



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

Dean, Winston College of Law

Leadership Profile

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Executive Summary

For more than 135 years, the Winston College of Law has educated generations of Tennessee's lawyers, judges, and civic leaders. Today, buoyed by a recent \$32.5 million naming gift and recognized as a top-13 Best Value law school in the nation with one of the most favorable student-faculty ratios among public law schools, Winston Law stands at an inflection point.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK), invites applications and nominations for the position of Dean of the Winston College of Law (Winston Law). The

University seeks an experienced, collegial, and energetic leader who will provide inspiration, cohesion, and an entrepreneurial vision for Winston Law and serve as its chief academic and administrative officer. The Dean reports to the Provost and works closely with the vice provosts, deans of other academic colleges, and Winston Law faculty, staff, students, alums, and other stakeholders (including members of the Tennessee bench and bar), in setting overall academic and strategic priorities for Winston Law, allocating resources to move those priorities forward, and developing a collaborative community committed to student success.

As the leader of the state's flagship law school at a land-grant university, the Dean must recognize and support the institution's duty to serve the people of Tennessee. Because Winston Law's graduates will join a dynamic and rapidly changing legal field at a historic moment of technological change, the Dean should recognize the significance of preparing law students to be adaptable, future-focused, and competitive for a multitude of practice areas and professions. Moreover, the Dean must be able to balance an internal role that engages the law school community with an external role that develops and maintains a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with alumni, state and local government officials, local bench and bar, and other Tennesseans.

The next Dean inherits an active, involved faculty committed to shared governance, a dedicated staff, a strong student body, a supportive campus administration, and a loyal alumni base. Winston Law has developed an engaged and respectful culture among its faculty, staff, and students. The successful candidate will not only be a scholar but also a collaborative, transparent, and inspiring leader who is equally committed to teaching, service, and scholarship. The Dean will further Winston Law's commitment to access and community engagement; continue to develop a successful fundraising and alumni-engagement program; promote and, where possible, advance Winston Law's local, regional, and national reputation; and work to build community and consensus across all its stakeholders.

Candidates should be able to demonstrate relevant experience in managing a comparable enterprise within a complex system like UTK; leading and inspiring a multifaceted mission-driven community and stakeholder base; and promoting engagement inside Winston Law, across the campus and the greater university, and within the legal profession and the public. The successful candidate will have strong interpersonal skills, a capacity for creative thinking, and the enthusiasm and demonstrated ability to lead with the highest integrity and a spirit of service.

To submit a nomination or express personal interest in this position, please see [Procedure for Candidacy](#).

Role of the Dean

The Dean serves as chief academic and administrative officer, academic head of the Winston College of Law, and reports to UTK's Provost. The Dean is responsible for all areas of strategic planning and academic operations for Winston Law: management of faculty and staff; development of academic programs; delivery of student services; oversight of facilities; development of research; and fiscal management, including fundraising. The Dean shall be a tenured Full Professor of the Law Faculty. The Dean works closely with a strong team of dynamic, involved leaders that include assistant and associate deans and program directors.

The Dean will:

- Serve as the intellectual leader of the faculty through a demonstrated commitment to legal scholarship, an ability to inspire junior and senior faculty alike in their scholarly pursuits, and a vision for further development of the intellectual environment at Winston Law;
- Promote Winston Law's teaching mission of educating outstanding lawyers through continued excellence in the academic program, including doctrinal, experiential, and hybrid courses;
- Support, guide, and further develop Winston Law's commitment to the integration of theory and practice, grounded in a foundational understanding of legal doctrine and public policy;
- Establish and maintain a strong, engaged relationship with the student body;
- Gauge the evolving needs of the legal profession and promote successful change in response to evolving external environments and emerging challenges;
- Provide leadership in developing a common vision for Winston Law that reflects the future of legal education, the career aspirations of our students, and the established strengths of the institution;
- Interact persuasively with the philanthropic community and solicit and steward private support from alumni, members of the Dean's Advisory Council and Dean's Circle, foundations, law firms, government institutions, and corporations;
- Develop and maintain positive, mutually supportive relationships with Winston Law alumni;
- Work effectively and collaboratively with senior administrators and other staff to ensure the smooth functioning of the academic and nonacademic components of Winston Law's operations;
- Create a strong sense of community and cooperation among faculty, staff, students, alumni, other campus academic and nonacademic units, the local and state bar, local and state government, and the judiciary;
- Attract, retain, and develop outstanding faculty, administrators, and staff;
- Manage Winston Law's budget within a responsibility-centered management structure;
- Ensure that the Winston College of Law is a climate where all viewpoints are valued; and
- Encourage and support scholarly research.



Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The search committee enthusiastically welcomes applicants from a variety of backgrounds and seeks to attract candidates of the highest integrity with a record of academic leadership and scholarship supportive of an appointment at the rank of full professor with tenure. At a minimum, applicants should possess a JD or other terminal degree in law, with accomplishments and a record of teaching and scholarship meriting tenure at the rank of full professor. The committee will consider the additional factors listed below in evaluating candidates for this important leadership role:

- A leadership style characterized by flexibility, inclusiveness, integrity, and openness that works to achieve consensus, involving and encouraging faculty and other key stakeholders to share in governance;
- A demonstrated commitment to legal education, scholarship, public service, and the rule of law;
- Experience as a tenured and full-time faculty member at an accredited law school;
- Administrative experience within an accredited law school;
- Familiarity with strategic resource management and an aptitude for successful fundraising;
- An entrepreneurial leader who will support current programs and establish new initiatives that will serve Winston Law students and fulfill our mission as a land grant institution;
- Experience working with senior academic leaders across a university campus, including the ability to collaborate with the Provost, deans, and other leaders to enrich the overall academic structure and the national and international reputation of UTK as a research and educational powerhouse;
- The capacity and commitment to further develop supportive affiliations with Winston Law alumni and friends;
- A demonstrated dedication to building an organization that welcomes all viewpoints and values culturally respectful civil dialogue;
- Superior communications skills; and
- Decisiveness and the ability to multitask, as well as a willingness to delegate and monitor appropriately.



About Winston College of Law

Overview

Founded in 1890, Winston Law is accredited by the American Bar Association and is a charter member of the Association of American Law Schools. In its 2026 law school listing, USNWR ranks Winston Law at #57 among all US law schools and #29 among public law schools in the nation. The National Jurist grades Winston Law as an “A” and #13 overall in its Best Value listing. USNWR ranks five of UT Law’s programs as among the 50 best in the nation and the top 25 among public law schools, including its business/corporate law program (#34 nationally, #12 among US public law schools), contracts/commercial law program (#28 nationally, #12 among public law schools), legal clinical training program (#29 nationally, #13 among public law schools), health care law program (#42 nationally, #21 among public law schools), and legal writing program (#36 nationally, #21 among public law schools). The legal clinical program previously and consistently ranks in the top ten of all US public law schools.



The mission of Winston Law is to prepare students for the practice of law by integrating theory and practice across the curriculum, with an emphasis on clinical and skills training, innovative classroom teaching, legal writing, and professional values. The College endeavors to produce high-quality scholarship that examines, explains, critiques, and improves the law and the legal system. Winston Law strives to serve the university, the campus, the profession, and the public by developing and sharing its talents and expertise.

Winston Law’s JD program has approximately 419 students, 60% of whom are Tennessee residents. With a productive, engaged faculty of 44, Winston Law boasts an enviable 6:1 student-faculty ratio while maintaining an affordable tuition. Winston Law offers JD students two optional concentrations: Advocacy and Dispute Resolution and Business Transactions, each of which provides an opportunity for students to focus their studies as they develop skills and gain knowledge helpful to their pursuit of meaningful employment. Winston Law is also proud to offer the Frank Winston Fellowship for six law students annually with interests in business or public interest law. Fellows are provided full tuition, a generous yearly stipend, financial support for summer internships, and extensive opportunities for academic enrichment and professional development. JD students can also pursue dual-degree programs in business, philosophy, public health, social work, and public policy and administration. Winston Law students may choose an accelerated JD program or opt for a flexible program, allowing them to earn their JD degree in a manner that best suits their own circumstances. Winston Law also provides a “3+3” program for students who intend to earn a BA/BS degree and a JD degree within 6 academic years. Winston Law’s MLS degree and legal studies graduate certificate program are designed to provide foundational legal knowledge to working professionals and graduate/PhD students whose fields intersect with law.

Winston Law hosts 5 flagship faculty-led programs to enhance student training: the Clayton Center for Entrepreneurial Law, the Center for Advocacy and Dispute Resolution, the Institute for Professional Leadership, the UT Legal Clinic, and the Legal Writing Program. Students at Winston Law also have opportunities to help produce several exceptional journals, including Tennessee Law Review, Tennessee Journal of Law and Policy, The Tennessee Journal of Race, Gender & Social Justice, and Transactions: The Tennessee Journal of Business Law. Students also participate in moot trial, mock court, and transactional business competitions, as well as pro bono and public service opportunities and externships.

Winston Law has an annual operating budget of approximately \$25 million and a strong donor base. The College recently received a naming gift of \$32.5 million. Separate and apart from the naming gift, the College is on pace to meet the \$110 million goal of its current It Takes a Volunteer fundraising campaign, scheduled to end in 2030.



The Campus and Its Leadership

Now is an exciting time to join UTK.

