

2022-23 DEI ANNUAL REPORT

Embracing Diversity and Enabling Inclusion: A Year of Progress

Welcome to the College of Law's third annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) report, a reflection of our steadfast commitment to cultivating a diverse and inclusive environment for students, staff, and faculty. Over the past year, our DEI efforts have been guided by our shared values and the conviction that diverse perspectives and an inclusive culture are the cornerstones of our success as a college. As we celebrate the accomplishments of the past year, we also recognize that our journey is ongoing, and we remain resolute in our dedication to fostering an environment where every individual belongs, contributes, and thrives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Highlighting Our Students	3
Collaborations, Celebrations, and Community Initiatives	4
Supporting Future Success: Readiness Program	4
ALL Iowa Initiative	4
Black History Month and MLK Day	5
Back to Iowa	6
Kenyan Judicial Services Commission	7
2022 DEI Awards	7
Celebrating our International Community	8
Faculty and Leadership Recognitions	9
Faculty Fellow Success	9
Outstanding First-Generation Student Advocacy	9
Looking Ahead	10

Highlighting Our Students

- **Eyasu Yirdaw:** Eyasu's exceptional ability to forge strong bonds with both students and faculty at Iowa Law has been instrumental in shaping his journey as a first-generation law student. His active involvement within the Iowa Law community is highlighted by his leadership roles in various law school clubs. Notably, he hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for fellow classmates and provided mentorship to first-year students through his research assistantship with Iowa Law's Writing & Academic Success Center. Learn more about his inspiring journey [here](#).
- **Apoorva Gokare:** Passionate about corporate law, Apoorva's decision to pursue legal studies at Iowa Law after relocating from Bangalore, India, has proven to be a rewarding choice. The networks she built with her peers, faculty, and alumni facilitated valuable opportunities that propelled her career in corporate law. Apoorva's active engagement in the community extends to leadership roles in various student organizations, including her position as International Student Rep on ISBA and Co-president of South Asian Law Students Association (SALSA). Discover more about her experiences [here](#).
- **Barbara Rodriguez:** Barbi received the prestigious "Law360 Distinguished Legal Writing Award" in recognition of her outstanding contribution to legal scholarship. Her Note, titled "In the Interest of Justice: Presuming Prejudice When the Right to Counsel in Removal Proceedings Is Denied," was published in the Iowa Law Review, and combined her academic interest in immigration and her experience working with immigrant clients in the clinic. Barbi also received the American Law Institute CLE Scholarship and Leadership Award, given to the person who best represents a combination of scholarship and leadership. Barbi's remarkable talent and expertise will continue to impact both immigration law and legal scholarship. Find more details [here](#).
- **Jamie McCarthy:** Mentored by Professor Mary Ksobiech, Jamie realized her goal of joining the Moot Court program as part of an exceptional all-women team. The highlight of her journey at the College of Law was Supreme Court Day, where she presented her moot court argument to the Justices of the Iowa Supreme Court and an audience of students, faculty, and lawyers. This achievement not only honed her legal skills but also fostered her confidence, motivation, and sense of accomplishment. Learn more about her inspiring journey [here](#).

Collaborations, Celebrations, and Community Initiatives

We take pride in the College of Law's celebrations of diversity and initiatives which engage the larger university and Iowa communities in our work.

Supporting Future Success: Readiness Program

The Law School Readiness Program is an initiative to close the resource gap for underrepresented and minority students interested in pursuing law. The program educates students on financial resources, the admission process, and the demands of law school. Additionally, students are introduced to Iowa Law professionals and receive individualized mentoring and support. This spring, the Law School Readiness Program had more than 70 undergraduate student participants.

ALL Iowa Initiative

The University of Iowa College of Law's Legal Clinic and Center for Human Rights is partnering with Drake University's Legal Clinics and Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice (Iowa MMJ) to form a new collaboration called ALL Iowa. ALL Iowa was formed in response to the critical need for legal services for Afghan evacuees following the threat to their safety in Afghanistan. The funding for this effort is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Iowa Law students will have the opportunity to represent Afghan immigrants and directly collaborate with diverse communities across the state. ALL Iowa in collaboration with other partners will conduct a needs assessment of Afghan refugees in the state and will build a "refugee legal corps" to train law students and then place them in organizations to build capacity to serve Afghan immigrants.

