



Dean, CUNY School of Law

Leadership Profile

May 2026



Executive Summary

The City University of New York (CUNY) seeks a social justice and public interested mission oriented, engaged, and highly collaborative leader for the position of Dean of its School of Law. Reporting to the Chancellor, the Dean will have an extraordinary opportunity to lead a school that is a national and international leader in experiential legal education, with its Lawyering program praised by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, capstone clinics, innovative approaches to doctrinal pedagogy, and recognized as the premier public interest law school in the nation. CUNY School of Law is the nation's #1 public interest law school, its dual mission to educate lawyers in the service of human needs, and to transform the teaching, learning, and practice of law to include those historically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed make it a singular institution. As the only publicly funded law school in New York City, CUNY Law increases access to excellent legal training by pursuing its mission. The Law School's access mission is further served by its four year part-time evening program, launched in 2015.

CUNY Law is built on a tradition of social justice lawyering: movements for social change are built with leadership and collaboration from the people and communities who have experienced injustice. The law school's #1 ranking in diversity of the faculty and student body is an example of how its mission is realized through intentional recruitment. Its status as a top-three clinical education program is a manifestation of CUNY Law's commitment to partnering with local and community-based organizations in the field. The CUNY Law community includes activists, organizers, accomplished scholars, and advocates that stand united in the belief that only when the world can see the full range of human experience reflected and represented in the law will we have justice for all. This is an exciting opportunity to join the nation's leading urban public university, led by a strong executive team of highly skilled and experienced leaders of all CUNY institutions, allowing for a plethora of unique collaborative opportunities.

CUNY seeks a Dean who will lead boldly with integrity and clarity, articulating a compelling, mission-centered vision that aligns the Law School's academic, operational, and community-facing work amid a complex economic, political, and regulatory environment and who is familiar with how the operation of local, state, and federal government, non-profit organizations, and community-based institutions impacts legal education and the landscape of law practice. The University seeks a courageous leader, one who demonstrates bravery in navigating complex challenges and advancing the Law School's mission with integrity and conviction. CUNY expects the Dean to foster trust and across faculty, staff, and students, setting clear expectations for collaboration, mutual respect, transparency, and academic excellence. As the public face of the Law School, the Dean will represent CUNY Law with confidence and strength, reinforcing its standing as the nation's premier public interest law school and a cornerstone of excellence within the CUNY system and the City of New York.

CUNY has retained WittKieffer, a global executive search firm, to assist in this search. This document describes CUNY and the School of Law, the opportunities and challenges facing the Dean of the School, and the personal and professional characteristics that the ideal candidate should possess. All applications, inquiries, and nominations, which will remain confidential, should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

For more information about CUNY and its School of Law please visit law.cuny.edu.

Role of the Dean

The Dean serves as the chief academic and executive officer of the School of Law, reporting to the Chancellor and participating as a key member of the University's academic leadership team. The Dean provides overall leadership and strategic direction for the Law School, with responsibility for advancing its mission, overseeing academic quality, stewarding resources, and leading fundraising and external engagement efforts. The Dean is accountable for the recruitment, development, and support of faculty and staff; the effective management of fiscal and physical resources; and the integrity and excellence of the Law School's academic programs. In partnership with the faculty, the Dean fosters an environment that supports outstanding teaching, scholarship, and public service, consistent with CUNY Law's commitment to Law in the Service of Human Needs. As the principal ambassador for the School, the Dean promotes its visibility, reputation, and impact within the University and to external audiences, including the legal profession, government, community partners, and the public.

The School is in a very strong position to attract new leadership. The Chancellor considers this appointment of strategic importance to the University and critical to its mission as the nation's leading urban public university. The Chancellor and the entire CUNY community expect the new Dean to:

- **Advance and champion CUNY Law's public interest mission**

CUNY School of Law is defined by its singular mission to educate law students to practice law in the service of human needs and to promote equal justice for people and communities historically excluded from legal systems and power. The next Dean will be a visible and vocal advocate for this mission, ensuring that it remains central to the law school's identity, operations, and future growth.

The dean will provide strategic leadership for a model of legal education grounded in public interest, social justice, and community engagement. This includes championing curricular and experiential approaches that prepare students to become effective, practice-ready advocates committed to addressing systemic inequities and advancing justice in a diverse and changing society. The Dean will support pedagogy that integrates doctrinal learning with clinical, experiential, and community-based education consistent with CUNY Law's mission.

The Dean will be focused on the practical as well as academic components that promote student learning and career development and success, including student support programs, pre-legal education, and continuing legal education and opportunities.

Working collaboratively with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners, the Dean will assess the effectiveness of existing programs and initiatives and lead efforts to strengthen and innovate in ways that align with the law school's mission and the evolving needs of the communities CUNY Law serves. The Dean will foster a culture of shared governance, inclusion, and accountability, ensuring that faculty and administrators are supported and empowered in delivering a rigorous, mission-driven legal education. As the chief advocate and ambassador for CUNY Law, the Dean will advance the law school's public voice as a leader in social justice legal education, access to justice, and transformative public interest lawyering.

- **Foster a supportive and inclusive academic community**

The school has long upheld values that emphasize broad access to legal education and the creation of an environment in which all members of the community can thrive. The next Dean will play a key role in continuing to advance these values by supporting an academic community that is welcoming, respectful, and responsive to the needs of individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Working in collaboration with faculty, staff, students, and alumni, the Dean will help articulate a contemporary vision for an environment that supports fairness, opportunity, and meaningful engagement across the community. This includes consideration of identities such as economic status, race and ethnicity, gender and sexual

orientation, international backgrounds, religious identity, military service, disability, and other intersecting experiences.

