



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023

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FORWARD

We are a nation in turmoil, a world in crisis. With the COVID-19 pandemic wreaking global havoc, we must be diligent in protecting and respecting lives. We must recognize and repair gaps in our humanity, from reducing poverty and eradicating disease, to overcoming violence, hatred, and racism.

Historic protests against police brutality and racial injustice have taken place across our nation and the world, requiring all of us to pause, dig deep, examine our own beliefs, and ask the tough questions: “Am I racist; do I unconsciously manifest bias; how do I recognize it; and what can I do about it?”

As we consider our own lives, Vermont Law School (VLS) continues to actively consider its own operations and if and how it discriminates or perpetuates harmful racial, gender, or sexual orientation stereotypes. Since 1998, when Vermont Law School instituted its first Diversity Plan, the school has regularly and tirelessly implemented measures to create an educational and work environment of fairness, respect, and understanding among students, faculty, and staff.

After George Floyd’s tragic death on May 25, 2020, we initiated a series of monthly virtual speaker panels, entitled “Embedded Racism in the Law,” which have been meaningful and well-attended by the VLS community and beyond. This spirit of solidarity also led to a Black Lives Matter rally on South Royalton’s town green that was attended by many members of the VLS community.

We are inspired and determined to recommit efforts to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion at Vermont Law School, and are looking forward to creating new initiatives to engage students, faculty, and staff, as well as the entire VLS community. We have made great progress, but there is much work to be done!

On a personal note, I would like to acknowledge the passing on July 17, 2020, of Senator John Lewis, the towering civil rights leader and the “Conscious of Congress,” who spoke about “The King Legacy” at Vermont Law School in 2006. He was a friend of mine and this great man will be missed. He and Dr. King would be proud of the work our school has done and will continue to do.

Shirley A. Jefferson
Associate Dean for Students and Diversity

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MISSION

Law schools control access to the legal profession. In this role, Vermont Law School (VLS) has had an obligation to ensure that individuals who have been traditionally under-represented and have not had the opportunity to enter the profession are able to do so. The broader American society, and indeed the world, is culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse. We live in a global society where technology has largely eliminated geographic and cultural barriers to communication and commerce. To live up to the expectations of its motto, *Lex Pro Urbe Et Orbe—Law for the Community and the World*—Vermont Law School must equip its students with the skills, knowledge, and understanding to reside as citizens and leaders in this increasingly diverse and dynamic world.

DEFINITIONS

- **DIVERSITY** is the existence of variations of different characteristics in a group of people that make us unique, such as cognitive skills and personality traits, along with things that shape our identity, such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, and cultural background.

<https://resources.workable.com/hr-terms/diversity-definition>

- **INCLUSION** refers to the procedures organizations implement to integrate everyone in the workplace, allowing their difference to coexist in a mutually beneficial way. The goal of inclusion strategies is to make everyone feel accepted and comfortable, ready to share their opinions and thoughts without hesitation.

<https://resources.workable.com/hr-terms/diversity-vs-inclusion>

- **EQUITY (Equality)** is justice free from bias or favoritism.

Adapted from Merriam-Webster

- **DIVERSITY** is a globally accepted concept which brings different people into the same place or territory. **Inclusion** introduces concrete methods and strategies to make diversity work. **Equity** among all people is the result.

<https://resources.workable.com/hr-terms/diversity-vs-inclusion>

INTRODUCTION

Vermont Law School aspires to become a more diverse community where individuals of all races, cultures, ethnicities, classes, religions, ages, gender identities, sexual orientations, physical abilities, and political views live and learn together in an atmosphere of open communication, acceptance, and understanding.

The VLS Diversity Report and Plan (now VLS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) was first created in 1998 to educate the VLS community of the importance, purpose, goals and progress of the law school's diversity efforts. This document is periodically amended and subject to the review, comment, and approval by the administration and faculty. It is also provided to the VLS Board of Trustees for consideration and adoption.

This report mostly covers past activities from August 2017 to August 2020, as well as future plans for the next three years, from September 1, 2020, through August 31, 2023, after which the reporting and planning period will remain triennial, every three years: September 1 through August 31.

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

The Diversity Committee, comprised of faculty, staff and students, serves as the primary catalyst for efforts to address diversity within the law school and the greater VLS community. To ensure that these efforts are tangible, measurable, practical, and realistic, the Diversity Committee has identified six key goals¹ to provide a framework within which the VLS community moves toward a more diverse, welcoming, understanding, and accommodating environment for all students, staff, and faculty. The VLS Diversity Committee meets on a monthly basis to discuss progress towards these goals as well as current issues and/or concerns. All recognized student groups are required to send at least one attendee to represent their group at the monthly meetings. In addition, the Student Bar Association (SBA) has its own diversity committee, which works together with the full Diversity Committee to represent and include students' ideas and needs.

DIVERSITY GOALS

These six goals are the backbone of the VLS Diversity Plan and call for continuing strategic development and implementation. They are:

1. To increase the ability of the administration, faculty, and staff to understand, discuss, and address in a sensitive and respectful manner the concerns of people of color—Black, Indigenous, and non-black people of color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and other members of diverse groups;
2. To increase the incorporation of topics of diversity into the curriculum and classroom;
3. To increase the number of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities in the student body;
4. To increase the ability of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities to succeed in law school, and to feel welcome, respected, and supported in the community;
5. To increase the number of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities in the faculty, administration, staff, and board; and,
6. To increase financial and human resources to support all diversity efforts.

STUDENT GROUPS

Vermont Law School recognizes and supports a wide range of diverse and active student groups, including the Alliance, Asian Pacific American Law Student Association (APALSA), Black Law Students Association (BLSA), Christian Law Fellowship (CLF), International Law Students (ILS), Jewish Law Student Association (JLSA), Native American Law Student Association (NALSA), Women's Law Society (WLS), and many others. There are a total of 60 student groups (44 active), most of which operate with a budget

¹ The original seven goals have been modified/merged into six goals.

and are managed and overseen by the SBA and the Office of Student Affairs and Diversity. Student groups implement activities that range from large, public events, to smaller VLS community events and cultural celebrations. Student groups advertise events to all students, staff and faculty, as well as alumni on occasion, inviting everyone—regardless of characteristics or identity—to participate and learn. Information about each group can be found in [Appendix A](#).

HIGHLIGHTS

Embedded Racism in the Law

In response to George Floyd’s tragic death on May 25, 2020, Vermont Law School initiated a series of monthly virtual panel discussions on “Embedded Racism in the Law.” The first panel, held June 4, was comprised of VLS faculty, while subsequent panels have included members of community law enforcement and legal justice experts from within and beyond Vermont’s borders.

The panels have been meaningful and well-attended by the VLS community and beyond. The initial two panels in June, held virtually on the Microsoft Teams platform, registered 390 participants. The three panels held during the months of July and August, on the Vimeo platform, garnered a total 1,154 live views (458 on VLS’s live webpage, and 696 on Facebook). To watch the most recent panel on August 6, 2020, click [here](#).

Center for Justice Reform and the National Center on Restorative Justice

At a time of historical demand for racial justice and new approaches in responding to harm, Vermont Law School was the first law school in the country to offer a Master of Arts in Restorative Justice in addition to the JD degree. Now in its fourth year of operation, the program graduated its first class of seven Master's students in 2019 and by June 2021 more than 30 students will have completed the program. In addition to a Master's degree, Vermont Law School recently began offering a professional certificate in restorative justice. In total, 107 students are currently enrolled in either the MARJ, joint-degree MARJ, or professional certificate program.



In April of 2020, the Center received a \$3M grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to establish a [National Center on Restorative Justice](#). VLS works closely with its partners, University of Vermont, the University of San Diego, and U.S. Office of Justice Programs (OJP) to incubate new ideas and create new approaches to restorative justice education and training. In February 2021, the Center received [a second \\$3M grant](#). More details can be found under Goal #2 in this report.

National Leadership

In the fall of 2019, Vermont Law School was awarded the *Outstanding Law School Diversity Outreach Award* from the National Black Pre-Law Conference for sustaining a commitment to actively recruiting to prospective Black applicants. At the same conference, Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Diversity Shirley Jefferson JD'86 received the Legal Education Access and Diversity Champion Award for her "outstanding commitment and service in helping aspiring Black lawyers better understand what it takes to be successful applicants, law students, and lawyers." VLS is the only school to have ever received two awards at this conference.



Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) and Food & Agriculture Clinic

On June 8, 2018, CAFS launched the [Farmland Access Legal Toolkit \(FALT\)](#) to provide a helpful resource for farmers to access land more affordably and creatively, and to assist with their estate planning needs. CAFS has partnered with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund to develop an additional section for the website on heirs' property, which has been identified as an acute need for Black farmers and their families. Targeted resources on the site have also been translated into Spanish.

Environmental Justice Clinic

The Environmental Justice Clinic's (EJC) work on legislation and administrative advocacy has provided opportunities for environmentally overburdened communities to have a greater say in decisions affecting their future at local, state, and federal levels. The EJC provides representation to low-income communities of color that are fighting sources of pollution in legally underserved areas. For example, a student team is working on behalf of the Ashurst Bar/Smith Community Organization in Tallassee, Alabama, where residents are struggling to protect their historic black neighborhood from the negative effects of a large landfill. The EJC's work has given voice to communities that otherwise would not have

had a say, while spurring compliance with Executive Order 12898, the 1994 Environmental Justice Executive Order that requires federal agencies to make achieving environmental justice part of its mission.

Stonewall at 50 Celebrated

The Alliance student group at Vermont Law School sponsored a major symposium on November 16, 2019, entitled “Stonewall at 50: A Half-Century of LGBT+ Civil Rights Advocacy.” The symposium, made possible by a generous grant from the Johnson Family Foundation, was organized by Alliance, with help from the Office of Student Affairs and Diversity.

Celebrating the LGBTQ+ community and the progress that has been made in the last 50 years, over 60 people participated, including students, faculty, and staff from VLS and other colleges and universities, as well local high school students. Dean Shirley Jefferson opened the conference and among the speakers were Vermont Attorney General T.J. Donovan and Vermont Supreme Court Justice Beth Robinson, who recounted her role as an attorney in Vermont’s same-sex marriage cases before she joined the court. See [Appendix B](#) for full program.

Indigenous People’s Day Established

In 2017, the Native American Law Students Association (NALSA) championed an effort at Vermont Law School to rename Columbus Day to *Indigenous People’s Day*. The VLS community listened, with the faculty voting to approve the new designation as official and, as such, Indigenous People’s Day appears in the VLS Academic Calendar and all other related materials.

Gender Inclusiveness Initiative Successful

VLS now has gender-neutral bathrooms, thanks to advocacy efforts initiated by Christopher Smith ‘14, then SBA President, and other concerned students. The converted bathrooms are located in the classroom building, Oakes Hall, on the second and third floors, and in several other areas across campus.

Activities and Progress - Goal 1

Goal #1: To increase the ability of the administration, faculty, and staff to understand, discuss, and address in a sensitive and respectful manner the concerns of people of color—Black, Indigenous, and non-black people of color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and other members of diverse groups.

Vermont Law School hosts regular and important presentations and events throughout the year that address diversity, equity, and inclusion. Most of the events and activities are student-led. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to participate in annual public events and cultural celebrations, such as MLK Day celebrations, Native American Law Students Association (NALSA) lunches, and GAYLA (described below). In addition, regular trainings are held for faculty and staff on diversity-related topics.

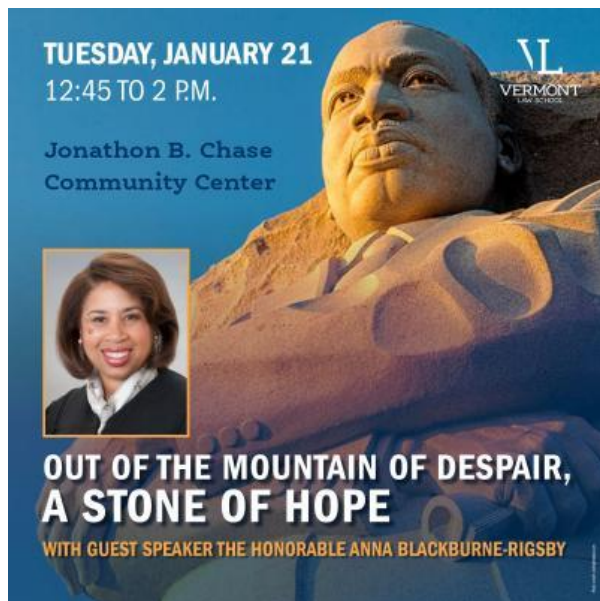
Activity 1: Presentations and Events

Faculty and staff are encouraged to attend presentations on diversity-related topics and participate in annual public events

Annual Public Events

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

Vermont Law School has honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for 18 years. Its celebration marks the holiday with music, a guest speaker, and discussion. Not only do students, faculty, staff, and alumni attend, but VLS invites several local junior high, Sharon Academy, high school, and community members to join as well.



Another inspiring celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. took place in the Chase Community Center on January 21, 2020. The Honorable [Anna Blackburne-Rigsby](#), chief judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, was the keynote speaker. A woman of color, Judge Blackburne-Rigsby described her path to becoming a judge, including the challenges she faced and the accomplishments she achieved. Dean Shirley Jefferson joined the Judge on stage for an informal armchair Q&A discussion about their respective experiences. The audience of 60 VLS students, staff, and faculty participated in the discussion, with traditional singing taking place during and after the event. Over 150 high school students, teachers, and community members also participated. This was the 18th MLK Celebration organized and

hosted by Vermont Law School. Click [here](#) to watch the event.

Race and the Law Symposium

This year's symposium, held on January 31, 2020, focused on re-imagining criminal justice in the 21st century. With two moderators, the panelists of prosecutors and defense attorneys from across the Northeast shared what their respective organizations have been doing to reform criminal justice practices in their boroughs, counties and states. The keynote speaker was Tiffany Cabàn, who is a career public defender, former candidate for district attorney in Queens, NY, and a national political organizer for the Working Families party.

The event was sponsored by the Vermont Law School Black Law Students Association, Student Bar Association, Center for Justice Reform, Office for Student Affairs and Diversity, Women's Law Society, Latin American and Caribbean Law Students Association, Alliance, and the National Lawyers Guild.



The symposium began five years ago and now boasts over 250 participants. To watch this year's event, please click [here](#).

Roe v. Wade Anniversary Dinner



This annual dinner is hosted by the If, When, How student group and co-sponsored by the Women's Law Society. This was the 17th dinner hosted by VLS, celebrating 47 years of the landmark Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. This year, Vermont State Representatives Emilie Kornheiser and Selene Colburn spoke, along with VLS Professor Peter Teachout and VLS students Rico Edwards and Julia MacDonald. Held in Yates, 60 people attended, and discussion focused on the plight of poor and disadvantaged women in society, as well as the impact of poverty on families, childcare, and health.

GAYLA

Hosted by Alliance, this annual drag charity event is a talent show and celebration of the diverse Vermont Law School community, primarily focusing on LGBTQ students, LGBTQ community members, and allies. Always held in April as a much-deserved break from studies, it is entertaining, joyous, often bawdy, and always hilarious. VLS students, staff, faculty, and alumni participate and all proceeds from the event go to a Vermont charity benefitting LGBTQ youth. In 2020, due to COVID, the event was celebrated online.

Veteran's Day Celebration

This anniversary event is presented by the Veterans Law Student Association (VLSA) in honor of those who have served in the U.S. military. A flag ceremony on the Debevoise front lawn is followed by a reception in the Yates Common Room follows. VLS last held the event on campus in 2019, marking the commemoration's 18th year, attended by local veterans from the community, as well as veterans among students, faculty, and the administration.

