

**Excerpts from the Handbook for The Association of American Law Schools (AALS)
Statements of Good Practices**

Statement of Good Practices by Law Professors in the Discharge of their Ethical and Professional Responsibilities

American law professors typically are members of two professions and need to comply with the requirements and standards of both. Law professors who practice law are subject to the law of professional ethics in force in the jurisdictions in which they are licensed to practice. In addition, as members of the teaching profession, all law faculty members are subject to the regulations of the institutions at which they teach and to professional guidelines that are more generally applicable, such as the Statement of Professional Ethics of the American Association of University Professors.

This Statement does not diminish the significance of these other sources of ethical and professional conduct. Instead, it is intended to provide general guidance to law professors concerning ethical and professional standards because of the intrinsic importance of those standards and because law professors serve as important role models for law students. This Statement is primarily directed to full-time law faculty, although much of the advice may also assist part-time faculty. The Statement also recognizes that full-time law faculty may have different responsibilities depending upon the nature of their school and the specifics of their faculty role and employment terms. The effort here is to provide guidance at a level of generality that can assist most full-time law faculty.

Law professors' responsibilities extend beyond the classroom to include out-of-class mentoring of students and other professional activities in support of students' professional development. Members of the law teaching profession should have a strong sense of the special obligations that attach to their calling. They should recognize their responsibility to serve others and not be limited to pursuit of self-interest. This general aspiration cannot be achieved by edict, for moral integrity and dedication to the welfare of others cannot be legislated. Nevertheless, a public statement of good practices concerning ethical and professional responsibility can enlighten newcomers and remind experienced teachers about basic ethical and professional tenets—the ethos of their profession.

Although the norms of conduct set forth in this Statement may be relevant when questions concerning propriety of conduct arise in a particular institutional context, the Statement is not promulgated as a disciplinary code. Rather, the purpose of the Statement—couched for the most part in general aspirational terms—is to provide guidance to law professors concerning their responsibilities (1) to students, (2) as scholars, (3) to colleagues, (4) to the law school and university at which they teach, and (5) to the bar and the general public.

I. RESPONSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS

As teachers, scholars, counselors, mentors, and friends, law professors can profoundly influence students' attitudes concerning professional competence and responsibility. Professors should assist students to recognize the responsibility of lawyers to advance individual and social justice.

Because they function as role models, professors should be guided by relevant ethical and professional standards. In all their pursuits, professors should seek to model and encourage in others the highest standards of professionalism and civility.

Law professors should aspire to excellence in teaching and to mastery of the doctrines and theories of the subjects they teach. They should prepare conscientiously for class and employ teaching methods appropriate for the subject matters and objectives of their courses. The objectives and requirements of their courses, including applicable attendance and grading rules, should be clearly stated. Classes should meet as scheduled or, when this is impracticable, classes should be rescheduled at a time reasonably convenient for students, or alternative means of instruction should be provided.

Law professors have an obligation to treat students with civility and respect and to foster a stimulating and productive learning environment in which the pros and cons of debatable issues are fairly acknowledged. Teachers should nurture and protect intellectual freedom for their students and colleagues. If a professor expresses views in class that were espoused in representing a client or in consulting, the professor should make appropriate disclosure.

Evaluation of student work is one of the fundamental obligations of law professors. Examinations and assignments should be conscientiously designed and all student work should be evaluated with impartiality. Grading should be done in a timely fashion and should be consistent with standards recognized as legitimate within the professor's institution and the profession. A student who so requests should be given an explanation of the grade assigned.

Law professors should be reasonably available to counsel students about academic matters, career choices, and professional interests. In performing this function, professors should make reasonable efforts to ensure that the information they transmit is timely and accurate. When in the course of counseling a student, a professor receives information that the student may reasonably expect to be confidential, the professor should not disclose that information unless required to do so by university or law school rule or applicable law. Professors should inform students concerning the possibility of such disclosure.

Professors should be as fair and complete as possible when communicating evaluative recommendations for students and should not permit invidious or irrelevant considerations to infect these recommendations. If information disclosed in confidence by the student to the professor makes it impossible for the professor to write a fair and complete recommendation without revealing the information, the professor should so inform the student and respectfully decline to provide the recommendation unless the student consents to full disclosure.

Discriminatory conduct based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, disability or handicap, age, or political beliefs is unacceptable in the law school community. Law professors should seek to make the law school

an inclusive and equitable community for all students and should be sensitive to the harmful consequences of professorial or student conduct or comments in classroom discussions or elsewhere that perpetuate stereotypes or prejudices involving such factors.

