

Call for Proposals

AALS Section on the Empirical Study of Legal Education and the Legal Profession

in Co-Sponsorship with

AALS Sections on Student Services, Academic Support, and
PreLegal Education and Admission to Law School

January 2021 Annual Meeting in San Francisco, CA

Disrupted Gatekeeping: An Empirical Look at How Gatekeeping Influences Access to Legal Education and the Legal Profession & How This Decision-Making Has Been Impacted By COVID-19

The Section on the Empirical Study of Legal Education and the Legal Profession is organizing a panel featuring newly emerging empirical research related to gatekeeping, key decision making stages that affect students' admission to law school, success during law school, and entry into the legal profession. In light of the pandemic underway across the United States and world, we encourage presenters to present empirical research on these critical gatekeeping moments and to discuss how this gatekeeping may be, is being, or has been impacted and disrupted by COVID-19.

In short, our goal is for panelists to present: (1) first, empirical research on gatekeeping, broadly defined, that influences access to law schools, law student engagement and success, and entry into the legal profession, and (2) second, to theorize, hypothesize, discuss, or present data on how these processes may be disrupted, impacted, or altered by COVID-19.

1. *Gatekeeping*. Panelists will first present research spotlighting one of three critical gatekeeping stages in a law student's career. While not an exhaustive list, possible topics for discussion might include any of the following, including how any of these gatekeeping stages impact members from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds:

Getting into Law School: Proposals examining the use of data to determine access to and admission to law school. Possible topics might include the use of LSAT, or other exam scores in admission determinations, policies and practices in the award of financial aid or scholarships, access to legal education (pipeline) programs and topics relating to the affordability of legal education. Proposals may also examine change in the number of law school applications over time, and change in the composition of these applications.

During Law School: Proposals examining data related to the law student well-being and the impact of legal education on student learning, growth, belonging, decision-making, trajectories, or success. Possible topics might include changes in law students' perception of career paths and opportunities including movement away from prior public interest practice goals (i.e., public interest drift), and the extent to which institutional decisions and practices or law teaching, grading, and clinical experiences influence law student well-being, learning, belonging, growth, or trajectories. Possible topics may also include gatekeeping to student services and prestigious opportunities within law school.

After Law School: Proposals examining either the use of data or data related to law school graduates' entry and engagement in the profession. Possible topics might include empirical analysis relating to bar exams and licensure systems, use of data in hiring and employer selection processes, the data collection practices and reporting by trade and accreditation organizations, and debt and income considerations in career pursuits.

2. *Disruption.* In light of the disruption produced by COVID-19 in legal education and within our communities and home life, we encourage presenters to discuss how this gatekeeping may be, is being, or has been disrupted or changed by COVID-19. We encourage participants to theorize, hypothesize, discuss, or present data on how gatekeeping decisions may be disrupted, impacted, or changed by COVID-19, and/or how this disruption may be overcome.

Last year, we jointly sponsored a successful program on leadership co-sponsored by the Sections on Leadership, Professional Responsibility, Pro-Bono & Public Service Opportunities, and Student Services, which attracted a large and diverse audience. This year, we seek to develop a program that has similar breadth and appeal. *The Journal of Legal Education* has graciously agreed to consider for publication papers presented in connection with our program, with particular consideration given to papers exploring changes to legal education and the profession engendered by the response to COVID19.

Proposals. Proposals should contain an explanation of both the substance of the presentation and the methods used in it. The planning committee would prefer to highlight talent across a range of law schools and disciplines and is especially interested in new and innovative research. Please share this call with colleagues—both within and outside of the legal academy and the academic support community.

Proposals must include the following information:

1. A title for your presentation.
2. A brief description of the objectives or outcomes of your presentation.
3. A brief description of how your presentation will support your stated objectives or outcomes.

4. An explanation of how your presentation can accomplish its goals in an allotted 15 minutes.
5. A description of both the substantive content and the presentation techniques to be employed, if any, to engage the audience.
6. Your current CV.

Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis, so please send yours as soon as possible, but no later than Monday, June 15, 2020 to Professor Jennifer Gundlach. If you have any questions, please email jennifer.gundlach@hofstra.edu or call (516) 463-4190.

Section on Empirical Study of Legal Education and the Legal Profession

Program Committee:

Program Chair: Jennifer A. Gundlach, Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University

Section Chair: Victor D. Quintanilla, Indiana University Maurer School of Law

Secretary: Joel Chanvisanuruk, University of Cincinnati College of Law

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Meera Deo, Law School Survey of Student Engagement

Neil W. Hamilton, University of St. Thomas School of Law

Trent Kennedy, Georgetown University Law Center

Rachel F. Moran, University of California, Los Angeles School of Law

Jeremy Paul, Northeastern University School of Law