Other Activities and Cultural Celebrations

The general purpose of the activities listed below is to build cultural awareness and inclusiveness by informing, respecting, and acknowledging. That is: to inform others about cultural traditions that may be unfamiliar to them; to respect these cultures and traditions; and to acknowledge that these cultural traditions and celebrations have a place in an increasingly diverse society.

VLS's goal is to make students' educational experiences richer and that by the time they graduate, they will have a better understanding of law, justice, and equity. VLS has encouraged collaboration between affinity groups for several reasons—to increase a more direct exchange of cultural traditions and ideas, but also to streamline activities and reduce the sheer number of events that may detract from studies.

NALSA Intersectional Lunch

This annual lunch is sponsored by the Women's Law Society and other student affinity groups. This year's discussion centered on the lack of jurisdiction that tribes have over non-tribal members when they commit crimes in Indian Country.

NALSA Storytelling Session

This is a weekly book discussion with NALSA members and other students, led by Professor [Bruce Duthu](#). Professor Duthu taught at Vermont Law School for many years, and is now the Samson Occum Professor (and former Chair) of Native American Studies at Dartmouth College. This year/semester the group discussed the books *A Pipe for February* and *Round House*. This activity is a collaboration between several student groups, spearheaded by NALSA.

Lunar New Year Celebration

An annual celebration hosted by APALSA in the Yates Common Room.

The Environmental Justice Caravan

A panel and networking reception sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Law Student Association (LALSA) in the Yates Common Room.

Winter Carnival

A cultural celebration that signals the near end of winter and the promise of spring, hosted by Black Law Students Association.

Mass Incarceration Week

Initiated two years ago, VLS hosts events and actions on mass incarceration, highlighting the connections between the exponential increase of incarcerated people, of which most are people of color, and the 40-year-old War on Drugs.

Holi/5k Color Run

This event serves as a way to celebrate the festival of color. The idea was to cover people with multiple colors to symbolize that they are one group of people. This event was hosted by APALSA

Diwali Festival

An annual event hosted by APALSA to introduce traditions and games when celebrating the festival of lights. This event takes place in the Chase Community Center.

Activity 2: Diversity Training

Vermont Law School makes a concerted effort to conduct trainings for faculty and staff on a regular basis. These sessions have allowed faculty and staff to highlight areas of the intersection between their work and the VLS diversity mission, explore racial, cultural, and generational barriers to communities, and provide practical strategies for effective multiculturalism in their interactions with students in or outside the classrooms. Annual mandatory trainings include Implicit and Unconscious Bias and Micro-aggression, Title IX Program, and Harassment. Other trainings have included Mental Health and Alcohol Abuse.

Title IX Training

Each year VLS is mandated by regulations promulgated by the Department of Education's Civil Rights Division to ensure that all employees and students have proper training in reporting and addressing sexual harassment and related forms of misconduct. To comply with this federal mandate, Vermont Law School provides a two-hour online training to all students, faculty, and staff via a training course called "Think About It." The training course addresses important information about sexual harassment and its various forms. It provides information about campus officials who have responsibilities in connection with Title IX and, in particular, incidents of sexual misconduct. The course focuses on the specific responsibilities faculty, staff, and students all have in maintaining a respectful campus environment.

Local attorney Jeff Nolan has held training sessions for staff and faculty on Title IX and the Clery Act. He has also reviewed all of the law school's policies and procedures, including the School's Sexual Misconduct, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking Policy.

SBA Code of Conduct Committee

Associate Dean Shirley Jefferson met with the SBA Code of Conduct Committee in 2019 to review and amend the Code of Conduct to include restorative justice principles.

Sexual Misconduct Review Panel

VLS legal counsel Karen McAndrew provided a mandatory training session for all members of the Sexual Misconduct Review Panel. The panel includes five staff, five faculty, and five students, who review cases where sexual misconduct is alleged. The panel members were briefed on current applicable guidance and approaches used in such cases, drafts of proposed regulations, procedures colleges and universities must consider in proposing and finalizing regulations, and how to effectively navigate the applicable Department of Education regulations.

Policy against Harassment, Sexual Assault, Discrimination, and Retaliation

The law school's website provides the policies on discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment, as well as a confidential incident reporting form. All policies can be found in the Student, Staff, and Faculty handbooks. The law school's annual Clery Act report is also available on the VLS website.

VITA Tax Clinic

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program at VLS prepares income tax returns for qualifying tax clients (income under \$54,000 in the previous year) for free. VLS students and residents from neighboring towns utilized the program and over 137 households were helped.

Clery Act Reporting

The Clery Act requires colleges and universities receiving federal financial aid to report crime on or near their respective campuses. As part of this requirement, Vermont Law School posts an annual Campus Security Report on its website and uploads crime data statistics to the Department of Education.

Ongoing training for faculty, staff, and students on changes to Title IX and the Clery Act regulations ensure that VLS's policies prohibiting harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, as well as the policies against sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking comply with state and federal requirements.

Activities and Progress - Goal 2

Goal #2: To increase the incorporation of topics of diversity into the curriculum and classroom.

Vermont Law School has made concerted efforts over the years to increase topics of diversity in both curriculum and practice. The School's Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, Center for Justice Reform, Environmental Advocacy Clinic, Environmental Justice Clinic, Institute for Energy and the Environment, and South Royalton Legal Clinic have developed specific curriculum and/or practices to tackle issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their programming. Likewise, the JD Externship Program has also incorporated efforts focused on providing all students with externship opportunities, as well as placing students at places where diversity issues are the prime focus. Programming details are described below.

Activity 1: Courses Focused on Diversity

Vermont Law School has divided course offerings into three categories based on the diversity content offered. The categories are defined as:

- **Courses with a Main Focus on Diversity:** These courses are listed in the course catalog with subject code "DIV." The entirety of each course is dedicated to addressing and challenging issues of diversity within the legal and criminal justice systems, with a strong focus on institutionalized racism and prejudice. These courses include discussions/materials that specifically address issues pertaining to Black/African-American and/or Native-American/Indigenous and/or LGBTQ+ and/or disability communities;
- **Courses with a Significant Focus on Diversity:** These courses address diversity and the challenges associated with diversity as it relates to the legal and criminal justice systems. They bring attention to the ways in which these systems were designed specifically to disadvantage under-represented groups, and they challenge students to explore ways in which these systems can be dismantled; and
- **Courses That Raise Diversity Awareness:** These courses bring general awareness of diversity issues within the criminal justice and legal systems.

The numbers below reflect the number of classes offered by category in 2020 compared to the number of classes by category in 2016. Please see [Appendix C](#) for Course Inventory.

- **Courses with Main Focus on Diversity:** increased from eight classes in 2016 to 12 classes in 2020;
- **Courses with Significant Focus on Diversity:** increased from 21 classes in 2016 to 23 classes in 2020; and
- **Courses Raising Diversity Issues:** decreased from 54 classes in 2016 to 52 classes in 2020.

Vermont Law School regularly conducts course surveys from students, evaluating how faculty managed diversity and sensitive topics within the classroom. Feedback from the surveys is provided to faculty to address any issues that arise based on student comments.

Activity 2: Diversity in Practice – Centers, Clinics, and Externships

Center for Agriculture and Food Systems and Food and Agriculture Clinic



The [Center for Agriculture and Food Systems \(CAFS\)](#) is directed by a first-generation Iranian American member of the faculty and has taken steps to apply a racial equity lens to its project selection and development. This includes: making the center’s work more relevant and useful for a more diverse audience; partnering with BIPOC-led organizations on projects; broadening its outreach contact list to include more BIPOC-led organizations; and applying historical context to all projects while digging deeper into narratives that are not traditionally taught in law

school. Below is a list of the work CAFS is currently doing to apply a racial equity lens, diversity, and inclusion to its work.

Projects

Currently, CAFS has ongoing projects that include focus on racial equity and diversity: Farmland Access Legal Toolkit, Healthy Food Policy Project, and Farmers Market Legal Toolkit.

1. **Farmland Access Legal Toolkit (FALT):** The goal of FALT is to provide a helpful resource for farmers to access land more affordably and creatively, and to transition their land to another farmer, as part of their estate planning or for other reasons. CAFS has added Spanish language translations to many of the resources on the site, and is determining what additional Spanish language materials would be useful and appropriate. In addition, CAFS has partnered with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund to develop an additional section for the website on heirs’ property as it has identified this as a need for Black farmers and their families;
2. **Farmers Market Legal Toolkit (FMLT):** FMLT is a partnership between CAFS, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), and Farmers Market Coalition. It was developed to support farmers markets throughout the U.S. with open-source legal tools to inform market managers as they make decisions to build and grow their markets. Currently, a student clinician is developing an ADA requirements resource for farmers markets. In the future, CAFS wants to develop resources around making farmers markets more accessible to farmers/vendors who may not have access to resources and insurance;
3. **Healthy Food Policy Project (HFPP):** HFPP identifies and elevates local laws that seek to promote access to healthy food, while also contributing to strong local economies, an improved environment, and health equity, with a focus on socially disadvantaged and marginalized

groups. HFPP is a multiyear collaboration between, the Public Health Law Center (PHLC), and the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at the University of Connecticut. A diverse advisory committee provides guidance on developing resources that are community-centered, and includes voices that have been historically excluded from policy development;

4. **Housing and Employment Rights for Vermont Dairy Workers:** CAFS's Food and Agriculture Clinic partnered with Migrant Justice to develop a Housing and Employment Rights handbook, available in both English and Spanish, tailored to workers on Vermont dairies. The Vermont-based Migrant Justice was formed in 2009 after a young worker from Mexico was killed on a dairy farm due to unsafe working conditions, and has since been advocating for better housing and employment conditions; and
5. **Farmworker Public Health Project:** The Farmworker Public Health Project is a joint initiative with the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins focused on the health risks and impacts associated with food and agricultural labor, specifically focusing on pesticide exposure and heat-related illness among farmworkers.

Curriculum

CAFS faculty has incorporated racial equity, diversity, and inclusion into the curriculum as it recognizes food and agriculture intersects with systemic and institutional blind spots on local, state, and national levels.

1. **Intro to Food and Agriculture Law and Policy:** This course focuses on a variety of food and agriculture topics from the Farm Bill, to organics, pesticides, and farmworkers. At the beginning of the semester, a historical context is given on land acquisition and distribution policies that moved land from indigenous control into mostly white ownership and, to a lesser extent, discusses slavery. Please see more information below.
 - a. Organics: The class talks about equity, based more on class than race, regarding having a two-tiered food system;
 - b. Food security and nutrition: The class discusses SNAP policies, disparate food access, paternalism, and how different policy tools to change consumer choices do or do not account for different lived realities (this is also more about class than race, but there are significant overlaps);
 - c. Pesticides and farmworkers: The class discusses race and immigration status as they relate to farmworkers and to power in the agricultural system; and
 - d. Farm Bill: In at least one class on the Farm Bill, the class discusses how a history of government policies dispossessed Black and other BIPOC farmers of land throughout the 1900s and how farm bill programs today direct almost all federal ag funds toward the overwhelmingly white landowners who remain.
2. **Food and Agriculture Clinic (FAC):** Students work with local, regional, national, and international partners, engaging in law and policy work that addresses food systems challenges related to the environment, public health, the economy, food security, and animal welfare. The legal tools and policy recommendations they develop have real-world implications for stakeholders across the food system, including farmers, food producers, entrepreneurs, distributors, consumers, legislators, and administrators. In the clinic, there is a seminar on racial equity in the food system and a seminar on bias in the legal profession, and the clinicians are asked to apply a racial equity lens to their project, if applicable, for the duration of the semester. They are

encouraged to speak to their clinic supervisor and project partners about applying this lens to their work;

3. **Food Regulation and Policy:** This course discusses how laws and policies related to issues such as nutrition, food access, food labeling, and marketing disparately impact BIPOC and under-resourced communities;
4. Additional classes that include racial equity, diversity, and inclusion:
 - a. **Global Food Security and Social Justice:** This course explores the legal landscape of global hunger: the definition of "food security"; food security risks; global food governance organizations and legal instruments; assessing and monitoring food security; food related human rights concerns; the current status of global food security; and international NGOs' strategies for policy advocacy against hunger; and
 - b. **Food Impact Litigation:** This course focuses on the impacts of CAFOs and industrial agriculture on the environment, communities, and food system workers.

Other Activities

CAFS's Racial Equity Working Group

CAFS fellows, staff, and faculty have been participating in weekly racial equity working group meetings, which started during the 2020 [Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#) hosted by Food Solutions New England in March 2020. The group, known as the Racial Equity Working Group, is open to all CAFS team members and meets every Friday. It is a safe and brave space for people to discuss racial equity within the food system, how to include racial equity into projects CAFS is producing, and other systems that impact BIPOC communities.

Embedded Racism in the Law Panels

In early September 2020, CAFS hosted a [panel discussion](#) about structural racism in agriculture. It was the most well-attended livestreamed event in VLS history, with 1,053 live viewers and an additional 500+ after the fact. Attendees heard from attorneys on the frontlines of the fight for land justice and learned more about heirs' property issues that contribute to Black land loss. In April 2021, CAFS will host a panel discussion on how farmworkers are exempted from labor protections and how these exemptions are rooted in discriminatory Jim Crow era policies, and how they have been perpetuated through systemic racism. The goal is to highlight the work of attorneys and organizations who serve and advocate on behalf of farmworkers, and discuss alternative approaches they have developed to ensure farmworkers' rights.

Equity Training

In August 2020, CAFS staff, faculty, and fellows (nine in total) participated in an equity training hosted by Equity Solutions Vermont. The training identified methods to incorporate race and class equity into how everyone interacts with one another and potential project partners and how to develop language around the work CAFS does.



VLS is the first law school in the country to offer a Master of Arts in Restorative Justice (MARJ) in addition to the JD degree. VLS also offers a nine-credit Professional Certificate in Restorative Justice designed to introduce restorative theories and practices to professionals in various fields. The MARJ degree is offered as a flexible online/on-campus program in 30 credits. The professional certificate is offered as a nine-credit, online/on-campus program.

[The Center for Justice Reform](#) is a statewide, regional, national, and international educational and training location for justice reform efforts including restorative justice. The Center was launched in late 2017 to address deficiencies in the criminal justice system and to create new responses to harm, conflict, and crime.

The program proved to be highly popular, so much so that in 2018 Vermont Law School successfully lobbied the New England Commission of Higher Education—its accrediting body—for an increase in maximum class size, from 30 to 60 students.

In 2019, the center awarded the first MARJ degrees to seven students. In 2020, 21 students graduated from the MARJ/Professional Certificate, and 107 students currently enrolled in either the MARJ, joint-degree MARJ, or professional certificate program.

Expungement Days

In 2018, the Center for Justice Reform held two days of expungement, inviting community members convicted of misdemeanor marijuana offenses to the VLS campus to assist them in removing the convictions from their record.

“Being restorative means to create and protect equity, to provide opportunity, and to build trust and relationships that can transform harm and conflict into healing and reparation. Expanding the reach of restorative justice principles and practice gives promise for mending and rebuilding divided communities.”

Stephanie Clark, Director

The Center for Justice Reform in collaboration with Vermont Legal Aid continues expungement work through the Vermont Expungement Project that is funded by a three-year Vermont Bar Foundation grant. Through this program, the CJR was able to hire a part-time research assistant who has coordinated and held trainings for VLS students to assist at Expungement Clinics held throughout the state. The project is scheduled to continue through FY 2021-2022.

