UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Experiential Learning Annual Report 2025-2026

From Classroom to Courtroom to Community



Faculty of Law

A Message from the Dean

Legal education is at its most powerful when students have the opportunity to move beyond studying the law to experiencing what it means to practise it. At the University of Alberta Faculty of Law, experiential learning is an essential part of that journey.

This year's report reflects the remarkable breadth and depth of experiential learning across our Faculty. From clinics and externships to judicial shadowing, land-based learning, community partnerships, and course-embedded opportunities, our students are encountering the law in places where it matters—in courtrooms, workplaces, communities, and in conversation with the people whose lives the law touches.

These experiences do more than develop practical skills. They ask students to exercise judgment, listen carefully, communicate with empathy, work collaboratively, and think critically about the responsibilities that come with being a lawyer. They help students understand that becoming a lawyer is not simply about knowing the law; it is about learning how to use that knowledge thoughtfully, ethically, and in service of others.

I am particularly excited by the work described in this report to build a more connected and intentional experiential learning ecosystem. The development of a shared framework has identified common competencies across our experiential programs, which will help us ensure that these opportunities are not isolated experiences but an integrated part of a student's professional development.

None of this would be possible without partnership. I am deeply grateful to the faculty and staff who create and support these opportunities, and to the judges, lawyers, alumni, Indigenous knowledge holders, community organizations, and other partners who generously share their expertise, time, and workplaces with our students. As this report makes clear, legal education flourishes through these relationships.

This report celebrates the work already underway and the many people who make it possible. I invite you to read it as a reflection of what happens when the classroom opens outward, connecting our students with the profession and the communities we serve.

Dr. Fiona Kelly
Dean, Faculty of Law



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A Message from the Director

This year has been one of growth, innovation, and collaboration. Experiential learning at the Faculty of Law continues to evolve beyond individual courses and placements into a connected ecosystem that prepares students for the realities of legal practice while strengthening relationships with our profession and community.

Over the past year, we welcomed new partnerships, expanded existing programs, created innovative externship opportunities, and worked alongside faculty, students, judges, lawyers, and community organizations to create learning experiences that simply cannot happen inside a traditional classroom.

Experiential learning is not simply about "doing." It is about becoming.

Whether students are drafting legal documents for clients, observing proceedings in the Court of King's Bench, learning Cree legal concepts on the land, supporting entrepreneurs, engaging with the public, or reflecting on professional identity, each experience contributes to the development of practice-ready lawyers.

None of this work happens alone. It is made possible by an extraordinary community of faculty members, alumni, practitioners, judges, organizations, and students who continue to invest their time, wisdom, and generosity in legal education. Thank you for helping make experiential learning one of the defining strengths of our Faculty.

Dr. Allison Fieldberg
Director, Experiential Learning
Faculty of Law



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Experiential Learning by the Numbers

Experiential learning bridges the space between knowing the law and becoming a lawyer. At the University of Alberta Faculty of Law, experiential learning is grounded in the belief that learning is enhanced when students engage with authentic legal problems, often in real settings with real clients.

Each experiential opportunity invites students to integrate legal knowledge with ethical decision-making, communication, collaboration, and an understanding of law's role in society.

BY THE NUMBERS, THE FACULTY OF LAW CAN BOAST ABOUT:



10

experiential learning opportunities on offer to Faculty of Law students



20

areas of law represented through clinics, externships, intensives, and field-based learning



24

supervisors, instructors, and practitioners supporting student learning



60

students engaged in co-curricular and volunteer experiential learning initiatives



3

new externships currently in development (including one in Energy and Natural Resources law)



100

students placed in experiential learning opportunities for the 2026-2027 year

This Year at a Glance

This year, the Experiential Learning portfolio continued to expand opportunities for students across clinics, externships, land-based learning, judicial engagement, and community partnerships.

Highlights included:

- Launching new partnerships with the Office of the Alberta Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner and the Alberta Law Reform Institute.
- Collaborating with Covenant Health to offer a free personal directive pop-up clinic for community members.
- Welcoming more community partners into the Entrepreneurial Law Clinic.
- Expanding opportunities for engagement through our Court of King's Bench Judge Shadowing Program.
- Continuing innovative land-based learning through the Oceans Law and Policy course in Bamfield and the Wahkohtowin Intensive.
- Beginning competency mapping across our clinical programs through a faculty-wide DACUM process.





