



College of LAW

Terence L. Blackburn, DEAN

HISTORY AND AFFILIATION WITH MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Michigan State University College of Law represents the functional academic integration and collaboration between a private law school and a Big Ten university.

Founded in 1891, the MSU College of Law remains one of the oldest continuously operating independent law schools in the United States. The law school affiliated with MSU in 1995 to extend its academic excellence and offer more interdisciplinary programs to its students and to provide Michigan State University with a law school fully accredited by the American Bar Association. The law school has been a member of the Association of American Law Schools since 1946. In 1997, the law school moved from Detroit to its state-of-the-art law building in the heart of MSU's East Lansing campus.

Through the affiliation, the programs and identities of the two institutions are aligned, and the MSU College of Law faculty and students are able to participate fully in MSU academic life. The name change and full academic participation were approved by the law school's Board of Trustees on April 14, 2004 and by the MSU Board of Trustees on April 16, 2004. The law school now fully participates in the same manner as MSU's constituent colleges, although it remains financially independent and receives no state or MSU funding.

Mission

The MSU College of Law provides a rigorous educational program which prepares a diverse community of students to be national and international leaders in private legal practice, business and industry, government service, and legal education. The MSU College of Law defines its mission drawing on a century of service, its contemporary association with a major research institution, and a common commitment by the MSU College of Law and

MSU to broad educational access, scholarly excellence, and service to society.

The MSU College of Law teaches core legal skills, supplemented with academic concentrations, programmatic initiatives, and scholarly research and exchanges. The educational program of the law school teaches and reinforces the ethical core of good lawyering, the values of professionalism and service, the art of client representation and trial advocacy, and the understanding of legal principles, private rights, and public policy.

Legal Education

The MSU College of Law legal education program leading to the Juris Doctor (J.D.) degree is distinctive in several ways. First and foremost, it is designed to offer integrated learning, marrying theory to practice. When students graduate, the Law College wants them to be ready to practice law in real-world settings. This goal is accomplished in the classroom, which provides skill-based learning — especially writing and advocacy skills — along with the theory of law. It also is achieved through an abundance of experiential learning opportunities such as internships, externships and clinical experiences.

Another distinction of an MSU College of Law education is the substantive collaboration with other disciplines and programs at MSU. Law school concentrations and certificate programs, which allow students to specialize in an area of law of interest, include opportunities to take graduate-level courses throughout MSU. Benefits from this interdisciplinary approach to legal education result from greater understanding of how law is practiced in society — how it interrelates to a wide range of disciplines.

Integrated learning also is accomplished through dual-degree programs, which allow students to earn both a law degree and another graduate degree in four years. Of particular note is the dual-degree program with the University of Ottawa Faculty of Law, which enables students to earn two law degrees — the J.D. and the Canadian LL.B. — in four years. This program provides a

COLLEGE OF LAW
Legal Education

deeper understanding of international law and practice in cross-border situations.

Juris Doctor

Of the 88 credit hours needed to graduate with a Juris Doctor (JD) degree, 44 credit hours are required courses.

In addition to the required courses, students must take a course that satisfies an upper-level writing requirement, which can be completed anytime after the student has successfully completed 29 credit hours and Research, Writing and Advocacy I and II. Students have 44 credit hours of elective courses, which may be used to fulfill the requirements for a concentration or certificate program or to gain a more generalized legal education.

Full and Part-time Programs

The American Bar Association (ABA) sets requirements for the study of law at all of the law schools it has accredited. The residency requirement states that students must attend classes a prescribed number of days and weeks. Full-time students at the MSU College of Law complete their J.D. degree in three years. A student may accelerate by completing some course work in the summer. The recommended maximum time for completion of requirements for full- and part-time students is five and six years respectively.

Full-time Program

The MSU College of Law full-time program is designed for students who can devote most of their time to the study of law. By def-

inition, a full-time student does not hold employment that requires the student to work more than 20 hours a week or who have other commitments which preclude them from focusing exclusively on their legal studies. Classes are held at varying times between 8 a.m. and 9:45 p.m., Monday through Friday, and a normal course load is 14 to 16 hours per semester. Based on the current curriculum, students can complete their law degree in three years, or six full semesters, exclusive of summer school.

Part-time Program

The MSU College of Law part-time program is designed for students who work more than 20 hours each week. Most part-time students take classes between the hours of 5:45 and 9:45 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The part-time program offers two basic formats. The first is a four-year option, or eight semesters, exclusive of summer school, with a normal course load of 10 to 12 credit hours per semester. The second is a more flexible schedule, with classes taken two or three days each week. Part-time students who choose the second option take six to nine credit hours each semester and five to six additional credits every summer for four summers. The same full-time faculty members teach both full-time and part-time required courses.

Summer Session

Both full- and part-time students may enroll in a seven-week summer session.