are different — that the historical, institutional and cultural context matters."

Learn more about LADD.



Navigating the Gray

Joshua Braver on the delicate art of principled disobedience.



All work is semi-autobiographical. So it makes sense that Joshua Braver, who had a rebellious streak in junior high, would explore the idea of rule-breaking in his scholarship.

"As a teenager, I thought an unjust rule should be violated as quickly as possible," said Braver, an assistant professor of law at University of Wisconsin Law School. "But as I matured, I realized that you had to be careful about how you fix an unjust rule so that you don't accidentally create chaos or even more injustice. My work explores how can you violate law in the least dangerous and most responsible way."

In 2023, Braver wrote "We, the Mediated People: Popular Constitution-Making in Contemporary South America," published by Oxford University Press, in which he examined the perils and promises of illegal constitution-making by "the people." This summer, he published "Disobeying Lawful But Unethical Orders in the Army."

"This paper examines three competing answers to the question of when an officer should disobey a lawful but unethical order — unethical in the sense that it violates their professional responsibilities," explained Braver. "Peter Feaver says 'never.' Samuel Huntington says there is no clear answer. General Mark Milley says 'always.'"

Each of these positions is unsatisfactory, he said. "Huntington leaves us in despair. Feaver and



Milley, by contrast, are too absolutist — each failing to adequately account for the difficult task of balancing two vital imperatives: preserving civilian control of the military and preventing civilian misuse of the military," he continued.

Braver's aim has been to "suggest how such disobedience might be guided in a way that intrudes upon civilian control as minimally as possible."

"I do not offer a solution from first principles but offer guidance for those who already accept the premise that disobedience is, at times, an unfortunate necessity," he said.

In the below Q&A, Braver discusses his research, the delicate art of principled disobedience within legal and ethical frameworks, and how the tension between legal authority and moral legitimacy threads through both projects.

Question: What inspired you to explore the ethics of disobedience within the military context?

Answer: In the Summer of 2020, it looked like President Donald Trump would invoke the Insurrection Act to send in armed forces to put down riots in D.C. and perhaps elsewhere. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley opposed it and released a memo to his troops that seemed to imply they should disobey the orders. In the memo, he reminded personnel that they took an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States, which, he noted, included protecting the American people's right to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly. It baffled me. Yes, disobey illegal orders I get, but how could someone in that position imply that troops should disobey a lawful order? And that somehow a lawful order could violate an oath to the Constitution? I was curious about what that meant and how various codes of ethics were viewed in the Armed Services.

Learn more about Professor Joshua Braver.

Q: Both in your book and in your paper, you revisit classic questions: Who are 'the people?' When must law yield to ethics? – but ground them in urgent contexts. How does this blending of normative theory and real-world urgency shape your approach as a professor and scholar?

A: In my work, I dive into the real world. I look into things like memos and debates and I interview people who actually struggle with these issues; people who have good intuitions about right and wrong but don't always have the time and opportunity to systematically develop their intuitions. To me, interviewing real people impacted by these concepts gives the work a kind of plausibility, a texture and buy-in from those individuals and hopefully helps provide them with guidance for future action.

Q: What have you learned personally through researching and writing this paper? Has it changed how you view authority, ethics or your own professional responsibilities?

A: I learned so much about the Armed Services. For example, I had no idea how deep their understanding of professional ethics was. I came away impressed by their dedication, hard work and intellectual curiosity. I came away from this project with a deeper understanding of the military's overall role in a democracy, and I'm immensely grateful for the sacrifices they are making.

By Kassandra Tuten

Dress for Success

Career Closet helps build strong foundation for success.



Becoming the legal scholars and leaders of tomorrow requires many things: Ambition. Drive. Persistence. Resilience. And, although we might not always think of it, a professional wardrobe.

Many students enter law school without having worked in environments requiring formal dress. University of Wisconsin Law School's Career Closet was created to address this shortcoming, ensuring all Law students have access to professional attire to pursue their goals.

The Closet was launched by the Office of Career and Professional Development (OCPD) in response to student requests for interview attire. Initially stocked through faculty and staff donations, the collection grew steadily, with alumni and legal professionals also supporting the Closet.

"The Career Closet has become a vital and valued part of the UW Law community, symbolizing both practical support and a culture of care," explained Lindsay Slaker, OCPD associate director. "It's promoting sustainability while enabling students to access professional attire free of charge, easing the financial and logistical burden of building a professional wardrobe."

A professional wardrobe boosts confidence as students prepare for interviews and workplace experiences.

"I think this resource is valuable for students because, speaking as a first-generation lawyer, the professional legal field can be very tricky to navigate," explained Madison Schwartz 2L.

