

A vertical stack of four colored squares: light blue, yellow, dark blue, and green.

A TRANSFORMED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016



**EXTENDING OUR MISSION
TO MAKE THE WORLD
MORE SUSTAINABLE AND JUST.**



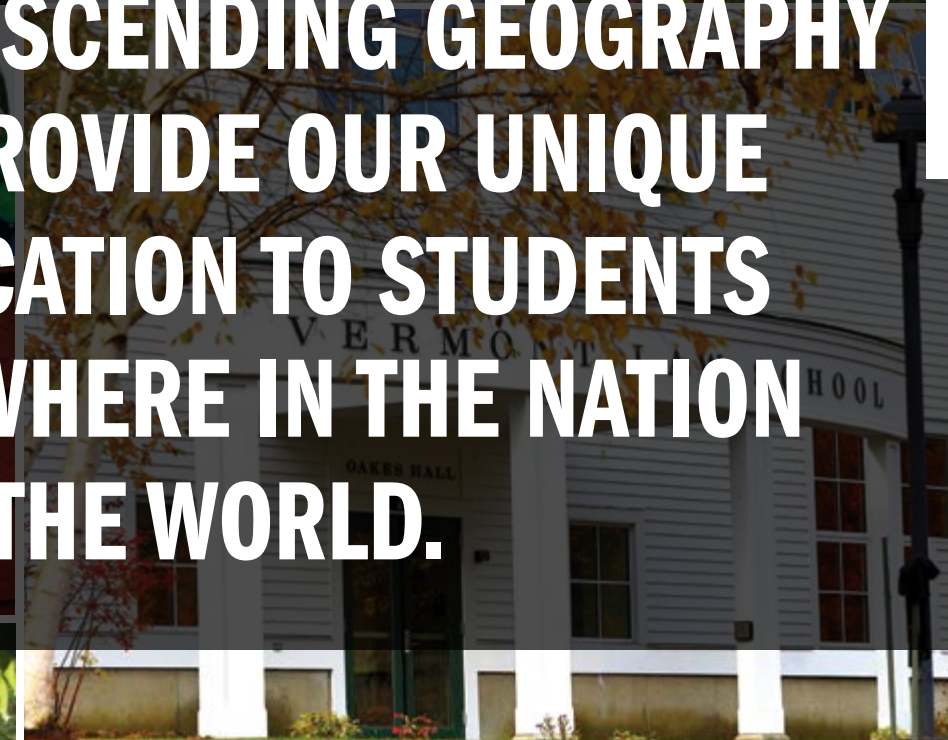
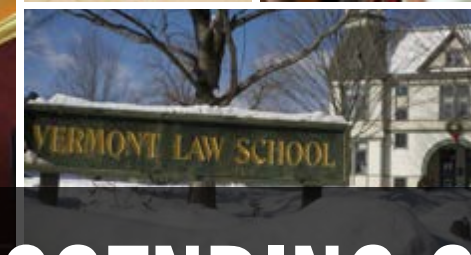
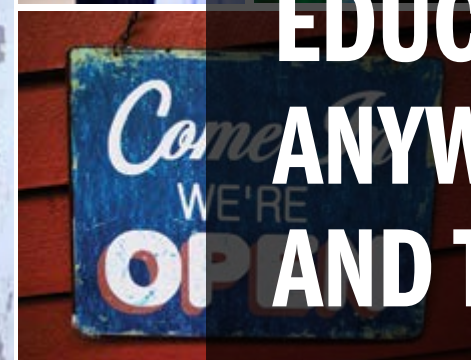
WE ARE COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING A GENERATION WHO USE THEIR TALENTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY AND THE WORLD.



THE POWER OF THE LAW



**TRANSCENDING GEOGRAPHY
TO PROVIDE OUR UNIQUE
EDUCATION TO STUDENTS
ANYWHERE IN THE NATION
AND THE WORLD.**





CREATING A FLEXIBLE EDUCATION FOR FUTURE ADVOCATES, ACTIVISTS, LEADERS.