Community Impact

Experiential learning continued to expand as a defining feature of legal education at the Faculty of Law this year. Through strategic program development, strengthened community partnerships, and a continued focus on student learning, the Faculty is advancing a more coordinated and sustainable approach to experiential education that prepares students for practice while strengthening connections with the legal profession and the broader community.

EXPERIENCE. CONNECTION. IMPACT.

Advancing Experiential Learning. Strengthening Communities. Preparing Future Lawyers.

FIVE KEY AREAS OF FOCUS. ONE COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS.

1



BUILDING A FACULTY-WIDE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ECOSYSTEM

Creating a connected and intentional ecosystem of experiential opportunities that aligns education, community needs, and professional practice.

2



ENHANCING STUDENT ACCESS AND THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Making opportunities easier to access through centralized processes, clear communication, and inclusive design.

3



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Building relationships with the courts, organizations, and communities to create meaningful learning experiences for students and impact beyond the classroom.

4



SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Ensuring student safety, professional responsibility, and sustainable programs that enable innovation and excellence.

5



SUPPORTING FACULTY INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Delivering high-quality, relevant, and transformative experiential learning.

Learning in action. **Making a difference together.**

Why This Work Matters

The impact of experiential learning is often most clearly seen in the reflections of the students and community partners who participate in these opportunities. Their feedback highlights not only the value of connecting legal education with real-world experiences, but also the ways these initiatives can spark further learning, strengthen community partnerships, and contribute to a richer student experience across the Faculty.

From a student who attended the Judge Shadowing opportunity:
I really enjoyed the experience … I really enjoyed meeting Justice Martin and getting to sit in on several proceedings. Because of this experience I am going to go watch court a few more times before the semester ends. Thank you for the opportunity.

From a community partner with Covenant Health:
It was such a pleasure to partner with all of you. We are very proud of what we were able to accomplish together. From convening community lawyers and engaging U of A law students, to coordinating, promoting, and hosting the event, it was a meaningful opportunity to connect directly with the public. Supporting the completion of 19 personal directives in a single evening was an especially impactful outcome and speaks to the value of this collaborative model.We also greatly appreciate the energy and openness you and the students brought—this was a wonderful example of rich learning in action, grounded in real community impact.

From a student applying for one of our many LAW 589 courses:
I'd like to also thank you for your work in developing experiential learning courses for us this past year. I've noticed many positive impacts from the leadership & organization in this year's opportunities.

Key Areas of Focus

1. Enhancing Student Access and the Experiential Learning Experience

One of our key priorities was improving student access to experiential learning. We introduced a new centralized application and information process to make opportunities easier for students to discover, understand, and navigate.

Shared application timelines, coordinated communications, and consistent student resources have helped create a more transparent and equitable experience while preserving the unique character of individual programs. Together, these improvements have reduced administrative complexity and strengthened students' ability to engage meaningfully with experiential learning throughout their legal education.





2. Strengthening Community Partnerships and Expanding Opportunities

Experiential learning is built upon strong relationships with courts, government agencies, law firms, and community partners. During the year, the Faculty strengthened existing partnerships while expanding opportunities available to students through the development of new externships and the renewal of established initiatives such as the Judge Shadowing Program.

These collaborations continue to create meaningful opportunities for students to learn through authentic legal practice while contributing to public legal education, access to justice, and community engagement across Alberta.



3. Supporting Sustainable and Responsible Experiential Learning

As experiential learning opportunities continue to grow, so too does the importance of thoughtful program design. Throughout the year, we focused on strengthening the systems and practices that support sustainable, high-quality experiential learning.

This included developing approaches to supervision, professional responsibility, confidentiality, student safety, and risk assessment that enable innovation while supporting students, instructors, and community partners alike. By embedding these considerations into program design, the Faculty continues to foster experiential opportunities that are both educationally meaningful and operationally sustainable.

4. Supporting Faculty Innovation and Continuous Program Development

Experiential learning is a collaborative endeavour, and much of the year's work focused on supporting instructors as they developed and enhanced innovative learning opportunities for students.