Schwartz became involved with the Closet last year as a 1L representative on the First Generation Lawyers board. This year, she serves as the vice president of professional development.

"I believe that having access to professional attire affects students' confidence in interviews and during internships immensely," she said. "I think most people may have heard the phrase 'dress for success,' but I think when put into practice, it does work. One outfit can potentially change an individual's entire future."

While the Closet is available to students year-round (as are donation opportunities), OCPD hosts a Stockup event in which all clothing is put on display for students to peruse, try on and bring home, free of charge. The two-day event occurs in the fall, when students are assessing their wardrobe needs for the upcoming year.

The event began in 2023 when Jenna Balsiger '24, representing First Generation Lawyers, partnered with OCPD to expand the initiative. Over 200 students participated in 2024's event, with participation increasing more than 20% from 2023.

Looking ahead, Slaker hopes to see the Closet grow in scope and visibility.

"We'd like to expand our inventory, deepen alumni and firm engagement, and reach even more students," she said. "Our goal is to ensure every student feels confident and prepared as they step into professional spaces, and that the Closet continues to reflect the generosity and solidarity of the legal community."

By Kassandra Tuten

SUPPORT THE CAREER CLOSET
Ideal donations include items that are gently used, freshly cleaned and in good condition. Professional attire and accessories of all sizes and styles are accepted. Items that can't be used, such as damaged/stained clothing or athletic wear, are recycled or donated to nonprofits that distribute them at no cost.

CORPORATE, LAW FIRM OR ORGANIZATIONAL DONORS: If your team would like to contribute to an upcoming Stockup event, contact OCPD at **career@law.wisc.edu**.

INDIVIDUAL DONORS: To arrange a drop-off, email **career@law.wisc.edu**.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS: If you don't have items to donate but would like to contribute to the Closet, donations to help purchase clothing racks, storage bins and other essentials are appreciated. Email **career@law.wisc.edu** to learn more.





Building Connection, and Badger Spirit

LAST FALL, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LAW SCHOOL launched its Law Firm Giving Program to encourage the philanthropic spirit among UW Law alumni at individual firms and create friendly competition among the participating law firms.

The challenge ran from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. Seven firms participated in the challenge, raising $85,175. The top three participating firms were Reinhart (28%), Godfrey & Kahn (21%) and DeWitt LLP (17%). The firm with the most dollars raised was Quarles ($32,476.46).

Quarles Partner Dan Conley said that "UW has provided generations of Law students high quality educations and alums at Quarles appreciate the opportunities UW created for them, and the important role the school plays in continuing to educate attorneys who represent clients in public service positions and the private sector."

He went on to add that, "alumni financial support is especially important considering ongoing cuts in funding and other financial pressures."

Learn how you can become involved.

"Such support helps continue to fund its important programs and meet its own high standards," he continued. "Funding for scholarships, in particular, creates opportunities for students who would not otherwise be able to attend UW Law and lessens the impact of student debt on decisions as to where and how to practice upon graduation."

Dean Dan Tokaji was "thrilled" by the vast support shown by so many participating firms.

"This program helps build Badger spirit within participating law firms, enhance our alumni network and provide much-needed support to UW Law School," he said.

Over the past year, participating firms hosted events featuring Dean Tokaji, UW Law faculty and leadership to support participation and engagement.

"UW Law has some great new programs and initiatives, and it was exciting to share those," said Tokaji. "I enjoyed engaging with our alumni and law firms to learn more about the matters they face in today's market and work to develop future partnerships."

The 2025 challenge began July 1. Scan the above QR code to learn how you can become involved.

Sampson Yimer '11 on Career in Sports, Entertainment and Media



"My experience at UW was a seminal moment in my career trajectory. It broadened the aperture of potential career paths."

– Sampson Yimer '11

When Sampson Yimer '11 stepped onto the University of Wisconsin Law School campus, he didn't know it would shape not just his legal mind but his entire career in the sports and entertainment business.

Now the executive vice president of partnerships and director of diversity and strategic development at sports marketing agency Momentum Worldwide in New York City, Yimer credits UW Law with showing him the many ways a legal education could be used beyond the courtroom.

"My experience at UW was a seminal moment in my career trajectory," said Yimer. "It broadened the aperture of potential career paths."

The decision to attend UW Law was an easy one for Yimer.

A visit to the school and attending the Legal Educational Opportunities (LEO) Banquet — which celebrates diversity and representation in law — made the choice clear.

"UW felt like home almost immediately," he said. "The welcoming presence of the student body made my decision a no-brainer."

Though Yimer has never practiced law in the traditional sense, his degree has been central to his success. From managing licensing deals to negotiating sponsorship contracts, his legal training helps him see opportunities and risks with a unique lens.