Since the 1970s Vermont Law School has been driven by a mission to make the world more sustainable and just through education. We've developed advocates, activists, leaders—some 7,000 graduates—who've carried this mission to Main Street, Wall Street, the dusty roads of Smalltown, U.S.A., and abroad, working to effect change in areas ranging from criminal law to human rights to environmental law and policy.

This Strategic Plan further extends that mission. It provides the means to move beyond borders to provide our unique education to students anywhere in the nation, anywhere in the world, affording them flexibility to balance academic goals with careers and 21st-century life.

VLS has come to stand for innovation in law and policy education, pioneering programs, centers, clinics, and curricula. The Strategic Plan builds upon these successes and VLS's core strengths: an excellent juris doctor (JD) program; the nation's best environmental, energy and food systems law and policy curriculum; thriving law school-based master's programs, among the first in the nation; a first-of-its-kind online program for master's and master of laws (LLM) students; and groundbreaking experiential and international programs.

Now we have the opportunity to transform ourselves to lead in law and policy education in ways that adapt to a rapidly changing world. Technology, market and cultural forces have profoundly altered the role of attorneys and other professionals, requiring us to equip our graduates with new capacities and new knowledge. The same forces are changing the process of education itself, eliminating the previous limitations imposed by physical distance, opening international opportunities, and pushing us toward a more flexible and outcome-based program that far surpasses the boundaries of our physical location in the Green Mountains of Vermont.

The Strategic Plan focuses on the drivers that will see us succeed. The Plan distills these changes into three basic objectives, and defines strategies and actions for each. We will:

■ Protect and Build on Our Existing Strengths. VLS will reinforce and enhance the existing strengths that are core to its identity and its mission to offer the best possible education, and to create a just and sustainable world;

■ Construct a Transformed Educational Model. VLS will reinvent the content and delivery of its education to increase accessibility, to reduce costs, and to better prepare graduates for professional roles in the 21st century; and,

■ Engage Students, Faculty, and Broader Community in a Permanent Process for Change. VLS will create a mechanism, distinct from the academic program, to support the incubation of faculty and student ideas, engage students and faculty in improving the world, and develop new sources of revenue for the school.

Achieving these objectives will ensure the future success and health of Vermont Law School as we—the Board of Trustees, our faculty and staff—carry forward the VLS mission for future generations of students and alumni. Thank you to everyone in our community who helped shape the ideas outlined herein, and to those of you who embark on this journey with us.


Marc Mihaly
President and Dean

OUR GOALS

VLS STRIVES TO OVERCOME THE CURRENT CHALLENGES IN GRADUATE LAW AND POLICY EDUCATION

- To offer students more efficient and less expensive approaches to their education;
- To create a flexible curriculum and schedule that promotes year-around access to our curriculum from anywhere in the world, thus reducing costs and opening access to a VLS education to new types of students;
- To sustain and grow our leading environmental program;
- To incorporate technology into both what we teach and how we teach it;
- To maintain and improve performance for all our students, and develop superior pathways to fulfilling employment, and for the JD student, promote bar passage;
- To create a graduate institute of law and policy to house our flourishing master's programs and expand degree offerings;
- To re-invent our curriculum, including its experiential components, so our students are equipped to fulfill our mission to make the 21st-century world more sustainable and just;
- To engage and support students and faculty in a continuous process of entrepreneurial activity and institutional re-invention; and finally,
- To maintain and enhance an educational system that performs as a successful financial whole.