We supported Faculty members through the development of course learning outcomes, application processes, student communications, promotional materials, safety planning, and partnership development. This collaborative approach has strengthened the Faculty's capacity to design and deliver future experiential learning opportunities that respond to the evolving needs of students, the legal profession, and the broader community.



Innovation: Designing for the Future

Designing for the Future

This year marked an important shift toward designing an integrated experiential learning system.

Key initiatives included:

- development of a faculty-wide experiential learning framework;
- competency mapping across clinical courses;
- creation of new assessment and reflection processes;
- expansion of centralized recruitment;
- strengthened risk management processes;
- exploration of responsible uses of generative AI within experiential education;
- development of new community partnerships.

These initiatives strengthen not only today's student experience but also the long-term sustainability of experiential learning at the Faculty of Law.

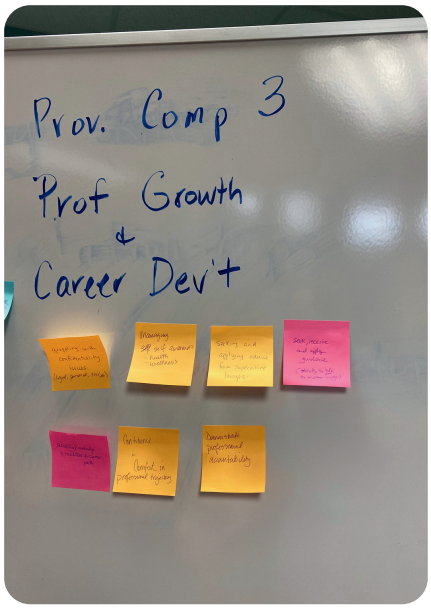


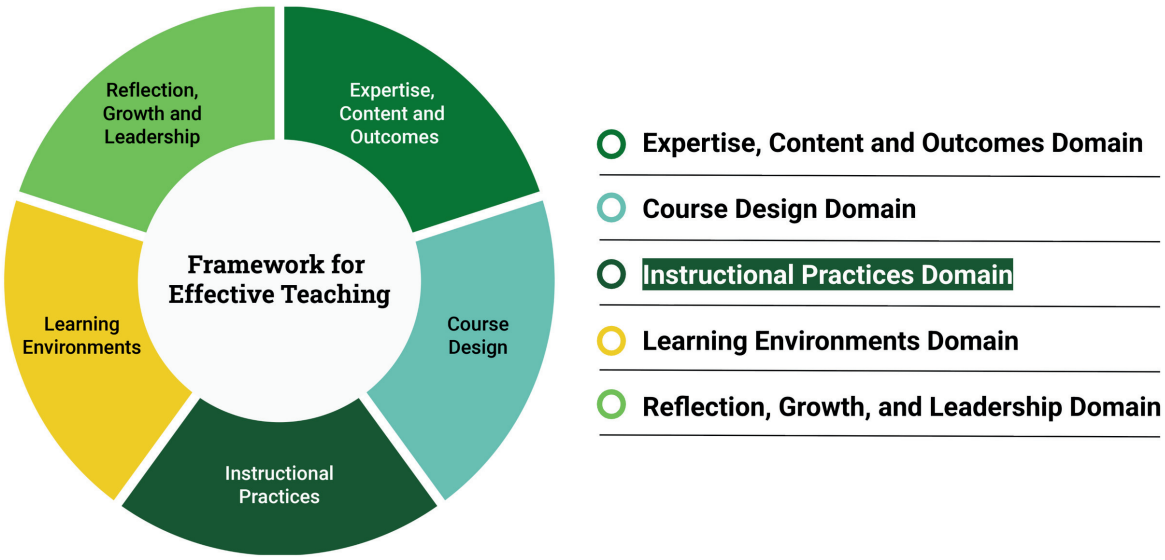
Building an Ecosystem for Experiential Learning: The DACUM Process

This year marked an important milestone in the evolution of experiential learning program design at the Faculty of Law.

Rather than viewing clinics, externships, land-based learning, and simulations as individual initiatives, we continued building an integrated ecosystem designed to support students throughout their professional development and make high-quality experiential learning possible.

