Students of Color & Cultural Diversity

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN LAW SCHOOL
Why Choose the University of Wisconsin Law School?

If you are considering law school, we encourage you to take a serious look at the University of Wisconsin Law School. By 2006, we will have graduated over 1,200 lawyers of color, and we’re committed to your success.

We are a nationally prominent law school and part of a world-class university. More than twenty-five (25%) percent of our students are students of color. We have a top-notch faculty, an award-winning facility, and an impressive curriculum. And like other first-tier law schools we offer superb academic and career opportunities.

But we also are different from other schools in ways that may be significant for you.

Let us tell you how we’re different:

- For us, diversity is not new.
- Our commitment to diversity can be seen in our numbers.
- We’ve made a financial commitment to diversity.
- Our faculty and administration provide a community of support.
- Our LEO Program unites the interests of our students of color.
- We offer unique mentoring and support programs.
- Our law-in-action approach will make your educational experience meaningful and exciting.
- Maintaining our leadership on matters of diversity is a focus of our strategic plan and the vision we have for our future.
For us, diversity is not new.

Diversity and equal access to legal education have a long tradition at the University of Wisconsin Law School. The first African-American student was admitted in 1875; the first woman graduated in 1885. Our Native American Program and our Legal Education Opportunities (LEO) Program have long been national models for recruiting students from historically under-represented communities and encouraging them throughout their three years in law school.

For more than 30 years, the Law School through its Hastie Fellowship Program also has been a leader in guiding and increasing opportunities for lawyers of color to become law professors. Graduates of the program have gone on to prominence as legal educators at law schools around the country, including our own.

We are proud of our tradition of diversity, but we’re not resting on our laurels. We know there is much more to be done, and we’re looking to the future by recruiting highly qualified candidates like you.
Diversity in the student body is the main reason that I chose Wisconsin. The Law School is conscious of the fact that intellectual diversity is not confined to culture or ethnicity. The unique experiences of each student (geographic, religious, educational, etc.) challenge me to approach legal and societal issues from multiple perspectives.

Samuel L. Owens
Calumet Park, Illinois
B.A. University of Chicago
As a Florida native, I was reluctant to leave an environment so rich in culture but was immediately comforted when I learned minorities comprise over 25% of the student body and there were students from 36 states in attendance. During my first year, I immediately became good friends with students from Wisconsin, Minnesota, California, Michigan, Illinois, Arkansas, and other states. I also made many friends through the Latino/a Law Student Association. I feel at home here and I am confident that the friendships I’ve made will go beyond my years at this school.

Aileen Zeledon
Miami, Florida
B.S. University of Florida
Our commitment to students of color can be seen in our numbers.

The UW Law School has made a significant contribution toward diversifying the legal profession nationally. The best evidence of the UW Law School’s commitment to diversity comes from the hundreds of students of color and cultural diversity who have graduated from the Law School—a proud group of prominent alumni who are increasingly active in their service to the Law School and its students.

Students of color comprise more than 25 percent of our student body. As a national law school, we recruit students from across the country and our current students represent 36 states. The faculty also reflects diversity in race, sexual orientation, religion, and national origin. We have a national reputation for emphasizing diversity and we are committed to maintaining it.

The students of color are close at Wisconsin and they are not shy about looking out for one another. This attitude has benefited me because I always feel I have someone to go to when I have a question about the Law School or where to go for services in the surrounding community.

Waladeen K. Norwood
Newark, New Jersey
B.S.E.E. Howard University
M.B.A. Marquette University
Compared to the tuition at our peer law schools, the University of Wisconsin Law School tuition is inexpensive; the cost of living in Madison is reasonable as well.

But, beyond these financial advantages, we also have made a financial commitment to diversity. We recruit top students and try to minimize the financial burdens of legal education through scholarships. We assist students who show financial need, and we offer scholarships to attract students who bring academic and other strengths to the Law School. Last year, students of color received over one million dollars through need-based and merit-based scholarships and tuition waivers. The LEO Enrichment Fund, an annual campaign among our alumni of color and other supporters of diversity, provides additional sources of financial support for students of color, and this fund awarded more than $50,000 in scholarships last year alone.