UT welcomed its largest student body ever in the fall of 2026, and both retention and graduation rates continue to rise. Students across campus are increasingly engaged and successful. Fundraising has seen three consecutive years of new highs. The university is spending over three billion dollars on capital projects and improvements, including the construction of new buildings across campus. The Dean of Winston College of Law would work within the College, the larger campus and university, the state, and the nation to pursue a shared vision for increasing success and transformation. Chancellor Donde Plowman became the ninth chancellor of UTK on July 1, 2019. Under her

leadership, the university has placed renewed focus on its land-grant mission as the state's flagship public institution. Since her arrival, Plowman has overseen the creation of the UT Oak Ridge Innovation Institute, the reunification of the Knoxville campus with the Institute of Agriculture, continued growth in student enrollment and retention rates, and the launch of a new strategic visioning process.

Before arriving at UTK as its Chancellor, Plowman spent nine years at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where she served most recently as executive vice chancellor and chief academic officer. She served for more than six years as the James Jr. and Susan Stuart Dean of UNL's College of Business Administration. Before going to Nebraska, Plowman was on the management faculty at UTK, where she served for two years as head of the Department of Management in the Haslam College of Business. She began her academic career at the University of Texas at San Antonio as an assistant professor of management and advanced to the position of professor and associate Dean for graduate studies and research, where she was responsible for the creation of the university's doctoral degree in business.

Plowman has a doctorate in strategic management from the University of Texas at Austin, an undergraduate degree with a major in English from Southern Methodist University, and an MEd in higher education administration from the University of North Texas.

Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor John Zomchick was appointed in May 2020, but he has called UTK home since 1985. He most recently served as vice provost for faculty affairs, a position he held for more than five years. He also served as interim provost and senior vice chancellor from August 2016 until April 2018. Before joining the Office of the Provost's staff, he served as executive associate Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences.

A professor of English, Zomchick is a scholar of eighteenth-century English literature. During his time in the UTK College of Arts and Sciences, he held several administrative appointments, including associate Dean for academic personnel, interim associate Dean for academic programs, and head of the Department of English. Zomchick has a bachelor's degree from Pennsylvania State University and a master's and doctorate in English literature from Columbia University.

For additional information about UTK, please review:
<https://www.utk.edu/>





Knoxville Area

Knoxville, Tennessee, and the surrounding East Tennessee region offer an exceptional quality of life, combining the opportunities of a growing metropolitan area with the warmth, charm, and natural beauty of the Appalachian Highlands. Knoxville features a vibrant and walkable downtown, diverse neighborhoods, thriving culinary and music scenes, with year-round outdoor recreation. The region's rich cultural heritage is showcased through beloved events such as the Dogwood Arts Festival and Big Ears Festival, many cultural festivals, along with a collection of museums, like the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame, galleries, and performing arts venues. Knoxville is also home to the University of Tennessee Volunteers, whose passionate fan base, game-day traditions, and nationally recognized athletics programs creates one of the most exciting college sports towns in the country. Moderate housing costs, short commute times, no state income tax, excellent healthcare, and a strong economy driven by higher education, healthcare, technology, advanced manufacturing, and energy attract residents and investors. The area also benefits from a local airport, regional destinations, and convenient access to major airports for both business and leisure travel. Knoxville experiences four distinct seasons, with pleasant springs and falls, warm summers, and winters that are typically milder than those in many northern cities, which allow for year-round outdoor activities.

Nestled in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, and specifically, the Great Smoky Mountains, Knoxville offers a unique and appealing blend of urban energy, suburban convenience, and outdoor adventure. The Tennessee River and an extensive system of greenways create opportunities for paddling, boating, fishing, cycling, walking, and relaxing in scenic settings close to the heart of the city. Ijams Nature Center, Knoxville's Urban Wilderness, Sequoyah Park, and numerous local trails make outdoor activity part of daily life, while the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Cherokee National Forest, Cherokee Lake, Norris Lake, Douglas Lake, Tellico Lake, waterfalls, state parks, and several mountain towns are all readily accessible for day trips and weekend exploration. The nearby Sevier County communities also provide a major family-entertainment destination in Dollywood, Dolly Parton's acclaimed Pigeon Forge theme park, which celebrates regional music, craftsmanship, food, and Appalachian heritage alongside seasonal festivals, rides, and live performances. The region's ridges, valleys, forests, rivers, and mountain views provide a remarkable backdrop in every season. This foothill setting also informs the area's rich cultural identity through Appalachian music, crafts, food traditions, history, and hospitality. By balancing urban vitality and suburban convenience with immediate access to nationally celebrated natural landscapes and attractions, Knoxville offers the rare combination of career growth, cultural engagement, community spirit, and outdoor adventure that allows residents not only to work successfully but also to feel genuinely at home. Knoxville continues to distinguish itself as one of the Southeast's premier places to live, work, and build, or solidify, a future.

For more information about Knoxville, please review the [Knoxville Chamber of Commerce](#) and [Visit Knoxville](#) pages.

Procedure for Candidacy

All applications, nominations, and inquiries are invited. Applications should include, as separate documents, a CV or resume and a letter of interest addressing the themes in this profile.

WittKieffer is assisting the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by **December 5, 2026**.

Application materials should be submitted using WittKieffer's [candidate portal](#).

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

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