Perhaps most significantly, faculty and clinical instructors came together through a DACUM (Developing A Curriculum) process to identify the foundational competencies that students develop through experiential legal education. The result is a shared framework that provides a common language across our programs while preserving the distinctive strengths of each learning experience.





The Framework for Effective Teaching

Competencies for Practice
A Shared Vision for Experiential Learning

We have identified four overarching competencies that span our experiential programs:

- **Lawyering Skills** — developing foundational legal practice skills, including legal analysis, client communication, writing, file management, ethics, and public legal education.
- **Client Relationships** — building trust, interviewing and counselling clients, managing expectations, and practising client-centred lawyering with empathy and respect.
- **Professional Growth and Career Development** — cultivating reflective practice, professional accountability, confidence, mentorship, wellness, and an evolving professional identity.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork** — working effectively with peers, supervising lawyers, community organizations, and external partners to achieve shared goals.

Together, these competencies provide a foundation for new curriculum design, assessment, and continuous improvement while clearly articulating the distinctive value of experiential legal education.

COMPETENCIES IN CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION

1 LAWYERING SKILLS

- Manage client intake and prioritize matters.
- Extract legally relevant facts from a client.
- Identify and spot legal issues.
- Communicate effectively with clients, including:
  - Tips and documentation
  - Tracking and folllow-up
  - Managing timelines and expectations
- Prepare information memoranda.
- Identify the difference between legal information and legal advice ("ethics in action").
- Manage files, related tasks and deadlines.
- Engage in community outreach and public legal education, including presentations to specialized audiences.
- Write for different audiences.

2 CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

- Interview clients.
- Develop interviewing and counselling skills.
- Communicate effectively with clients.
- Build relationships, rapport and trust with clients.
- Adopt a client-centered approach.
- Meet people where they are.
- Manage client expectations.
- Develop confidence in client-facing interactions.
- Promote the clinic to the public and support client outreach/intake.

3 PROFESSIONAL GROWTH & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Grapple with confidentiality issues.
- Develop self-awareness and attend to health and wellness.
- Seek and apply advice from supervising lawyers.
- Seek and apply guidance from other legal professionals.
- Build knowledge of realities lawyering as a career path.
- Develop confidence and comfort in professional trajectory.
- Demonstrate professional accountability.

4 COLLABORATION & TEAMWORK

- Collaborate with other student colleagues on files and projects.
- Work effectively with supervising lawyers and industry.
- Communicate with those external to the university including industry and/or community partners.
- Engage in collaboration both within and beyond the university, including industry and/or community partners.

Community Partnerships

Legal education flourishes through partnership.

This year our students learned alongside judges, military lawyers, entrepreneurs, health professionals, Indigenous knowledge holders, community leaders, and lawyers in private practice.

These partnerships create opportunities for students to encounter the complexity of legal practice while contributing meaningfully to communities across Alberta and beyond.

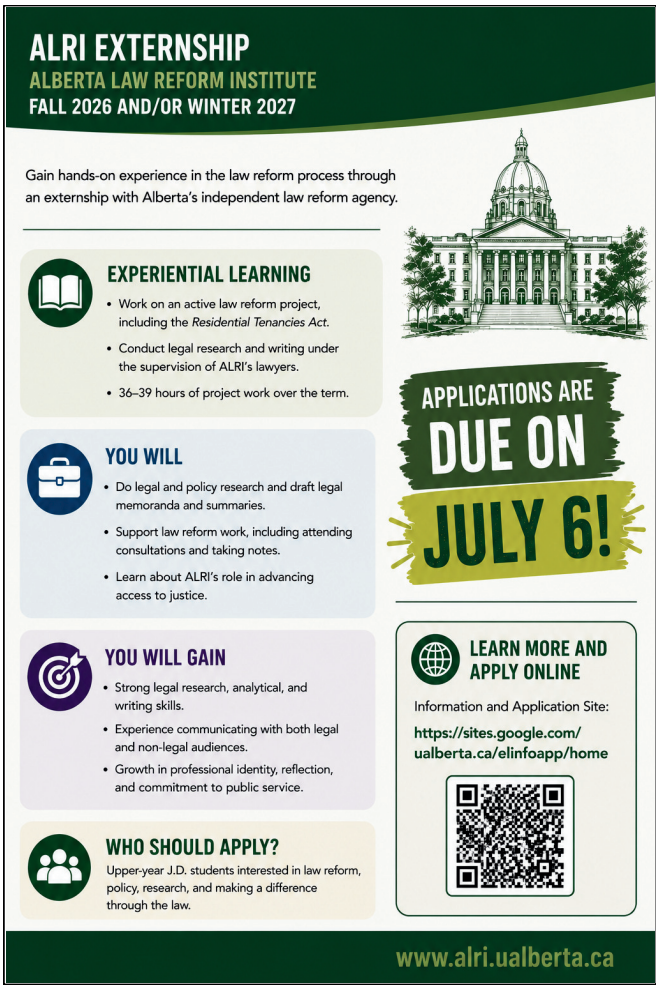
We are deeply grateful to every organization and professional who welcomed our students into their work.