"In our industry, we deal with plenty of contracts — media rights, licensing, sponsorships," he said. "Having grounding in risk assessment and working with legal counsel all taps into the lessons I learned from legendary professors at UW Law."

That legal foundation helped Yimer rise through positions at top organizations, including the Atlanta Hawks and Nielsen, where he worked closely with the NFL, NBA and MLB. Most recently, he was named to the Sports Business Journal's "Forty Under 40" list in 2025.

"It was always my goal to work in this industry," Yimer said. "To do it at the highest levels provides a real sense of accomplishment."

Though his success is undeniable, he's quick to deflect personal praise, often crediting his mentors, teams and colleagues for helping him reach his goals.

"Nothing of merit is ever accomplished in isolation," he said.

Yimer's connection to UW Law didn't end at graduation. He and his wife Cassandra Best '12 now both serve on the school's Board of Visitors, an alumni advisory group.

"It feels incredible to be able to give something back," he said. "The Law School had such an indelible impact on our lives."

Yimer joined the Board in 2024 and said the best part is returning to campus and helping shape the future for current students.

"I think I bring a different perspective," Yimer said. "There are so many career paths for law graduates. I hope to be a resource for those who might be looking outside of traditional practice."

By Brian Walker



The World of Steven Hendrix '87

Steven E. Hendrix '87 has seen the world — and made an impact on it.

Recently named a Wisconsin assistant state public defender, he is a former career diplomat who had a knack for assessing difficult global problems and aiding in solutions through a strong understanding of a team approach. Wherever it took him, he reminded himself it was about the people in need, not the accomplishment.

"I had a chance to go to my share of places in the world, but, most importantly, it was about trying to make a difference," he said.

Serving in USAID from 1997 to 2024, Hendrix worked many roles; he relishes the experiences.

In his role as senior advisor at USAID from 2020-22, Hendrix oversaw more than $300 million a year to help Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

"My heart goes out to them because leaving a despotic country where the economy has collapsed, where do they go?" he posed. "Most of them went to Colombia and neighboring countries, and multiple U.S. presidential administrations supported to help those countries integrate them."

The first way of help from USAID was typically emergency assistance in the form of food and shelter, he explained. This was followed by transitioning the refugees and migrants into real jobs. Hendrix witnessed the impact of this process firsthand during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"One of the many things I enjoyed being a part of in Peru was getting qualifications for Venezuelan medical doctors, nurses and dentists and other medical professionals who went out and treated the pandemic before a vaccine," he said. "You had Venezuelans at the front lines of health responses in Peru and Ecuador, giving it everything they had."

Previously, as deputy mission director in Ghana, he helped with literacy issues.

Partnering on key strategies, such as having instruction begin in local languages and then transition to English (instead of the teaching beginning in English), the literacy rate rose from 2% to 28%, he noted.

> "I had a chance to go to my share of places in the world, but, most importantly, it was about trying to make a difference."
>
> – Steven E. Hendrix '87

Hendrix went on to become senior coordinator for the State Department Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance, the highest-ranking USAID official at the Department.

"I oversaw about $53 billion a year that we managed around 23 government agencies," he said. "The State Department needed me to head plans and programs and systems, strategizing for the Department worldwide. This included all the auditing, tracking and performance measurement worldwide across about 180 embassies."

Hendrix is proud to take on his new role of Wisconsin assistant state public defender, just as he is proud to be a University of Wisconsin Law School graduate.

"The Law School had a huge effect on my writing and research skills, and that comes in handy for the rest of your career," he said. "The critical thinking skills you are taught are vital. I found that combination with the Spanish program to be so helpful, especially for my time in South America. I've had an interesting career, and the Law School provided an important base."

By Eric Butterman

SanDee Priser '02: 'I Keep Going Back to the Practicality of Things'

For SanDee Priser '02, it all comes down to making practical impacts.

It's what first drew her to University of Wisconsin Law School, what led to her writing two books and what most excites her about the school's path forward today as a member of the Board of Visitors.

Priser has built a career at the intersection of law and business leadership. She's a partner at Ernst & Young LLP on the risk management team helping teams operate within the regulatory requirements of auditor independence. Prior to moving to risk management, Priser led forensic accounting investigations related to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and helped improve regulatory compliance programs for global corporations, resulting in extensive experience providing services throughout Europe and Asia and across industries.

She's also the author of two non-fiction books, with a third forthcoming.

The first is "enCharge: Transform Your Life From Within Through Your Life Success Factors," published in 2020. Priser shares her "journey of exploration from tomboy on a farm to a successful career and satisfying life that were made possible by following my life success factors and moments of growth when loss of alignment frustrated achievement of my goals." In 2022, she published "Awakening: Inspirations & Motivations in Living Color," a collection of her photographs and thoughts intended to motivate and inspire growth. "Daybreak: Seizing the Gift," a companion to "Awakening," will be published this autumn.