Key opportunities include strengthening recruitment and retention practices for faculty, staff, and students; fostering policies that promote an equitable and supportive learning environment; and sustaining professional development efforts that help the community advance CUNY Law's mission.

The broader national and global environment in which the new Dean assumes leadership requires bravery, persistence, thoughtful attention, communication, and collaborative problem-solving. The Dean will be expected to initiate and guide innovative efforts to build and sustain an inclusive community. The Dean must navigate a range of perspectives within the school and work to create a climate in which open dialogue, informed discussion, and shared commitment strengthen the institution and advance its mission of expanding access to justice.

- **Possess a track record of integrity and commitment to excellence**

The University seeks a Dean with integrity who will uphold the School's values in developing and executing a vision and course that navigates a dynamic economic, political, and demographic environment while staying focused on outstanding results and its unwavering commitment to Law in the Service of Human Needs.

CUNY's leadership believes that a great public University needs a great law school and vice versa. CUNY expects its law school to be a pillar of excellence and continue to build on its reputation as the premier public interest law school in the country.

- **Lead faculty and promote the development of scholarship**

The new Dean will lead a unitary tenure track faculty by respecting and appreciating a shared governance structure, encouraging and supporting faculty scholarship, facilitating teaching excellence, cultivating collegial and constructive relations with and among faculty, diversifying the faculty and student ranks, encouraging faculty service, addressing faculty issues, and ensuring that library and information resources continue to effectively support the academic program and faculty scholarship.

The new Dean will exhibit a strong commitment to and personally exhibit a track record in scholarly, creative, and professional endeavors that will differentiate CUNY Law and fulfill its promise. The Dean will play a central role in encouraging this activity as well as identifying promising new areas for inquiry that support CUNY Law's unique mission. The Dean will continue to develop and implement CUNY Law's efforts to enhance its reputation and influence. The Dean will promote CUNY Law's longstanding lawyering program, academic support, career initiatives, and innovative teaching and scholarship. The Dean will also promote CUNY Law's long-standing, top ranked clinical programs, which allow students to gain valuable real-world experience and make a difference in the community by performing legal work for their clients.

- **Be a visionary leader with strong administrative skills**

The Dean will assume extensive and crucial strategic leadership in designing the pathways by which general strategic goals are achieved, defining a range of concrete goals embedded in the school's commitment to developing innovative teaching models and public service, and constructing annual priorities for the school that define its developmental trajectory. The Dean will join a management team that efficiently and effectively supports all academic and administrative functions of CUNY Law, with Senior Associate and Associate Deans and members of the senior staff in supervisory roles reporting to the Dean. The Dean will be responsible for managing and stewarding the school's budget, campus, and staff and will work closely with the Chancellor around financial planning and resource allocation. Given the competitive landscape, it is essential that the Dean support vigorous and robust student support services, especially career planning programs that facilitate the students' ability to meet their professional objectives in an increasingly challenging employment market.

- **Collaborate with the University administration and create collaborative educational opportunities with other CUNY institutions**

The Dean is expected to maintain and continue to nurture strong ties to the University and its administration on whom the School depends for a number of central services, leadership, and support as well as serve as the face and voice of CUNY Law vis-à-vis external constituencies. There also exists a great opportunity for the

new Dean to work with the leaders of other CUNY institutions to create unique educational opportunities for students and faculty. The existing dual degree programs with CUNY institutions (a JD/MA in Forensic Psychology and a JD/MPA in Public Policy Administration both with John Jay College of Criminal Justice; and a JD/MIA in International Relations with the Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership at City College) are good examples. The Law School has also begun to regularly cross list courses with the School of Labor and Urban Studies and is exploring the possibility of certificate programs.

- **Enhance institutional advancement and external relationships**

The Dean will play a critical role in raising the profile of the School of Law and leading its institutional advancement and fundraising initiatives. The Dean will build alliances with numerous external partners, find external revenue sources, and match them with institutional priorities. The Dean is expected to play an active and visible role with alumni on a regular basis to encourage their involvement as volunteers, donors, and mentors. The Dean must externally promote CUNY Law's reputation and goodwill within legal education, the legal profession, and the New York legal market. Strengthening the visibility and reputation of the faculty is critical. An effective, multifaceted communications plan is needed which builds on the school's mission and presents a strong, innovative, and consistent image to key constituencies. Furthermore, it will be important that CUNY Law prepares its students for postgraduate opportunities by responding to market demands and employment trends through strategic partnerships with the legal community including opportunities to work with historically marginalized groups.

- **Develop a strategy for student recruitment, enrollment management and financial aid**

Law school enrollment is highly competitive. The Dean must bring creativity and focus to student recruitment efforts in order to attract and retain a highly qualified and diverse student body and to meet enrollment and financial goals. While selectivity is important to CUNY Law, the School also does very well attracting students whose ambition, promise, diverse background, record of overcoming obstacles, and/or work experience offset below-average test scores. In a competitive national and regional market, the Dean will be expected to lead efforts to diversify enrollment through strengthening and marketing existing offerings, capitalizing on faculty creativity and talent, and nourishing programs serving the New York area and region. At the same time, the Dean will work with staff and faculty to ensure CUNY Law is attracting and retaining academically strong and diverse students who are committed to public service. The Dean will engage with faculty members and enrollment management staff to develop a strategic approach to enrollment stabilization that considers academic preparation, need for financial support and career expectations. In the past scholarships have been identified as a valuable recruitment tool and creative fundraising to support scholarship initiatives is a priority.