Conferences

- **2020 “Race and the Law Symposium”:** (see Section 1 in this report for a full description);
- **2019 “Advancing Juvenile Justice Reform in Vermont”:** An Exploration of Vermont’s Pioneering Juvenile Jurisdiction Law,” a conference for judges, prosecutors, defenders, child protection workers, community advocates, policy makers and others. Just over 100 participants attended the day-long conference, which included several plenary sessions and group discussions; and

- **2018 “Global Unity and Healing: Building Communities with a Restorative Approach”**: Over 400 participants from around the world attended this three-day international restorative justice conference that featured over 40 workshops and breakout sessions that included restorative justice approaches for understanding and addressing inequities among diverse communities.

Research

The expungement project research assistant has conducted research on expungement laws nationally and provided comparative analyses of these laws and processes implementing these laws to help with policy discussions involving expungement in Vermont.

National Center on Restorative Justice

In April of 2020, the Center received a \$3M grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to establish a [National Center on Restorative Justice](#). The goal of the National Center is to improve criminal justice policy and practice in the United States through enhanced restorative justice training and education for undergraduate and graduate students as well as incarcerated people and those under court supervision, professional development, and rigorous research into the impact of broadened restorative justice education on justice systems. VLS works closely with its partners, University of Vermont, the University of San Diego, and BJA/OJP to incubate new ideas and create new approaches to restorative justice education and training. In February 2021, the center received [a second \\$3M grant](#). The funding will be used to: expand access to restorative justice education; provide targeted training to public safety officials, other professionals, and communities; convene and coordinate a national conversation to identify best practice guidelines for use by justice systems and communities; and, conduct research to evaluate the efficacy of restorative justice education and the infusion of restorative justice practices in a replicable manner across the criminal justice continuum.

Courses

Given the disparate impact of the criminal justice system on BIPOC community members, diversity and equity are necessarily a central topic of any restorative justice course as the restorative justice movement seeks to provide a way forward that prevents or meaningfully addresses the harm commonly experienced by the BIPOC community while engaging with justice processes. Therefore, all courses in the MARJ program involve discussion of and promote greater understanding of diversity topics.

In addition to this general focus, there are a few specific courses that take a deep dive into diversity issues. Among these are:

- Race Crimes and Restorative Justice
- Restorative Justice in Indigenous Communities
- Global Restorative Justice
- Adversity Trauma and Victimization

Environmental Advocacy Clinic

The Environmental Advocacy Clinic (EAC) is committed to advancing environmental justice and diversity and educating students on how to advocate on behalf of communities of color and low-income communities that are hit hardest by environmental pollution and climate change. One of the EAC’s four focus programs, its



Healthy Communities program, explicitly focuses on partnering with groups and communities disproportionately affected by pollution as well as advancing policies that make communities healthier and empower their voices.

This program, which was conceived in 2016, is led by Staff Attorney Rachel Stevens and run in partnership with Earthjustice, a national public interest law firm with a growing practice focused on environmental and social justice. It focuses on building community lawyering and providing needed legal representation for communities of color and economically disadvantaged communities. In this partnership, students represent clients from environmental justice communities in real-life cases brought in courts, state agencies, and other fora, in matters to advance legal actions and policies that ensure their voices are heard and their communities are protected. The EAC is building on this work in collaboration with the VLS Environmental Justice Clinic, creating synergy between these two clinics and providing opportunities for students to take advantage of seminars and guests focusing on diversity issues across clinics.

Curriculum

The EAC is building a new seminar curriculum that integrates interdisciplinary instruction along with foundational lawyering skills. In addition to learning the fundamentals of environmental and administrative legal advocacy such as legal writing and research, client management, depositions and discovery, motion practice, oral arguments, and agency advocacy, students will be hearing from communications experts, organizers, scientists, technical and policy experts, lobbyists, and others about how to build not only a strong legal case, but how to utilize and understand the full suite of tools needed to effectively advance a campaign. In particular, the EAC will have seminars on environmental justice and hear from front-line players in efforts such as the Flint water crisis. These classes will build awareness of environmental and social justice work and help connect students with opportunities to deepen their experience with advancing advocacy on behalf of disenfranchised communities.

Cases and Advocacy Work

At the EAC, students are working on matters to:

- Oppose large waste incinerators and natural gas plants that are polluting the air of an intercity community of color in Newark, New Jersey;
- Advocating before a state agency, and possibly a state legislature, to ensure that renewable energy credit standards are not abused to allow for harmful waste incinerators to keep polluting;
- Investigating several Clean Water Act citizen suits against scrap metal processing facilities that threaten the health of communities of color;
- Building a potential case challenging proposed permits for a new sludge processing plant impacting environmental justice communities;
- Advocating in courts and state legislatures for medical monitoring for dangerous “forever” chemicals that have poisoned the drinking supplies of many low-income communities;.
- Working to oppose permits for a major oil refinery proposed for a low-income community of color;
- Working on water pollution policy proposals with diverse groups, including environmental justice, to craft water quality policy solutions that account for inequities in the enforcement and implementation of clean water laws;
- Developing cases aimed at protecting low-income communities and communities of color from industrial agricultural pollution; and

- Advocating against toxic lead pollution that forced a 6th-generation family off their family farm.

Students visit clients and their communities, investigate sites, develop legal theories, file comments, draft notice letters of intent to sue, file cases in court, negotiate with state and federal agencies, and advocate before legislative bodies to advance more just outcomes for disadvantaged communities disproportionately impacted by pollution.

Work with National Wildlife Federation

The EAC also has a partnership with the National Wildlife Federation where it serves as legal counsel for NWF's many conservation programs. NWF has dramatically increased its commitment to diversity, hiring Mustafa Santiago Ali—a founding member of the Environmental Protection Agency's office of Environmental Justice—as its vice president of environmental justice, climate, and community revitalization to lead a program focused on advancing environmental justice. The EAC and EJC are exploring creating a fellowship position that would support NWF's vision by providing legal and policy analysis on environmental and climate legislation that impacts environmentally overburdened communities of color and low-income communities. Such analysis would be provided to environmental justice communities, and the environmental justice Fellow would convey not only the analysis but also feedback from environmental justice communities to NWF so that NWF's positions will be informed by this feedback.

The position would be consistent with principles of Environmental Justice and help NWF to support the work of partners in environmental justice communities and their efforts to have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their health and welfare. The position would:

- Investigate and remain up-to-date on environmental and climate-related legislation, with a particular focus on issues of environmental and climate justice;
- Analyze proposed bills and synthesize information in a digestible format to facilitate communications and policy stances among NWF and EJ communities;
- Evaluate and draft proposed legislation to support policy-making that elevates environmental and social justice in related bills;
- Engage environmental justice communities in an iterative way, to provide up-to-date information to environmental justice communities and to get feedback on legislative and policy proposals from community-based partners;
- Collaborate with the NWF advocacy team and the VLS's Environmental Justice Clinic to identify opportunities to advance environmental and social justice on water and climate-related campaigns;
- Create opportunities for environmental justice leaders and organizations to have a seat at the table as policies are shaped and moved forward, recognizing the principle that "Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation;"
- Develop and maintain a database on legislation and proposed policy changes;
- Periodically draft written content, including presentations, blogs and policy memos; and
- Create mechanisms for accountability to environmental justice community partners.

Environmental Justice Clinic

In 2017, Vermont Law School offered one class on environmental justice. Since then, students in that class formed the Environmental Justice Law Society (EJLS) and in the fall of 2019, VLS launched the [Environmental Justice Clinic](#) (EJC) with 13 EJC students. With spring, summer and fall 2020 enrollment, there are a total of 37 EJC students and 10 Advanced EJC students.

The EJC at VLS is one of just a few law school clinics in the United States specifically devoted to environmental justice, an interdisciplinary practice at the intersection of civil rights and the environment.

Students are involved in real-life cases. They work in partnership with low-income communities and communities of color to address racial disparities and ensure that residents can fully participate in decisions affecting their health and welfare. They gain experience working on law and policy issues at the nexus of environment, race, and policy, while also learning essential community lawyering skills.

Curriculum

Students participate in a seminar that focuses on community-based lawyering, discussing the theoretical, practical, and ethical dimensions of a lawyer's role in representing and working with disenfranchised communities. Topics include client interviewing and counseling; case theory; settlement negotiations; brief writing; oral argument (trial and appellate); direct/cross examination; depositions; discovery planning; regulatory, legislative, and media advocacy; and more.

Legislative Work and Administrative Advocacy

EJC students work on behalf of partners on administrative advocacy, petitions for rulemaking, and legislation. Most recently, provisions of the Environmental Justice for All Act and the Environmental Justice Act of 2019 were passed by the U.S. House of Representatives as part of the Clean Economy Jobs and Innovation Act.

- **Title VI Reform:** Working with an alliance of community-based groups and activists from across the country, students have been involved in efforts to compel the Environmental Protection Agency to strengthen and reform its civil rights enforcement program. Among other actions, students have filed quarterly Freedom of Information Act requests on behalf of three organizational clients to obtain and make public EPA's civil rights enforcement docket. This information has then been posted online in a repository of civil rights information;
- **Comments on Rulemaking:** In the spring of 2020, students drafted comments on the Council on Environmental Quality's proposal to modify NEPA regulations. The comments were signed by 26 organizations and a number of individual activists and raised claims that the proposal for rulemaking failed to comply with Executive Order 12,898. These comments created a record for subsequent litigation;
- **Comments on Rulemaking:** EJC students also filed comments on behalf of multiple community-based groups on the EPA's proposed rule, "Strengthening Transparency in Regulatory Science;"
- **Comments on Language Access Policies:** Students filed comments on behalf of community groups in North Carolina and Michigan in the fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020, respectively, regarding each state's proposed language access policies. In both cases, the impetus for the state's development of language access policies was a result of civil rights cases on the EJC's docket. Each state produced a formulaic plan and, working closely with community groups, the

EJC presented detailed comments. In Michigan, the clinic conducted outreach to ensure that stakeholder communities had information about the policies and offered a webinar to gather information from community members about the draft policies; and

- **Civil Rights Complaint:** Students worked on behalf of Friends of the Earth and other groups in Robeson County, North Carolina, to file a civil rights complaint under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to challenge the state Department of Environmental Quality's decision to permit the Atlantic Coast Pipeline because it had an unjustified racially discriminatory impact on Native Americans. The client groups had filed a complaint previously that was dismissed as not yet ripe, and the clinic filed a second complaint to preserve the rights of the group. The second complaint was dismissed as not ripe as well but it provided clarity on the timeliness of a claim and preserved the rights of the clients. Ultimately the Atlantic Coast Pipeline proposal was withdrawn by the applicant.

Cases

EJC matters are a mixture of litigation and projects. With approximately 10 cases per semester, some cases continue beyond one semester and others may be dormant for a semester or are completed. In the fall, 2020, there was a docket of 11 cases. Below are examples of several timely cases.

- **Living in the Shadow of Polluting Facilities:** Working on *Care v. EPA*, students are representing a group of community-based organizations around the country that successfully sued the Environmental Protection Agency for failing to investigate civil rights complaints in a timely way. Students have worked on successful litigation in the Northern District of California challenging EPA's unreasonable delay in investigating civil rights complaints. The case was brought on behalf of five communities that filed civil rights complaints with EPA more than a decade before the litigation was filed. Under law, EPA has 180 days to complete its investigations. The district court ruled in favor of plaintiffs on five claims, each asserting that EPA failed to comply with the regulatory deadlines. EPA continued to fight and filed a motion to alter the judgment, challenging the court's authority to issue prospective injunctive relief. In October 2020, the district court rejected EPA's request to remove prospective injunctive relief from its order;
- **A Landfill's Racially Discriminatory Impact:** A student team is working on behalf of the Ashurst Bar/Smith Community Organization in Tallassee, Alabama, where residents are struggling to protect their historic black neighborhood from the negative effects of a large landfill; and
- **An Environmental Justice Policy for Vermont:** Students are participating in the Rural Environmental Justice Opportunities Informed by Community Expertise (REJOICE) project, which conducts outreach to communities and stakeholders throughout Vermont in order to recommend environmental justice policy to the state. Students work on behalf of three community-based advocacy organizations to develop environmental justice policies appropriate for Vermont. Students are engaged in legal research, investigating best practices from across the country, and working with partners to conduct outreach across Vermont to engage community residents in a process to hear their input into environmental justice policies. REJOICE also brings policy recommendations directly to the state Department of Environmental Conservation and has engaged in a dialogue that has encouraged the state agency to develop environmental justice policies.

Multiple Strategies

In addition to litigation, administrative advocacy, and legislative work, the EJC works with clients and partners on a range of other strategies to assert and highlight environmental justice issues. In the summer of 2020, student teams interviewed champions of environmental justice about the connection between their work and Black Lives Matter, and published a series of blogs called EJ Clinic Conversations on the Vermont Law School website. See <https://www.vermontlaw.edu/blog/environmental-justice/kerene-tayloe>.



Outcomes and Impact

The environmental justice movement is community driven, and the EJC aims to provide legal and technical assistance to community-based organizations seeking to assert their own vision for their communities. The theory of change focuses on the power of communities to compel change. In this context, students are part of a legal practice that has built strong relationships with clients and partners across the country and gain experience drafting legislation, developing and pursuing legislation, and working on administrative advocacy. Goals include strengthening civil rights enforcement in the environmental context and fully implementing the environmental justice executive order. In turn, these reforms are intended to address inequalities in the distribution of exposure to health hazards and, on the other hand, inequalities in access to environmental goods such as clean air and clean water. They also are intended to lead to more open access to decision-making. Concrete impacts include the following:

- The EJC's representation has provided opportunities for environmentally overburdened communities to have a greater say at local, state and federal levels in decisions affecting their future. The clinic provides representation to low-income communities of color that are fighting sources of pollution in legally underserved areas such as the Ashurst Bar/Smith and Uniontown, Alabama, communities. Its work on rulemaking has given voice to communities that otherwise would not have had a say, while spurring compliance with Executive Order 12898; and
- Litigation in *CARE v. EPA* has also led to development and implementation of statewide language access policies in Michigan and other states.

Institute for Energy and the Environment and Energy Clinic

A central focus of Vermont Law School's [Institute for Energy and the Environment](#) (IEE) is academic training and research on a just energy transition to prepare its students for future clean energy career opportunities, collaborate with a growing alumni network, and to have a positive impact on people and the planet as it helps facilitate this transition. The IEE works to achieve its goals through classroom teaching, experiential opportunities, and networking across the globe with scholars and practitioners.

Curriculum

IEE faculty have included important discussions of diversity and equity into their course work such as [Global Sustainability Field Studies](#), Environmental Economics and Markets, and the Energy Clinic and Advanced Energy Clinic. Global Sustainability Field Studies currently explores energy and agricultural sustainability on the unique island nation of Cuba. Through a collaboration with academics and practitioners in Cuba, IEE has invited its Cuban collaborators to visit VLS. In Environmental Economics and Markets faculty take the opportunity to educate students on how neoclassical economics does not properly account for distributional impacts or equity and the class explores the important concerns the current economic system presents for environmental justice issues. A primary focus of the work in the VLS Energy Clinic and Advanced Energy Clinic is climate justice, and energy clinicians work to bring the benefits of clean energy to low income and underserved communities.