All proceeds from the sale of books benefit the enCharge Purpose in Action Scholarship Fund at UW Law School established by Priser.

"The scholarship assists Law students with a demonstrated record of pursuing their purpose, and that purpose will be furthered by a legal education," she explained.

Priser's books are available on Amazon, and you can learn more at sandeepriser.com.

Priser's objective in writing the books is to help people find more fulfillment in their lives through growth and purpose.

"I realize that I'm different than the person I was even a year ago, and if something I've learned along my path can help others, I want to share it with them," she said.

That drive to provide practical support is why, in 2019, Priser joined the Law School's Board of Visitors.

"One of my mentors, Kay Oberly, was on the Board at the time and she encouraged me to become involved," she explained. "We, and the Law School, felt it was important to have a variety of voices on the Board because, while a legal education is beneficial to many career paths, like me, not all graduates end up practicing law."



Priser is excited about the direction UW Law is headed, particularly in terms of the clinical program's depth and breadth. UW Law's commitment to clinical education is so strong, we now guarantee a clinical experience for every J.D. student.

"That ability to have practical skills before going into the field, that's a real differentiator," she said. "I keep going back to the practicality of things and this

continued to page 44

Kyle Nakatsuji ’12 Named 2025 Forward Recipient



CLEARCOVER

Double Badger Kyle Nakatsuji ’12 didn’t follow the traditional path to entrepreneurship — he carved one of his own. A former football player at University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh with a political science degree, Nakatsuji arrived at University of Wisconsin–Madison for graduate school without a clear plan. He left with two degrees, a certificate in entrepreneurship, and a start-up mindset backed by tenacity, creativity and the belief that an underdog can come out on top.

Nakatsuji is CEO and cofounder of Clearcover, a digital auto insurer leveraging technology to deliver affordable, convenient and customer-centered experiences. Its scalable application programming interface (API) platform and proprietary system, ClearAI, power Clear Claims, which determines eligibility for expedited payments, enabling payouts on eligible claims in as little as 30 minutes, with a record of just seven minutes, making it one of the fastest claims experiences in the industry. Clearcover is now focused on delivering flexible, tech-driven solutions tailored to meet the needs of the nonstandard auto insurance market.

Under Nakatsuji’s leadership, the company has raised more than $560 million in funding and earned recognition from Inc., Deloitte and CNBC.

The journey to leading one of the fastest growing and most innovative insurance tech companies began with persistence and curiosity. Nakatsuji was, by his own admission, “a terrible applicant” to business school — lacking the coursework, credentials and experience typically expected of an MBA candidate. But he kept showing up with new arguments and ideas and eventually, one admissions staffer took a chance on his doggedness.

He repaid that leap of faith with relentless initiative. While earning both a J.D. and an MBA, Nakatsuji dove headfirst into the start-up world, gaining experience with founders and real-world challenges through University of Wisconsin Law School’s Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic and the Venture Capital Investment Competition team, with whom he traveled to London to help a UW-based start-up pitch to investors.

“The school provided me with opportunities to meander and learn and explore,” he said. “It’s hard to imagine I’d get to do what I do today without the experiences I gained at the UW.”

After graduation, Nakatsuji joined American Family Ventures — the venture capital arm of American Family Insurance — where he helped shape the firm’s strategy by investing in early-stage start-ups. From there, he was ready to take a leap and launched Clearcover.

Nakatsuji’s leadership extends beyond the business world. He also mentors students and entrepreneurs through UW–Madison’s Creative Destruction Lab — a seed-stage program for science- and tech-based start-ups — with a special focus on teams exploring innovation in insurance and risk.

His journey from a political science major with no business experience to a dual-degree graduate, venture investor and tech CEO reflects what can happen when courage meets opportunity (and when the UW alumni network is full of Badgers willing to offer advice over a cup of coffee).

And for Nakatsuji, the work is never done.

“We’re eight years into building this company, and every day is a new challenge and a new adventure,” he said.

He finds motivation in what his father called “the law of the farm” — the idea that growth takes patience and perspective.

“If you look every day, it’s pretty hard to see the crops growing,” he said. “But if you give yourself some time, slowly but surely the results will come.”

This article originally appeared in the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association awards magazine.
By Wendy Krause Hathaway

Ryan Packer '04: Law, Love and Lambeau

Ryan Packer '04 met the second love of his life at University of Wisconsin Law School Reunion.

His first love? The Green Bay Packers. Just like millions of other kids who grew up in Wisconsin with games "always on." The team is a unifying fabric for so many families and communities.