- **Enhance CUNY Law's social justice-focused education and bar examination preparation**

The next Dean will bring a strategic focus on a program of legal education that prepares students to be effective advocates who are committed to public service, and that supports bar exam preparation and success. The Dean will be expected to work with faculty to ensure students receive a legal education grounded in theory and practice, equipping them to be leaders in their communities. The Dean will be asked to assess the strength of current programs and help identify, with input from the faculty and staff, which programs would best serve the needs of students and the practicing legal community. In addition, the Dean will remain vigilant about students' needs and assess current and new educational tools to improve the learning experience and student bar passage rates. It is important that the next Dean lead and support administrators and faculty in ensuring a strong social justice-focused education, academic success and bar preparation.

Professional Qualifications and Personal Qualities

The ideal candidate will have many of the following skills and unique qualities:

- **Outstanding legal background:** The Dean will have a J.D. and academic or professional qualifications appropriate for appointment as a tenured full Professor at CUNY Law and a strong record of distinguished academic or professional accomplishments that exhibits a commitment to excellence in social justice lawyering.
- **A record of successful leadership:** The Dean will bring experience in leadership, organizational development, and staff professional development within complex institutions or organizations. The Dean will have a student-centered attitude and prioritize enhancing the student experience, including bar passage. The Dean will have the ability to adapt to the opportunities and challenges afforded by new trends in legal education and the legal profession and will be able to provide innovation and effective direction, including through understanding and exploring the impact of technology on teaching, learning, and law practice.
- **Faculty and staff development experience:** The Dean will have experience in faculty/organizational development and staff/professional development, as well as a proven track record for leadership in formulating and implementing academic policies, programs, and scholarly activities.
- **Commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion:** The Dean will demonstrate a deep and sustained commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access across multiple dimensions, with experience leading racially, ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse communities. Beyond commitment, the Dean must be willing to lead bravely—setting boundaries, upholding community standards, and creating space for constructive dialogue even when tensions arise. This leader will build relationships grounded in trust and shared purpose with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and civic and professional partners throughout New York City, New York State, and beyond.
- **Management expertise:** The Dean will bring substantial administrative experience, including strategic planning, program assessment, and policy development, with the ability to manage complexity across multiple constituencies and priorities. This role calls for strong executive function - the ability to see the Law School as a system of interdependent parts and to make informed, timely decisions amid competing pressures. The Dean will lead collaboratively and transparently, respect academic governance, align resources with mission-driven priorities, and maintain accountability to the Law School's multi-year strategic plan.
- **Commitment to CUNY Law's mission:** The Dean will have understanding of, and commitment to, clinical training and innovation in pedagogy, academic support and experiential learning, and how to enhance student learning. The Dean will also demonstrate a deep commitment to social justice as a focus of legal education and the passion and ability to articulate this commitment to internal and external audiences.
- **A successful fundraiser:** The Dean will be an experienced and enthusiastic fundraiser. The Dean will have the ability to contribute to and lead the development efforts and other extramural funding activities, including strengthening alumni relations and building relationships with partners for clinical education programming.
- **Relationship builder:** The Dean will possess the skills necessary to maintain and develop relationships with all of the constituencies of CUNY and the ability to create new and productive relationships. The dean will serve as a comfortable and effective collaborator with CUNY Law faculty, staff, and students, as well as alumni, lawyers, judges, corporate officers, foundations staff, government officials and a range of potential donors. The Dean will have a commitment to the future careers of CUNY students and to building relationships with the entities and organizations that provide opportunities for students and alumni.
- **Excellent communicator:** The Dean will be an excellent communicator with the ability to speak and write with clarity, confidence, and moral authority, both publicly and internally. This leader will be approachable and engaged, yet willing to speak declaratively when circumstances require, especially in moments of public

scrutiny or internal challenge. The Dean will foster a collegial environment while demonstrating the bravery to confront difficult issues directly, champion the Law School's values publicly, and lead with humility, honesty, and resolve.

About CUNY School of Law

Founded in 1983, CUNY School of Law is guided by a clear mission: to graduate outstanding public interest lawyers and diversify the legal profession. Recognized as the nation's #1 public interest law school and its most diverse, CUNY Law trains students to use the law in the service of human needs.

Located in Long Island City, Queens, one of the most diverse urban centers in the world, the Law School draws students whose lived experiences mirror the communities they serve. The student body reflects CUNY's broader access mission: many are first-generation college or law students, parents, caregivers, or professionals returning to school.

More than 5,400 alumni serve across public service, government, the judiciary, and community-based advocacy, advancing justice throughout New York City and beyond. Over half of graduates enter public interest or public service roles within ten months of graduation, compared to a national average below 10 percent, demonstrating CUNY Law's continued leadership in preparing lawyers committed to serving the public good.

Academic Philosophy

CUNY School of Law brings together the very best in clinical training with traditional doctrinal legal education to create lawyers prepared to serve the public interest. As part of its mission, students are prepared to practice, in accordance with CUNY Law's motto, "Law in the Service of Human Needs." CUNY Law's curriculum requires all third- or fourth- year students in its full-time day and part-time evening programs to represent actual clients in such fields as criminal defense, immigration law, human rights law, community economic development and more. CUNY is a national leader in progressive legal education. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in a national study of legal education, lauded CUNY School of Law's innovative curriculum, which has become a model for law schools across the nation. Many pedagogical initiatives first piloted at CUNY School of Law are now curricular standards at other law schools.

