



# UNB LAW STRATEGIC PLAN

*Small Enough to Make Anything Possible.*



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we will re-establish ourselves  
as one of the top five law  
schools in Canada.*



Michael Marin  
Dean of Law

# UNB LAW STRATEGIC PLAN

*Small Enough to Make Anything Possible.*

## *Our Values*

We are committed to small class sizes and low student-faculty ratios, a professionally relevant curriculum, scholarship and service that makes a difference, caring for our students, and a collegial learning and working environment.

## *Our Strategic Priorities*

Within the next decade, we will re-establish ourselves as one of the top five law schools in Canada by enhancing our programs and services in the following ways:

- Achieving a student-faculty ratio of 11:1 and lowering class sizes in first-year courses to ensure a supportive learning environment;
- Building teaching and research capacity in the upper-year core curriculum, including required courses and compulsory areas of study;
- Offering a greater variety of courses, particularly in emerging areas of law;
- Meaningfully responding to the TRC Calls to Action through curriculum reform, including a new course in Indigenous Legal Traditions;
- Upgrading our facilities to promote learning objectives, accessibility, and pride;

- Pursuing strategic opportunities for enrolment growth by adding graduate and pre-law programs;
- Creating Canada's most innovative experiential learning program;
- Enhancing student services by focusing on wellness, career placement, and mentorship;
- Promoting excellence in research through interdisciplinary collaboration, new research chairs, and celebrating our successes;
- Opening UNB Law to the community and the world through visiting lectureships and broadcasting new and existing events; and
- Creating a robust needs-based financial assistance program so that no qualified student is turned away for financial reasons.

In pursuing each of these goals, we will emphasize reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion. These principles reflect our core values of caring for our students and fostering a collegial learning and working environment. They also further our obligation as a law school to serve the public interest and promote confidence in the administration of justice.



## **STRATEGIC GROWTH THAT ADVANCES OUR CORE VALUES**

As one of only two English law schools in Atlantic Canada, and with a national reputation for a high quality, foundational curriculum, UNB Law is well-positioned to introduce new programs that fill gaps in legal education. These initiatives will ensure that UNB Law remains at the forefront of labour market trends and interdisciplinary research. At the same time, these new programs will boost enrolment within the Faculty of Law and elsewhere at UNB, thereby generating the resources necessary to reduce class sizes in our JD Program and invest in student services. And as the quality of our JD Program improves, we will attract and retain the best law students in Canada.

### *A New Master of Studies in Law (M.S.L.)*

The core teachings of a legal education are relevant far beyond the practice of law. Legal knowledge, problem-solving, and communication are essential in many industries and disciplines, and will contribute to addressing our toughest challenges. So while the world may not need many more lawyers, it does need more legally trained professionals and scholars. This is what the Master of Studies in Law (M.S.L.) is all about.

Through the M.S.L. non-legal professionals and scholars will have the opportunity to pursue a course of study and research project that is relevant to their field. For example, through this program, computer scientists will be able to study cybercrime and intellectual property; business leaders will be able to study corporate law and taxation; human resource professionals will be able to study labour and employment law; and policy analysts will be able to study public law. In addition, by collaborating with our faculty, M.S.L. students will be catalysts for cutting-edge interdisciplinary research at UNB Law.



### *Canada's First English-Language Pre-Law Program*

In order to make law school more accessible, and attract the most promising students, UNB Law will partner with other faculties to offer a pre-law program. Through this program, exceptional high school students will be offered conditional acceptance to law school. As long as they pursue two years of undergraduate study at UNB and achieve a 3.7 GPA and LSAT score of 158, they will be able to enrol at the Faculty of Law. The main benefit of the pre-law program is that it will shorten by two years the total length of post-secondary education required to earn a law degree. Similar programs have proven successful in French-speaking Canada and they are fully compliant with the requirements of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada. The UNB Pre-Law Program will be the first of its kind to be offered in English, creating a distinctive proposition relative to other Canadian universities.

The benefits of the Pre-Law Program will accrue primarily to other faculties by allowing them to use the allure of early law school admission to attract top undergraduate candidates who may not have chosen UNB otherwise. The Pre-Law Program is one of the many ways that UNB Law seeks to advance the University's strategic objectives.

### *Recruiting and Retaining the Best JD Students*

As UNB Law enhances the quality of its JD program, it will attract and retain the very best students. We will strive to ensure that every student who enrolls in first-year stays in the program and completes it successfully. By doing so, UNB Law stands to significantly increase its overall enrolment and generate additional revenue to reinvest in its offerings.