His second? Marie Packer, who tagged along to the Karaoke Kid in Madison with her cousin Sarah Lawson '04 for the UW Law Reunion.

"September 21, 2014. I will never forget the day we met," he recalled.

The thunderbolt struck. And the rest is history.

Packer, then known as Holtan-Murphy, married Marie in a green-and-gold suit in 2017 (in Chicago, of all places!) and took her last name because it was just so fitting.

The Wauwatosa native has become famous for his football-inspired surname change. And for being a finalist for the Packers Fan Hall of Fame in 2023.

> "The breadth of the education that I got [at UW Law] was incredible."
>
> – Ryan Packer '04

While his enthusiasm for the team is well-known, some may be unaware of his robust law career. In fact, he's served as senior legal counsel and director, Capital Markets, at BMO Financial Group for the past six years.

The double Badger majored in sociology and was drawn to law as an extension of his interest in how institutions influence or encourage people's behaviors.

Packer loved his UW Law experience.

"The breadth of the education that I got was incredible," he said. "I took so many interesting courses — international law, trademarks, Latin American law — in addition to the basics like con law and torts. I learned a lot. The professors were terrific."

He added that the experience was "great preparation for life," teaching him to find camaraderie with people from various backgrounds and to think like a lawyer and simply how to navigate the world.

Upon graduation, Packer did not know what concentration he wanted to focus on in law, but he knew where: New York City. Thanks to fellow grad Nate Rice '04, he found his home in finance law at Morgan Stanley, where he worked for over 10 years.

Packer's start as a financing legal documentation negotiator opened "a lot of doors." He moved to London for vice president and executive director roles for the company's team in Europe.

Even though he has enjoyed the global nature of his career, which has taken him from Budapest to Hong Kong, he is a "Midwest guy at heart." After a short stint in a regulatory role brought him to the Windy City, he started his current role at BMO in 2019 and then moved to Milwaukee in 2021 to be closer to family.

Packer still sees sociology and law tied together in his career focus of institutional investing with an international focus.

"Whenever I go past a construction site, I can say I think we financed that," he said. "I had a tiny part in bringing that to life. Sometimes it can seem like numbers on a page, but you can see the threads of how a contract I am negotiating this afternoon in a year's time will be a factory somewhere."

Back to the Pack

When asked what his prediction was for this year's Green Bay season, he had two words: "Super Bowl." Not surprising. He optimistically buys plane tickets to the big game's city every year in advance, just in case. And he often flies to cities like Denver and Las Vegas during the regular season to catch away games.

Just don't let him travel outside the U.S. for games. He was in Brazil for the 2024 season opener that saw quarterback Jordan Love injured and a loss to the Philadelphia Eagles. And he watched the team fall to the New York Giants in London three years ago.

"I'm not allowed to go to any more international games," he joked.

By Jennie Broecker


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Miller Lite
GREEN BAY PACKERS






Green Bay Packers
FAN Hall of Fame
2023 Finalist
RYAN PACKER
20
FAN
HALL of FAME




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Miller Lite
GREEN BAY PACKERS
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1980s

Scott Pryor '80 retired at the end of 2024 as emeritus professor after 27 years of law school teaching. Pryor finished his teaching career at Campbell University in Raleigh, North Carolina. Before Campbell, he taught at Regent University. Prior to teaching, Pryor practiced commercial law with Howard, Solocheck and Weber in Milwaukee.

Michelle Behnke '88, former president of the State Bar of Wisconsin (2004-05), was sworn in as president of the American Bar Association (ABA) on Aug. 11, 2025. Behnke will serve a one-year presidential term. Behnke is only the second Wisconsin Bar member to become ABA president.



1990s



Gregory P. Seibold '91 was appointed by Gov. Tony Evers to serve as Florence County District Attorney. He will fill the vacancy created by District Attorney Michael J. Scholke's passing. Seibold will serve for the remainder of the unexpired term that ends January 2029.

Bill Zito '93, general manager of the two-time consecutive Stanley Cup-winning Florida Panthers, was honored at the National Italian Invitational Golf Tournament at Grand Geneva Resort in August 2025.

2000s

Brandon Vaughn '08 was named to Minnesota Lawyer's "Power List: Personal Injury Law" in recognition of his outstanding work on behalf of injured clients. Vaughn, partner at Robins Kaplan LLP, specializes in complex personal injury and medical malpractice cases involving delayed cancer and stroke diagnoses, nursing home negligence and birth injuries resulting in cerebral palsy.

2010s

Catherine Giljohann '10 was appointed as Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's General Counsel.



Bethany Nelson '10 is the assistant director for Research Security and Export Controls at Princeton University.