Doctrinal Study and Lawyering Skills

The basic premise of the Law School's program is that theory cannot be separated from practice, abstract knowledge of doctrine from practical skill, and understanding the professional role from professional experience. CUNY Law's curriculum integrates practical experience, professional responsibility, and lawyering skills with doctrinal study at every level. Forming the core of its lawyering curriculum are the skills recognized by the profession as essential to successful law practice: problem solving, legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, factual investigation, communication (legal writing, oral argument), counseling, negotiation, litigation and alternative dispute-resolution, culturally competent practice protocols, organization and management of legal work, and recognizing and resolving ethical dilemmas. The Law School has developed a required program consisting of 12 credits of Lawyering that addresses these skills in a seminar setting and offers immersive simulated experiences. All first year students also take a 2 credit legal research course. This work is grounded in CUNY Law's commitment to critical pedagogy: all 1L students take required courses such as Law, Equality & Due Process and Critical Race Theory, establishing a foundation in power analysis and structural critique that is carried forward through the curriculum. Additionally, CUNY Law faculty are committed to incorporating critical theory across the curriculum to train students to apply this analysis in all of their work as lawyers.

The Role of Clinical Education

For the past decade, CUNY School of Law's clinical programs have been designated among the top three in the nation by U.S. News & World Report. Layered onto the traditional foundation of doctrinal education is CUNY Law's deep and broad clinical training program. First-year students acquire hands-on experience through

simulation exercises conducted in a required year-long lawyering seminar; second-year students take an advanced one-semester lawyering seminar in a public interest law area; third- or fourth- year students earn 10-16 credits in either a live-client clinic onsite at the Law School or a field placement program.

CUNY Law's curriculum rejects the traditional separation of substantive law courses into narrowly defined subjects. Precisely because attorneys are seldom presented with legal problems neatly compartmentalized into analytically distinct subject headings, the law school's curriculum teaches students to think about subject matter, rule application and procedure and to synthesize these aspects critically. Thus, CUNY Law graduates are able to address the many-sided problems that confront attorneys and their clients in real life.

Student-to-Student Collaboration

Because collaboration is both an important practical skill and a valuable learning mode, the Law School encourages students to work together on many activities and provides opportunities and frameworks for them to develop collaborative skills and practices. The Law School has a grading system but does not rank students. This approach alters the conventional hierarchical structure and atmosphere of most legal education settings.

Students collaborate in many learning contexts, particularly in their clinic classes. The school's small size and low student-faculty ratios foster a supportive learning environment designed to maximize individual and professional development. Because exams should be the means, not the ends of learning, many courses rely upon writing exercises and simulation work to evaluate student performance and progress. All courses require more than one evaluative tool for grading purposes.

Academic Support and the Irene Diamond Professional Skills Center

CUNY Law's Skills Program is an embedded component of the curriculum, designed to ensure that every student, regardless of background or starting point, has access to the foundational methods of legal analysis, writing, and professional practice. Skills instruction is woven throughout the early curriculum and aligned with doctrinal coursework, giving students consistent exposure to the habits, frameworks, and strategies essential to learning law. It remains a core part of CUNY Law's commitment to access, equity, and academic excellence.

The Law School is committed to providing academic support services to all students. The 18:1 student-to-faculty ratio in Lawyering Seminars creates a unique opportunity for skills development through close supervision and frequent feedback.

However, recognizing that many students experience difficulty transitioning to Law School, CUNY Law has also developed a comprehensive approach to academic support that emphasizes individual diagnostic assessment, learning styles and individual or small group work with a faculty member. These academic support services are provided through the Law School's Irene Diamond Professional Skills Center, appropriately located contiguous to the Writing Center. Importantly, the centers are not an ancillary part of the academic program, but a fully integrated component of the overall curriculum.

The philosophy of the academic support programs is skill-based: CUNY Law believes that the best service it can provide is to help students develop the academic and study skills necessary to do excellent work. CUNY Law tries to build on the enormous strengths that each student brings to the law school. These academic support programs begin in the first semester and continue with a variety of services in the First Year and the Second Year.

Essential to the Law School's curriculum design is the belief that the overall curriculum and academic support program must address individual learning styles and attempt to accommodate students' differential learning trajectories. Special attention is paid to the importance of legal writing skills including techniques and support to meet each student's individual needs. In the second semester of the first year, individualized and small-group tutoring programs are offered by the Skills Center. The Skills Center also offers an additional course designed to

enhance analytic, writing, and test-taking skills in the second-year. A variety of methodologies, including facilitated study groups and, where necessary, individual tutors, are available to upper-level students. In addition, the Skills Center faculty provides academic workshops and referral services throughout the program.

Bar Exam Support

CUNY Law provides comprehensive bar exam support that begins early and continues through the exam. In partnership with Kaplan, the Law School offers no-cost bar preparation throughout the journey, including focused courses, in-class and individualized skills development, and structured study planning. Most students take a 4-credit capstone in their final semester that reviews doctrinal topics and hones test-taking skills. Each graduating student is paired with a dedicated mentor from the Law School community and has ongoing access to one-on-one guidance on essay writing, study strategy, and time management. The program also administers bar grants to help qualifying students cover living expenses during bar study.