## A TRANSFORMATIVE LEGAL EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

### *Canada's Smallest Class Sizes*

Throughout its 129-year history, UNB Law has offered a special atmosphere that sparked some of the most brilliant achievements in Canadian law. It is the place where a boy who was born during the Depression in Grand Falls, New Brunswick, the youngest of 12 children and the only one to go to university, emerged as a Rhodes Scholar and was eventually appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada. It is the place where, in the early 1960s, a mother of four enrolled in law school; within a few years of her graduation, she was appointed to the bench and eventually became a Commissioner of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women and Chairperson of the Canadian Commission on the International Year of the Child.

We know that such seemingly improbable stories, and hundreds more like them, are possible because of the supportive learning environment that small classes provide. UNB Law's limited enrolment means that professors know all of their students and take a personal interest in their success. With fewer students, curricular and extra-curricular opportunities are more accessible. Our small size fosters special bonds between students that serve as the basis for lifelong friendships and professional collaborations. And it is responsible for the distinctively well-rounded character of our graduates, who combine superior legal knowledge and skills with humility, compassion, and good humour.

In this plan, we are recommitting ourselves to this defining character of UNB Law — that

our small size enables excellence. Since first-year courses are the foundation of law school, we will focus on lowering their size by creating a third section. This will require hiring at least seven new professors, who will also expand our teaching capacity in upper years as well as our research output. In doing so, we will reduce our student-faculty ratio to 11:1, which will be one of the smallest in Canada and allow us to deliver on what UNB Law is known for.

### *Canada's Most Innovative Experiential Learning Program*

Many people in the legal community consider UNB Law's comprehensive and structured curriculum to be one of its distinguishing features. By requiring students to take courses in many areas of law, and to study the law from both theoretical and doctrinal perspectives, we prepare them to adapt to the inevitable and unforeseeable changes that will occur during the course of their careers.

We must supplement our historically liberal approach to legal education with experiential programming that helps students apply what they learn in the classroom to real-life problems and acquire critical skills. As a law school known for its "career-ready" curriculum, it makes sense for UNB Law to embrace experiential learning as a natural extension of its program. We will do this by pursuing four strategies that will position UNB Law at the forefront of innovation in experiential learning.



### *1) Legal Clinic*

We will establish a new legal clinic that will provide legal representation to people who cannot afford it. The UNB Legal Clinic will start by filling in gaps in New Brunswick's legal aid system by focusing on areas such as housing, social benefits, employment standards, human rights, and immigration. Through the UNB Legal Clinic, and under the supervision of its full-time lawyer, students will advise clients and represent them before courts and tribunals.

### *2) Legal Observatory*

Inspired by the medical school operating theatre, the UNB Legal Observatory will make real legal proceedings part of the law school experience. The Legal Observatory will be a hearing room with an

adjoining classroom separated by a one-way mirror and linked by an audio feed. Through this facility, law students and their professors will be able to observe and discuss real proceedings as they unfold live. We also anticipate that Legal Clinic students will appear on behalf of clients in proceedings held at the Legal Observatory. This facility will contribute to the administration of justice in New Brunswick by providing badly needed hearing space equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including to facilitate remote appearances.

### *3) Canada's First Virtual Reality Law Lab*

Imagine being able to argue before the Supreme Court of Canada while in law school, or to

examine a witness in a murder trial as part of a course on evidence or criminal procedure. By leveraging augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence, UNB's Virtual Reality Law Lab will allow students to hone their knowledge and skills through realistic and dynamic simulations. This technology will allow us to simulate many more experiences than would ever be possible through clinics and moots, which require clients, lawyers, judges, and volunteers. We intend to pursue the development of this technology in New Brunswick with UNB Law serving as the proof of concept. Once developed, this technology could be made available to other educational institutions.



*The law library is to law school what the lab is to chemistry or engineering; it is inseparable.*

#### *4) Enhancing Internship Opportunities*

A legal education is becoming increasingly relevant and desirable to organizations other than law firms, like government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and businesses. We want to supplement our existing partnerships with organizations in the Maritimes by adding new ones elsewhere in Canada and around the world. These new partnerships will enable students to engage in legally-relevant work and receive academic credit as well as funding for their expenses. This will require hiring additional staff and creating a fund to support student internships.

#### *Honouring Our Commitment to Reconciliation*

Over the next decades, Canada will be engaged in a process of reconciliation with its Indigenous Peoples. This critical work will involve unraveling the harmful legacy of colonialism by fostering the revival of Indigenous legal traditions and making space for them to be practiced. Reconciliation also means reforms to Canadian laws to ensure that they respect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, promote self-determination, and reverse historical oppression.