Research Projects

The IEE research team has authored important studies that address equity and justice in the clean energy transition, including the following books and reports: "[Energy Costs and Burdens in Vermont: Burdensome for Whom?](#)" "Global Energy Justice: Problems, Principles and Practices," "[Low Income Solar in Vermont: Overcoming Barriers to Equitable Access](#)," "[Energy Justice and Climate Refugees](#)," "[Powering Energy Efficiency and Impacts: A Data Driven Project Supporting Low Income Households in Northeastern North Carolina](#)," and, "[The Political Economy of Pandemic Policy: COVID-19 and Climate Change](#)." Currently both the research associate program and the energy clinic are addressing equity and justice issues through ongoing projects including:

- **Equitable Transportation Policy and Accountability Research:** This project helps equip environmental justice and equity groups with communications and advocacy resources to counter the oil industry efforts to influence policy in their communities, states, and regions. Environmental justice groups working across the country have recently warned of deceptive marketing and PR efforts that counter clean transportation policy. These groups have requested workshops and a toolkit to help combat these false narratives to defend clean transportation policy for the communities that stand to benefit the most from cleaner air. The project team is designing educational and training workshops, and will produce a “toolkit” for communities to fight disinformation and promote clean transportation; and
- **Climate Justice Projects:** The energy clinic has multiple projects working to more equitably distribute the benefits of clean energy. For multiple semesters it has been working with the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund to assist residents at cooperatively owned mobile home parks develop community solar projects that both reduce residents’ energy costs carbon footprints. The clinic currently has multiple projects under development and in addition to providing pro bono services to the residents, the clinic has helped access over \$368,000 in state grants to reduce solar ownership costs. In Vermont, the energy clinic is working with the Randolph Area Community Development Corporation to assist in the development of approximately twenty units of affordable net zero housing adjacent to the community’s downtown.

Summer Energy Scholars and Fellows

IEE regularly brings scholars and fellows to the Vermont Law School campus to add to the diversity and experience of its faculty and students. Over the last six years, half of the energy scholars who have been invited to VLS have been women of color. In addition, IEE regularly uses its ability to provide funding support to student fellows to increase the diversity of the student population. This year’s Global Energy LLM Fellow will visit VLS for two years from Cuba.

JD Externship Program

The JD Externship Program focuses on diversity in primarily two ways. The first is making certain all students, including those who identify as members of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities, have access to the program and feel welcome and supported. The second is to ensure all students participating in the program are provided with opportunities to learn about and reflect upon how issues of diversity affect lawyers and the legal profession. To accomplish these goals, VLS has undertaken a number of steps, including:

- Ensuring program faculty holds individualized conversations with students about the diversity of various placement settings and mentors, and accommodate students’ preferences when possible;
- Recognizing and articulating the limited opportunities in Vermont to work with BIPOC-led and -staffed entities; providing opportunities to extern out of state;
- Offering opportunities to extern at places where diversity issues are a primary focus of the organization’s work. Recent placements have included:
 - ACLU of Vermont
 - Vermont Human Rights Commission

- OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon
 - U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Memphis District Office)
 - Tahirih Justice Center (VA)
 - Vermont Attorney General Civil Rights Unit
 - U.S. Agency for International Development
 - American Humanist Association (DC)
 - Immigrant Justice Project (NY)
 - The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights (DC)
 - Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) (MA)
 - Legal service and public defender organizations across the country
- Modifying the JD externship application procedure to collect data on student diversity with a goal of analyzing data to ensure that the diversity of the students participating in the JD Externship Program is reflective of the diversity of students attending VLS;
 - Training three professors on the development of community agreements as a way to facilitate open, honest, and deep conversations in the classroom on issues of race and other forms of diversity;
 - Adjusting curriculum to include more direct discussion of diversity issues. The program recognizes this work is only beginning and plans to address it in more depth as it undertakes a course reorganization during the 20-21 academic year;
 - Service by one professors and the program coordinator on the VLS Diversity Committee;
 - Training all of all full time departmental employees in diversity, equity, and inclusion by the close of the 2020-2021 school year; and
 - Committing to hiring more diverse candidates by broadening searches and by researching and implementing hiring techniques that attract more diverse candidates.

South Royalton Legal Clinic

The South Royalton Legal Clinic (SRLC) is a civil practice clinic that serves Vermont residents who are unable to afford counsel and who need help with issues such as family law, children’s rights, domestic violence, veterans law, bankruptcy, consumer matters, housing, and immigration. Students step into the role of counsel for the clinic clients, and the work they do makes the SRLC a leading provider of pro bono service in the state. The clinic is offered in the spring, summer, and fall. SRLC is comprised of three programs:

Projects and Cases

- **The Family Law Project:** Serving a diverse clientele, the Family Law Project provides pro bono legal consultation and representation to Vermonters from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, racial identities, gender identities, sexual orientation, age, and abilities. It provides legal services to individuals who cannot afford to hire private counsel, thereby expanding access to justice. It understands the ways in which marginalized individuals are particularly vulnerable and take an intersectional approach to legal advocacy. The project consider the ways in which systemic racism impacts its clients of color. It advocates for minors under a ChildrenFirst grant, and provides targeted legal support for Vermont’s LGBTQ+ community, helping these Vermonters take advantage of the state’s strong laws to secure legal rights to their children;

- **Veterans Legal Assistance Project (VLAP):** VLAP provides pro bono legal assistance to Vermont's veteran population. The project assists veterans with state civil law issues in Windsor and Orange counties, including landlord/tenant matters, consumer protection claims, consumer bankruptcy matters, real estate matters, and simple estate planning, as well as on a statewide basis in matters concerning veterans law-specific issues, such as VA benefits appeals and discharge upgrades. VLAP is an excellent choice for students looking for exposure to a variety of different practice areas as well as frequent client interactions; and
- **Vermont Immigrant Assistance (VIA):** VIA provides pro bono legal support and representation to immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers throughout Vermont. The project provides assistance with humanitarian issues such as VAWA Petitions and I-751 waivers (domestic violence); U-Visa applications (victims of crime); asylum cases; Special Immigrant Juvenile cases; and removal defense cases for people fighting deportation in immigration court. To date, VIA has represented individuals from 71 different countries around the globe.

Curriculum

The SRLC incorporates diversity throughout its curriculum by focusing on teaching the practice-based skills required to effectively represent vulnerable and traditionally marginalized clients, and by helping students understand the myriad ways laws contribute to the historic and continued oppression of certain groups.

For example, clients of limited means may not have access to adequate transportation, or the technology needed to access legal support, court processes, or to fulfil their obligations under a court order. The clinic's child clients, or clients with disabilities, may have trouble understanding procedure. Clients of color are often subjected to implicit bias, explicit bias, and may struggle under the effects of systemic racism. Clients with Limited English Proficiency often struggle to understand and navigate the legal system. LGBTQ+ clients may be unaware of the ways in which Vermont has modernized its laws to protect this segment of the community. Conversely, LGBTQ+ clients may have an unrealistic sense of security. SRLC curriculum helps students consider these issues and apply what they learn about the law and litigation to help diverse clients in diverse situations.

SRLC's seminar curriculum is also inclusive. It strives to ensure adequate representation of diverse individuals, family structures, and different socioeconomic and cultural perspectives in its presentations and hypotheticals. The clinic has added classes to specifically address trauma informed advocacy and cross-cultural lawyering to help increase students' skills in working with clients from diverse backgrounds. Students are taught about client-centered lawyering; Access to Justice; and dynamics of privilege, power, and membership. Students are encouraged to look at clients holistically, taking into consideration their identity and background when communicating and formulating a case plan.

Faculty Practices

Clinic faculty strive to create a warm and welcoming environment to all students and clients. They routinely evaluate their choices of language and consider the ways in which privilege and oppression impact a law student's or client's experience. It seeks out seminars, conferences, and continuing legal education that centers diversity so that it can support students and clients using the most current, well-researched approaches.

Policy Work and Administrative Advocacy

In addition to casework, clinic faculty and students also engage in policy work that aims to make laws and policies more inclusive and to help increase access to justice for all Vermonters.

- **State Court Jurisdiction to Issue Special Findings for Vulnerable Immigrant Youth:** In 2019-2020, students successfully drafted and testified on behalf of a bill that helps vulnerable non-citizen children access the state courts for the “special findings” they need to regularize their immigration status as Special Immigrant Juveniles;
- **Language Access:** Clinic faculty and students are collaborating with partners to address widespread language access barriers impacting individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in Vermont. This has included language barriers to accessing COVID-19 information and medical care, expanded unemployment compensation, and subsidized housing—which implicate national origin discrimination protections under the Civil Rights Act Title VI, the federal Fair Housing Act, and the Vermont Fair Housing and Public Accommodations Act.

In collaboration with Environmental Justice Clinic faculty and students, SRLC consulted broadly to identify patterns of language access barriers, and researched and produced a language access rights and remedies practice advisory for Vermont legal services providers. In 2021, Clinic faculty and students will launch the practice advisory by leading a Racial Justice “Teach-In” Ethics CLE for Vermont Legal Aid and Legal Services Vermont staff, with upwards of 30 advocates expected to attend. Clinic faculty and students will also produce and lead a VLS Race in the Law Series virtual panel on language access that features panelists from other VLS clinics, civil enforcement experts, and LEP communities. The hope is to use this platform to galvanize the building momentum to improve language access across Vermont’s human and health services.

- **Vermont COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Equity Fund:** Clinic faculty and students are providing legal information and advice on the design and delivery of Vermont’s Economic Stimulus Equity (ESE) Program—one of the first state-funded COVID stimulus relief programs for anyone excluded from CARES Act stimulus relief for reasons relating to immigration status. Clinic faculty joined and helped expand a coalition of organizations that are led by, represent, or serve Vermont’s immigrant communities. Ongoing during program development and roll out, Clinic faculty offered ongoing issue spotting and advice. They helped resolve program eligibility questions arising under federal immigration and tax law, and advised on the immigration and benefits consequences of program participation. In advance of the ESE program’s closure on March 1, 2021, clinic faculty and students offered approximately a dozen legal consultations to ESE program registrants with the most complex eligibility and immigration safety questions. Because of these efforts, clinic faculty and students helped to ensure that this unprecedented COVID-19 relief program reached the individuals and families who need it most;
- **Health Insurance for Undocumented Children and Pregnant Women:** Clinic faculty are currently working with Vermont Legal Aid and other health advocates on a legislative effort to allow undocumented children and pregnant women to access health insurance. Undocumented children and pregnant women are currently ineligible for both Medicaid and qualified health plans on the marketplace. The bill would provide Dr. Dynasaur coverage to income-eligible children and pregnant Vermonters regardless of immigration status;

- **Access to Justice and Legal Advocacy with the State of Vermont:** Clinic faculty sit on two statewide Access to Justice committees: the Vermont Judiciary’s Access to Justice committee and the Vermont Bar Association’s COVID-19 committee. Both aim to increase and ensure fair, meaningful, and equal access to courts and the justice system. Clinic faculty also sit on the statewide Domestic Violence Council which aims to eliminate domestic violence by facilitating coordination of services, information and education. It provides safety for victims and support of survivors, promotes effective prevention, intervention and treatment techniques, fosters community responsibility, studies the needs of state programs and policies, reviews other state methods and recommends models for Vermont, and evaluates current laws and to identify and recommend change for systematic obstacles; and
- **Administrative Advocacy with Federal Agencies:** Clinic faculty participate in national organizations engaged in advocacy efforts for its constituent populations affected by federal rules and policies, primarily veterans and immigrants. Clinic faculty and students draft comments to proposed agency rules changes, such as when recently, the VA proposed a rule change to its character of discharge process, and when the DHS proposed a series of rules that would greatly weaken asylum protections under current laws.

Community Outreach and Education

Clinic faculty and students also provide community-based trainings and legal assistance to diverse clients and stakeholders. Recent examples include multiple statewide information sessions regarding the Trump Administration’s travel bans and immigration restrictions; training sessions for lawyers and lay advocates on immigration and asylum law topics; outreach and legal consultation sessions for non-citizens to help them access Vermont’s COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Equity Funds; outreach to veteran service organizations to educate advocates on various alternatives available to veterans facing foreclosure; and regular participation in legal information sessions for pro se litigants in Vermont Family Courts.

[U.S.-Asia Partnerships for Environmental Law](#)

Founded in 2006, the US Asia Partnerships for Environmental Law at Vermont Law School (PEL) has the mission to strengthen environmental governance and rule of law in Asia. PEL develops and delivers capacity-building programs for environmental advocates in Asia. It has helped to design and create advocacy centers and environmental law clinics in Asia to ensure that critical legal services reach pollution victims while increasing the capacity of Asian institutions to train their next generation of advocates. PEL has worked in the countries of China, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

Projects

In China, PEL helped create the first environmental public interest law firm in Beijing, which provides legal services to pollution victims—especially those in rural areas—who do not have financial resources and often bear the brunt of environmental impacts of development projects that are fueling the economy. PEL also helped to establish the Environmental and Worker Health and Safety Advocacy Center at Sun Yat-sen University Law School in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, which assists migrant workers in addressing environmental, health, and safety problems in the workplace.

Currently, PEL has a project focusing on less developed urban and rural communities in northwestern and southwestern China. Due to increasingly strict environmental enforcement on pollution-intensive

industries on the east coast of China, many heavy polluters are relocating to less developed and remote areas inland. This pollution transfer is having a disparate impact on communities in these areas, in particular ethnic minority communities. They face incredible pressures from natural resources extraction and ecological destruction in their communities. The project PEL has developed will convene outreach activities to raise environmental rights awareness of ethnic minority communities. VLS recognizes that local indigenous communities play an important role in natural resources stewardship. Yet, their protocols—documents developed by local communities to record information on their practices, institutions, customary law, rights and visions of development—have not been recognized in China as legal tools to uphold ethnic minority communities’ rights. The outreach activities aim to empower ethnic minority communities to engage in advocacy and exert their rights over their land and resources against ecological destruction.

As part of these awareness-raising activities, PEL will assist ethnic communities in formalizing their community protocols on natural resources stewardship practices and share them with local and provincial government officials, conservation activists, and academics in experience sharing meetings to facilitate dialogues on the positive impacts these practices have on biodiversity conservation and sustainability. Through these experience sharing dialogues, VLS aims to increase mutual understanding among participants and to foster community confidence in sharing their practices, and in engaging with government officials and potential collaborators.

PEL launched the Myanmar Environmental Governance Program in January 2013 to provide capacity building and research and policy development support to government officials and NGOs. Since launching the program, it has hosted a number of successful trainings with government officials as well as NGOs on the requirements of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) system. PEL assisted the government in developing a set of Guidelines for Public Participation in the EIA process related to development projects and hosting a series of public input sessions on the draft Guidelines. The draft guidelines address diversity, equity and inclusion issues in Myanmar. Myanmar is an extremely diverse country with 135 officially recognized distinct ethnic groups with hundreds of different languages spoken. The guidelines were sensitive to this diversity and the fact that many people’s primary language is not the official language of the country. The draft guidelines try to address access to information and the ability of a community to participate meaningfully in the assessment process.

Currently, PEL is implementing a capacity-building project aimed to educate community leaders, particularly those in ethnic minority communities, on the EIA process in Myanmar and how they can participate in the EIA process. PEL is also developing an advocacy toolkit to assist NGO and community leaders in this process. The toolkit has a strong focus on the impacts of development projects on women and members of marginalized groups and the challenges faced by these groups, both in participating in EIAs and as a result of the way that they can be uniquely affected by environmental impacts.