Dual Degree Programs

The Law School has three dual degree programs in conjunction with other CUNY campuses. These dual-degree programs, providing training for students to gain expertise in substantive areas of law and policy and further integrate CUNY Law's work with the larger City University of New York system. They also build on CUNY's nationally recognized strengths in law, public administration, and international relations. The current dual degree programs are:

- JD/MPA in Law and Public Accountability

CUNY Law offers a dual-degree program in Law and Public Accountability with CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice. This program combines CUNY Law's nationally renowned JD program in public interest law with John Jay College's incomparable MPA program in investigating waste, fraud, and abuse in public services. Graduates will be prepared to make lasting contributions to the pursuit of justice and equality in cases of police bias, government corruption, medical/healthcare fraud, technological misuse, media ethics, and other public service matters.

- JD/MA degree in Forensic Psychology

This dual degree combines CUNY Law's nationally renowned expertise in public service and public interest law with John Jay's highly recognized program in forensic psychology. This integrated program provides students with training at the intersection of psychology and law.

- JD/MIA in Law and International Affairs

CUNY Law and City College's Colin Powell School for Civic and Global Leadership offer a dual-degree program in Law and International Affairs. The program combines CUNY Law's exceptional JD program in public interest law with Colin Powell School's expertise in international politics. The program addresses specializations in international law as well as critical topics of societal concern from multiple intellectual perspectives. Graduates will be prepared for careers in national and international governments, multinational/transnational corporations, international Non-Governmental Organizations, and human rights organizations. The program enhances graduates' ability to function as social justice lawyers in an increasingly globalized environment.

Clinical Program

CUNY School of Law's clinical program is the cornerstone of its curriculum and a national model for experiential public interest education. Every student completes a full-time clinic in the third or fourth year, working under faculty supervision to represent clients and communities who might otherwise lack access to legal services. Through ten in-house clinics and two practice-based placements operating under Main Street Legal Services, students engage in live-client representation, advocacy, and movement-aligned work across a wide range of practice areas—from immigrant and gender justice to family law, disability rights, criminal defense, and community economic development and beyond.

Under the auspices of Main Street Legal Services, Inc., the in-house clinics provide direct services through faculty-supervised live-client representation, while the practice clinics are placement-based with supervision by faculty and practicing attorneys. The clinical program's faculty are deeply engaged scholars and advocates whose work informs both teaching and national conversations in clinical legal education. CUNY Law's clinical program continues to be recognized among the top in the nation, reflecting a long-standing belief that the practice of law must be learned through the practice of justice itself.

CUNY Law clinical programs collaborate with local, national, and international organizations to address the needs of clients and diverse communities. Every year, CUNY Law clinics provide legal representation to people who otherwise would not have access to justice.

CUNY Law faculty members are recognized for their leadership and contributions to the field of clinical legal education. They regularly organize and serve as presenters at national conferences, and have been awarded major grants and published influential, groundbreaking scholarship. CUNY Law students have also received professional recognition for their clinical work, including the 2025 CLEA Award at AALS. The Immigrant and Non-Citizen Rights Clinic and the Economic Justice Project Seminar were recipients of the New York State Bar Association's prestigious President's Pro Bono Service Award, and more recently, CUNY Law clinics have continued to shape national and international precedent. From the Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic's work advancing recognition of gender-based persecution before the International Criminal Court, to the Defenders Clinic's leadership in clemency and parole reform litigation throughout New York State, to the Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility (CLEAR) Clinic's ongoing challenges to discriminatory surveillance and national security overreach on the national stage.

Current clinics include:

- Community and Economic Development
- Creating Law Enforcement Accountability and Responsibility
- Defenders Clinic
- Disability Rights and Social Justice Clinic
- Economic Justice Project
- Equality and Justice In-House Clinic and Practice Clinic
- Family Law Practice Clinic
- Family Law Defense Clinic
- Human Rights and Gender Justice Clinic
- Immigrant and Non-Citizen Rights Clinic
- Mediation Clinic

Student Life and Community

CUNY Law's student body reflects the diversity, determination, and purpose of New York City itself. Students bring a wide range of lived experiences to their legal studies, many as first-generation college or law students, organizers, caregivers, and professionals. The Law School's collaborative ecosystem fosters mutual support, leadership development, and collective learning.

Through more than 40 student organizations, and journals, including Black Law Students Association (BLSA), Law Review, Public Interest Law Association (PILA), and other affinity groups, students organize around issues ranging from immigration and environmental justice to gender equity. Campus life is grounded in advocacy and community: students working together to host conferences, and teach-ins that connect law to social movements.

Access Initiatives

Expanding access to legal education is central to CUNY School of Law's mission to train outstanding public interest lawyers and diversify the legal profession. Through initiatives that remove structural barriers to entry, success, and licensure, CUNY Law advances equity and strengthens the pipeline of advocates prepared to serve communities historically excluded from the legal profession.

Evening Program

Launched in 2015, CUNY School of Law's evening program extends the Law School's mission by providing an affordable path to a J.D. for working professionals, caregivers, and career changers. Students complete the program over four years, following the same rigorous curriculum as full-time students, with full access to clinics, bar support, and faculty engagement. The evening program attracts hundreds of students annually, and prepares graduates to pursue justice while balancing work, family, and community commitments.

Pipeline To Justice

The Pipeline to Justice program is an innovative pre-law initiative that expands access to legal education for students from underrepresented communities by offering a second look to applicants who need additional preparation for law school. The program supports participants from admission through graduation and bar passage, advancing CUNY Law's commitment to diversifying the legal profession while also ensuring access to legal education.

