



Association of American Law Schools

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Dear Dean Colleagues:

American legal education is a beacon of excellence around the world thanks to you and the devoted members of your law school communities. Our member schools promote excellence in teaching and scholarship; academic freedom; and diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints. As the 2024–25 academic year and the fall faculty hiring season begin, we write as the Executive Committee of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) to offer our support to our member schools during a particularly tumultuous time in legal education. We hope that the reflections we share here will help you and your schools in the coming months.

Many member schools have expressed concern over recent lawsuits seeking to dismantle diversity initiatives. The most recent lawsuit was filed against Northwestern University’s Pritzker School of Law, but NYU, Harvard, and other businesses and organizations have previously been targeted. The complaint against Northwestern, which alleges unlawful hiring practices, also attacks American legal education broadly, and it deploys harmful stereotypes about Black and other underrepresented faculty. In doing so, it strikes at AALS’s core mission and values and, thus, warrants our attention.

We also recognize that many states are proposing and enacting laws designed to restrict how universities conduct their hiring, and that these developments add further complexity to your hiring processes this year. Finally, we appreciate that your universities may have differing views about the decision in *SFFA v. Harvard* that restricted race-based decisions in student admissions, and how your school should implement the decision both within and beyond the admission context.

AALS is committed to the core value of diversity. Of course, the means to achieve diversity goals must be legal. Of all institutions, law schools certainly understand that employment decisions based on race (or any other protected characteristics) are – and long have been – unlawful. At the same time, our members’ lawful efforts to improve access and to further diversity and inclusion are broadly supported across the political spectrum at public and private law schools with differing missions, histories, commitments, and communities. AALS and its member schools have long rejected the harmful trope that diversity and excellence are mutually exclusive and, instead, understand diversity as part of excellence.

We will continue to support your embrace of our shared values, including striving for “a diverse faculty hired, promoted, and retained based on meeting and

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supporting high standards of teaching and scholarship and in accordance with principles of nondiscrimination,” per AALS Bylaw 6-1. AALS leaders are available to speak with deans and others in legal education who may seek our help in continuing to pursue excellence, including furthering the goal of creating diverse and inclusive law school environments. We expect our member schools to continue to pursue lawful steps to promote diversity and full inclusion.

While the legal profession is more diverse today than at any time in our history, there is still work to be done to achieve equality. Our students must be ready to represent people of all backgrounds, beliefs, religions, cultures, races, and viewpoints. People of all identities and beliefs must trust that they are represented in our legal system. Our world’s most pressing problems are more likely to be solved when diverse viewpoints are included in the analysis.

AALS has long supported the efforts of member schools in faculty recruitment. We believe that attracting a broad and diverse pool of qualified applicants for law school faculty positions is a collective responsibility that begins with the understanding, inspiration, and sense of possibility we provide to all of our students and alumni about the value of the rule of law, access to justice, and legal education.

As we continue our progress together, in addition to making ourselves and others in our resource corps available for consultation and assistance, we hope that the following suggestions may be helpful:

Nurturing Community. Each of your law schools has its own community and collegiality, and we know that you do your best to nurture a positive one for all members. During times like these, it is especially important to note that we are affected differently based on our own unique backgrounds and identities. The Northwestern complaint, for instance, not only targets that specific school’s faculty and former faculty with vitriolic characterizations, but it also makes broad, inaccurate, and scurrilous claims about law school faculty hiring generally. This approach harms individuals at Northwestern, but also undermines underrepresented faculty at all our schools.

AALS Sections. AALS has over 100 sections organized by subject areas and affinity, including large sections, such as the Minority Groups Section, the Section on Women in Legal Education, and many more. These sections are open to all faculty and staff in our member law schools; please encourage faculty and staff to join and participate. Most sections not only have robust programming at our Annual Meeting, but they also maintain active discussion lists and conduct year-round programming that provide support and professional development.

Thank you for your individual and collective commitments to excellence in American legal education. We are proud to stand with you and are ready to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Melanie D. Wilson
AALS President
On behalf of the AALS Executive Committee