Curriculum

PEL developed a new course, Transnational Environmental Law Practicum Course, which the Curriculum Committee approved in December 2020 and which PEL hopes to offer starting in the fall 2021. The course combines substantive classroom instruction with project implementation where students are teamed up to work on an environmental-related legal or policy research project for a partner organization in China, or one of developing countries in the Mekong Region—Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam or Laos. The projects, which are drawn from PEL’s work, support PEL’s partnering organizations’ environmental advocacy and legal reform work on the ground. They provide students with an opportunity to learn about specific environmental challenges and the gaps in the laws and policies in

these countries and to apply theories and concepts learned in the classroom. Through these projects, students will explore environmental justice issues and questions of diversity, equity and inclusion in China and the Southeast Asian countries.

PEL offered the course, Environmental Governance in the Developing World, during the summer session in 2017, 2018, and 2019. This course introduces students to the unique challenges regarding the development, implementation, and enforcement of strong environmental governance systems in the developing world. Developing countries represent some of the fastest growing economies in the world today, and they are also home to the large majority of the world's human populations. The "perfect storm" of incredibly rapid economic development in countries with generally weak environmental governance systems creates enormous risks for the future of the environment and natural resources upon which these populations depend. This course instills in students an appreciation for these risks and challenges and will encourage them to think analytically and creatively to propose solutions going forward. The course exposes the students to some of the environmental and social impacts that many ethnic minority communities and marginalized communities face in their countries' desire for rapid economic growth. This course also offers students a two-week field study in Southeast Asia, where they meet with local NGOs and legal advocates to learn about their work with rural and ethnic minority communities to address land-grab issues and other development-related environmental and social impacts.

Activities and Progress - Goal 3

Goal #3: To increase the number of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities in the student body.

For many years Vermont Law School has made it a priority to increase the diversity of the student body. Spearheaded by Dean Shirley Jefferson, these efforts have included recruiting, collaboration with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), partnerships, and leadership among external constituents. The results of these efforts have had a significant and successful impact on the VLS study body. Dean Jefferson's and the Office of Student Affairs' continued advocacy and support of all student groups, from BLSA to Alliance to NALSA, have helped increase the numbers of diverse students and made the VLS experience all the more rich for the entire VLS community.

Activity 1: CLEO Program

Vermont Law School is one of four law schools that collaborates with the Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) on a pilot program, the CLEO Legal Inspired Cohort (CLIC), to enhance diversity in legal education by increasing opportunity for underrepresented people of color, low-income individuals, and other historically disadvantaged students. VLS has collaborated with CLEO for 20 years and has been a CLIC partner for five. Through CLIC, VLS has enrolled 21 students who have completed CLEO's Pre-Law Summer Institute. These students received support through scholarships, faculty mentors, clinical training opportunities, and additional academic and support services to ensure success at law school.

Activity 2: HBCU Partnerships

VLS has several partnerships with HBCUs in an effort to expand racial and ethnic diversity in the legal profession. Current partners are Spelman College (GA), Morehouse College (GA), Central State University (OH), and Cheyney University (PA).

Activity 3: Student Ambassadors (see also Goal 4, Activity 11)

VLS has made a concerted effort to increase diversity among the Student Ambassadors to help make incoming students of diverse backgrounds feel comfortable on campus and in the local community. Student Ambassadors have been instrumental in helping new students, particularly international students, in becoming acclimated to the area and feeling welcome.

Activity 4: Students of Color Recruitment Efforts (see also Goal 4, Activity 12)

Current students of color assist the Admissions Office in the law school's recruitment efforts in a variety of ways. These students reach out to admitted students of color, answer questions they may have, encourage them to visit the campus, give them tours while they are on campus, invite them for lunch, and host them in their homes when they are visiting. VLS's students of color are particularly instrumental in the transition of admitted students to life at the school and in the local community, given the absence of a substantial population of color locally and throughout the state.

Activity 5: External Leadership

VLS has not only made efforts internally to promote diversity, but it has extended its reach beyond Vermont both to recruit new students and assume a leadership position among other educational institutions. Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Diversity Shirley Jefferson JD'86 regularly visits and speaks at various institutions and programs across the country on a range of diversity topics. These institutions have included the University of Alabama, Syracuse University, Auburn University, Keene State, and Tugaloo College, among others.

VLS has been a regular attendee at numerous other summits on diversity, including the annual HBCU Pre-Law Summit, the National Hispanic Pre-Law Conference, the Annual National Black Pre-Law Conference, and the National Black and Hispanic Pre-Law Conference. Dean Jefferson participates in recruitment fairs and events at the Atlanta University Center Consortium, Tuskegee University, Savannah State, and Spelman College, which has resulted in an increased number of Africa-American applicants and the presence of graduates from several of these institutions in recent entering classes. VLS representatives have participated in diversity roundtables on a regular basis and provided invaluable support to other schools struggling with diversity issues. In 2019, VLS participated in a workshop on minority and diversity issues at the LSAC annual conference in Arizona.

In the fall of 2019, Vermont Law School was awarded the Outstanding Law School Diversity Outreach Award from the National Black Pre-Law Conference for sustaining the commitment to reaching out to black prospective applicants. And in recognition of her commitment to diversity, Dean Jefferson received the Legal Education Access and Diversity Champion Award for her "outstanding commitment and service in helping aspiring black lawyers better understand what it takes to be successful applicants, law students, and lawyers." VLS is the only school to have ever received two awards at this conference.

Additionally, Dean Jefferson has spoken to local elementary and high school students in South Royalton, Sharon, Tunbridge, Norwich, Thetford, and other nearby communities.

Activity 6: Campus Accessibility (See also Goal 4, Activity 13)

Several years ago, the SBA initiated and completed a campus accessibility survey to determine what upgrades were required around campus to allow better access for disabled students. The survey identified and made recommendations regarding numerous areas of concern, including issues

with accessibility to the Chase Computer Lab, the Jacobs House building, the Cafe and other areas on campus. As a result of these efforts, many deficiencies were addressed and access improved.

Activities and Progress - Goal 4

Goal #4: To increase the ability of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities to succeed in law school, to feel welcome, respected, and supported in the community.

Vermont Law School provides a number of programs designed to support all students, regardless of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, culture, age, religion, physical disability, or political views. These programs together are designed to help students improve academic skills, gain confidence, feel safe and secure, and maintain good health and well-being throughout their VLS experience. Many of these activities are particularly relevant to, or resonate with, students of color.

Academic Program

Activity 1: Jump Start Program

The Jump Start Program is designed for students who have been identified or self-identified as needing an extra introduction to the rigors of law school. These students receive: instruction from faculty members, led by the Academic Success Program (ASP), on the U.S. Court System and federalism, the origins of law, how to read and brief a case; introductory materials about legal research and writing; and the opportunity to participate in mock trial procedure and tort law classes. Jump Start has been in operation since 2008 and has featured robust participation numbers in recent years: 67 participants in 2017, 75 in 2018, 65 in 2019, and 55 in 2020. Ethnically diverse students participating in the program in recent years has number 20 or more students. Both JD and MARJ degree students participate in the Jump Start Program.

Activity 2: Academic Success Program

The Academic Success Program empowers students to become more effective learners and ultimately accomplished professionals. This program is individualized and available to every student throughout the course of his or her degree program. ASP offers skills-building workshops, one-on-one consultations, mentoring sessions with upper-level students, information sessions focusing on different types of exams, boot camp sessions, mock exam sessions, and more. ASP provides resources including access to the ASP TWEN site—which contains an exam bank, bar preparation materials, CALI lessons, and program updates—and the Pathway to Bar Passage program, which helps students manage their stress and increase their productivity during bar exam preparation.

Activity 3: Academic Success Program Peer Mentor Program

Successful second- and third-year students are hired and trained by the Academic Success Program office to meet with first-year JD, LLM, and master's degree students. ASP Peer Mentors offer advice on study skills and similar issues required to succeed in the study of law and policy. Since 2015, some mentors also serve as teaching assistants in first-year courses to provide substantive tutoring.

Activity 4: Foundations of Analysis

This class was designed for students who demonstrate the passion, determination and drive to succeed, but who have lower academic credentials. The class is offered to 1Ls during the first

semester of law school. This course assists students with creating calendars, briefing cases, exam taking tips, outlining, and other fundamental skills necessary to succeed in law school.

Activity 5: Faculty Mentors

The Faculty Mentoring Program provides students with moral and academic support and guidance from the beginning of their law school career. Mentors are mandatory if a student is on academic probation, but our experience also suggests that a reduced course load and faculty mentoring are two important components that contribute to overall student success. Students are required to meet with their assigned mentor at least every two weeks. Regular topics and guidance include forming study groups, utilizing course supplements and study aids, examining extra-curricular activities, and time-management, among others.

Bar Preparation

Activity 6: Legal Methods and Bar Exam Skills Tactics

These two specialized courses are intended to improve academic performance and bar passage. Legal Methods is a skills course required for all first-year JD students who are placed on academic probation after the fall semester and focuses primarily on studying, writing, outlining, and exam taking skills. The Bar Exam Skills and Tactics course is offered both residentially and online to upper-level students in the spring and fall semesters, before they take the bar exam. This course focuses on writing and structuring bar essays and reviews some of the substantive areas that are typically tested on the bar exam.

Activity 7: Preliminary Bar Exam

This is a relatively new effort aimed at exposing first-year students to the bar exam experience. The results indicate what skills and knowledge students may be lacking to succeed on the bar exam. VLS is hopeful that this program will identify weaknesses and help students plan their studies more effectively to enhance bar passage.

Activity 8: Bar Information Sessions

These sessions are presented to third-year students in the fall and spring semesters. These sessions provide an overview of the structure of the bar exam, subjects tested on the bar, the commitment required to prepare for the bar, and the bar exam application process.

Activity 9: February Early Bar Course

In partnership with Kaplan Bar Preparation, VLS developed and implemented the February Early Bar Course (FEB) in 2020. In this class, 3L students take a bar preparation course for credit and sit for the Vermont February Early Bar during their sixth semester. Students use Kaplan's platform, but participate in live courses with VLS professors to review subject matter and practice questions several times a week.

Students earn six credits for this course, which is covered by their tuition. Since they earn credits, students receive support for living expenses, which prevents the need for them to work during bar study. This class also offers structure and accountability because it is graded and taught live by VLS professors. Students are also required to sign a contract certifying that they are not involved with other work or activities that would detract from bar study.

Activity 10: July Education for the Bar

Building on FEB and beginning in July 2020, VLS piloted a small bar class during the summer to help prepare students for the July bar. There is no charge and this class is not for credit. Unlike traditional bar study courses, this class offers a live component taught by professors. It is meant to add structure and accountability to student study. Eligibility includes registration for the UBE and a signed contract. Students are asked to commit to bar preparation for ten weeks, forgoing work, travel, and other class or academic obligations. A small, need-based, stipend for living expenses may be available. Maximum enrollment is 10 students. This pilot program was also offered to students who took the February 2021 bar exam.

Social Orientation

Activity 11: Student Ambassadors

VLS has made a concerted effort to increase diversity among the Student Ambassadors to help make incoming students of diverse backgrounds feel comfortable on campus and in the local community. Student Ambassadors have been instrumental in helping new students, particularly international students, in becoming acclimated to the area and feeling welcome.

Activity 12: Students of Color Recruitment Efforts

Current students of color assist the Admissions Office in the law school's recruitment efforts in a variety of ways. These students reach out to admitted students of color, answer questions they may have, encourage them to visit the campus, give them tours while they are on campus, invite them for lunch, and host them in their homes when they are visiting. VLS's students of color are particularly instrumental in the transition of admitted students to life at the school and in the local community, given the absence of a substantial population of color locally and throughout the state.

Activity 13: Campus Accessibility

Several years ago, the SBA initiated and completed a campus accessibility survey to determine what upgrades were required around campus to allow better access for disabled students. The survey identified and made recommendations regarding numerous areas of concern, including issues with accessibility to the Chase Computer Lab, the Jacobs House building, the Cafe and other areas on campus.

VLS has installed card access and button-activated doors, and over the last four to five years has been adding electronic locks to powered doors, starting with the most utilized entryways to buildings. Chase doors have button-activated power door openers, with handicap access from the Chase/Debevoise connectors and the Library. The café has button-activated power doors and electronic locks on the outside doors to the rear of the building and an elevator from the Chase Hallway. Most buildings have an access ramp, but not all are up to ADA specifications. As more funding is available, VLS will continue to improve access to buildings.

Moot Court Competitions

Vermont Law School encourages students to participate in a variety of moot courts during the academic year. Among them are several competitions focused on diversity and civil liberties, often on themes of relevance for VLS students.

Activity 14: Thurgood Marshall Moot Court Competition

In March 2019, VLS sent four students to the Thurgood Marshall Moot Court Competition, previously known as the Frederick Douglass Moot Court Competition. This competition, run by the National BLSA, provides an additional appellate advocacy opportunity for diverse students who may not have scored high enough to participate in the Advanced Appellate Advocacy. Further, cases argued during this moot court competition raise issues that are relevant to students of color, thus providing an experience to engage competitively in a case of interest.

Activity 15: Emory Civil Rights and Liberties Moot Court Competition

VLS has sent students to the Emory Law School Civil Rights and Liberties Moot Court Competition every year for the last 10 years. This competition helps students develop oral advocacy and brief writing skills while focusing on civil rights cases. After months of preparation, last October three students competed in the 14th Annual Moot Court Competition—virtually. (See below.)



Activity 16: Native American Law Students Association

In February 2020, VLS sent two teams to the NALSA Moot Court Competition at UC Berkeley. The briefed case topic was about the tribal regulatory authority under the Clear Clean Water Act. This competition allowed students who are interested in Native American Legal Advocacy to network with other students, various tribal judges, and attorneys from around the country.

Mental Health Program

The Mental Health Program has developed over the last several years in response to a growing recognition of the need for mental health services for students. The program has increased the understanding among students, faculty, and staff of the complexities of depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and mental illness, and provided the VLS community with a number of mental health resources.

Activity 17: Mental Health Committee

The SBA worked with the Mental Health Program Manager to create a student-run Mental Health Committee. The Mental Health Committee's goal is to increase the mental health dialogue around campus.

- **Swan Support:** The committee offers weekly "Swan Support" in the evening, for students to gather and speak about challenges and ask for help, panel sessions with the legal community, activities for positive thinking, and information sessions;
- **Panel Sessions:** One of the panel sessions this year included Dr. Sonya Shropshire, a woman of color. Her session was well attended;
- **Food Shelf:** With the onset of COVID-19 this year, the committee created a food shelf on campus for those students who need extra help with food; and
- **Clara Martin Support Center:** Vermont Law School works with the Clara Martin Support Center, which handles all mental health issues and makes their resources available to the VLS and the general community.

Activity 18: First Aid for Mental Health Crisis Training

This two-day training for students and "front-line" staff includes procedures for helping people with suicidal thoughts, depression, crisis, panic attacks, self-injury, alcohol abuse, and aggressive behaviors. The training was taught by VLS's mental health program manager.

Activity 19: Mental Health Surveys

The Mental Health Committee creates and distributes surveys on a regular basis to students so they can provide comment on various mental health issues, including depression, substance abuse, and more. Unique situations, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, prompt distribution of surveys and questionnaires as well.

Activities and Progress - Goal 5

Goal #5: To increase the number of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people in the faculty, administration, staff, and board.

Vermont Law School has not made as much progress under this goal as anticipated. The number of diverse senior administrators and faculty has decreased in the last year. There are currently few faculty of color, which includes adjunct professors and summer faculty. At the beginning of the academic 2019-2020 academic year, VLS had only one faculty member of color with tenure. There are two staff members who are persons of color and several staff members who self-identify their sexual orientation.