Launched in 2006 as one of CUNY's Black Male Initiatives, the Pipeline to Justice program has become a national model for inclusive admissions and student success. A \$550,000 grant from AccessLex is supporting the program's largest-ever cohort for 2025 and strengthening its capacity to assess outcomes and measure long-term impact. Pipeline enriches the Law School community by attracting students whose personal and professional experiences align with CUNY Law's mission.

First Impressions Youth Legal Collaborative

The First Impressions Youth Legal Collaborative engages young people to create a powerful shift toward civic leadership, community advocacy, and a more representative justice system. Funded by Governor Kathy Hochul and State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey '12 and led by Hon. Tracey A. Bing '96 (ret.), the initiative is supported by CUNY Law students, faculty, and alumni and builds early access to legal education through youth-centered programming that connects community, education, and justice.

Launched in 2024, First Impressions draws on the Law School's expertise in pipeline programming to introduce middle and high school students to models of civic engagement, youth empowerment, and social justice lawyering. Its four-week Youth Summer Institute at CUNY Law brings students together with current law students and alumni for a hands-on exploration of advocacy and community-based legal work. Its mentorship component with the Office of Court Administration pairs youth with attorneys, judges, and law students to demystify the legal profession and highlight diverse pathways to justice-focused careers. Through partnerships, career conversations, and college-credit courses developed with CUNY's College Now program, First Impressions is building a sustainable framework for early engagement with the law—redefining what a young person's first impression of the justice system can be.

Social Justice Initiatives

CUNY School of Law integrates social justice into every aspect of legal education, giving students the opportunity to engage in advocacy and community partnership throughout their time in law school. Students learn by doing—joining faculty, alumni, and community partners to address systemic inequities and advance justice in the communities they serve.

CUNY Law's dynamic justice centers foster intersectional and global approaches to issues and initiatives at the heart of human and civil rights work, gender justice, environmental advocacy, law and policy, and transforming justice and representation for communities throughout New York City. These centers create collaborative spaces where students, faculty, and partners address urgent issues through research, policy, and direct engagement. Their collaborative work is ever evolving and expanding, connecting students, faculty, and community partners.

W. Haywood Burns Chair in Human & Civil Rights

The W. Haywood Burns Chair in Human and Civil Rights reflects CUNY School of Law's enduring commitment to civil rights, human rights, and community-centered legal education. Named for W. Haywood Burns—a lawyer, educator, and activist who, as dean from 1987 to 1994, helped shape the Law School's social justice mission—the Chair recognizes and supports leaders whose scholarship and advocacy advance these ideals.

Each year, the Chair brings a distinguished scholar, advocate, or activist to engage with the CUNY Law community through teaching, public dialogue, and collaborative work. Burns Chair holders contribute to the academic and public life of the institution, mentoring students, partnering with faculty, and strengthening CUNY Law's role in national and international conversations on civil and human rights.

Community Legal Resource Network

The Community Legal Resource Network connects CUNY Law alumni with communities across New York City to expand access to justice. Through its City Counseling Program, funded by 15 members of the New York City Council as well as the Manhattan Borough President's Office, CLRN places alumni attorneys throughout New York City to provide free legal assistance in areas including immigration, housing, benefits, family law, and general legal consultations. With additional support from the City's Immigrant Opportunities Initiative, CLRN partners with trusted community organizations to deliver multilingual legal services and strengthen immigrant rights. Alongside these outreach efforts, CLRN fosters professional connection and development through practice-area groups and continuing legal education opportunities for CUNY Law alumni committed to social justice lawyering.

CUNY's Institute on Gender, Law and Transformative Peace

The Institute on Gender, Law, and Transformative Peace (the Institute) reimagines policymaking from the perspective of social movements, bringing those most impacted by crisis and conflict into the policy development process. A hub for cross-sectoral, cross-movement, and transnational organizing, research, and scholarship, the

Institute advances rights-based approaches to national and international law and policy, including peace and transitional justice processes, reconstruction, and human rights mechanisms.

It promotes the leadership of women and LGBTQI+ persons who face interlocking forms of discrimination, including those at the intersections of race, ethnicity, and disability, partnering with them to strengthen movement-building initiatives and change attitudes, policies, and practices that shape global crisis response.

The Second Look Project: Beyond Guilt

A project of the Defenders Clinic, the Second Look Project challenges extreme and unjust prison sentences and works to end mass incarceration through direct representation and advocacy. It secures clemency, parole, and resentencing for people who have served decades in prison and leads statewide efforts to make “second look” review a meaningful part of New York law. Founded by CUNY Law faculty and students, the project is the only initiative in the state dedicated to reducing sentences for those who have transformed their lives while incarcerated.

The Center for Diversity in the Legal Profession

Founded in 2008 and re-established in 2022, the Center for Diversity in the Legal Profession advances racial equity and social justice through research, education, and advocacy. CDLP brings together students, faculty, alumni, and community partners to confront inequities in legal education and the profession while expanding access to the law for communities historically excluded from it. The Center’s work spans research and public education, training and instruction, and service and advocacy. Through mentorship, community-based legal education, and partnerships with schools, bar associations, and justice organizations, CDLP prepares and supports future lawyers committed to equity and representation.

