

What makes the University of Victoria Faculty of Law a Special Place?: Characteristics that Define the UVic Faculty of Law

The 2012-13 UVic Law Strategic Planning Committee took the lead in preparing this document in consultation with faculty and staff as part of the strategic planning process. The document has not yet been approved by Law Faculty Council. Faculty and staff wish to share this draft with decanal candidates to help give them a sense of the Faculty of Law.

Submitted to the Law Dean Search Committee by Associate Dean Elizabeth Adjin-Tettey, Chair, Strategic Planning Committee, on behalf of faculty and staff

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The purpose of this document is to set out the central characteristics of the UVic Faculty of Law. The document is also intended to inform the ongoing strategic planning process to help the Faculty reflect on these central characteristics and an opportunity to discuss their relative importance, which ones are in good shape and which ones need improvement as we move into the future.

The mission of UVic Law is to provide and support a dynamic study of law that prepares students for dynamic legal careers influenced by a sense of public service and an understanding for the lived experiences of those impacted by the law. We value the cultivation of “humane professionalism” and promote the study of law in ways that integrate the learning of legal rules and skills, and reflect a “humane perspective on law, and a deeper understanding of law as a social phenomenon and an intellectual discipline.” (Arthurs Report, *Law and Learning: Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada* / by the Consultative Group on Research and Education in Law (1983), p. 47). UVic Law is a leader in the inter-disciplinary study of law as a reflection of a commitment to the dynamic study of law and its impact on people and society generally.

The current mandate of UVic Law (from the 2003 Strategic Plan¹) is to:

- (i) provide legal education, scholarship and public service with a critical, interdisciplinary, policy-oriented focus that contributes to the attainment of justice and sees law as a dynamic process that cannot be fully understood apart from its context;*
- (ii) ensure access to legal education and produce graduates who are generally representative of the diverse composition of Canadian society;*
- (iii) produce law graduates who are competent and ethical, exhibit a humane professionalism, and are capable of serving the broadest possible set of constituents both nationally and internationally.*

Here are what we take to be the central characteristics of UVic Law:

Student-centred

- (i) UVic Law is a destination law school. Our students come from across the country (as well as from BC) and abroad. Our graduates work across Canada and indeed internationally.

¹ The 2003 Strategic Plan is currently under review.

- (ii) We provide a supportive learning environment. We encourage and support a diversity of approaches to teaching and learning, and pedagogical innovation to reflect the diversity of our student body and different learning styles.
- (iii) We encourage and nurture collaborative approaches to learning. UVic Law faculty model collaborative teaching, particularly through team teaching in the legal process course.
- (iv) We pay particular attention to experiential learning. We provide students a broad range of skills courses including our three clinics (Law Centre, Environmental Law Clinic and Business law Clinic), field course in environmental law and sustainability, extensive mooted opportunities, and the only co-op program in a Canadian Common Law school.
- (v) UVic Law offers small class sizes to facilitate better interactions among students and faculty and to promote personalized experiences for students.
- (vi) We promote the inter-disciplinary study of law with opportunities for students to obtain double degrees in Law+MBA and Law+ MPA, as well as opportunities to take some non-law courses as part of the JD program.
- (vii) Our graduate program is inter-disciplinary, with joint graduate supervision of law and non-law faculty members.
- (viii) UVic Law has extensive national and international exchange programs that provide students opportunities to enrich their educational experience nationally and internationally.
- (ix) Students have a unique opportunity to participate in an annual Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Camp and learn from elders who regularly visit the law school and contribute to our program.

Accessible

- (i) UVic Law is committed to promoting access to legal education and a diverse student body through our admission process.
- (ii) We take pride in the success of our students and are committed to (1) supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds so that they can succeed in law school and beyond; and (2) helping students to overcome economic, social and cultural barriers to attending law school through our extensive financial aid and other support programs.

Program/Strengths

- (i) We have teaching and research strengths in a broad range of areas, with particular depth in legal theory (ranging from law and economics to critical race theory, feminist theory, indigenous legal theory, green legal theory, etc.), environmental law and sustainability, indigenous legal orders, and public and private dimensions of law. We have strong links with and focus on Asia Pacific countries.

- (ii) We pay particular attention to issues of social justice, alongside concerns with legal reasoning, legal skills, legal theory, and legal history.
- (iii) We focus not just on the adjudicative dimension of the law, but also pay careful attention to the policy process, public advocacy, legislative reform, institutional design, alternative dispute resolution, and the mechanisms of international law. Among other things, we see this as supporting an enlarged, socially engaged, conception of legal ethics.
- (iv) We provide opportunities for inter-disciplinary engagements among faculty and students through avenues such as the Victoria Colloquium, and the Consortium on Democratic Constitutionalism that enrich the experience of students and faculty.
- (v) We have Chairs dedicated to inter-disciplinary work including the Lansdowne Chair (Labour Law), CRC Chair in Law and Society, Eco-Research Chair, Chair in Environmental law and Sustainability, National Aboriginal Economic Development Chair (joint Chair in Law and Business), Law Foundation Professor of Aboriginal Justice and Governance, and Chair in Asia Pacific Initiatives.
- (vi) We have inter-disciplinary links with many UVic centres and research groups such as POLIS, the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society and the Centre for Cooperative and Community-Based Economy.

Research

- (i) UVic Law values excellence in research that speaks in a range of voices to a range of constituencies.
- (ii) We have a demonstrated commitment to interdisciplinary research and collaboration.
- (iii) We value graduate studies both as a contribution to our overall research output and as a way of developing the next generation of researchers and academics.
- (iv) We seek to develop international linkages in our scholarship, in exchange and internship opportunities for our JD students, in the recruitment of graduate students, and in our public engagement in law reform and legal development. [insert link to faculty research page]

Community

- (i) UVic Law cultivates strong linkages between the Faculty and its various communities so that students can pursue their study of law in practical contexts.
- (ii) The Faculty contributes to the betterment of its surrounding communities, and the faculty in turn draws support from these communities. Many faculty, staff and students are involved in a broad range of community activities including a community legal aid clinic, legal information clinic, Pro-Bono Students Canada, speaking engagements on topics of interest to community groups, board memberships, etc.

- (iii) We value a collegial and supportive environment that includes all constituencies: faculty, staff and students.
- (iv) We value staff as the face of UVic Law providing the day-to-day contact with students and community members, and continuity of experience for all participants in the Faculty community. We share the view expressed in the University's 2012 Strategic Plan that staff provide critical support and services to our students and faculty by maintaining a high-quality physical environment that enable the Faculty to accomplish its goals. (*A Vision for the Future- Building on Excellence: A Strategic Plan for the University of Victoria*, at 21)

Collegial and Democratic Governance

We value diversity of voices in a non-hierarchical manner in decision-making. Faculty, staff and students participate in the Faculty's governing body, Law Faculty Council, and in making decisions including those that affecting the student experience.

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