

## **Program for Professional Identity Development**

### **May 2, 2022**

*From this day forward, I promise to do my utmost to live up to the high ideals of my chosen profession. I will remember that my actions reflect not only upon myself, but upon the University of Mississippi School of Law and the legal profession. I vow to be a person of principle, truth, compassion, strength, and courage. At all times, I will conduct myself with dignity and civility, showing kindness and respect toward my classmates, teachers, and all persons.*

#### **Oath of Professionalism (taken by incoming students upon matriculation)**

At the University of Mississippi School of Law, we believe that a lawyer's ethical-social development as a lawyer is at least as important as their learning to think like a lawyer. Accordingly, our program integrates doctrinal and practical learning to create a holistic experience designed to produce graduates with the technical expertise and ethical-social intelligence to lead the legal profession. Our Program for Professional Identity Development ensures that our students enter the profession with both practice-ready skills and a strong sense of professional identity.

The law school offers a multi-faceted program for the development of our students' professional identity. Its core components are [clinical offerings](#) in which students practice under the supervision of professors with substantial experience in law practice, [externships](#) where students work with practicing lawyers, and courses in which students role-play in simulated practice settings, such as [Alternative Dispute Resolution](#) and [Interviewing and Counseling](#). In each context, students must address the question of what it means to be a lawyer by making decisions in situations similar to those they will face in practice.

The law school's commitment to our students' professional identity development begins even before they attend their first class. Our orientation program for new students features a program on Equity at UM Law and sessions in which more than 30 practicing attorneys lead break-out groups for discussion of professionalism hypotheticals. Orientation culminates in students taking the Oath of Professionalism. During the first semester of the [first-year legal research and writing course](#) students are introduced to the skills and values required of lawyers, emphasizing the obligations of lawyers to their clients. During the second semester, the focus shifts to the obligations lawyers owe to the justice system and their clients. These materials are incorporated into the program through classroom lectures, guest lectures, and written assignments. All first-year students also take [Contract Negotiation and Drafting](#), an experiential class that helps develop interpersonal skills under the stress of negotiating

agreements. The class counts as three of a student's nine mandatory [experiential credits](#).

The law school also offers co-curricular and extra-curricular experiences that offer substantial opportunities outside of the curriculum for the development of their professional identity. [Student-run organizations](#) offer moot court, trial advocacy and negotiation competitions and training to a wide cross-section of students in which professionalism is a core focus. Not a week goes by at the law school without multiple presentations by academics, practicing lawyers, businesspersons, judges, elected officials and community leaders in which experienced professionals discuss the challenges of being a lawyer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Implementation of the law school's Strategic Plan for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is central to our professional identity program, with [recent initiatives](#) including a program of Diversity Discussion Groups that recognize a different affinity group each month for discussion of shared experiences; a series of diverse-student focused placement workshops; a pilot program for the integration of issues on race, gender and other DEI topics into classes; and a co-teaching program with HBCUs Tougaloo College and Jackson State.