The Law School’s funding has been an essential part of my law school success. Without having to worry about how I will fund my legal education, I’ve been able to focus solely on my coursework. I also feel more comfortable about the options that will be available to me after graduation; I won’t have to commit to any job just for the sake of paying back excessive student loans!

Joi C. Ridley  
Chicago, Illinois  
B.A. Howard University
During my time at the University of Wisconsin Law School, I have met and interacted with some amazing faculty and staff. Many of my professors are easily approachable and have a passion for teaching that encourages students to learn. Their passion and energy transfer to the students either through classroom learning, clinicals or informal interaction. Furthermore, I am impressed with the amount of time that I have been able to spend with the assistant deans and the dean of the law school. This is evidence of their constant commitment to the Law School and its students.

Lisa Lin
Ansonia, Connecticut
B.S. University of Connecticut
Our faculty and administration provide a community of support.

Our students of color and cultural diversity have a supportive community at the Law School. Specific minority student organizations actively provide personal, academic, and career support for their members. In addition, the Legal Education Opportunity (LEO) Program, a student-organized umbrella organization that collectively represents, supports, and helps all students of color, offers a warm and helpful community for students.

The UW Law School faculty and administration also are actively involved with our students of color, and dedicated to their success. Most importantly, our faculty is racially diverse. Many of our professors understand what it’s like to be a law student of color, and they, along with their colleagues, are there with support and encouragement.
Our LEO Program unites the interests of our students of color.

The Legal Education Opportunities (LEO) Program, a student-run program, is designed to bring the UW Law School’s students of color together as a single community. LEO provides a strong academic and social support network, promotes diversity, and recruits students from groups that have been historically disadvantaged. LEO provides study groups for first-year students, serves as a communication mechanism, influences policy decisions important to students of color, and sponsors an orientation for first-year students. Each spring, LEO organizes an impressive banquet bringing together LEO alumni and celebrating the successes of our students of color.

In addition to LEO there are five specific constituent law student associations representing Black, Asian-Pacific-American, Latino, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous law students. They are active, vital organizations. Each is a prime support group that provides academic, social, and cultural support for its own members and assists in recruiting and retaining students. Each also encourages student involvement and leadership and provides networking and career opportunities.

LEO heavily influenced my decision to choose Wisconsin. When I went to my first LEO banquet I was warmly received, which has continued since then as well. Many students of color are active in multiple organizations, not just the ones of their race or ethnicity. LEO has also had a considerable impact on the rest of the student body.

William F. Sulton
West Windsor, New Jersey
B.A. Michigan State University
LEO was a big draw for me. I attended the LEO Banquet as an admitted student and met a great group of professors and current students. I also met some prospective students who I now count as close friends. I was most impressed by the fact that the LEO Program had several decades of history behind it—a distinction that not all top-tier law schools can claim. It quickly became clear that at Wisconsin, diversity isn’t just a fleeting fad.

**Bobak Razavi**  
*Cincinnati, Ohio* 
*B.A. Amherst College*
The Law School supports the minority community through mentorship programs and a strong support network. At the heart of that support system are the fellow minority students who run study groups and provide guidance to new students. The atmosphere is something I don’t think you get anywhere else.

Jaime Hickey-Mendoza
Brooklyn, New York
B.A. Vassar College
Unique mentoring and support programs help our students.

In addition to the many support systems and programs available through the LEO Program, several additional unique programs serve our students of color.

*The Friends of LEO* is a support organization of LEO alumni and friends that raises money, connects students of color with LEO alumni around the country, and provides a mentoring program for students of color who do not have a lawyer in their immediate families. The mentors, who are highly accomplished lawyers and judges, make a three-year commitment to their students and meet with them regularly in both professional and social settings.

*The Minority Clerkship Program*, a Wisconsin State Bar sponsored program, offers an opportunity for first-year students of color to have summer employment in high-quality legal settings. The clerkship program places students in private firms, corporate legal departments, and government agencies. The experience, feedback, and real world setting give students a way to explore their career choices and expand their options.

