

# Strategic Plan

2021-2025

## Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors

September 2021

### MAPLA Strategic Planning Committee

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## Introduction & Executive Summary

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to advance the Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors' (MAPLA) vision to be “the most comprehensive, inclusive, and supportive resource for pre-law advisors in the Midwest.” This vision is, of course, not self-executing and requires careful planning, commitment, and resolve to succeed.

While the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic has caused many challenges related to pre-law advising, it has also provided MAPLA with the opportunity to ask ourselves critical questions of our organization: Who are we? What do we do well? What do we need to work on? Where do we want to be in four years? What are the best ways to get there?

In answering these questions, dozens of people across the MAPLA footprint, covering Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin-- gave their time, energy, talents, and experience to assist us in formulating this plan that will help guide the future of MAPLA over the next four years. They include pre-law advisors, whether MAPLA members or not, as well as law school admissions representatives from across the region.

MAPLA's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 consists of five strategic goals, each with its own objectives and actions, that were developed by the MAPLA Strategic Planning Committee during Summer 2021 through utilization of anonymous survey, SWOT analysis, and development and adoption of mission, vision, and values statements. These strategic priorities and objectives should guide the work of MAPLA and the MAPLA Board over the next four years through (1) increasing membership through outreach, engagement, and retention (2) increased resources to pre-law advisors through the MAPLA website (3) a re-commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (4) increased professional development opportunities, including webinars, and (5) clarification and modification of Board of Director roles.

The MAPLA Strategic Planning Committee recommends reconvening this committee every two years to ascertain MAPLA's progress in achieving these goals and to create a Strategic Plan every five years.

We are confident that the goals in this Strategic Plan will enrich the MAPLA organization and experience and continue to make MAPLA the most comprehensive, inclusive, and supportive resource for pre-law advisors in the Midwest.

Larry Hayman, Chair  
MAPLA Strategic Planning Committee

# About the Organization

## Mission Statement

The Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors (MAPLA) promotes informed advising of students who are considering a legal career, by providing professional development, networking, and engagement opportunities for faculty and staff advisors.

## Values Statement

MAPLA values providing individualized, honest, and independent advice to prospective law students. We support pre-law advisors through accessible resources, community building, collaboration, and consultation. We strive to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive legal profession.

## Vision Statement

MAPLA strives to be the most comprehensive, inclusive, and supportive resource for pre-law advisors in the Midwest.

## Organizational Background

Founded in 1975, MAPLA is a non-profit organization that, at the time of the writing of this Plan, consists of 183 members, made up of 137 Pre-Law Advisors and 47 law school admissions representatives. MAPLA members advise students across a large portion of the United States, including in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. MAPLA is currently governed by an elected Board of Directors, including the President, President-elect, Secretary, and Treasurer, as well as five at-large board positions. Additionally, the Midwest Alliance for Law School Admissions (MALSA) elects one of its members to sit on MAPLA's Board of Directors and MAPLA invites the executive leadership of the Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC) from the MAPLA region to sit on the Board.

MAPLA membership is open to pre-law advisors from 2 and 4 year institutions as well as law school representatives from any ABA-approved law school. MAPLA membership comes with a host of benefits, including an annual conference (except every quadriennial year), a caravan of law school admissions representatives that brings law school admissions to the region, webinars, newsletters, email list-servs, and several others.

Two representatives from MAPLA serve on the Board of Directors of the Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC), the national coordinating body bringing together leadership from the six regional pre-law advisors associations (APLAs) and select partner organizations.

## Strategic Goals and Objectives

### 1. Goal # 1: To increase MAPLA Pre-Law Advisor membership by raising awareness of MAPLA

MAPLA should increase Pre-Law Advisor (PLA) membership in the organization by raising awareness of MAPLA. As of the distribution of the Strategic Planning Survey (“survey”) in March 2021, the Law School Admissions Council had 623 individuals listed as PLAs across the MAPLA geographic footprint. Around this same time, the organization consisted of 183 members, with 137 PLA members. This equates to only about 22% of PLAs in the region being members of MAPLA.<sup>1</sup>

Seventy-three PLAs responded to the survey. While a significant majority of respondents indicated that they were currently MAPLA members, approximately 33% of respondents were either never a MAPLA member (14%) or had been a member in the past but were no longer members (19%). The primary reasons respondents gave for not being a MAPLA member were related to either awareness, such as never having heard of MAPLA, or not having the institutional funds to pay the \$40 membership fee. For example, one respondent noted that they were “not sure what MAPLA would add to my practice,” while another noted that they were not sufficiently aware of what MAPLA does to decide whether or not to join. Consistent with the survey results, the SWOT analysis undertaken by the committee identified a number of weaknesses related to MAPLA awareness, including advisors not being aware of MAPLA, difficulty in ascertaining campus professionals who engage in pre-law advising, and the challenges associated with reaching community college students.