Center for Urban Environmental Reform

Founded on the principle that environmental justice is inseparable from social justice, CUER advances community participation, civic engagement, and participatory democracy in environmental decision-making. CUER serves as a resource hub for community groups—providing data, training, and access to information to increase transparency and support equitable participation in policy processes. Through research, education, and citywide advocacy, the Center engages students in collaborative projects with community partners, preparing them to practice environmental justice lawyering while helping communities most affected by environmental harm influence environmental governance and drive collective action across New York City and beyond.

The Gender Persecution Observatory

A project of the Human Rights and Gender Justice (HRGJ) Clinic, the Gender Persecution Observatory is a groundbreaking platform that aims to increase global awareness and accountability for gender-based crimes in conflicts. Developed in partnership with other universities and advocacy organizations, the Observatory is an interactive hub showcasing data and documentation on gender-based harms and highlighting mechanisms for justice and prevention.

Contemplative Lawyering Program

With yoga and meditation, the Contemplative Lawyering Program additionally offers tools for mindfulness and stress reduction to the Law School community, even as it explores new approaches to justice.

Faculty

CUNY School of Law's faculty is nationally recognized for redefining how law is taught, learned, and practiced. The faculty is among the most diverse in the nation and brings lived experience, deep expertise, and a commitment to social justice that animates every classroom and clinic. Faculty members are movement lawyers, scholars, advocates, and public servants whose work spans courts, communities, and global institutions, shaping both the practice of law and the education of those who will carry it forward.

Known for pioneering pedagogy that integrates critical theory, experiential learning, and client-centered practice, CUNY Law's faculty produces engaged scholarship and public advocacy that influence pressing issues from immigration and gender justice to abolition, environmental policy, and human rights. Their collective strength lies in connection—to students, to communities, and to the pursuit of justice within and beyond the law.

Administrative Staff

CUNY School of Law's administrative staff are integral to the life and mission of the institution. They bring expertise across operations, student services, academic and bar support, technology, advancement, and communications, ensuring that the Law School functions effectively and that its programs, people, and partnerships thrive. Reflecting the diversity and values of CUNY Law, staff collaborate closely with faculty, students, and partners to advance the shared goal of preparing outstanding public interest lawyers and sustaining an inclusive, mission-driven institution. Many also contribute nationally through conferences and professional organizations that shape best practices and policies across the University and legal education.

Law School Facilities

CUNY School of Law moved to its LEED Gold–certified home at 2 Court Square in Long Island City in 2012, positioning the institution at the center of one of New York City's most dynamic and accessible neighborhoods. Designed to reflect the Law School's social justice mission, the facility features sustainable materials, abundant natural light, and flexible spaces that support learning, collaboration, and community engagement.

In 2025, CUNY Law secured a \$6 million New York City capital investment, championed by Council Member Julie Won, to expand and renovate its Community Room. The project will more than double the current space, creating a 3,800-square-foot multi-purpose space for classes, youth programs, civic engagement, and community legal education.

Over the course of the 2024-25 academic year, the Community Room and adjacent campus spaces supported a steady calendar of mission-aligned public programming. In addition to CUNY Law-led youth, immigration, and civic engagement events, the Law School hosted trainings and meetings for several City and nonprofit partners—including the First Impressions Youth Legal Collaborative workshops, CUNY CitizenshipNow!, immigration support events, the Young Debaters Program, citywide WMBE seminars, the NYC Department of Health, Office of Mayor Services, BETA NYC, the Urban Debate Leave, and other community groups that rely on its facilities for high-impact public programs. Across these partnerships, the Law School welcomed over 1,800 visitors, with city agencies and department trainings alone accounting for roughly one hundred sessions annually.

These activities complement CUNY Law's core academic use of space, from classrooms to clinics to student organizations, while making the campus a reliable civi hub for local partners and community legal education.

The Law School also hosts gatherings, public programs, and select external partners that generate supplemental revenue to support the school's mission.

For additional information on CUNY Law, please visit www.law.cuny.edu.

University Leadership



Chancellor Felix V. Matos Rodriguez is the eighth chancellor of The City University of New York, serving nearly 240,000 degree-seeking students across 26 New York City colleges with an operating budget of \$4.1 billion. As Chancellor, he has focused on advancing systemwide career opportunities through industry partnerships, eliminating barriers in the transfer process and reducing costs to improve retention and graduation rates for students. These priorities feature prominently in the University's strategic roadmap, CUNY Lifting New York, adopted in 2023. Student Life

His historic appointment in May 2019 made him the first educator of color and the first Latino to lead the nation's largest urban university. He is also one of a select few U.S. education leaders who has led both a baccalaureate and a community college: Matos Rodríguez previously served as president of CUNY's Queens College and Hostos Community College.

He has made it a key priority to build and advocate for career pipelines for students and graduates. During his tenure CUNY has launched a series of new public-private partnerships, including the New York Jobs CEO Council, a coalition of CEOs from 28 of New York's largest employers, and CUNY Futures in Finance, part of the University's goal of connecting all CUNY graduates to careers by 2030. Additional efforts include placing students in public and nonprofit sector summer jobs via CUNY Career Launch and providing in-demand skills training through CUNY Upskilling.

Under the Chancellor's leadership, the University has revamped its academic offerings to better serve its students. CUNY overhauled the transfer process to establish a seamless transfer of credits for CUNY students moving from an associate to a bachelor's degree within the same major, saving time and money for thousands of students. To increase access and add flexibility, CUNY has expanded the number of online degree programs with a goal of doubling these offerings by 2030. The University has also expanded its programs in Black, Race and Ethnic Studies (BRES), developing New York's first multidisciplinary graduate program in BRES.

