

BALANCE & WELL-BEING IN LEGAL EDUCATION

Association of American Law Schools

Greetings and Gratitude

BY ROSARIO LOZADA

As composer, scholar, and activist Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon observes, *"Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you; they're supposed to help you discover who you are."* When it comes to the work of this Section during a year of ongoing challenges, that is certainly the case: we continue to discover who we are and our potential to enhance and transform legal education.

Since receiving the AALS Section of the Year Award in January 2021 for our contributions under the leadership of past-chair Jarrod Reich, our Section has remained engaged at the highest level. Amid the continuing uncertainty and the trials of living and teaching in this time, our Section's engagement gives us countless reasons for hope and gratitude, as we continue to investigate, discover, and inspire practices that support the well-being of law students and lawyers.

As many of you know, the ABA is considering revisions to the Standards for Legal Education that recognize the *significance of developing a professional identity, cultural competence, bias awareness, and well-being practices*—all of which are essential to the ethical, healthy, and successful practice of law. In 2021, building on these critical concepts, the Executive Committee and the Section's membership generated innovative *projects and programs*, created multiple opportunities for transformative *collaboration and community-building*, and laid the *foundation for the year ahead*.

Overview

PROJECTS & PROGRAMS

- A GROWTH MINDSET
- WELL-BEING
- PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND BIAS
- TEACHING IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

COLLABORATION, RECOGNITION, & COMMUNITY

- MEETINGS & NETWORKING SESSIONS
- SCHOLARSHIP
- REVISIONS TO THE ABA STANDARDS OF LEGAL EDUCATION
- RECOGNITION FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS
- PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER SECTIONS

LOOKING AHEAD

- NEW LEADERSHIP
- SAVE THE DATE

Projects and Programs

A Growth Mindset. We kicked off the year at the AALS conference with a program that re-evaluated legal education through the lens of a growth mindset. Our panelists explored ways in which a growth mindset can help cultivate autonomy, relatedness, and self-efficacy among law students—all essential traits for resiliency and success.

Well-Being. We launched a six-part series on well-being in law school. At each session, presenters highlighted innovative approaches to promoting well-being practices in and out of the classroom. Attendance at each session regularly exceeded 90 participants. And, thanks to AALS Associate Director of Sections Services, Clarissa Ortiz, our website is a repository of the teaching tools, resources, and recordings generated by our gifted presenters. (Visit "[compendiums](#)" at our website.)



Professional Identity and Bias. In October, our section convened scholars and thought leaders to explore professional identity development, individual and systemic bias based on racial and other identities, and strategies to mitigate how bias impacts the legal education and the practice of law.

Teaching in Uncertain Times. Our 2022 AALS Conference Program—The Power of Now: A Mindset for Teaching in Times of Uncertainty—brings together panelists who will examine legal education in this unique time in our history, and offer innovative solutions, as we continue to face an ongoing global pandemic, social unrest, and growing awareness of racial injustice and the racial fissures in American society.

The Section on Balance & Well-Being in Legal Education seeks to investigate, discover, and inspire those practices that support the well-being of law students, lawyers, and judges. The Section encourages research into the conditions that allow students and practitioners to thrive, both personally and professionally, and informs the membership of the Association of American Law Schools about the results of that research. Among other things, Section activities explore the importance of health, compassion, integrity, and ethics to the effective study and practice of law. The Section promotes continual re-examination of pedagogical practices, program content, and institutional priorities to promote the long-term best interests of law students and the constituencies they will serve.

Collaboration, Recognition, & Community

Meetings and Networking Sessions. The Executive Committee and the sub-committees met regularly on Zoom; at each meeting, we reconnected, re-fueled, dreamed big, and networked while generating new ideas and following up on existing projects. And thanks to the dedication, expertise, and enthusiasm that are hallmarks of our Section, proposed projects evolved from ideas to reality. With each group interaction, we strengthened our community of well-being advocates.

Scholarship. We expanded our rich repository of articles on critical issues of well-being, including a December 2021 newsletter, available [here](#).

Revisions to the ABA Standards for Legal Education. When the Council on Legal Education invited public comment on proposed revisions to the standards corresponding to curriculum and student services, Section members actively contributed to the dialogue; we collaborated with other professional organizations and groups to identify language that would improve the proposed revisions, consistent with our mission. In addition, multiple Section members submitted individual comments to the Council. We are optimistic that the revised standards will enhance the lives of law students—future lawyers who will go on to serve their clients, their communities, and the profession.

Recognition for Outstanding Contributions to Well-Being in Legal Education. The Section created the first annual award to recognize an individual who models Section ideals, develops innovative programming that integrates this work into curricular or co-curricular offerings, contributes to academic scholarship in the field, and regularly contributes to the Section, their law school, and the legal community by providing access to well-being programming or services. The award will be presented in January 2022 at AALS annual conference.

Partnerships with Other Sections. At the 2022 AALS Conference, we join the Sections for Law School Deans, Clinical Legal Education, and Leadership to co-sponsor a program of the Section for Pro Bono and Public Service Opportunities—*Prioritizing Public Service in Your Role as Dean: Why It Matters*.

Looking Ahead

New Leadership. As I write this message, members of our Executive Committee are hard at work honing the process through which next year's Executive Committee will be selected to serve under the leadership under Chair-Elect Leah Terranova.

Save the Date. Please calendar these AALS conference programs: *The Power of Now: A Mindset for Teaching in Times of Uncertainty*, January 5, 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.; *Section Networking Session*, January 5, 2 to 3 p.m.; and *Prioritizing Public Service in Your Role as Dean: Why It Matters*, January 8, 12:35 to 1:50 p.m.

In closing, I express my deepest gratitude to each of you. You are leaders. You are experts. You are innovators. You are givers. You are light. And you are forever saved in my smartphone contacts. Serving as your Section Chair has been an honor, a privilege, and a gift.

With appreciation,

Rosario Lozada
2021 Section Chair