Law professors should not sexually harass students and should not use their role or position to induce a student to enter into a sexual or romantic relationship, or to subject a student to a hostile academic environment based on any form of sexual harassment. Sexual or romantic relationships between a professor and a student who are not married to each other or who do not have a preexisting analogous relationship are inappropriate whenever the professor has a professional responsibility for the student in such matters as teaching a course or in otherwise evaluating, supervising, or advising a student as part of a school program. Even when a professor has no professional responsibility for a student, the professor should be sensitive to the perceptions of other students that a student who has a sexual or romantic relationship with a professor may receive preferential treatment from the professor or the professor's colleagues. A professor who is closely related to a student by blood or marriage, or who has a preexisting analogous relationship with a student, normally should eschew roles involving professional responsibility for the student.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES AS SCHOLARS

A basic responsibility of the community of higher education in the United States is to refine, extend, and transmit knowledge. As members of that community, law professors share with their colleagues in the other disciplines the obligation to discharge that responsibility. Law schools also have a responsibility to maintain an atmosphere of academic freedom and respect for diverse viewpoints in which knowledge can be sought and shared without hindrance. Law professors are obligated, in turn, to make the best and fullest use of that freedom to fulfill their scholarly responsibilities.

In teaching, as well as in research, writing, and publication, the scholarship of others is indispensable to one's own. A law professor thus has a responsibility to be informed concerning the relevant scholarship of others in the fields in which the professor writes and teaches. To keep current in any field of law requires continuing study. To this extent the professor, as a scholar, must remain a student. As a corollary, law professors have a responsibility to engage in their own research and publish their conclusions. In this way, law professors participate in an intellectual exchange that tests and improves their knowledge of the field, to the ultimate benefit of their students, the profession, and society.

The scholar's commitment to truth requires intellectual honesty and open-mindedness. Academic freedom enables and encourages a professor to state arguments and conclusions frankly, even if unpopular. Although a law professor should feel free to criticize another's work, misrepresenting facts or another's work is always unacceptable. Relevant evidence and arguments should be addressed, not elided or distorted.

When another's scholarship is used—whether that of another professor or that of a student—it should be fairly summarized and candidly acknowledged. Significant contributions require acknowledgement in every context in which ideas are exchanged. Publication permits at least

three ways of doing this: shared authorship, attribution by footnote or endnote, and discussion of another's contribution within the main text. Which of these will suffice to acknowledge scholarly contributions by others will, of course, depend on the extent of the contribution.

To preserve scholarly integrity, a law professor should disclose material facts in each covered activity (defined below) concerning any receipt of direct or indirect payment for, or any personal or familial economic interest in, the subject of the publication. Disclosure is not required for normal academic compensation, such as salary, internal research grants, and honoraria and compensation for travel expenses from academic institutions, or for book royalties. Disclosure of material facts should include: (1) the conditions imposed or expected by the funding source on views expressed in the covered activity and (2) the identity of any funding source, except where the professor has provided legal representation to a client in a matter external to legal scholarship under circumstances that require the identity to remain privileged under applicable law. If such a privilege prohibits disclosure the professor shall generally describe the interest represented.

A law professor should also disclose the fact that views or analysis expressed in any covered activity were espoused or developed in the course of either paid or unpaid representation of or consultation with a client when a reasonable person would be likely to see that fact as having influenced the position taken by the professor. Disclosure is not required for representation or consultation that is sufficiently remote in time that a reasonable person would not expect it to be disclosed. Disclosure should include the identity of any client, where practicable and where not prohibited by the governing Code or Rules of Professional Conduct. If such Code or Rules prohibit a professor from revealing the identity of the client, then the professor shall generally describe the client or interest represented or both. Covered activities include any published work, oral or written presentation to conferences, drafting committees, legislatures, law reform bodies and the like, and any expert testimony submitted in legal proceedings. A law professor should make, to the extent possible, all disclosures discussed in this policy at the earliest possible time. The earliest possible time should be when the professor is invited to produce the written work for publication or to make a presentation or when the professor submits the written work for publication or delivers the presentation.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES

Law professors should treat colleagues and staff members with civility and respect. Tenured law professors should be particularly sensitive to the terms of any debate involving their untenured colleagues and should so conduct themselves that those colleagues will understand that no adverse professional consequences would follow from expression of, or action based upon, beliefs or opinions contrary to those held by the tenured professor.

Matters of law school governance deserve the exercise of independent judgment by each voting member of the faculty. It is therefore inappropriate for a law professor to apply any sort of pressure other than persuasion on the merits in an effort to influence the vote of another member of the faculty.

Law professors should comply with institutional rules or policies requiring confidentiality concerning oral or written communications. Such rules or policies frequently will exist with

respect to personnel matters and evaluations of student performance. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), for instance, has strict rules about student privacy and professors should become familiar with its requirements. If there is doubt whether such a rule or policy is in effect, a law professor should seek clarification.

An evaluation made of any colleague for purposes of promotion or tenure should be based exclusively upon appropriate academic and service criteria fairly weighted in accordance with standards understood by the faculty and communicated to the subject of the evaluation.

Law professors should make themselves reasonably available to colleagues to discuss teaching methods, content of courses, possible topics of scholarship, scholarly work in progress, and related matters. Professors should honor requests from their own law schools for evaluation of scholarship and teaching in connection with promotion or tenure decisions. Law professors should also give sympathetic consideration to similar requests from other law schools.