The Community Empowerment Law Project

The Community Empowerment Law Project (CELP), part of the college's clinical law program, collaborated with the Des Moines Black Liberation Project and the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) in Fall 2022. The law students created an advocacy toolkit aimed at students, parents, and other organizers and activists working to remove police from Iowa schools. The toolkit was disseminated through NCYL's website debtfreejustice.org with the goal of empowering Iowa's citizens to make schools safe for all youth.

The CELP also worked with the family and supporters of Michael Williams, a Black man, who was lynched in Grinnell, Iowa, in 2020. The team of students conducted an in-depth analysis of the history of hate crimes and lynchings, as well as the federal and various states' hate crime laws, and proposed reforms to Iowa's hate

crime statute. In addition, based on the Williams family's experience as the family members of a homicide victim, the law students identified and made recommendations about gaps in Iowa's victim witness program.

Black History Month and MLK Day

Iowa Law was proud to once again sponsor several events for Black History Month and MLK Day. In celebration of Black History Month, the College of Law, UI Center for Human Rights, and the Collegiate DEI Committee hosted a special virtual panel on February 10, titled "The Future of Blacks in Iowa." This panel was moderated by UICHR Director Adrien K. Wing and included panelists Stacey Walker, former Linn County Board of Supervisors, Wayne Ford, former Iowa State legislator, Mazahir Salih, and former Iowa City Mayor.

The groups also sponsored a panel discussion entitled "The Johnson Family: Committed to the Law." This panel included Lonnie Johnson, Eartha Jean Johnson, Antuan Johnson, Teira Johnson Williams, Hon. Te'iva Johnson Bell, and Antoy Bell.

In commemoration of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the College of Law, the UI Center for Human Rights, the Law Student DEI Committee, and Faculty DEI Committee welcomed Dr. Ashley Howard for a special lecture titled "Where Do We Go From Here? Meditations on Region, Violence, & Possibility." Dr. Howard's forthcoming book *Prairie Fires* analyzes the 1960s urban rebellions in the Midwest and the ways race, class, gender, and region played critical and overlapping roles in defining resistance to racialized oppression.

OWLSS Spring Conference

In April, the Organization for Women Law Students and Staff (OWLSS) co-hosted their Annual Spring conference with Iowa Law Career Services. The conference connects students with women in leadership within the legal profession through multiple panel sessions. This year, OWLSS and Dean Adrien Wing moderated a panel featuring Delegate Kimberly Teehee ('95), Breanna Young ('04), Jenness Parker ('04), Michelle Booker ('09), Lorraine Gaynor ('11), Julie Mehta ('13), Honorable Sara Darrow, and Samantha Norris. Panelists shared their perspectives on leadership, navigating a career in the legal field, balancing work, and personal life, and more.

HLLSA

The Hispanic Latino Law Student Association (HLLSA) hosted a 'Latinx While Lawyering Panel' this March. The panel featured Victoria Del Campo (Dorsey & Whitney LLP), Pablo R. Guevara Sastre (Sidley Austin LLP), Miguel Puentes (Iowa State Public Defender's Office), and Cesar Rosado Marzan (Professor at Iowa Law). The panelists shed light on their journey in the legal field.

Back to Iowa

The 2023 Back to Iowa (BTI) event was held Feb. 3 and 4, 2023, in Chicago. Over 50 alums and members of the Black Law Student Association (BLSA) were in attendance. Back to Iowa began as a unique and special effort by African American alumni, BLSA, and the University of Iowa College of Law to provide highly granular, real-life and real-time information to Iowa law students about the practice of law and the legal job market. The BTI program was founded in 1996 by Tiffany M. Ferguson (1996), to educate students about the ups and downs of the practice of law as experienced by African American alumni.

In subsequent years, due to the program's success and the continued commitment of African American alumni and the College of Law, the program has continued to be successful and to include alumni of other institutions. The first meeting and all others since have been characterized by frank discussion between students, alumni, professors, and deans. Topics have included job opportunities in various markets, salary trajectories from early career through senior attorney and partnership positions, managing family and personal life, coursework experiences, challenges for attorneys due to gender and race and the importance of networking. Several mentor relationships, friendships, and employment opportunities have naturally emerged from these sessions.

BTI has been lauded for its high level of candor and its commitment to diversity. In addition to helping students, alumni have received the added bonus of reconnecting with each other.



Kenyan Judicial Services Commission

In November 2022, the University of Iowa College of Law hosted the Kenyan Judicial Services Commission. Iowa Law and the Kenyan delegation have a long-standing partnership as this was their third year in a row visiting the University of Iowa campus. During their two-week visit, members of the delegation attended training sessions and visited state and federal courts.