We are committed to playing an active role in this vital project by making the content of Call to Action #28 part of our mandatory curriculum, by adding a course on Indigenous Legal Traditions, by hiring faculty and instructors who identify as Indigenous, by recruiting more Indigenous students and supporting their success, and by providing all of our students with training in anti-racism and intercultural competency.

#### *A More Diverse Curriculum Through An Intensive Term*

Despite our commitment to teaching the basic doctrinal and theoretical subjects, our curriculum needs to be responsive to the latest developments in the law by offering a greater variety of elective courses. We will do this by creating an intensive term during which upper-year students will take one course for three or four weeks. The courses offered during the

intensive term will be those that are unlikely to part of our regular curriculum, either because they concern emerging fields of law or because of the lack of qualified local instructors.

Intensive term courses will be taught by visiting professors from elsewhere in Canada and around the world who are experts in their fields. In this way, the intensive term will allow us to attract leading scholars and practitioners to UNB Law, thus also expanding our circle of influence and opportunities for research collaboration. The intensive term will allow us to preserve the benefits of our traditional core curriculum, while adding variety and choice through new and cutting-edge courses.

#### *A Well-Resourced Law Library Integrated with UNB Law*

The law library is to law school what the lab is to chemistry or engineering; it is inseparable. The primary material that law students and professors use is contained in reports and databases that are the backbone of every aspect of every course, not just an occasional project. This is why the majority of our law librarians are lawyers and why they actually teach courses in our Faculty.

In addition, the Gerard La Forest Library serves the New Brunswick legal profession and is part of the Province's network of law libraries. The relationship between the Law Library and the legal profession is maintained by the Dean of Law, who is a member of the Council of the Law Society of New Brunswick. For these reasons, our Law Library must remain integrated with and accountable to the Faculty of Law through its Dean. This will ensure that the Law Library remains responsive to the Faculty's curriculum, scholarship, and the legal profession.

The Law Library's continued integration with the Faculty of Law will also be critical to the achievement of other aspects of this plan, including the expansion and modernization of the building and establishment of new initiatives like the Virtual Reality Law Lab, which may be located in the Law Library.



## A STUDENT-CENTERED LAW SCHOOL

### *Becoming a Leader in Wellness and Mental Health*

We believe that law school needs to be about more than learning legal principles and skills. In order to become competent and fulfilled legal professionals, students need to be able to cope effectively with adversity and develop habits that are conducive to mental and physical wellbeing. After all, when a lawyer is unwell or overwhelmed, his or her ability to perform is compromised.

This is why UNB Law will invest in services and programming focused on proactive approaches to promoting wellness and mental health. Specifically, we will hire a Wellness Advisor who will provide counselling to law students, offer training and resources to students with respect to coping strategies (e.g. mindfulness), and advise the Faculty on academic matters that affect student wellness and mental health. In doing so, our objective is to equip students to pursue the highest standards of academic and professional excellence.

### *Investing in Career Placement Services*

In order to enhance our reputation as a national law school, we need to ensure that our graduates are getting great jobs across the country and around the world. In addition, with more lawyers working outside private practice, and with more students interested in pursuing alternative careers, the advice and connections that we provide need to change too.

Accordingly, we will focus on building relationships with legal employers outside Atlantic Canada and around the world. We will offer more information to students about careers in government, business, and civil society. In keeping with our student-centered approach, we will continue to provide personalized career counselling so that each of our graduates finds employment that's right for them.



In order to achieve these goals, we will need to hire an additional Career Services Officer, who will ensure that in seeking to broaden our national and international reach we maintain our strong links in Atlantic Canada and remain responsive to the individual needs of our students.

### *No Qualified Student Turned Away for Financial Reasons*

Regrettable as it may be, we have to plan for a future in which legal education becomes more expensive. Indeed, achieving the goals set out in this Plan entails increased costs, which will partly be borne by students in the form of higher tuition fees. But this does not mean that legal education needs to become less accessible to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The key is to offset higher tuition fees with investments in financial assistance targeted at those who cannot afford to pay more.

As we implement this plan, we resolve to focus on enhancing our needs-based financial

assistance such that no qualified student is turned away for financial reasons. And we will continue to keep our tuition fees lower than comparable law schools.

### *Mentorship Programming*

We want to provide our current students with the encouragement and confidence to succeed. And we want our potential students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, to aspire to pursue a law degree at UNB. We believe in the power of mentoring to help students overcome obstacles and realize their full potential.

This is why we will establish new mentorship programs aimed at both existing and potential students. For our current students, we will match them with alumni mentors, who will provide advice and connections. For high school students, we will develop summer programs that will spark a passion for the study of law by engaging them in mooted exercises, the observation of real proceedings, and interactions with judges and lawyers.