Objective: Increase MAPLA PLA membership by 10% over the next four years

**Action:** Consistent and sustained outreach to new LSAC designated PLAs

MAPLA should increase its efforts to increase membership by raising awareness of the organization through consistent and sustained outreach to newly designated PLAs. The Law School Admission Council has recently updated its database to allow users to search for designated PLAs by date that they were added to the database. The MAPLA Board member responsible for Membership and Recruitment should regularly, but not less than once a month, run a search through the LSAC PLA database to find newly added PLAs. They should then contact those PLAs with an invitation to join MAPLA while informing them the benefits of joining.

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<sup>1</sup> It is unclear how frequently the LSAC Pre-Law Advisor database is updated.

The MAPLA Board member responsible for Membership and Recruitment should create a comprehensive communication plan to identify and recruit potential new members and to retain and maintain engagement with existing members.

**Action:** Structured process for onboarding new members

New MAPLA members should feel welcomed to the organization soon after joining. Unfortunately, MAPLA currently lacks a formal process for onboarding new PLAs and new members do not have a means of interacting with the organization until the next annual conference. The committee recommends establishing a protocol for welcoming new members. The Board member in charge of Membership and Recruitment will be responsible for creating these onboarding processes which should include (1) creating a peer to peer mentorship program connecting new MAPLA members with more seasoned PLA members and (2) virtual regular meet-ups to create opportunities for more informal interactions among MAPLA members, including idea sharing, updates, Q&A, and other topics (3) new PLA features in the MAPLA Minute.

## **2. Goal # 2: To increase advising resources available to PLAs**

When asked what goals MAPLA should focus on over the next four years, a significant majority of respondents (74%), identified creating an advising resource bank where members could share handouts, powerpoints, syllabi, and other content through the password protected MAPLA member only website.

Objective: Significantly expand resources available on the password protected MAPLA member only website.

Behind the password protected portion of its website, MAPLA currently provides members with helpful information, including past conference presentations, past webinars, and past member minutes. While these resources are incredibly useful tools for members, MAPLA should significantly expand the content that is currently provided. These resources should include: (1) Pre-Law Advising Resources, including links to frequently used websites (such as LSAC, AccessLex, ABA, NALP), powerpoints, handouts, and other content (2) Teaching Resources: including syllabi for introductory courses, research courses, topical courses, and experiential learning courses (3) Experiential Learning Opportunities, such as Moot Court and Mock Trial Resources, including syllabi (4) Undergraduate Awards, Publications, and Scholarships (5) Professional Development: resources related to faculty and staff professional development, including information related to tenure files, advocating for resources to university administration, and other similar resources. The Board member responsible for Professional Development will be responsible for coordinating these resources and will work with the Technology and Website Coordinator to make these resources available.

**Action:** Identify and collect existing resources

At the beginning of Fall Semester 2021, MAPLA should put out a call to all members to share the above information with a goal of having all materials collected by mid-semester. This can be either an ongoing ask in the regularly monthly communication, or a specific ask each semester. The Board member in charge of communication will be responsible for this

**Action:** Creation of new resources as needed

After the call for new materials, the Board member in charge of communication should assess which Resources need additional materials and put out a call to the Board and membership for creation of materials. The request should be ongoing.

The MAPLA Board may solicit the creation of appropriate materials by members as needed.

Objective: Develop signature MAPLA programs for pre-law students to support diverse applicants and candidates with more limited resources.

**Action:** Creation of a committee to explore distribution of pre-law resources and programming.

Pre-law advising resources and programming are finite and, unfortunately, not distributed equally across all colleges and universities in the MAPLA geographical region. As such, this committee recommends exploring different options for additional ways of distributing information and opportunities, including the creation of an ad hoc committee to explore the idea of creating a MAPLA program for undergraduate and/or high school students from diverse backgrounds to prepare them for law school.

**3. Goal #3: To encourage, expect, and re-commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion in MAPLA membership, culture, programming, advising, and law school applicants**

Both MAPLA's newly drafted Vision and Values Statement include commitments to diversity and inclusion as important pillars of the organization. According to the American Bar Association, there has been virtually no change in the racial demographics of active attorneys in the United States over the last ten years. For instance, the percentage of African-American and Asian attorneys in the United States has remained flat at 5% and 2% respectively in the decade spanning from 2011-2021.<sup>2</sup> Hispanic attorneys now account for just 5% of attorneys, up from 4% while Native Americans have gone from 1% of attorneys to, statistically, 0% in 2021. Individuals