OBJECTIVE 1 PROTECT AND BUILD ON OUR EXISTING STRENGTHS INVESTMENT IN CORE CAPACITIES AND STUDENT SERVICES

This objective focuses on evolutionary improvement through creation of a better version of the current VLS structure and education. It focuses on making our world-class environmental programs even broader, deeper and more innovative; on growing and broadening the scope of our master's programs by increasing their external visibility, breadth, internal status and access to student services; on developing and improving the JD curriculum; on addressing the high cost of education; and on improving existing student academic success and career services.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS:

- Enhance our environmental program to maintain a leadership position in environmental law and policy education.
- Elevate the institutional, organizational importance and broaden the scope of our master's programs through the establishment of a graduate institute of law and policy.
- Improve the JD curriculum by continuing and accelerating our efforts to ensure that our JD students are equipped with the demands of 21st-century employment.
- Improve career placement for all graduates.
- Improve student outcomes.
- Respond to the high cost of education.

“THE STRATEGIC PLAN EXTENDS INTO THE JD OUR FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE WITH ONLINE MASTER’S EDUCATION. WE HAVE LEARNED THAT STUDENTS SEEK AND ENJOY A COMBINATION OF RESIDENTIAL AND ONLINE EXPERIENCE. THEY FOLLOW PREVIOUS GENERATIONS OF VLS ALUMNI WHO LOVED LIVING AMONG OUR TIGHT COMMUNITY IN BEAUTIFUL SOUTH ROYALTON; THEY LOVE THE VERMONT EXPERIENCE. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY ENJOY THE UNIQUE INTIMACY OF AN ONLINE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY. AND THEY ESPECIALLY APPRECIATE THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO—WORKING ONLINE WITH THEIR CLASSMATES AND THEN MEETING THEM HERE IN VERMONT. THE STRATEGIC PLAN INVESTS IN JUST THAT COMBINATION.”

—PRESIDENT AND DEAN MARC MIHALY

OBJECTIVE 2 CONSTRUCT A TRANSFORMED EDUCATIONAL MODEL NEW PATHWAYS FOR STUDENTS

This objective calls for fundamental change in the way we deliver our educational services and even in the structure of our educational products. It includes actions that move us from a primarily residential program toward a hybrid residential/online learning status, and from a primarily traditional academic schedule to year-around education.

The implementation of this objective will move the school further toward a flexible approach where students have substantial freedom to tailor the timing and location of their education to their financial situation and career goals.