New Partnerships for 2026-2027

In the upcoming academic year, we have a number of new externships to offer students. From the Environmental Law Centre to the Wahkohtowin Law & Governance Lodge, law students will have the opportunity to collaborate with lawyers working across many different areas and fields of practice.



Public Interest Commissioner of Alberta

Alberta Ombudsman

WAHKOHTOWIN

LAW & GOVERNANCE LODGE

Environmental Law Centre

Mooting 2025-2026

Each year, students participate in approximately 20 provincial, national and international moot competitions. They sharpen their advocacy skills and build their confidence with the support of one-on-one coaching and mentorship from the legal community. Moots cover a variety of subject areas including health law, Indigenous law, constitutional law, and more.

Mooting starts in the first year of Law School at the U of A. A capstone experience for first year students is the Right Honourable Beverley McLachlin Moot. Embedded within the mandatory Legal Research and Writing course, the moot gives students the opportunity to work with upper year students to draft a factum and participate in oral argument.



Mooting builds a skillset that is useful whether or not you become a litigator. When I started, I wasn't sure if I was going to like it and it ended up being the most important part of my law school career. Mooting gave me confidence that I didn't know I had, and showed me what I was capable of.

—Emma Stirling, '24 JD



From left to right:
Christopher Samuel, LRW Director; Calum Ward, current 3L; Kindred Paul, current 3L; Chief Justice Ritu Khullar; Dean Kelly; Rowan Ley, current 3L; Justice Kevin Feehan. Photo taken April 2025.

Student Experience: Their Day in Court!

What motivates me to apply for Justice Shadowing again next year is the opportunity to engage with legal professionals. For example, our Judge prepared students for court by identifying the key issues to watch for during the hearing, then followed up afterward by asking us whether we thought the arguments had addressed those issues. That kind of guided learning experience is incredibly valuable. The justices were very generous with their time and interest. The Q and A at lunch ... was a highlight. Most of us had observed court before, so it was interacting with the justices and the clerks that was most beneficial.

—Student participant from the 2026 Judge Shadowing Program



Student Experience: One Client. One Conversation. One Lesson.

What was the best part of volunteering at the personal directives clinic? I think it's that the public felt comfortable to do a personal directive (PD) that night, and have their questions answered. The combination of teaching, experiential activities and Q&A so they could learn from others really helped them to feel ready to proceed to the room with a lawyer to complete a PD. It was a nice community atmosphere where people felt safe to share and ask questions and get help with their own needs.

The collaboration between the Faculty of Law, Covenant, lawyers, and students was amazing. We completed 19 PDs that night!

—Student participant from the 2026 Personal Directives Pop-Up Clinic



Learning law by doing: course offerings

Experiential Learning is built on strong partnerships and careful coordination, creating meaningful opportunities for students to connect legal learning with professional practice, community engagement, and career readiness.

Here are just some of the experiential learning opportunities available to students in our Faculty.

Entrepreneurial Law Clinic

Support entrepreneurs to turn ideas into action. Students work with start-ups and social enterprises on real-world legal matters, from business formation and employment to intellectual property and commercial transactions, under the supervision of experienced lawyers.

Low-Income Individuals and the Law

Advocating for communities. Students complete clinical placements with Edmonton legal and community organizations, developing practical skills while exploring access to justice, professional responsibility, and the realities of providing legal services to low-income and marginalized communities.