Edgar Lin '11 was named among "Wisconsin's 20 Most Influential Asian American Leaders for 2025" by Madison365. Lin is Wisconsin state policy advocate and counsel at Protect Democracy, where he focuses on policy advocacy and litigation related to preventing election subversion.





Sarah M. Raisch '11 was named to the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin's 40 Under Forty List. Raisch is a senior attorney at Romanucci & Blandin, LLC, a national personal injury firm primarily based in Chicago. Raisch represents survivors of sexual abuse, especially in institutional settings such as schools, healthcare facilities and hospitals, and correctional facilities.

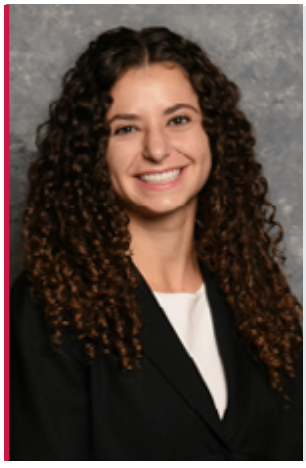
Caitlin Fish '16 was promoted to domestic violence and family group coordinator at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid.

Janelle Ramsel '16 received the National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA) First Decade Award. The award recognizes a member representative who has made an innovative contribution to NACUA or provided outstanding service to the Association and to the practice of higher education law, and who has been a member of NACUA for 10 or fewer years. Ramsel has served in higher education law since 2018, and has been Chief Legal Counsel and Secretary to the Board of Trustees for Regis University in Denver since 2020.

What's new?
Share your updates at
gargoyle.law.wisc.edu/class-notes.

Andrew Benson '19 joined Godfrey & Kahn in Milwaukee as a senior associate in its Estates & Trusts practice group in July 2025.

2020s



Samantha Crane '25 was named the Center for Equal Opportunity (CEO) 2025-26 Visiting Legal Fellow and previously was a fellow in CEO's 2023 Civil Rights Fellowship class. CEO's mission is to study, develop and disseminate ideas that promote colorblind equal opportunity and nondiscrimination in America.

Did you know that Continuing Legal Education for Wisconsin (CLEW) serves attorneys and legal professionals each year through programs, seminars and publications? Learn more at law.wisc.edu/clew/ or by scanning the QR code.

Learn more about CLEW.

Carrying the Wisconsin Idea Forward *continued from page 12*

me a national platform to advocate for causes I care deeply about," she said. "I've connected with people across the country, shared my story, encouraged others to pursue higher education and promoted leadership in spaces where many still feel underrepresented."

What makes this title especially meaningful, said Bader, is the journey it took to get there.

"When I first competed for Miss Collegiate USA in 2021, I was a college freshman who didn't quite know what she was doing," she explained. "I didn't win a single award, but I walked away inspired by the incredible women around me. I left that experience with a promise to myself: that I would return stronger, more prepared and more confident. And I did just that."

In 2025, Bader won every optional competition as well as the national title.

"That transformation taught me something I now carry into every new challenge: With enough tenacity, growth and belief in your purpose, anything is possible," she said.

The experience has also shaped her Law School ambitions.

"It's reinforced my belief in the power of combining legal training, policy work and public engagement to create lasting change," she said. "Most importantly, it's reminded me that leadership isn't about a title; it's about using every platform you have to uplift others, champion your values and lead with purpose."

Pairing her experiences and legal training with an MBA, which Bader is pursuing simultaneously from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, gives her the tools to approach these challenges not only through advocacy, but also through systemic, policy-driven change.

"I hope to be part of reshaping the educational system so that no family has to fight as hard as mine did just to receive the support their child deserves," she said.

Bader said she believes that being a lawyer, no matter the practice area, comes with a responsibility to serve. That's why, after graduation, she hopes to practice transactional law while dedicating a portion of her time to pro bono work focused on educational rights law, advocating for students and families navigating unjust systems. She also hopes to sponsor and fund initiatives that expand access to equitable education across Wisconsin, especially in underserved and rural communities like the one she grew up in.

> "That transformation taught me something I now carry into every new challenge: With enough tenacity, growth and belief in your purpose, anything is possible."
>
> – Mariah Bader 2L

For Bader, the Wisconsin Idea is not just an ideal.

"It's a promise to use the tools and education I've gained to make a lasting impact," she explained. "Whether in the boardroom or the classroom, I intend to use my legal career to help build a more just and accessible future for others."

Her experience at UW Law has been instrumental in preparing her for that path.

"The school's commitment to experiential learning and the support I've received through student leadership roles have all helped me build a well-rounded legal foundation," she explained. "Whether through clinical work, externships or collaboration with faculty and peers, I feel empowered to step into a legal career that reflects both my values and my vision for impact."