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<sup>2</sup> ABA National Lawyer Population Survey, 10-Year Trend in Lawyer Demographics, Year 2021, online available at [https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market\\_research/2021-national-lawyer-population-survey.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/market_research/2021-national-lawyer-population-survey.pdf) accessed July 7, 2021.

identifying as women have fared slightly better during that same period, increasing from 33 to 37%.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a survey from the National Association of Law Placement from 2019 suggests that only about 3% of attorney respondents at law firms openly identify as LGBTQ+.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, only one-fifth of undergraduate students who are considering law school are first-generation college students, contrasted with the fact that 50% of undergraduates who are considering JDs have at least one parent with an advanced degree.<sup>5</sup>

**Objective: Significantly expand MAPLA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion**

**Action:** Create a new Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Board Member at Large

MAPLA should create a new at-large board member position whose responsibility would include championing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives for MAPLA. The position responsibilities would include assisting the board in developing and implementing DEI initiatives in support of this Strategic Plan, identify and serve as a liaison between MAPLA and historically underrepresented institutions, consult with the Board regarding strategies to encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion in membership, culture, programming, advising, and law school applicants, and other related responsibilities. This position will serve as chair of the MAPLA DEI committee, which should include representatives from community colleges, minority serving institutions, and institutions with large populations of first generation college students.

Prior to the first MAPLA Board meeting, but after the election of the DEI Board Member at Large, the DEI Board member, MAPLA President, MAPLA President-elect, MAPLA Secretary, and MAPLA Treasurer shall meet to develop goals for the position, which may include recruitment goals, programming goals, pre-law advising goals, and other related matters. This committee will revise these goals as from time to time becomes necessary.

Given its broad geographic footprint and large population, MAPLA would continue to be a DEI leader by creating this Board position.

**Action:** Identify and outreach to PLAs at institutions serving historically underrepresented students.

Survey respondents and committee members alike noted that it is difficult, especially at community colleges and colleges and universities that serve historically underrepresented

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<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> National Associate for Law Placement, 2019 Report on U.S Diversity in Law firms, online available at . [https://www.nalp.org/uploads/2019\\_DiversityReport.pdf](https://www.nalp.org/uploads/2019_DiversityReport.pdf) accessed July 8, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> Before the JD: Undergraduate Views on Law School. American Association of Law Schools, online available at <https://www.aals.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/BJDReportsHghlights.pdf>



students, to identify individuals at these institutions that are responsible for providing pre-law advising and resources to students. This is particularly problematic given that the legal profession continues to be one of the least diverse professions.

That DEI Board member would be responsible for, among other responsibilities, outreach to community colleges and universities with populations who are historically underrepresented in the legal profession.

**Action:** Ensure MAPLA commits to DEI in membership, activities, programming, communications, and culture.

Taking broad definitions of diversity, including visible and invisible qualities while accounting for intersectionality, MAPLA should ensure that representatives at all levels promote the vision and values of DEI by taking actions to increase DEI in membership, activities, programming, communications, and culture.

#### **4. Goal #4: Increase professional development opportunities for faculty and staff PLAs**

The MAPLA survey indicated that PLAs across the MAPLA region are split relatively evenly between faculty with pre-law advising responsibilities and staff with pre-law advising responsibilities. Of course, the core pre-law advising responsibilities of both populations are the same. But the two populations oftentimes have different professional development needs and concerns. For example, faculty with pre-law advising responsibilities are often concerned with attaining promotion and tenure. Staff with pre-law advising responsibilities are also interested in promotion and career advancement. But the way that each makes the case for each of those to university administration might be different. There may be times that both populations have to advocate for pre-law advising generally and how their pre-law advising work, inside and outside MAPLA, can be used for their own professional development.

**Action:** Incorporate professional development and career advancement into MAPLA programming and resources.

Through its conferences, webinars, and networking opportunities, MAPLA provides excellent opportunities for PLAs to learn more about the profession. In addition to these opportunities, the survey indicated that members were interested in having opportunities for professional development and career advancement incorporated into MAPLA programming. Some proposals include information about how to advocate for pre-law and the work that PLAs do to administrators responsible for promotion and tenure, salary increases, and budget decisions. This could also include gathering information related to budgeting information, salary information, office structuring, how-to's, campus and institutional partnerships, as well as the retention of new, mid-level, and seasoned PLAs.

5. Goal #5: Clarify MAPLA Board membership, position descriptions, and term limits

While elected positions on the MAPLA Board of Directors are clear, it has not always been clear which PLANC officers should serve on the MAPLA board in an *ex officio* capacity. Additionally, there has not been a consistent protocol for whether the immediate past president of MAPLA should continue serving on the MAPLA Board of Directors for a period of time after the completion of their term. In order to maintain consistency, allow Board members to plan for expectation of service, and to assist with budgeting, the MAPLA Bylaws should be revised as set forth below.