As is the case with respect to students (Part I), sexual harassment, or discriminatory conduct involving colleagues or staff members on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability or handicap, age, or political beliefs is unacceptable.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE LAW SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY

Law professors have a responsibility to participate in the governance of their university and particularly the law school itself. Although many duties within modern universities are assumed by professional administrators, the faculty retains substantial collective responsibility to provide academic leadership. Individual professors have a responsibility to assume a fair share of that leadership, including the duty to serve on faculty committees and to participate in faculty deliberations.

Law professors are frequently in demand to participate in activities outside the law school. Such involvement may help bring fresh insights to the professor's classes and writing. Excessive involvement in outside activities, however, reduces the time that the professor has to meet obligations to students, colleagues, and the law school. A professor thus has a responsibility both to adhere to a university's specific limitations on outside activity and to assure that outside activities do not significantly diminish the professor's availability to meet law school obligations. Professors should comply with applicable laws and university regulations and policies concerning the use of university funds, personnel, and property in connection with such activities.

When a law professor resigns from a university to assume another position, or seeks a leave of absence to teach at another institution, or assumes a temporary position in practice, government or other sector, the professor should provide reasonable advance notice. Absent unusual circumstances, a professor should adhere to the dates established in the Association of American Law Schools Statement of Good Practices for the Recruitment of and Resignation by Full-Time Faculty Members.

Although all law professors have the right as citizens to take positions on public questions, each professor has a duty not to imply that he or she speaks on behalf of the law school or university. Thus, a professor should take steps to assure that any designation of the professor's institution in connection with the professor's name is for identification only.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE BAR AND GENERAL PUBLIC

A law professor occupies a unique role as a bridge between the bar and students preparing to become members of the bar. It is important that professors accept the responsibilities of professional status. At a minimum, a law professor should adhere to the Code or Rules of Professional Conduct of the state bars to which the law professor belongs. A law professor may responsibly test the limits of professional rules in an effort to determine their constitutionality or proper application. Conduct warranting discipline as a lawyer should be a matter of serious concern to the professor's law school and university.

One of the traditional obligations of members of the bar is to engage in uncompensated public service or pro bono legal activities. As role models for students and as members of the legal profession, law professors share this responsibility. This responsibility can be met in a variety of ways, including direct client contact through legal aid or public defender offices (whether or not through the law school), participating in the legal work of public interest organizations, lecturing in continuing legal education programs, educating public school students or other groups concerning the legal system, advising local, state and national government officials on legal issues, engaging in legislative drafting, or other law reform activities.

The fact that a law professor's income does not depend on serving the interests of private clients permits a law professor to take positions on issues about which practicing lawyers may be more inhibited. With that freedom from economic pressure goes an enhanced obligation to pursue individual and social justice. For the same reason, engaging in law reform activities or advocating for improvements in law and the legal system is a valued role of legal academics.

Adopted by the Executive Committee, November 17, 1989

Amended July 12, 2017

Statement of Good Practices on Diversity, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action

The purpose of the Association of American Law Schools, as stated in the first article of its bylaws, is “the improvement of the legal profession through legal education.” Toward this end, one requirement of the bylaws is that member schools “seek to have a faculty, staff and student body which are diverse with respect to race, color, and sex.”

AALS’ commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity reflects the judgment of the member schools that these are core values in legal education and in the legal profession. The objective reaches beyond simply ensuring access to all who are qualified. It seeks to increase the number of persons from underrepresented groups in law schools, in the legal profession and in the judiciary in order to enhance the perception of fairness in the legal system, to secure legal services to all sectors of society, and to provide role models for young people.

Diversity means more, however, than expanding access to those historically underrepresented in and underserved by legal education and the legal profession. Its objective is also to create an educational community—and ultimately a profession—that incorporates the different perspectives necessary to a more comprehensive understanding of the law and its impact on society; and to assure vigorous intellectual interchanges essential for professional development. It also implies changing the culture of educational institutions—making learning, the curriculum, and pedagogy more responsive to the needs of a changing student population and a changing world. It presumes an obligation to create a greater sense of belonging, of connectedness, and of place for all members of the educational community.

In an increasingly multicultural nation with a global reach, a commitment to diversity—to broadening the boundaries of inclusiveness of American institutions—is economically necessary, morally imperative, and constitutionally legitimate. In higher education, diversity is also vital to intellectual pursuits. Different backgrounds affect the way people see the world. These differences enrich learning, scholarship, public service, and institutional governance. The voices from diverse cultures bring to the classroom important and different perspectives.

Although there has been great progress in recent decades in respect to the number of women and members of minority groups in American law schools, legal education still has a long road to travel to produce a truly diverse profession prepared to meet the needs of American society. The challenge is thus to develop an educational community—and ultimately an America—where all of us can work together and learn from each other in a climate of mutual trust.

Adopted by the Executive Committee, November 1995

Amended July 12, 2017