

University of Puerto Rico

School of Law

Approved at the April 27, 2016 Faculty Meeting

Declaration of the Purposes and Objectives of the School of Law

2016

### **Vision and Mission**

The University of Puerto Rico's School of Law's vision is to serve as a cutting-edge academic center with international projection and prestige focused on providing accessible education, as well as, on the reflection, analysis and practice of law and justice as an instrument of social transformation from a human dignity perspective.

Its mission is to provide students with the academic education necessary to mold capable jurists and custodians of rights, who shall contribute in the strengthening of an ethical, just and inclusive society. Likewise, initiate and cultivate in the student-body an interest for the analysis of new perspectives in the practice of law, with special attention to transactional and innovative techniques that lead a society to learn, value and enforce their rights

### **Governing Principles of the Academic Tasks**

The School of Law pursues the conservation, improvement, and transmission of the most advanced concepts in law, in harmony with democratic principles, from a perspective of justice and respect for human dignity. Additionally, the School of Law maintains its position as a center for generating knowledge and critical reflection on legal institutions.

Because of this, the School of Law must encourage the continued development of growth and clarification of the law in Puerto Rico, and contribute to universal legal thought and law at large.

The School of Law, both through individual and collective efforts, must demonstrate continuous endeavors to reform the current state of the law in Puerto Rico and the alternate methods of dispute resolution by encouraging and promoting studies and research concerning important social problems which may be effectively resolved through the law. Professors and students alike should participate in society's thinking activities where the main decisions of public policy affecting Puerto Rico emanate from, forging and focusing the legal social change of the community. Also, the School should attend to the tasks more directly related to teaching and legal scholarship, such as preparing educational materials, conducting historical research of the law, analyzing recent legislation and jurisprudence, and other similar undertakings. Likewise, the School must specifically encourage the development of comparative law by capitalizing on Puerto Rico's circumstances, where both civil and common law coincide.

## **Profile of the Graduate**

Our objective is to uphold a rigorous legal education program that both encourages the creation of knowledge that generates new rules of law and that prepares students for admission into the practice of law and for responsible and effective participation as members of the legal profession. This way, graduates can take on a call to service that contributes to keeping justice free and comprehensively accessible for all.

The School of Law aspires for the graduates of our program to be well-rounded professionals, capable of creatively managing data and concepts in a socially responsible way so that they may resolve the legal problems that they encounter.

To achieve these goals, our school curriculum and the wealth of academic experiences are geared toward providing students with the following:

### *Critical Attitude*

It is our hope that students and graduates strive to discover the truth and that by doing so, they will use reason logically, uncover fallacies or inapplicable points in arguments with which they are confronted, hear out complicated situations, and classify, organize, and synthesize these multiple elements. They must be capable of conducting a rigorous analysis of any legal situation, judicial decision, legislative piece or administrative order, outlining all of the elements that compose them, and identifying the relative importance and effect of each one of them. This is only one aspect of the critical attitude. These skills must be complemented with the knowledge and perspectives from which they may conduct a critical analysis-synthesis of the matters at hand.

### *Ethical-philosophical Vision of Law and Lawyering*

Graduates will seek to completely understand the nature of their society, and, in general, the nature of social processes, so as to place law in its own space within the larger framework of human reality. They will acknowledge law as a social product and also as a formative factor of society. They will know the dynamism of the law, its internal logic, timeline, and history. They will thoroughly understand the history of law and how their profession is organized, as well as its social purpose, the standards of professional conduct, and the reasons that justify said standards. They will become conscious of the serious social responsibility that rests on the shoulders of the legal professional in light of the profession's significant mission in society.

### *Knowledge of Positive Law*

The School of Law creates many substantial opportunities for students to obtain a strong command and understanding of the basic institutions within the legal system, taking into account our mixed tradition and embracing global perspective. Likewise, they should be able to know and distinguish the ways in which law contributes to structuring a broad spectrum of social relationships, both in the public and private domains, as well as master the institutional mechanisms for dispute resolution. Graduates of the School of Law will be able to recognize law

as a normative system, as well as to create and employ new and various methodological approaches that tend to both existing and emerging social and legal issues. By completing their law studies, students will possess an integrated vision of the structure of legal system, including full knowledge of the institutions, concepts, and basic problems of its main areas.

#### *Knowledge of the Background and Development of Positive Law*

The School of Law strives for students to understand positive law in all of the dynamism of its reality as both a social product and an instrument for obtaining desirable social goals. Therefore, students will develop an adequate understanding of the underlying considerations and implied premises that inform the basic norms of positive law in each of its main areas. In other words, they will know its origin and historical development, and the socioeconomic forces to which it responds. The information available to students will allow them to reflect on the probable configuration of future positive law by pointing them to new trends taking root in each specific field and the development and predictable events in these. Presenting both positive law and new trends will be accompanied by evaluative criticism that takes into account the *is-ought* of law. Students will be exposed to the exegesis of current law that exposes its deficiencies and what is required to improve it. To achieve this broad vision and critique of law, students will be exposed to its study in a comparative and interdisciplinary manner, in conjunction with the context of factors that come into play in it.

#### *Skills Specific to the Legal Profession*

Throughout their legal studies, students must develop skills that allow them to identify and diagnose legal issues. Likewise, together with their client, they must be able to prepare and execute action plans for the evaluation and solution of conflicts. We aim for graduates to develop and apply negotiation and conciliation skills, as well as conduct factual investigations, including the ability to plan and design investigative strategies. In addition, our students will have the opportunity to develop other basic skills, such as critically analyzing the relationship between factual situations, context, and the rule of law, as well as gathering and organizing adequate information for identifying various courses of action and providing appropriate counsel to clients. Students will also be able to develop oral and written communication skills within a legal context; articulate legal arguments in a clear, coherent, and organized manner; and apply basic forensic skills, including discovery of evidence mechanisms, and first instance and appellate litigation.

Lastly, we aim for students to learn to express themselves with correctness, precision, and clarity. They will learn to write documents necessary for the professional practice, put negotiation and alternative methods of conflict resolution techniques into practice, and argue persuasively and effectively, both orally and in writing. They will acquire some practical experience in interviewing clients, formulating theories of the case, examining and cross-examining witnesses, and jury selection, among others.

*Professional Values*

In addition, the School of Law aspires to instill in its students *ethical and professional responsibilities*, which involve social responsibility and a commitment to access to justice for financially disadvantaged or socially marginalized populations. Students will also develop an attitude towards reflecting on the fairness of the rule of law beyond positive law and a critical and diligent analysis that seeks to eliminate systematic discrimination in the administration of justice and in the legal profession, as well as the understanding and application of ethical obligations.

*Complete Knowledge of the Fundamental Legal Processes*

We aspire for students to acquire in-depth knowledge of the dynamics of legislative, judicial, and administrative processes. They will not only acquire a technical expertise, but also an understanding of the elements that comprise the decision-making process.

*Complete Knowledge of Bibliographical Sources and Research Methods and Techniques.*

Our legal professionals should be able to research the current norms relative to any legal issue, and know how and where to acquire specialized knowledge on the extralegal aspects of each situation that they encounter. Not only will they manage bibliographical materials, but they will also have a full command of the research process.