Read a Q&A with Bader online at gargoyle.law.wisc.edu.

By Kassandra Tuten

SanDee Priser '02 *continued from page 38*

seems like the essence of Law in Action."

She's also excited about the recent investment in faculty whose work connects to Chancellor Jennifer Mnookin's Wisconsin Research, Innovation and Scholarly Excellence (RISE) Initiative. It's designed to help address significant, complex challenges of importance to Wisconsin and the world through accelerated and strategic faculty hiring, research infrastructure enhancement, interdisciplinary collaboration and increased student and educational opportunities.

"It's becoming ever more clear that you may get a degree in something, but the world our graduates work in is very multidisciplinary," she said. "The more we're working with other schools, departments, etc., the more we set our students up for success and innovation."

By Kassandra Tuten

Jessa Nicholson Goetz '06
died Aug. 5, 2025.

Nicholson Goetz was the founding partner of Nicholson Goetz & Otis, S.C., based in Madison, and was widely regarded as one of the most skilled sensitive crimes defense attorneys in the state. She received an undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan at the age of 20 and quickly enrolled at University of Wisconsin Law School. By age 23, she pursued her passion of advocating for the rights of others as a criminal defense attorney.

In 2021, the Wisconsin Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (WACDL) created an award to honor attorneys who successfully secured an acquittal on a felony sexual assault case (some of the most challenging cases to defend). Because of her career-long successes in defending and teaching on these types of cases, the award was named after Nicholson Goetz and two defense bar colleagues; today the Kuchler-Nicholson-Stilling Award is given each spring by WACDL and is a branding of one of the utmost achievements for any attorney to be named.



Nicholson Goetz held one of the most successful trial records of any attorney in the state. She was the recipient of many awards and honors, and was a three-time recipient of WACDL's Hanson Award, which is given to attorneys who secure an acquittal in a homicide case. Nicholson Goetz handled several high-profile cases and was comfortable navigating the often complicated relationship between the press and the accused. Nicholson Goetz also had success litigating pre-trial motions, receiving favorable rulings with respect to piercing rape shield law, suppressing evidence, severing crimes/charges and excluding prior bad acts. She also worked to advocate for legal reform; one of her proudest accomplishments was working with prosecutors and law enforcement to get legislation on outlawing stalking passed in Oklahoma.

While Nicholson Goetz had a prolific career with many accomplishments, she always said that what she was most proud of was her family. In 2012, she met her husband, James; they have two children.

Michael J. Remington '73, a distinguished figure in intellectual property law, died March 30, 2025. His life was marked by a profound commitment to justice, a passion for the arts and a deep love for his family.

Over the course of a remarkable career spanning more than four decades, Remington made significant contributions to intellectual property law, legal reform, government relations and lobbying. He served as Chief Counsel to the House Judiciary Subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration for nine years, where he played a pivotal role in the enactment of over 20 public laws aimed at improving the administration of justice. The subcommittee was chaired by Congressman Robert Kastenmeier. Prior to this role, he was a key member of the Congressman's staff.

Remington was an important supporter of University of Wisconsin Law School and key to the creation of the Kastenmeier Lecture, one of the school's premier events. He remained active with the series and served as a long-standing member of the lecture's committee, which traditionally included one or more individuals with a close connection to Congressman Kastenmier, leading lawyers and judges and faculty members.

A partner at Drinker Biddle in Washington, D.C., Remington was the founding chair of the firm's Intellectual Property Group. Throughout his career, he worked with a diverse array of clients, from a performing rights organization representing thousands of songwriters and music publishers, to a university foundation involved in technology licensing, individual authors and creators, and an alliance of inventors and start-ups.

In addition to his professional achievements, Remington was affectionately known as a "Renaissance Man" among family and friends. He was celebrated for his talents in painting, photography, cooking, writing and his deep appreciation for other cultures.



His love for exploration took him around the world, where he made lasting connections in places such as Africa, India and France, where he became fluent in French.

A proud graduate of UW Law School (Order of the Coif), Remington was a former Fulbright Scholar in Paris, France and a Peace Corps Volunteer in Côte d'Ivoire, where he met his wife, Françoise. Together, they shared 53 years of marriage and raised three children: Cecile (Todd Deutsch), Elise and Christophe (Elizabeth Remington). He is the son of Professor Frank Remington, founder of the Frank J. Remington Center at UW Law School. The Center houses one of the oldest, largest and most diverse clinical programs in American legal education.