Oceans Law and Policy

Take legal learning to the coast. Students explore the law of the sea through classroom study and an immersive experience at the Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre on Vancouver Island, connecting law and marine science through fieldwork focused on conservation, protected areas, species at risk, and ocean ecosystems.

Wahkohtowin Intensive

Experience Indigenous law through land, language, and relationship. Guided by professors, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers, students engage with Cree legal concepts through land-based learning, stories, ceremony, language, and the traditional tanning of a moose hide.

Office of the Judge Advocate General

Explore law in a military context. Students work with military lawyers at Canadian Forces Base Edmonton, conducting research and contributing to legal work involving military justice, administrative law, operational law, and other matters affecting the Canadian Armed Forces.

Courts Clerkship

Experience the judicial process from inside the courtroom. Students work alongside supervising judges at the Edmonton Law Courts, observing proceedings, conducting legal research, preparing memoranda, and gaining an inside perspective on judicial decision-making and the work of the courts.

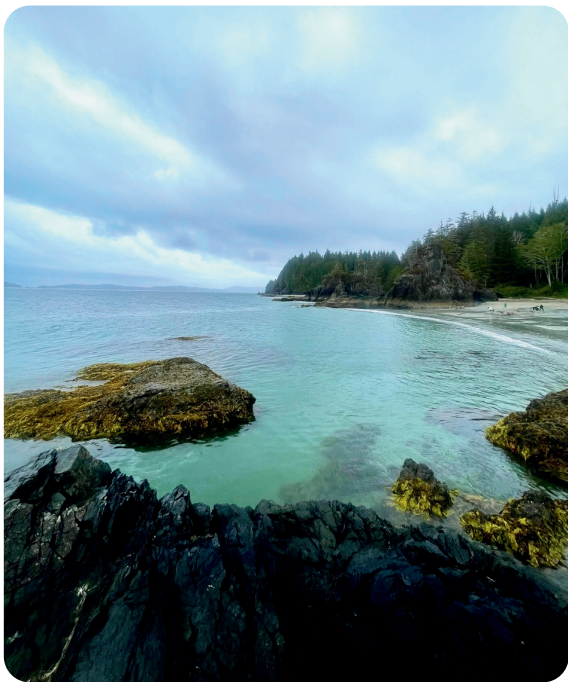
Prison Law

Explore law, advocacy, and access to justice in the correctional system. Students develop practical legal skills while engaging with issues affecting incarcerated people, gaining insight into prison law, legal advocacy, and the realities of navigating the correctional system.






















ALBERTA
20
Building Community
FACULTY
OF LAW
EDMONTON
RESEARCH
PARK


Join us on Thursday, March 26 from
12 - 1:30 PM
UNIVERSITY
OF ALBERTA
Advanced Technology Centre
Edmonton Research Park
9650 20 Ave NW
Edmonton, AB
Free
registration, and
refreshments for
those who register!
Contact Dayna Nelson
(Research Assistant) at
dayna2@ualberta.ca for
more information.
For more
information on the
ELC, please visit our
website:
Entrepreneurial Law Clinic Pop-Up Session:
Protecting your Intellectual Property
TECHNOLOGY
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ENTREPRENEURIAL LAW
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RESEARCH
PARK

Looking Ahead

The coming academic year promises continued growth.

Priorities include:

- expanding interdisciplinary partnerships;
- strengthening assessment of experiential learning outcomes;
- developing new externship opportunities;
- deepening Indigenous and community-engaged learning;
- increasing access to experiential opportunities across the JD curriculum;
- supporting faculty innovation through collaborative curriculum design.

As our programs continue to evolve, our commitment remains the same: preparing graduates who are not only knowledgeable about the law but ready to practise it with competence, humility, and purpose.



Thank you!

All of this work continues to provide students with meaningful ways to apply legal knowledge in real-world settings while developing professional judgment, ethical awareness, and leadership skills.

From classroom to courtroom to community, experiential learning remains a core component of legal education in the Faculty of Law at the University of Alberta. Our students continue to benefit from the generosity, expertise, and mentorship of faculty, staff, practitioners, judges, community partners, and alumni who make these opportunities possible.

Thank you for your continued support of experiential learning!