Through its Nominating Committee, the Board of Trustees is making concerted efforts to bring on diverse members. This past year has seen a slight increase of diverse members as of the current 25 members, 11 are women, three are persons of color and one is of Native American heritage.

The hiring process incorporates a number of steps intended to communicate the school's pledge and focus on diversity. All career opportunities listed include statements about how VLS values diversity and encourages unrepresented groups to apply. Faculty groups and listservs are used to help disseminate information about employment opportunities at the law school. Several years ago, the Diversity Committee created sub-committees, one of which conducted research on hiring data and goals.

Activities and Progress - Goal 6

Goal #6: To increase financial and human resources to support all diversity efforts.

This goal is a recent addition in recognition of the fact that to achieve any or all of the five other diversity goals, resources are critical to success. Vermont Law School has provided support in past years for curriculum development, trainings and workshops, student events and activities focused on diversity efforts. Funding has been used to host symposia, dinners, cultural celebrations, and other activities on campus, as well as for travel to recruit students from HBCUs, participate in workshops, and compete in moot courts. The challenges that diverse VLS students face make it all the more important to increase and secure funding in light of the ambitious diversity goals and initiatives described above.

CHALLENGES, PLANS AND INITIATIVES – LOOKING AHEAD

The Vermont Law School Diversity Committee and its subcommittees, Student Experience and Community Events, will work with the Office of Student Affairs and Diversity to find ways to improve the overall experience for faculty and staff, and to understand and address in a sensitive manner the concerns of students of color and other diverse groups in the VLS and South Royalton communities. They will endeavor to increase discussion and understanding among faculty and staff on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The subcommittees have identified the following steps to be taken to achieve the goals below.

Goal #1: To increase the ability of the administration, faculty, and staff to understand, discuss, and address in a sensitive and respectful manner the concerns of people of color—Black, Indigenous, and non-black people of color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and other members of diverse groups.

Challenges continue under this goal, rising from lack of information and/or understanding on a range of diversity issues, as well as other factors. These include the lack of BIPOC faculty and board members, lack of funding to support diversity activities, clash of political ideologies, and lack of collaboration among student affinity groups that leads to many separate events and the dilution of participation and impact.

1. Develop and schedule a series of facilitated, community-wide forums on diversity, equity and inclusion as well as anti-racism education through campaigns and coalition-building for each academic year;
2. Prepare and publish an annual report on the progress of achieving the diversity goals and distribute to the Vermont Law School community;
3. Establish an anonymous reporting system for students with conservative and libertarian or other perceived minority political views to voice concerns and issues so that they may be addressed by the associate dean for student affairs and diversity or vice dean for students;
4. Provide training and organize events and programs to increase awareness and understanding of cultural competency, systemic racism, implicit bias, and micro-aggression within society and the legal profession; and
5. Schedule future diversity, equity and inclusion, Title IX, harassment, mental health and substance abuse trainings and sessions for faculty, administration, staff, and students. Staff and faculty are also expected to educate themselves on anti-racism practices.

Goal #2: To increase the incorporation of topics of diversity into the curriculum and classroom.

Vermont Law School will endeavor to increase curriculum development, as well as pro bono clinical programming, specifically designed to engage and support those who are marginalized, such as women and immigrants, in communities and surrounding areas. Clinics may offer legal services and representation for these groups and increase service, activism, and other initiatives to help eradicate racism.

Curriculum

The Diversity Subcommittee on Curriculum will work closely with the Faculty Curriculum Committee (formerly Hiring Committee) to ensure that all students, as future lawyers, understand how individual and institutional racism impacts every aspect of our legal system, and that they acquire the knowledge and skills needed to take an anti-racist approach to combat racism in all of its forms. The committee will take the following steps to achieve this goal:

1. Faculty will regularly evaluate and improve classroom teaching and culture to understand and eliminate racial and cultural bias in the classroom and course materials;
2. Faculty will make efforts to address race and systemic racism and incorporate these dialogues into classroom discussions in a way that students feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe in their conversations;
3. Support efforts for professors to de-colonize the law throughout the semester;
4. Make efforts to spend at least one class period per semester on legal material literacy, i.e. to examine how racism is embedded in legal materials;
5. Consider making a “diversity” requirement (like skills and perspective) so that all students have at least one significant curricular exposure to diversity issues before graduation;
6. Add books, articles, podcasts, and other relevant course materials that address diversity and anti-racism to course reading lists;
7. Provide opportunities for students to work on justice reform efforts in the courts and legislature; and
8. Reaffirm the responsibility as legal educators to equip our students with the knowledge and experience to recognize racial injustice and inequality.

Centers, Clinics and Externships

Center for Agriculture and Food Systems

Food and Agriculture Clinic

- CAFS is working with an equity consultant to refine plans and goals related to applying a racial equity lens to projects, communications, and resources;
- Currently in the process of gathering food and agriculture topics, such as food access, and heir’s property, to host another Embedded Racism in the Law panel discussion; and
- CAFS has developed three equity groups that focus on projects, communications, and student outreach. Each group comprises three to four CAFS staff, faculty, and fellows who meet regularly to discuss how to apply equity to those three areas. In the project equity group, they are developing how to apply a racial equity lens to existing and future projects and how to identify and select partners. In the communications equity group, they are looking to connect with more BIPOC-led organizations and leaders in food and agriculture and to add racial equity to CAFS’s communications strategic plan. In the student equity group, they are developing a plan to connect with students and student groups and to provide more opportunities for students to work with CAFS either as a clinician, intern, research assistance, or to develop an Independent Research Project (IRP).

***Center for Justice Reform
National Center for Restorative Justice***

Scholarships

In the fall 2020, VLS awarded five public interest scholarships for the Professional Certificate in Restorative Justice Program.

- These scholarships are awarded to professionals from fields as diverse as law enforcement and the military, to education and child protection;
- Courses may be taken residentially, online, or in a hybrid fashion; and
- These scholarships complement VLS's decision to significantly reduce the cost of the Professional Certificate for all participants in recognition of the need for restorative justice education to be more widely available, with fewer substantial financial barriers.

There is growing interest in the Restorative Justice Professional Certificate (PC). This interest will likely expand as VLS looks to tailor the PC to specific subject areas. As it builds the MARJ curriculum, opportunities for obtaining a certificate with a special focus, for example in law enforcement or education, also grow. This is expected to make the certificate more marketable.

NCRJ initiatives will be targeted to national audiences and given the current interest in social justice both expansively, and in its many areas of specific focus, it is anticipated what VLS offers will be of growing interest and marketability. More importantly, it will make a difference.

Re-Writing of MARJ Program Learning Outcomes

During the fall 2020 semester, NCRJ held a series of circles with students, faculty, community partners, advisory board members, and restorative justice practitioners to reflect on the learning outcomes of the MARJ program. Circle participants were asked to reflect on what MARJ students need to know, do, and value as they prepare to take on leadership roles in the restorative justice movement. The themes that emerged from this series of circles informed the drafting of new Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and will guide the completion of a course mapping process to guide future program development.

Holding these circles provided a way to use the principles and tools of restorative practices to guide the growth of the MARJ program. The circle structure allowed for all participants in the process to have equal voice and to listen deeply to each other as the community collaboratively determined the best way forward. The importance of understanding diversity, the racial justice shortfalls of both conventional and restorative justice approaches, and a need for the restorative justice field to innovate to better address structural inequities that disproportionately impact BIPOC justice-involved individuals, were themes that came up repeatedly in the circles and are reflected in the new PLOs that will guide future program growth.

Podcast with Authors of Colorizing Restorative Justice

NCRJ has recently begun the process of launching a podcast titled "The Restorative Lens." Its intention with the podcast is to create a space for restorative practitioners, academic, and advocates to come together to share their insights and perspectives in hopes of further advancing and improving the restorative justice social movement.

The goal is to structure the podcast in “mini-series” on various topics. For the first “mini-series” NCRJ is doing a series of interviews with some of the authors of the recently released book, “Colorizing Restorative Justice,” who share their experiences of restorative work as practitioners of color. Though it was published just last year, “Colorizing Restorative Justice” is already widely considered one of the most influential books in the restorative justice field. Many of the authors who contributed to the book are considered thought-leaders in some of the most pressing issues facing restorative justice implementation today.

Environmental Advocacy Clinic

Curriculum

The EAC is moving forward with building a new seminar curriculum that integrates interdisciplinary instruction along with foundational lawyering skills. In particular, the EAC will have seminars on environmental justice and hear from front-line players in efforts such as the Flint water crisis. These classes will build awareness of environmental and social justice work and help connect students with opportunities to deepen their experience with advancing advocacy on behalf of disenfranchised communities.

Cases and Advocacy Work

EAC students will continue to work on the many issues that are described above under the activities section. Students visit clients and their communities, investigate sites, develop legal theories, file comments, draft notice letters of intent to sue, file cases in court, negotiate with state and federal agencies, and advocate before legislative bodies to advance more just outcomes for disadvantaged communities disproportionately impacted by pollution.

Work with National Wildlife Federation

The EAC and Environmental Justice Clinic are exploring creating a fellowship position that would support NWF’s vision by providing legal and policy analysis on environmental and climate legislation that impacts environmentally overburdened communities of color and low-income communities. Such analysis would be provided to environmental justice communities, and the environmental justice fellow would convey not only the analysis but also feedback from those communities to NWF so that NWF’s positions will be informed by this feedback.

The position would be consistent with principles of environmental justice and help NWF to support the work of partners in environmental justice communities and their efforts to have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their health and welfare.

Institute for Energy and the Environment (Energy Clinic)

Equitable Transportation Policy and Accountability Research

Our project team is designing educational and training workshops, and will produce a toolkit for communities to fight disinformation and promote clean transportation.

Climate Justice Projects

The clinic currently has multiple projects under development and in addition to providing pro bono services to residents, the clinic has helped access over \$368,000 in state grants to reduce solar ownership costs. In Vermont the energy clinic is working with the Randolph Area Community Development Corporation to assist in the development of approximately twenty units of affordable net zero housing adjacent to the community's downtown.

Summer Energy Scholars and Fellows

This year's Global Energy LLM Fellow is from Cuba and will visit VLS for two years.

JD Externship Program

- The program will continue to adjust curriculum to include more direct, in-depth discussion of diversity issues and will undertake a course reorganization during the 20-21 academic year.
- One professor and the program coordinator will continue to serve on the VLS Diversity Committee.
- Complete training of all of its full-time departmental employees in diversity, equity, and inclusion by the close of the 2020-2021 school year.
- Commit to hiring more diverse candidates within the department by broadening its searches and by researching and implementing hiring techniques that attract more diverse candidates.

South Royalton Legal Clinic

Language Access

In February 2021, SRLC faculty and students launched the practice advisory by leading a Racial Justice "Teach-In" Ethics CLE for Vermont Legal Aid and Legal Services Vermont staff. In March, SRLC faculty and students also produced and led a VLS Race in the Law Series virtual panel on language access that features panelists from other VLS clinics, civil enforcement experts, and LEP communities. SRLC's goal was to use these platforms to galvanize the building momentum to improve language access across Vermont's human and health services.

Vermont COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Equity Fund

In advance of Vermont's Economic Stimulus Equity (ESE) Program's closure on March 1, 2021, SRLC faculty and students offered approximately a dozen legal consultations to ESE Program registrants with the most complex eligibility and immigration safety questions. Because of these efforts, clinic faculty and students helped ensure that this unprecedented COVID-19 relief program reached the individuals and families who needed it most.

Health Insurance for Undocumented Children and Pregnant Women

Clinic faculty are currently working with Vermont Legal Aid and other health advocates on a legislative effort to allow undocumented children and pregnant women to access health insurance. Undocumented children and pregnant women are currently ineligible for both Medicaid and qualified health plans on

the marketplace. The bill would provide Dr. Dynasaur coverage to income-eligible children and pregnant Vermonters regardless of immigration status.

U.S.-Asia Partnerships for Environmental Law

In addition to the Environmental Governance in the Developing World course, PEL hopes to be offering the Transnational Environmental Law Practicum course, which the Curriculum Committee recently approved. These courses will expose students to environmental justice issues in Asia. PEL will continue to integrate its project work with these courses to give students opportunities to examine these environmental justice issues and to explore possible solutions.

Goal #3: To increase the number of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities in the student body.

Attracting BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities can be difficult and challenging because of VLS's rural location and the lack of diversity in the region. The Diversity Subcommittee on Admissions will work closely with the Office of Admissions to identify and address accessibility to the legal profession and brainstorm ways to improve equitability and inclusivity in the admissions process. The committee has identified the following steps to be taken to accomplish these initiatives:

1. Develop a diversity recruitment plan to increase diversity in the applicant pool, including expanded networking contacts with historically black colleges, Native American colleges, and increased sensitivity to diversity credentials in admissions;
2. Exploring the LSAT requirement for all merit scholarships and establish needs-based scholarships for all students;
3. Investigate moving from using the LSAT to the GRE to assess reading comprehension in logical and verbal reasoning proficiency for applicants;
4. Work with other law schools to challenge and address the structural inequalities in the LSAT and Bar examinations;
5. Explain the reduced course load option for incoming students more clearly;
6. Make campus more accessible for visiting students and students with physical disabilities;
7. Provide additional tuition scholarships, grants, and opportunities for diversity students, as well as students who are focused on diversity issues, such as environmental justice; and
8. Provide adequate funding to address specific needs of students, such as personal grooming, transportation, mental and physical health, and appropriate housing.

Goal #4: To increase the ability of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people and people with disabilities to succeed in law school, to feel welcome, respected, and supported in the community.

This goal overlaps with Goal #1 in its challenges and plans. More funding is needed for maintaining a healthy and diverse student body and to ease the incredible debt load students carry after graduation.

The VLS community should reinforce community and the culture of participation as key elements of the VLS experience, and take the following steps:

1. Make education in a caring and respectful environment for students a top priority;
2. Expand opportunities for formal and informal communication among all people of the VLS community;
3. Develop programs for faculty, staff, and students that emphasize interaction, partnering, and service with local, regional and global communities;
4. Enhance communication with the Town of South Royalton and other communities in the region;
5. Collaborate with South Royalton to facilitate disability accessibility to sidewalks, restaurants, and other retail establishments in the town;
6. Develop strategies for retention of diverse students;
7. Reduce debt for diverse students to enable success once they enter the workplace;
8. Set aside funds to help pay students' loans if they work for public interest organizations;
9. Change the default health insurance coverage to avoid auto-enrolling students; and
10. Review and address systemic racism in our institutional policies, procedures, and enforcement, as well as in the legal profession.

Goal #5: To increase the number of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people in the faculty, administration, staff, and board.

Vermont Law School's rural location, as mentioned above for students, poses the same challenge in attracting diverse faculty and staff to the school. Lack of competitive salaries has also proven to be a deterrent as VLS is an independent school not associated with a large university, has a relatively small endowment, and has experienced financial instability over several years. Administration and the board of trustees are currently working on a strategic plan towards sustainability of the school.

The Diversity Subcommittee on Hiring will work with the Faculty Appointment Committee and the director of human resources to prioritize the diversification of our staff and faculty.