*Partners for Success* is a Graduate School program that supports incoming graduate students of color at the University of Wisconsin. Partners for Success provides professional, social, and educational networks by bringing together graduate students of color from the UW graduate programs throughout the entire University.
Last year, I participated in the Wisconsin Department of Justice externship program, which allows Wisconsin law students to work with the state assistant attorneys general on a variety of legal issues. Because of the heavy caseloads at the DOJ, externs can often take on more responsibility than summer associates working at law firms. In my first week, I wrote a brief on a very unique bankruptcy case, and armed with my brief, the assistant attorney general won the case at trial. It was a great feeling and reassured me early on that I was in the right profession.

**Emily Chow**  
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*  
*B.A. Johns Hopkins University*
Our law-in-action approach will make your educational experience meaningful and exciting.

Top students are drawn to the UW Law School because of its tradition of excellence and its law-in-action philosophy, which combine to make Wisconsin one of the most intellectually exciting law schools in the country. Our law-in-action tradition differentiates us from other law schools: the UW Law School pioneered the belief that law must be studied in action as it relates to society and not in isolation.

The Law School focuses on helping its students understand how law both affects and is affected by every other institutional force in society. The Law School does this in its classrooms, in its many clinical programs, and in its numerous collaborations among departments and colleges at one of the world’s leading universities.

The law-in-action approach should be a must for every law student. Law students should know that there are two sides of practicing law, one that is taught in the schools and the other that is practiced in the real world. The clinicals showed me that not everything works as expected and that we must use patience, understanding, and compassion when applying legal skills.

Samuel J. Zermeño
El Paso, Texas
B.A. University of Texas-El Paso
Maintaining our leadership on matters of diversity is a focus of our strategic plan and the vision we have for our future.

We are serious about diversity and have made it an important part of who we are and what we want to be. We will continue to ensure that it is a key component of our future as we assess our institutional needs and resources and update our strategic plan.

We believe that diversity improves legal education. It provides a broadening, more stimulating, and thought-provoking environment for everyone; enhances our students’ ability to see problems from different perspectives; teaches students how to represent clients who are different from them; and prepares students to succeed in the increasingly diverse world in which they will practice.

We are committed to continuing our tradition of recruiting talented students of color, helping them make law school a reality through financial aid and scholarships, and providing academic support to ensure their success. And we are committed to increasing our efforts at recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff.

UW’s commitment to diversity is very apparent and primarily comes across to students by way of the LEO student organizations. It has made a huge difference in my experience by giving me a sense of belonging. Among LEO students, I felt more comfortable making friends right off and knew somehow we would have something in common. I also feel like the speakers and talks featured at the Law School often are relevant to minority or immigrant experiences.

Emily Yip
San Diego, California
B.A. University of California at Berkeley
The Law School’s commitment to diversity is seen in its faculty, students, and administration. The faculty has set up lectures geared toward issues effecting minorities and study groups for LEO students. The majority of the students that come to the Law School are committed to diversity and work to make sure the Law School remains diverse. There are many student leaders that work to provide social, academic, and community service-based activities that work to create culturally responsible attorneys. Furthermore, the administration is active in offering incentives to recruit and retain minority students.

Kene Okocha
Madison, Wisconsin
B.S. University of Wisconsin
We are looking for students like you.

We are looking for students who will take advantage of the exciting opportunities we offer and who will give something back to their clients and to society when they graduate. We seek talented students who come from a variety of backgrounds so that they are prepared to understand and respond to every kind of client, from Wall Street to rural Wisconsin. Most of all, we want students who are interested in something bigger than themselves.

Law is a profession. To be a professional is to serve others. This means we need all kinds of people with all kinds of skills who will pursue careers in both urban and rural settings, in both corporate and public service jobs, and in both large and small firms. That is why our admissions committee spends so much time reading each file and trying to get to know every applicant—to put together a class that represents all of the kinds of people we need for all of the kinds of people who are in need.

We want students of honor, integrity and commitment, and in turn we will make a commitment to prepare them to be outstanding lawyers.

If you are a student who meets these requirements, we want to hear from you.

Deciding to attend Wisconsin was an easy choice for me. Although I was born and raised in Alaska, my reservation is in Wisconsin and so I had a natural affinity toward Wisconsin Law. When I attended the admitted students weekend I was sold. When I heard deans, faculty, and students describe the Wisconsin law in action philosophy and what they were looking for in their student body, I instantly felt like the reasons I was attending law school and the ways I learn best were being described. I am glad that I chose to attend the University of Wisconsin Law School.