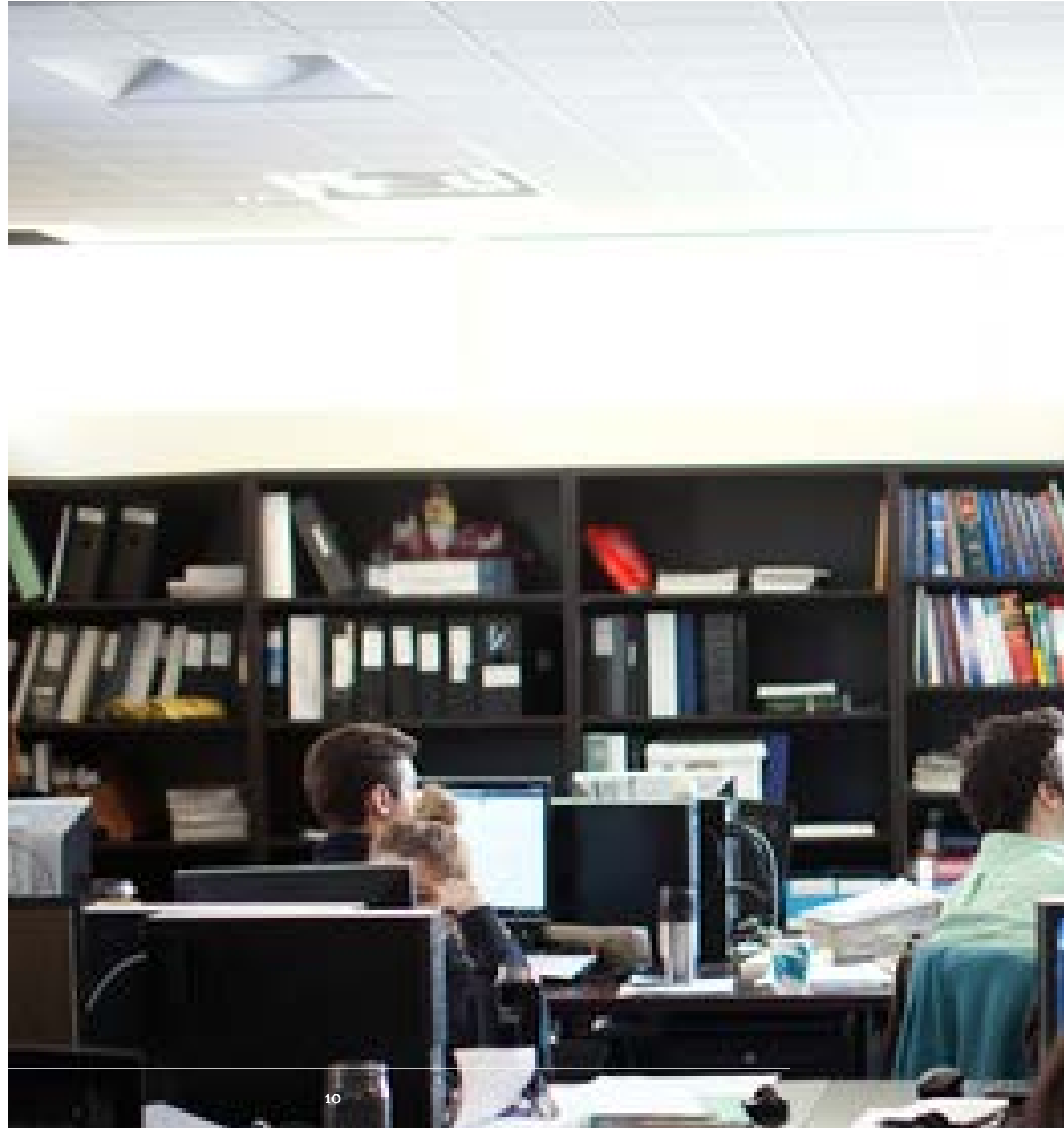
This effort has proven successful in connection with our master’s degrees, where students can complete their degree through a combination of residential and online courses. This objective contemplates formalizing that evolving situation. Equally important, it calls for further extension of the effort for the JD, for which VLS currently offers 22 courses online with more planned in the coming year. These flexible new pathways to a degree will open opportunities for new students to obtain VLS degrees and will increase in significance as society seeks to solve complex global challenges.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS:

- A Reduced Residency JD.
- A hybrid residential/online JD.
- Formalization and enhancement of hybrid master’s programs.
- Additional master’s and LLM degrees.

“WE MUST MEET NEW CHALLENGES WITH NEW SOLUTIONS.”

-VICE DEAN DAVID MEARS



OBJECTIVE 3 ENGAGE STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND BROADER COMMUNITY IN A PERMANENT PROCESS FOR CHANGE

AN INCUBATOR FOR CONTINUING INNOVATION

Objective 3 encourages the innovative spirit and service to society that have characterized Vermont Law School since its founding. VLS students and faculty are driven by a desire to develop viable solutions to real-world problems, whether related to the environment or issues of social justice. Objective 3 seeks to provide a place, an incubator, for their innovative ventures—a support system to bring their ideas to fruition.

We have seen that VLS students and faculty excel through participation in such ventures initiated by the nationally recognized Environmental Law Center, Institute for Energy and the Environment, Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, and related clinics. The incubator concept is inspired by the practical, real-world solutions they have achieved and seeks to extend such creative endeavors to other areas without limitation.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS:

- Provide support for faculty, students and other members of our extended community with entrepreneurial ideas to come together, analyze opportunities and priorities, and focus the school's resources on determining the steps necessary to bring them to fruition.



Vermont Law School
164 Chelsea Street | PO Box 96
South Royalton, VT 05068
vermontlaw.edu