1. The Faculty Appointment Committee will make diversification (especially Black or Brown persons) of the faculty and staff a top priority in the upcoming hiring process;
2. Develop a systematic plan for attracting diverse applicants for all faculty and staff openings;
3. The Faculty Appointment Committee will make a concerted effort to review alumni from the past 10 years to identify talented alumni of color for possible faculty positions;
4. Make phone calls or send notes encouraging alumni of color to consider teaching law as a career;
5. Special efforts should be made to recruit a visiting professor from BIPOC and LGBTQ+ alumni, faculty, and other diverse groups;
6. Review with the Office of Institutional Advancement (OIA) plans for establishing a capital fund to raise money for initiatives described in this Diversity Plan. The OIA office should help create an endowment to chair diversity faculty members;
7. Looking ahead, the faculty should maintain a file of current VLS BIPOC students and after their graduations, facilitate communication with them about the possibility of entering the profession of teaching law;
8. Similarly, students with disabilities should be tracked post-commencement about teaching law;
9. Increase sensitivity to diversity credentials in the hiring process of faculty and staff;
10. The Board of Trustees should recruit trustees with diverse backgrounds, i.e., BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people, and people with disabilities; and

11. Consider emeritus status and commencement speakers opportunities for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ people.

Goal #6: To increase financial and human resources to support all diversity efforts.

To achieve many of the goals listed above requires resources. It is recommended that the following steps be taken while working on these goals:

1. Review all budget areas to determine funds needed for initiatives described above;
2. Increase financial and human resources necessary to achieve these goals, such as hiring an additional staff person for the Student Affairs and Diversity Office to assist on diversity efforts; and
3. Review with OIA plans for establishing annual and capital fund-raising initiatives to support needs described in the Diversity Plan.

CONCLUSION

Overall, VLS is overcoming a number of challenges and obstacles concerning diversity, but more steps are needed to accomplish the goals and objectives outlined above. VLS needs to continue striving to promote itself as a leader in educational diversity, as well as continue to attract students and faculty of color; Black, Indigenous, and non-black people of color, as well as LGBTQ+ and people with disabilities. VLS should also seek to employ more people of color and other diverse groups. Significant efforts to reduce debt and associated obstacles for diverse students is another key goal for VLS. While the school is on the right track with targeted efforts in a number of key areas, including hiring, accessibility updates, and recruiting, VLS can better position itself as a leader in law school diversity.

Diversity Plan approved by the Vermont Law School Faculty on March 11, 2021.

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APPENDIX A – VLS STUDENT GROUPS – ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

From the 2020-2021 [Student Handbook](#).

STUDENT BAR ASSOCIATION

The purpose of the Student Bar Association (SBA) is to support and encourage academic excellence and professional growth among students; ensure the attainment and preservation of the rights of the individual student to acquire a quality legal education in a just and reasonable manner; and serve as the vehicle for interaction and communication between the students and the faculty, administration, alumni, and the community. All students of Vermont Law School who are enrolled as degree candidates are regular members of the SBA. Such members are entitled to the full benefits of membership and to attend all meetings of the Senate.

Student groups may be approved as a Recognized Student Group by the SBA. Once approved and after a period of proven activity, that group may seek approval as a Funds Eligible Student Group to receive SBA funding.

Student groups list on next page.

SBA RECOGNIZED GROUPS

Alliance
Animal Law Society
Asian Pacific Law Students Association
Black Law Students Association (BLSA)
Christian Law Fellowship
Criminal Law Society
Energy Law Society
Environmental Justice Law Society
Environmental Law Society
Federalist Society
Food and Agriculture Law Society
If/When/How
International Law Society (ILS)
Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA)
Latin American Law Students Association (LALSA)
Mental Health Committee (MHC)
Native American Law Students Association (NALSA)
Phi Alpha Delta
Student Community Outreach for Education (SCORE)
Space Law Society
Specific Performance
Women's Law Society (WLS)

OTHER STUDENT GROUPS

Alternative Spring Break
Barrister's Book Shop Board of Directors
Campus Greening Committee
Emory School of Law Civil Rights and Liberties Moot Court Competition
Equal Justice Foundation
Hearsay
Moot Court Advisory Board (National, Civil Rights, and Environmental teams)
National Lawyers Guild (NLG)
National Moot Court Team
Native American Law Students Association Moot Court Team
Pace Environmental Law Moot Court Team
SPEAK
Student Ambassadors
Texas Young Lawyer's Association Regional Competition
The Forum
Thurgood Marshall Moot Court Competition
Trial Advocacy Moot Court Team
Trivia Quizmasters
Tulane Sports Law Arbitration Competition
Vermont Journal of Environmental Law
Vermont Law Review
Veteran Law Students Association

VLS TEAMS

Basketball
Bike Club
Ice Hockey Club
Men's Rugby
Outdoor Club (and The Gear Shed)
Tabletop Society
Ultimate Justice (Ultimate Frisbee)
VLS Futbol Club (Soccer)
Women's Rugby

APPENDIX B – STONEWALL AT 50 PROGRAM

Vermont Law School Presents:

STONEWALL AT 50 ITINERARY

Saturday, November 16, 2019

8:30am - 9:00am Check-in and Refreshments

9:00am - 9:15am Opening Remarks

Shirley Jefferson | Associate Dean of Student Affairs & Diversity, Vermont Law School

9:15am - 10:00am How Stonewall Changed My Life—And Yours!

Rep. Bill Lippert | Vermont House of Representatives (Chittenden-4-2)

10:00am - 10:15am Break

10:15am - 11:15am “Because of Sex”: Will the Supreme Court Affirm or Eliminate
Federal Workplace Nondiscrimination Protections for LGBTQ+ Workers?

Moderator: Sara Gaylon (VLS '21) | Co-Chair, Alliance at Vermont Law School

Panelists: Gregory Antollino | Counsel for Respondents, *Altitude Express, Inc. v. Zarda*

Thomas Mew | Counsel for Petitioner, *Bostock v. Clayton Cty., Georgia*

Jon Davidson | Chief Counsel, Freedom for All Americans Education Fund

11:15am - 11:25am Break

11:25am - 12:35pm New, Now, Next: The New Frontiers of LGBTQ+ Advocacy

Moderator: Christopher Smith (VLS '14) | Assoc. General Counsel, Cannabis Control Commission

Panelists: Jon Davidson | Chief Counsel, Freedom for All Americans Education Fund

Molly Gray (VLS '14) | Adjunct Professor, Vermont Law School

Rep. Bill Lippert | Vermont House of Representatives (Chittenden-4-2)

12:35pm - 12:45pm Break (Lunch buffet available throughout Keynote)

12:45pm - 1:00pm Introductory Remarks

T.J. Donovan | Vermont Attorney General

1:00pm - 2:25pm Keynote Address

The Honorable Beth Robinson | Associate Justice to the Vermont Supreme Court

2:25pm - 3:25pm Full Spectrum: Lived Experiences of LGBTQ+ Youth in Vermont

Moderator: Amanda Rohdenburg | Associate Director, Outright Vermont

Panelists: Youth Members of Outright Vermont

3:25pm - 3:35pm Break

3:35pm - 4:35pm A Place to Call Home: The Fight for Fair Housing

Moderator: Mitul Patel (VLS '21) | Co-Chair, Alliance at Vermont Law School

Panelists: Erika Johnson | Attorney, Vermont Legal Aid Housing Discrimination Project

Dr. Reed Loder | Vermont Law School

Joseph Wardenki | Counsel, Relman, Dane & Colfax

Skylar Wolfe | SafeSpace Director, Pride Center of Vermont

Made Possible by a Generous Grant from the Johnson Family Foundation

APPENDIX C – DIVERSITY CURRICULUM INVENTORY

Updated February 2020

The Diversity Committee has undertaken its periodic review of the diversity aspect of our curriculum with an eye toward courses with a main focus on diversity, courses with a significant diversity component, and course raising diversity issues.

Courses with a Main Focus on Diversity – These courses are listed in the course catalog with the subject code of “DIV.” The entirety of each course is dedicated to addressing and challenging issues of diversity within the legal system, with a strong focus on addressing and challenging institutionalized racism within our legal and criminal justice systems. These courses should include discussions/materials that specifically address issues pertaining to Black/African-American and/or Native-American/Indigenous and/or LGBTQ+ communities.

- Civil Rights Seminar
- Employment Discrimination
- Environmental Justice
- Environmental Justice Clinic
- Indian Tribes as Government Stewards of the Environment
- International Human Rights
- Native Americans and the Law
- Race, Ethnicity and Law
- Restorative Justice Clinic
- Restorative Justice in Indigenous Communities
- Sexual Orientation and the Law
- South Royalton Legal Clinic

Courses with Significant Focus on Diversity – These courses address diversity and the challenges associated with diversity as it relates to our legal and criminal justice systems; they bring attention to the ways in which these systems were designed specifically to disadvantage underrepresented groups and challenge students to explore ways in which these systems can be dismantled.

- Advanced Criminal Law Seminar
- Advanced Victim’s Rights Seminar
- Adversity Trauma and Victimization
- American Legal History
- Current Topics in International Law
- Employment Dispute Resolution
- Employment Law
- Environmental Ethics
- Environmental Advocacy Clinic

- Ethics and Restorative Justice
- Food and Agriculture Clinic
- Food Regulation and Policy
- Food System Justice and Sustainability
- General Practice Program IV: Pretrial Litigation
- Global Food Security and Social Justice
- Global Impacts of Energy Use
- Global Restorative Justice
- International Regimes for Sustainable Development
- Introduction to Chinese Law
- New Approaches to Domestic/Sexual Violence
- Origins, Evolution and Critical Issues in Restorative Justice
- Principles of Restorative Justice
- Restorative Justice Theory and Practice
- Restorative Justice in Educational Institutions

Courses Raising Diversity Issues – These courses bring general awareness of diversity issues within our criminal justice and legal systems.

- Air Pollution Law
- Advanced Energy Regulation and the Environment
- Advanced Land Use Regulation
- Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Capital Punishment Seminar
- Civil Procedure
- Clemency, Pardon and Expungement
- Climate Change and Law
- Climate Change; The Power of Taxes
- Comparative Law
- Comparative Law and Canadian Legal System IRP
- Constitutional Criminal Procedure
- Constitutional Law
- Contracts
- Energy Regulation & the Environment
- Environmental Dispute Resolution
- Environmental Law
- Environmental Semester in Washington
- Estates
- Family Law
- Food Regulation and Policy
- Food System Justice and Sustainability

- Global Energy Justice
- Global Food Security and Social Justice
- Income Tax
- International and Comparative Environmental Law
- International Law
- International Environmental Law
- International Human Rights
- Introduction to Chinese Law
 - Includes segments on Chinese policy toward ethnic minorities and the comparison with US policy.
- Introduction to Food and Agriculture Law and Policy
- Judicial Opinion Writing
- Land Use Regulation
- Land Use Regulation and Climate Change
- Land Use
- Law of International Organizations
- Legal Profession
- Legal Writing II
- Natural Resources
- National Security Law
- Negotiation
- New Frontiers in Environmental Policy
- Non-Profit Law
- Regulating the Marine Environment
- State and Local Government in a Federal System
- Secured Transactions
- Semester in Practice
- Property
- Public Health Implications of US Food and Agricultural Policy
- Sports Law
- Torts
- U.S. Asia Partnership
- Water Law

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION REPORT & STRATEGIC PLAN 2020-2023



Data Collection

Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Diversity Shirley Jefferson created this statistics report. The data reflected in the report was collected from the Admissions Office, the Office for Student Affairs and Diversity, the Registrar's Office, and the Academic Success Program.

The report begins with Vermont Law School's first graduating JD class (1976) and ends with last year's graduating class (Spring 2020). The data tracks the percentage of men, women, students of color, LGBTQ (self-identified), and first-generation students in each class.

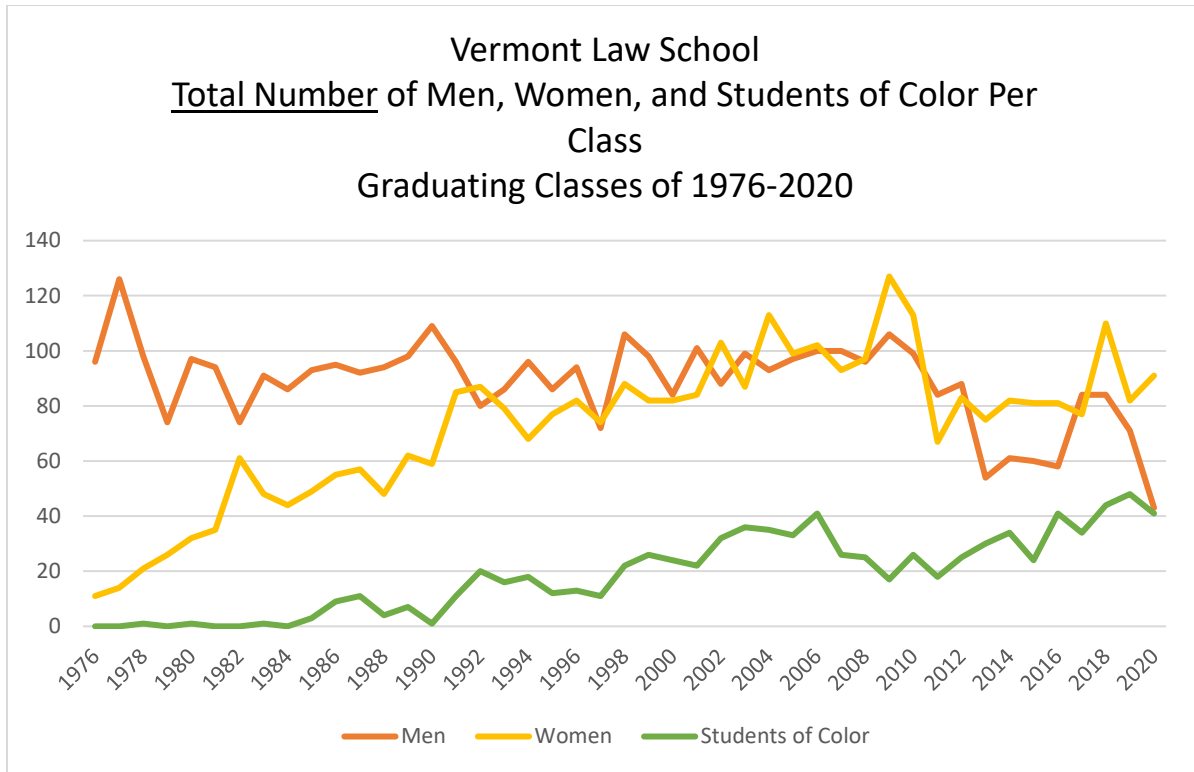
From Vermont Law School's inception, the school tracked and focused on the number of women and students of color that graduated. In 2012, the school began to track LGBTQ students who self-identified as such. Since 2011, the school tracked students who were the first generation to graduate from college.