2022 DEI Awards

At Iowa Law, we continue to highlight and celebrate the work of our faculty, staff, and students to make the College of Law and the University of Iowa a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive community for all. For the second year in a row, we awarded members of our community with the annual College of Law DEI Award. This year's award honorees were:

- **Dean Adrien Wing** was recognized for the many ways she supports and promotes DEI inside and outside of the law school. She is a faculty mentor and faculty advisor for BLSA, and she fosters a culture of inclusion with our international students, and more.
- **Noëlle Sinclair, a law librarian**, was recognized for creating a display to tell the stories of international students at Iowa Law in the 19th century and early 20th century. Noëlle's efforts connect our current international students to our history and demonstrate that our commitment to them and their success is a long-standing Iowa tradition.
- **Marisa Leib-Neri (3L)** is a tireless advocate for disability rights. She worked at the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund and helped research and draft a bill that would provide reparations to disabled Californians who were forcibly sterilized in the state's hospitals in prisons. She contributed to the *Iowa Law Review* by rewriting a section of the diversity language guide for the *Iowa Law Review* writing and publication conventions to reflect disability positive language updates and increase inclusivity of the *Iowa Law Review* writing-style choices in the realm of disability.

- **Maya Sanaba (3L)** was recognized for working toward increasing visibility of South Asians in the law. She started a chapter of the South Asian Law Students Association and has built important relationships with South Asian alumni. She also brought together presidents of various affinity student organizations to work collaboratively together.

We look forward to celebrating them and our other nominees at the upcoming Diversity reception in October 2023.

Celebrating our International Community

This year we also celebrated the cultural diversity of our community with a Cultural Showcase. 12 different regions, countries, and cultures were represented, including Cameroon, France, the Jewish Law Student Association, the Middle East (Sham Region), Nigeria, the South Asian Law Students Association (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan), South Korea, Southeast Asia (Vietnam and the Philippines), Spain, Sudan, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom.



The UI Law's Library Spring Semester Exhibit featured Iowa Law's first three international students:

- Mounq Edwin မှာဝင်ရိုင်းပါဘိန်, Burma (Class of 1879)
- Kizo Ishikawa 石川器蔵, Japan (Class of 1890)
- Nai Hsin Chien 钱乃信, China (Class of 1933)

The exhibit included a biographical timeline for each alum, highlights of their Iowa Law experience, and photographs of archival materials, many of which are held in the Law Library's collection.

Faculty and Leadership Recognitions

Faculty Fellow Success

After its relaunch in 2020, the Faculty Fellowship program has seen tremendous success over the past few years. The program was created to provide career development and research opportunities to fellows with the goal of increasing diversity in the legal field. The committee hired two fellows in 2022, Phoebe Jean-Pierre and Christopher Mathis. Now, Phoebe is working as an Assistant Professor at Indiana University Kelly School of Business. Her area of research lies between health and law and focuses on issues involving race disparities. Christopher recently joined the faculty at the University of Maryland School of Law as an Assistant Professor of Law. His research spans inequality within higher education related to access and equity. This fall, Iowa Law graduate Vinita Singh (18JD) will join the faculty under the Faculty Fellowship program.

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“I definitely felt there was a very strong culture of collegiality throughout my time there and also a very strong culture of intellectual inquiry,” says Singh. “Paired with the collegiality [was] the accessibility of professors and their very clear desire to be supportive of the student body, not only in terms of our professional goals, but also in terms of our personal lives.”

Outstanding First-Generation Student Advocacy

This year the College of Law was proud to announce that two of our faculty members, Professor Lorie Reins-Schweer and Professor Joseph Yockey, were the recipients of the University's Award for Outstanding First-Generation Student Advocacy. This award honors those who support first-generation students' education and serve as exemplary advocates for first-generation students at the University of Iowa.



Looking Ahead

As we celebrate these achievements, we look forward to the continued growth and success that our community will undoubtedly achieve in the future. Last year we launched a comprehensive survey aimed at assessing our DEI efforts at the College of Law. The insights gained from the survey have provided us with great data, highlighting areas of strengths and identifying areas that need further attention. One of our many goals this year will be to create a strategic focus on the areas where the survey results show that we need improvement. Through ongoing assessment and action plans, we are confident that we can uphold our commitment to excellence and inclusivity.