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## RESEARCH THAT ADDRESSES SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

### *Interdisciplinary Collaboration*

The law is inherently interdisciplinary as it touches all aspects of life. The law is also central to addressing all of the major challenges facing our society, including climate change, human rights, and cybersecurity. The Faculty of Law is uniquely positioned to collaborate with researchers in other fields on these and other pressing issues.

Our Master of Studies in Law will be a vehicle for this collaboration by welcoming professionals and scholars in other disciplines to pursue a course of study and research that's relevant to their discipline. In addition, the appointment of our Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Digital Information Law and Policy will open the door to collaborations with UNB's leading research units, including the Canadian Institute for Cybersecurity and the New Brunswick Institute for Research Data and Training.

Finally, through the cross-listing of courses and the appointment of Research Associates affiliated with other faculties and institutes, we will create an interdisciplinary environment within the Faculty of Law that will spark new research partnerships and projects.

### *New Research Chairs*

The addition of research chairs will focus more resources and attention on scholarship, thereby boosting our national profile. Furthermore, endowed and externally funded chairs add to our teaching complement

without burdening scarce operating funds. As a result, new research chairs will not only help us produce more scholarship, but also offer more and specialized courses, as well as contribute to lowering our student-faculty ratio. Therefore, in addition to UNB Law's CRC in Digital Information Law and Policy, we will add one research chair that will also have some teaching responsibilities within the Faculty.

### *Celebrating Our Research Success*

Fortunately, many of UNB Law's professors are recognized as research leaders in their fields, and we have recently hired several new ones whose futures look very bright. We will capitalize on our exiting research strength and promise by focusing on promoting our scholarly achievements in three specific ways.

First, we will produce an annual publication that will present the research output of our faculty. Second, we will make it easier for faculty to promote their scholarly work through UNB Law's website and social media presence. And third, we will celebrate our research achievements through events like book launches and symposia.



*We are committed to creating an environment that inspires pride within our community and makes others want to join us.*



## MODERN FACILITIES THAT INSPIRE BELONGING AND PRIDE

Physical spaces reflect the values and aspirations of the people who occupy them. And research shows that learning environments play a crucial role in the student experience and in students' success. A positive learning environment supports students' motivation, engagement and their ability to meet the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century legal education.

We are committed to creating an environment that inspires pride within our community and makes others want to join us. This includes:

- *Modernizing our classrooms and study spaces;*
- *Letting in more natural light, which has been shown to boost mood and reduce anxiety and stress;*
- *Focusing on accessibility;*
- *Designing state-of-the-art facilities for our Legal Clinic, Legal Observatory and the Virtual Reality Law Lab;*
- *Adding classrooms with modular seating that can accommodate problem-based and active learning methods;*
- *Upgrading technology to include cameras, videoconferencing and broadcasting capabilities;*
- *Adding faculty and staff offices to accommodate contemplated new hires;*
- *Adding comfortable seating areas for students to gather, talk and study.*





## **FOSTERING DIALOGUE HERE AND EVERYWHERE**

UNB Law has a proud tradition of engagement in public discourse. Our professors are often called upon by local and national media to comment on legal controversies and challenges. In addition, we have two prestigious annual lectures that attract considerable attention from the legal community.

Given the knowledge and skills of our faculty, we are well-positioned to play an even greater role in fostering dialogue on key issues. This means turning UNB Law into a site where influential and consequential discussions happen. We can do this by leveraging our connections to external stakeholders, including the legal profession, judiciary, and all levels of government. Doing so will allow us to contribute meaningfully and positively to society while at the same time raising our profile and influence.

### *Distinguished Visiting Lectureships*

We will invite leading professionals and scholars from across Canada and around the world to UNB Law through Distinguished Visiting Lectureships. As mentioned previously, these visitors will teach in our intensive term, but also collaborate with our

permanent faculty. By inviting new people into our community on ongoing basis, we will add to its intellectual dynamism and broaden our reach.

### *Appointment of a Jurist in Residence*

We will also return to UNB Law's tradition of having a Jurist in Residence, perhaps a judge or distinguished practitioner. Through the appointment of such a figure, UNB Law will gain a mentor, role model, and advisor — someone who personifies the excellence to which we aspire, and who is capable of enriching the intellectual life of the Faculty.

### *Hosting and Broadcasting National and International Events*

By updating our classroom technology with broadcasting capability, we will position ourselves to broaden the reach of existing lectures and to host even more. As more people from across Canada and around the world attend our events, we will raise our profile and UNB Law will become known as a place where the most influential figures in law come to share their ideas and experiences.



*In pursuing each of these goals, **we will emphasize reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion.***

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