Rachel Lauesen
Anchorage, Alaska
B.A. University of Alaska–Fairbanks
Meet Some of Our Faculty of Color

Lisa Alexander
Assistant Professor of Law
J.D., Columbia University Contracts, Business Organizations, Community Development Law

Originally from New York, Professor Alexander focuses her scholarly interests on the study of transactional legal strategies to foster equitable urban community development that minimizes displacement, mitigates poverty and promotes racial and social justice. Professor Alexander is an Associate Editor of the Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law, a publication of the American Bar Association (ABA). Prior to joining the faculty, Professor Alexander practiced in the Chicago Office of Miner, Barnhill & Galland, P.C., where she focused on community economic development, non-profit organizations, affordable and fair housing, and residential and commercial real estate. She was also awarded a competitive Equal Justice Works Fellowship (formerly NAPIL), and with it worked as a staff attorney at the Chicago Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc.

Tonya Brito
Associate Professor of Law
J.D., Harvard University Family Law; Civil Procedure; Children, Law and Society

A native New Yorker, Associate Professor Tonya Brito teaches family law and several advanced courses she developed, including Children, Law & Society and Adoption Law & Policy. Her scholarly interests include open adoption, family law, children’s legal issues and poverty law. She has written on the relationship between family law and welfare law, the promotion of marriage as anti-poverty policy, the image of mothers in poverty discourse, and how working mothers fare under spousal support law. She is currently working on a number of projects, including a qualitative study of the role of law and trust in open adoption and an anthology of readings on children, law and society.

Anuj C. Desai
Assistant Professor of Law
J.D., University of California-Berkeley (Boalt Hall) Master’s in International Affairs, Columbia University Copyright, Trademarks, Cyberlaw

Professor Desai brings a diverse set of professional experiences to his teaching at the Law School, including having served as legal assistant to the American judges at the Iran-United States Claims Tribunal in The Hague, and working at the U.S. State Department and in the Legal Resource Centre in Grahamstown, South Africa. His current research interests focus on the intersection between international law and communication and information technology. He has written on a variety of topics related to law in cyberspace, including Internet filters, copyright, privacy, the First Amendment, and domain name dispute resolutions.

Linda S. Greene
Evjue-Bascom Professor of Law
J.D., University of California-Berkeley (Boalt Hall) Civil Procedure, Constitutional Law, Employment Discrimination, Legislation, Race-Conscious Remedies

A California native, Professor Greene is one of the nation’s most prominent African-American women in legal education. She began her career as a civil rights attorney at the NAACP, and went on to serve as Counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee, where she participated in the Senate’s consideration of five U.S. Supreme Court nominees. She is former Chair of the American Association of Law Schools Section on Minority Groups and former President of the Society of American Law Teachers. She has also served as Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for the University as a whole. She serves on numerous boards and foundations, including the U.S. Olympic Committee, and co-founded the Black Women in Sports Foundation.
Alexandra Huneeus received her J.D. and Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Her research interests include the judicialization of politics in Latin America, the interaction of international and national tribunals, democracy and judicial change, and judicial culture. Her dissertation focused on the Chilean courts' treatment of Pinochet-era cases during the democratic era. As a practitioner she has worked on a right to education case against the Dominican Republic before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and on the case against Pinochet in Spain and in Chile. She teaches courses on Latin American law and international law, as well as courses on law and social science in the Legal Studies Program. Prior to becoming an academic, she worked as a journalist in Santiago, Chile, and San Francisco.
Asifa Quraishi is a specialist in Islamic law and legal theory. Her expertise ranges from U.S. law on federal court practice to constitutional legal theory, with a comparative focus in Islamic law. Her professional experience includes serving as a judicial law clerk with Judge Edward Dean Price on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California and as the death penalty law clerk for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Asifa Quraishi made news in 2001 when she drafted a clemency appeal brief in the case of Bariya Ibrahim Magazu, who was sentenced to flogging for fornication in Zamfara, Nigeria. Quraishi is a founding member of the National Association of Muslim Lawyers (NAML) and the California group American Muslims Intent on Learning and Activism (AMILA). She is an associate of the Muslim Women’s League, and has served as past president and board member of Karamah: Muslim Women for Lawyers for Human Rights.