Matos Rodríguez has also championed an increase in private fundraising, a focus that yielded the three largest gifts in CUNY's history. These generous gifts include \$75 million from the Simons Foundation and Simons Foundation International, which earmarked \$50 million to establish CUNY as a hub for computational science and \$25 million to support CUNY's participation in Gov. Kathy Hochul's Empire AI project.

As the rising cost of tuition raises questions about the value of a college degree, CUNY has worked to expand access to high quality, affordable higher education; its annual tuition (under \$5,000 for community colleges and under \$7,000 for senior colleges) remains among the most affordable in the nation. In 2022, it ended a long-held policy that banned CUNY colleges from releasing the official transcripts of students and graduates who owed the University unpaid tuition and fees. During the pandemic, the Chancellor erased more than \$100 million in owed tuition and fees for more than 57,000 students through the CUNY Comeback program, at the time the country's largest debt-forgiveness initiative of its kind.

Matos Rodríguez has also used his extensive regional and national networks and board memberships to advance the visibility and recognition of CUNY. In 2024, he was elected to serve as chair of the board of directors of the American Council on Education, the major coordinating body for the nation's colleges and universities. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Council on Foreign Relations, and serves on the boards of the Association for a Better New York, Phipps Houses and the United Way of New York City. The Chancellor also serves as co-chair of the New York City Regional Economic Development Council and is the former chair of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.

From 2006 to 2008, Matos Rodríguez served on Puerto Rico's Cabinet as secretary of the Department of Family Services, overseeing a \$2.3 billion budget and over 11,000 employees.

Matos Rodríguez has an extensive publication record in the fields of women's, Puerto Rican, Caribbean and Latino and migration studies. He was the founding editor of the series *New Directions in Puerto Rican Studies* and the recipient of the Albert J. Beveridge Award of the American Historical Association.

A cum laude graduate in Latin American studies from Yale University, Matos Rodríguez received his Ph.D. in history from Columbia University. He has taught at half a dozen institutions, including CUNY's City College and Hunter College, Yale and Northeastern University. At Hunter, he directed the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, one of the largest and most important Latino research centers in the United States.

He is married to Dr. Liliana M. Arabía, a dentist, and they have two sons.

Queens, NY

Long renowned as “the world’s borough,” Queens is enjoying a renaissance as immigrants from everywhere once again are calling Queens their new home. After they land at one of the two airports located in New York City, they settle into neighborhoods such as Flushing, Jackson Heights, and Long Island City — home to CUNY Law, with spectacular waterfront views of Manhattan.

New York City is composed of five boroughs: Manhattan, Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island. Each borough has the same boundaries as a county of the state. Queens is the easternmost and largest in area of the five boroughs of New York City, geographically adjacent to the borough of Brooklyn at the western end of Long Island. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Queens County has a total area of 178 square miles, of which 109 square miles is land and 70 square miles is water. It is the second-largest in population of the boroughs, with a Census-estimated 2,405,464 residents in 2020. Queens County is also the second most populous county in New York State, behind neighboring Kings County, which is coterminous with the borough of Brooklyn.

With the second-largest and most diversified economy of all the five boroughs of New York City, the Queens job market is evenly spread across the health care, retail trade, manufacturing, construction, transportation, and film and television production sectors. No single sector is overwhelmingly dominant. Several large companies have their headquarters in Queens, including watchmaker Bulova, based in East Elmhurst; internationally renowned piano manufacturer Steinway & Sons in Astoria; Glacéau, the makers of Vitamin Water, headquartered in Whitestone; and JetBlue Airways, an airline based in Long Island City.

Queens is also home to the New York Mets baseball team. The team plays at Citi Field, located in Flushing Meadows–Corona Park, often referred to as Flushing Meadows. Flushing Meadows is a public park in New York City and this park also contains the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center, the current venue for the U.S. Open tennis tournament, the New York Hall of Science, the Queens Museum of Art, the Queens Zoo, and the New York State Pavilion. Other well-known attractions in Queens include Kaufman Astoria Studios, Silvercup Studios and Aqueduct Racetrack.

Queens offers an array of restaurants and some of the City’s finest momo, bao, tacos, moussaka, pad kee mao, dosas, kebabs, kasha, soup dumplings, and almost any other far-flung specialty you can think of—often just an elevated train ride away. The City is great for food lovers who are coming not just for traditional iterations of global cuisine, but for more forward-thinking spots, too, where next-generation chefs have discovered that cheaper rents plus changing demographics create a rich culinary landscape. Well-known restaurants delight customers throughout Queens, and particularly in Long Island City, which is home to Michelin star winning Casa Enrique.

The other boroughs within New York City also offer many attractions, restaurants, shops and nightlife. These surrounding areas can be easily accessed through the New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority. For additional information regarding public transportation, please refer to: <http://www.mta.info>

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 CUNY School of Law in this search. For fullest consideration, candidate materials should be received by **October 16, 2026**.

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

Nominations and inquiries can be directed to:

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Ashlee Musser

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CUNY's Policy on Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination applicable to all colleges and units is—to recruit, employ, retain, promote, and provide benefits to employees and to admit and provide services for students without discriminating on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, creed, national origin, ethnicity, ancestry, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital status, partnership status, disability, genetic information, alienage, citizenship, military or veteran status, pregnancy, status as a victim of domestic violence/stalking/sex offenses, unemployment status, caregiver or familial status, prior record of arrest or conviction, or any other legally prohibited basis in accordance with federal, state and city laws.