1950s

Charles White '51
Joseph Becker '54
Donald Losby '55
Lowell Sweet '55
Stanley Roberts '57
Dennis Selby '58
Donald Ray '59
William Slate '59

1960s

Robert Lee '60
William Nelson '60
Douglas Yanggen '60
George Christianson '61
Richard Neuheisel '61
James Cummings '62
Harry Garwood '62
Warren Schmidt '62
Craig Hunt '64
Darrell Lynn '64
Richard Hemming '65
Jack Olson '65
George Whyte '65
John Andrews '66
William Broll '66
John Hibbard '66
Joseph Jochman '66
Ronald Pipkin '66
Gerald Opgenorth '67
Charles Pellino '68
Richard Boynton '69
Edward Lalor '69

1970s

Arthur Kroos '70
Penn Rhodeen '70
Kenneth Casey '71
Troy Brown '72
William Lewis '72
James McCord '72
Ronald Ziwisky '72
Michael Remington '73
John Kreitler '74
William Clark '75
William Heibl '75
Barbara Husseini '75
Barbara James '75
John Louderman '75
Clarence Sherrod '75
Mark Stern '75
Leroy Lokken '76
Stephen Schultz '77

1980s

Walter Isaacson '82
Narciso Aleman '83
Kevin O'Brien '84
Ingrid Keiser '87
Rod Koenen '88

1990s

Mark Shore '90
Gerald Wright '90
Nathan Hart '92
Amy Moran '97

2000s

Marsha Brewer '03
Jessa Nicholson Goetz '06

2010s

Luke Gaeckle '13
Jeramiah Maynard '13





Congressman Bryan Steil '07 always wanted to be a Badger. Today, the Janesville native represents Wisconsin's First Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives (he was first elected in 2018). A Wisconsin pennant hangs in his D.C. office to remind him of his time in Madison.

In 2023, he was appointed chairman of the Committee on House Administration, which oversees federal election law, House of Representatives operations, Legislative Branch oversight and Capitol Security. He is also a member of the House Financial Services Committee, where he serves as the chairman of the Subcommittee on Digital Assets, Financial Technology and Artificial Intelligence.

Prior to his election to Congress, Congressman Steil spent a decade working in Wisconsin's manufacturing industry — first with an industrial motion control manufacturer in Beloit, and later at a local plastics manufacturer in Milton. In 2016, he was appointed and unanimously confirmed in the Wisconsin Senate to serve on the University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents.

He will be visiting the Law School later in the school year.

Interview by Kassandra Tuten

Question: What experiences or mentors at the Law School shaped your career path?

Answer: Entering law school, I knew I was interested in the intersection of business and law. Professor Richard Heymann's business transactions course focused on the practical complex business transactions. The course prepared me to work in the intersection of business and law. Learning negotiations was as applicable to business and legal transactions as it is in my work today in policy negotiations. I developed a strong relationship with Professor Heymann and later returned to guest lecture for his course.

Q: How did your UW Law experience equip you to address, and even reform, regulatory barriers?

A: I took administrative law with Professor Carin Clauss, the former U.S. Solicitor of Labor in the Carter administration. Although she worked in the Carter administration, Professor Clauss never shared her political views in class, but instead focused on the theory underlying labor and employment law. I still utilize the skills learned in that class as I work to streamline federal regulations to help employees. Professor Clauss was one of the best professors I had at UW.

Q: How has your UW Law education continued to shape your work in public service?

A: I believe in the Wisconsin Idea — that the value of the education I received at UW extends far beyond the classroom. The UW is a forum for rigorous debate about law and policy. I specifically recall engaging in ardent discussions in Professor Asifa Quraishi-Landes's constitutional law class. We benefit the more we dialogue and discuss issues in thoughtful and productive ways. That is as true when deciding the best policy for a school board as it is when building a successful business. My experience at UW reinforced my belief that open and productive dialogue can build successful organizations and strong communities.

As all Badgers know, fearless sifting and winnowing is the only way truth can be found. There are an array of issues facing the federal government at any time, with a seemingly endless number of information sources that make it uniquely challenging to find good information. The skills taught at UW, in that sense, are timeless. They allow you to cut through the noise, identify trustworthy information and make informed decisions.



THANK YOU to Habush Habush & Rottier for their continued support of University of Wisconsin Law School.

For over 60 years, the Habush firm and attorneys have provided funding to support our mock trial and moot court programs, served as adjunct professors and taught classes, volunteered as guest speakers and participated in career panels. Recently, the firm wanted to ensure their named space, the Habush Habush & Rottier Reading Room in the Law Library, received some much-needed upgrades. This space is one of the most sought-after study spots on campus. Offering an impressive and expansive view of Bascom Hill, with its towering glass windows that connect library users with the outdoors, this space has been celebrated nationally for its design and comfort. Thank you, Habush, for ensuring the next generation of students enjoys studying in such an inspirational and beautiful space.

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