Mitra Sharafi is a legal historian whose work focuses on colonial India. After completing a history degree in Canada (B.A. McGill, 1996) and legal studies in the UK (B.A. Cambridge, 1998; B.C.L. Oxford, 1999), Sharafi completed a doctorate in history (Ph.D. Princeton, 2006). Her dissertation, “Bella’s Case: Parsi Identity and the Law in Colonial Rangoon, Bombay and London, 1887-1925” is a study of a colonial lawsuit about conversion and identity in the Parsi or Indian Zoroastrian community. Sharafi’s research interests include the history of marriage and divorce, legal pluralism, and the history of the legal profession. She joins the UW Law Faculty, where she will teach contracts, after a two-year research fellowship at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge University.

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Carlos Weeden
Clinical Assistant Professor
J.D. Howard University
Legal Defense Program

Professor Weeden is originally from Chicago, Illinois where he served as an Assistant State’s Attorney from 1989 to 1994. While with the State’s Attorney, prosecuting numerous juvenile, misdemeanor and felony criminal matters. He also practiced law as a solo practitioner, focusing on criminal defense, police misconduct, and civil rights issues. Professor Weeden has performed volunteer work with the Minority Legal Education Review (MLER) bar preparation program at Northwestern University and was one of the founding volunteer attorneys of the Police Custody Hotline program in Chicago. He has also served as a panel attorney with the Cook County Juvenile Court and performed many hours of pro bono work. Prior to joining the University of Wisconsin staff he was an Assistant Attorney General for the U.S. Virgin Islands where he prosecuted cases on behalf of the Territorial government.briefed and argued cases involving a range of issues, from the protection of endangered cave species in Texas to the issuance of dredge and fill permits under the Clean Water Act.

Joseph R. Thome
Professor Emeritus
L.L.B., Harvard University
Comparative Law, Land Reform in Latin America, Latin American Legal Institutions

Professor Thome’s research and teaching focuses on the processes of legal reform in Latin America and on legal issues of social and economic change in Latin America and Africa. He has served as a consultant for the World Bank in Equatorial Guinea and for the U.S. Agency for International Development to evaluate its projects across Latin America, and lectured and consulted on land tenure issues in South Africa. He had a long relationship with the university’s Land Tenure Center, participating in several projects in Latin America. He has served as Director of the Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies Program, and has conducted research and lectured on land tenure, legal reform and other law and development issues in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, South Africa, and Uruguay. Professor Thome was born and spent his childhood in Costa Rica. He is bi-lingual in Spanish-English, and fluent in Portuguese.
Where Our Students Work During the Summer

An important issue that concerns prospective students of color is the value of their degree upon graduation and where they will be able to go to practice.

As a top national law school, we see our students employed literally from coast to coast during the summer, and our alumni of color are found in almost every state and in every practice setting, including government, academia, corporations, private practice, and the public interest arena.

A sampling of where our current students of color spent their recent summers includes:

Alaska Department of Law (AK)  
Ayuda, Inc. (DC)  
Baker McKenzie (Hong Kong)  
Center for Constitutional Rights (NY)  
DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary (NY)  
Day, Berry & Howard (CT)  
Dickinson Wright (MI)  
Dorsey & Whitney (MN)  
Dow Lohnes (DC)  
Faegre & Benson (MN)  
Foley & Lardner (WI)  
Fullbright & Jaworski (CA)  
GlaxoSmithKline In-House Counsel (PA)  
Heller Erhman (WI)  
Howrey, Simon, Arnold & White (DC)  
Public Counsel (CA)  
National Labor Relations Board, Region 21 (CA)  
O’Hagan, Smith & Amundsen (IL)  
San Diego City Attorney (CA)  
Riddell & Williams (WA)  
Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi (DC)  
U.S. Attorney (WI)  
U.S. Department of Justice, Environment & Natural Resources Division (DC)  
Winston & Strawn (IL)

and the list goes on.

We are happy to connect you to alumni in any area of the country or in any practice setting that may interest you. Just ask.
For more information about the University of Wisconsin Law School, email us at admissions@law.wisc.edu or call us at (608) 262-5914.