Vermont Law School

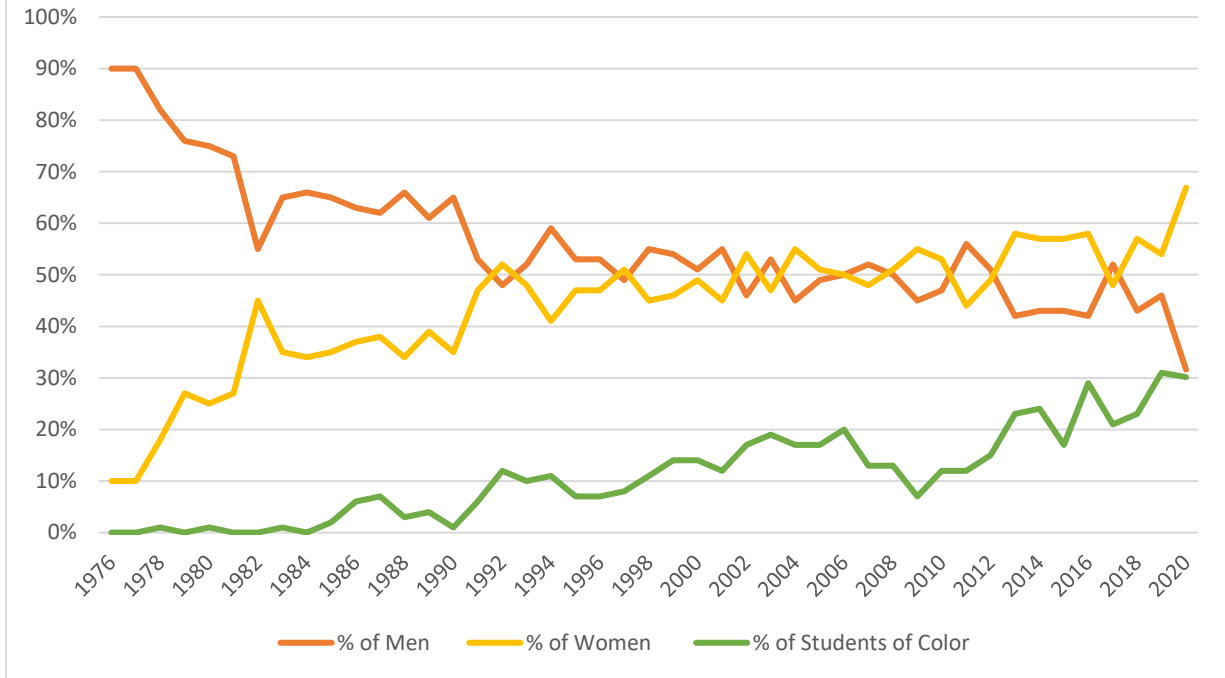
JD Statistics for Men, Women, Students of Color, LGBT Self-Identified, and 1st Generation

Class	Class Total	Men	% of Men	Women	% of Women	Students of Color	% of Students of Color	LGBT Self Identified	% of LGBT Self Identified	First Gen	% of First Gen
1976	107	96	90%	11	10%	0	0%	0	0	0	0
1977	140	126	90%	14	10%	0	0%	0	0	0	0
1978	119	98	82%	21	18%	1	1%	0	0	0	0
1979	98	74	76%	26	27%	0	0%	0	0	0	0
1980	129	97	75%	32	25%	1	1%	0	0	0	0
1981	129	94	73%	35	27%	0	0%	0	0	0	0
1982	135	74	55%	61	45%	0	0%	0	0	0	0
1983	139	91	65%	48	35%	1	1%	0	0	0	0
1984	130	86	66%	44	34%	0	0%	0	0	0	0
1985	142	93	65%	49	35%	3	2%	0	0	0	0
1986	150	95	63%	55	37%	9	6%	0	0	0	0
1987	149	92	62%	57	38%	11	7%	0	0	0	0
1988	142	94	66%	48	34%	4	3%	0	0	0	0
1989	160	98	61%	62	39%	7	4%	0	0	0	0
1990	168	109	65%	59	35%	1	1%	0	0	0	0
1991	181	96	53%	85	47%	11	6%	0	0	0	0
1992	167	80	48%	87	52%	20	12%	0	0	0	0
1993	165	86	52%	79	48%	16	10%	0	0	0	0
1994	164	96	59%	68	41%	18	11%	0	0	0	0
1995	163	86	53%	77	47%	12	7%	0	0	0	0
1996	176	94	53%	82	47%	13	7%	0	0	0	0
1997	146	72	49%	74	51%	11	8%	0	0	0	0
1998	194	106	55%	88	45%	22	11%	0	0	0	0
1999	180	98	54%	82	46%	26	14%	0	0	0	0
2000	166	84	51%	82	49%	24	14%	0	0	0	0
2001	185	101	55%	84	45%	22	12%	0	0	0	0
2002	191	88	46%	103	54%	32	17%	0	0	0	0
2003	186	99	53%	87	47%	36	19%	0	0	0	0
2004	206	93	45%	113	55%	35	17%	0	0	0	0
2005	196	97	49%	99	51%	33	17%	0	0	0	0
2006	202	100	50%	102	50%	41	20%	0	0	0	0
2007	193	100	52%	93	48%	26	13%	0	0	0	0
2008	191	96	50%	97	51%	25	13%	0	0	0	0
2009	233	106	45%	127	55%	17	7%	0	0	0	0
2010	212	99	47%	113	53%	26	12%	0	0	0	0
2011	151	84	56%	67	44%	18	12%	0	0	12	8%
2012	171	88	51%	83	49%	25	15%	11	6%	2	1%
2013	129	54	42%	75	58%	30	23%	10	8%	15	12%
2014	143	61	43%	82	57%	34	24%	17	12%	8	6%
2015	141	60	43%	81	57%	24	17%	7	5%	10	7%

2016	139	58	42%	81	58%	41	29%	17	12%	15	11%
2017	161	84	52%	77	48%	34	21%	20	12%	16	10%
2018	194	84	43%	110	57%	44	23%	24	12%	17	9%
2019	153	71	46%	82	54%	48	31%	16	10%	30	20%
2020	136	43	32%	91	67%	41	30%	25	18%	24	18%



Vermont Law School
Percentage of Men, Women, and Students of Color Per Class
 Graduating Classes of 1976-2020



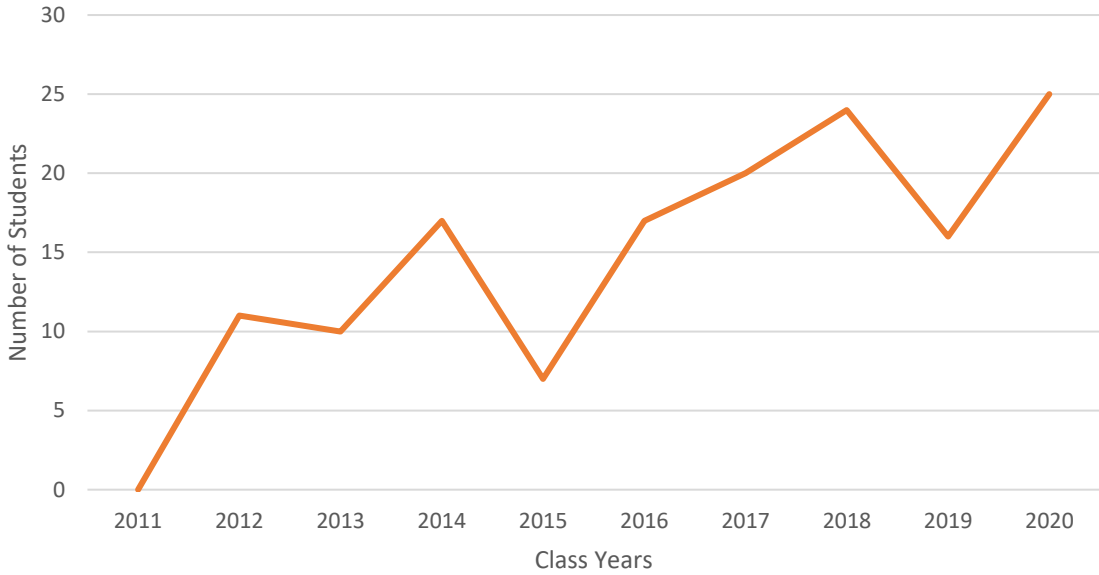
Gender Statistics:

From 1976-1981, Vermont Law School classes had a steady increase of women students. In 1981, there was an 18-percent increase in women attending VLS. The graphs above show that there are some years where the ratio of men-to-women in classes drops, but not significantly. Over the time frame of 1976 to 2008, there is a steady increase to where men and women overlap, showing more women attending classes than men. The attendance of women students at Vermont Law School is continuously growing.

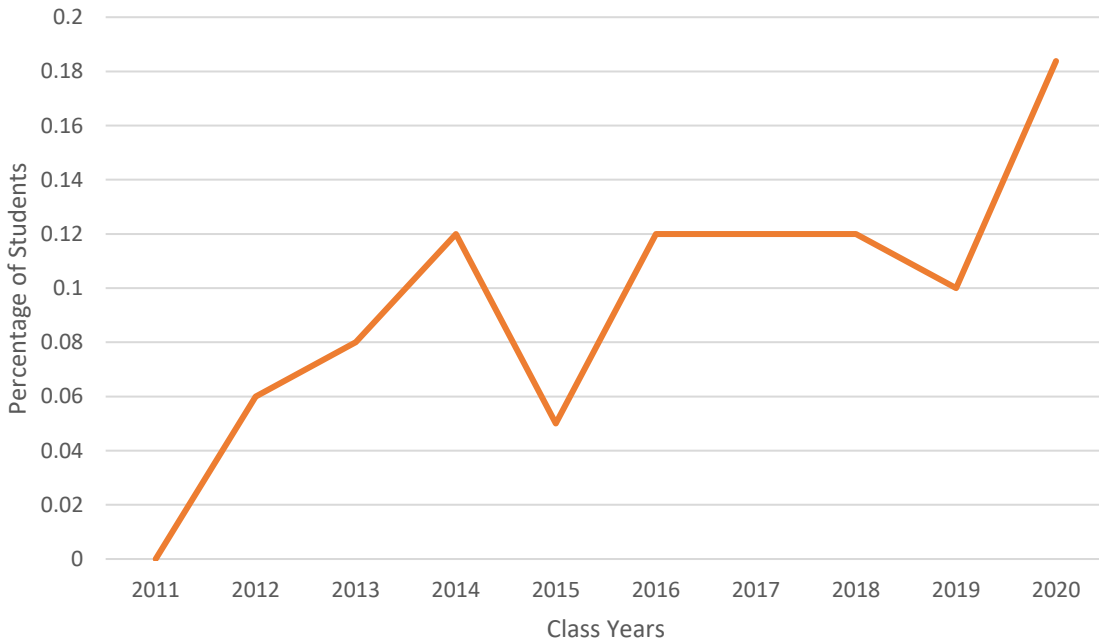
Students of Color Statistics:

From 1976 to 1991, the number of Students of Color attending classes at VLS was less than 10 percent. The graphs with the percentages of all students (men, women, and students of color) show that from 1998 to 2006 there was a steady increase in the attendance of students of color with slight fluctuation of a percentage or two. Overall, both categories—percentage of class and total number of students—for students of color has continued to increase at Vermont Law School.

Vermont Law School
Total Number LGBT Self Identified Students Per Class
 Classes 2011-2020



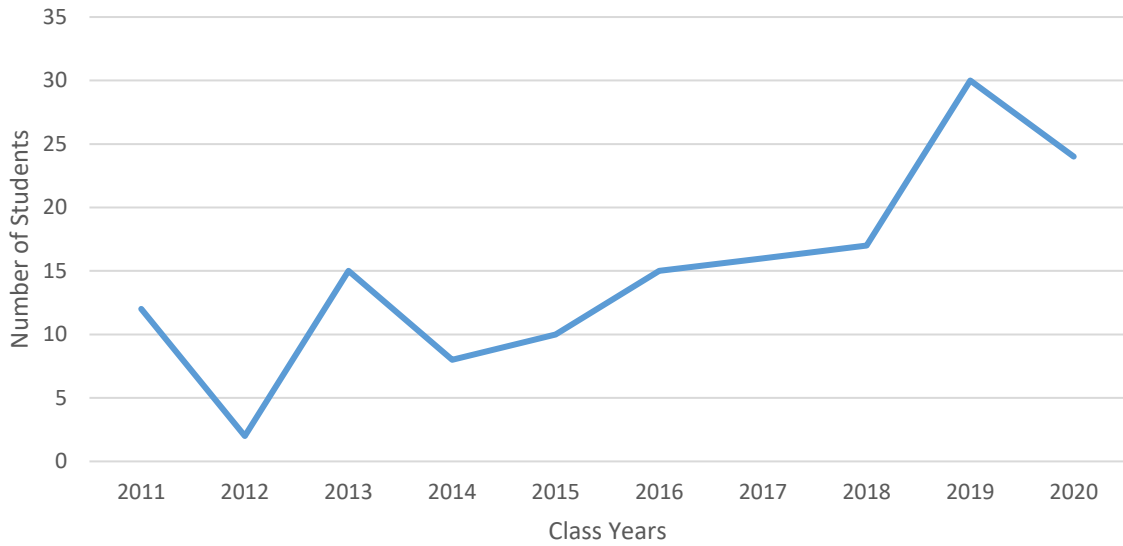
Vermont Law School
Total Percentage of Self Identified LGBT Students Per Class
 Classes 2011-2020



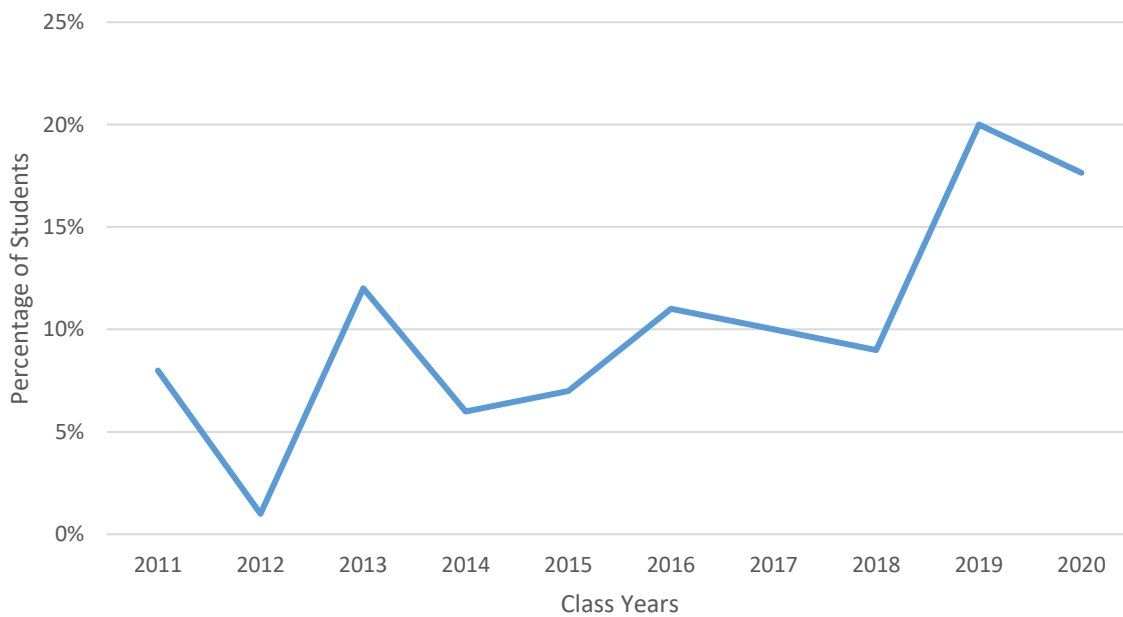
LGBTQ Statistics:

Vermont Law School started seeing students self-identify their sexuality on applications in 2011. The two graphs above, total number and the overall percentage, shows that there was a steady increase in students sharing their LGBTQ identities for four years. In the 2015, there was a decrease in students who self-identified themselves on their applications. The following year Vermont Law School began to see more applications enroll with students self-identifying their sexuality.

Vermont Law School
Total Number of First Generation Students Per Class
 Classes 2011-2020



Vermont Law School
Total Percentage of First Generation Students Per Class
 Classes 2011-2020



First Generation Statistics:

In 2011, Vermont Law School began recording data for the first generation of students attending graduate school. As the graphs above illustrate, the first couple of years VLS recorded data there was a small percentage of first generation students. In 2013, there was a striking increase of first generation students attending graduate school. From 2014 and on, there has been a steady increase in the number of students who claim they are the first generation of their family attending graduate school.