Objective: Clarify MAPLA Board membership and position descriptions

**Action:** Only PLANC Executive Committee members from the MAPLA region should be designated ex officio MAPLA Board members.

Having PLANC representatives on the MAPLA Board as ex officio Board members helps maintain the strong ties between the two organizations. However, in order to reduce redundancy, Only PLANC Executive Committee members will serve as ex officio members of the MAPLA Board after 2021. These positions include the Chair, Chair-elect, Past Chair, and Treasurer roles only.

**Action:** Immediate Past President to serve 1 year, renewable term on MAPLA Board

The Immediate Past President of the MAPLA Board will have valuable institutional knowledge and experience that would be advantageous to the MAPLA Board after the Immediate Past President's term has concluded. Additionally, the Immediate Past President can mentor the current President and provide transitional support to the MAPLA Board and overall organization. Accordingly, the Immediate Past President will continue to serve on the MAPLA Board ex officio for a one year required term immediately following the conclusion of their term as President. This one year commitment can be extended to one additional year at the discretion of the Board.

**Action:** Modify Board descriptions to update role or define new role as set forth in this Plan

To bring the MAPLA Board of Director position descriptions into line with this Strategic Plan, we have outlined revisions below. We have made no revisions to the President, President-elect, or Secretary positions.

**DEI Director**

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director oversees the implementation of DEI, assists MAPLA in shaping and advancing its efforts to build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization.

### **Immediate Past President**

The Immediate Past President of MAPLA position is automatic and, unlike most Board positions, will not be voted on by the members. Only the person who has served as President of MAPLA in the previous term is eligible to serve in this position. The Immediate Past President shall:

- Serve as an advisor and mentor to the new President
- Ensure the successful onboarding of the new President and all new Board members
- Assist in other projects as assigned by the President or Board

### **Communications Director**

MAPLA Communications is the primary way in which MAPLA stays in touch with its membership. The individual responsible for MAPLA Communications shall:

- Communicate with the MAPLA membership on a regular basis. Such communications may be electronic in nature.
- Provide information to the MAPLA membership on items of interest to them including:
  - Upcoming events sponsored by MAPLA
  - Information related to the law school admission process
  - News events related to pre-law advising, law schools, and the legal profession
- Maintain and update the MAPLA membership Facebook page, as well as other social media platforms utilized by MAPLA

### **Recruitment & Membership Director**

MAPLA Recruitment & Membership maintains the connection between MAPLA and its membership. This person is also responsible for recruiting prospective new members into the organization. The individual responsible for MAPLA Recruitment & Membership shall:

- Maintain an accurate and up-to-date list of the MAPLA membership via an Excel spreadsheet (or other electronic form) and store this list on the MAPLA Board Google Drive so that it is accessible by all members
- Check Constant Contact weekly for new membership registrations
- Update MAPLA Members Google group weekly
- Respond to inquiries from MAPLA members or potential members in a timely manner
- Remind existing members when their membership expires and actively encourage them to renew their membership
- Draft invoices and send to members as necessary
- Actively recruit potential new MAPLA members
- Collaborate closely with other MAPLA Board members to develop and convey updates and member benefits to the membership, including the DEI Officer, Communications, and Professional Development
- Create and execute a standardized process for onboarding new MAPLA Board members, in collaboration with other members of the Board;

- Serve as Chair for annual Drive-In Conference, as scheduled, (except during PLANC years), including:
  - Engaging law schools to serve as hosts, creating conference agenda, securing speakers/panelists, creating and monitoring registration, arranging for parking, ordering catering, and other conference duties

### **Technology & Website Coordinator**

MAPLA Technology and Website Coordinator maintains the MAPLA website and Constant Contact platform. The individual responsible for MAPLA Technology shall:

- Keep the MAPLA website updated with news and information of use to MAPLA members (such information often provided by other members of the MAPLA Board)
- Consult with and assist Board with technology related issues with respect to Board responsibilities
- Act as a liaison with MAPLA's website and other technology providers and partners

### **Professional Development Director**

MAPLA Professional Development develops and coordinates regularly-scheduled professional development opportunities designed to provide professional development, educational opportunities, and career advancement experiences for the MAPLA membership. The individual responsible for MAPLA Webinars shall:

- Develop opportunities on topics of interest to pre-law advisors
- Work with the webinars representative of the Midwest Association of Law School Admissions (MALSA) to develop and coordinate webinars
- Arrange dates and times for webinars and coordinate with a technology host for each webinar
- Act as host/moderator for each webinar or, if unable to host/moderate, arrange for a substitute host/moderator
- Regularly collaborate with DEI board member regarding potential topics and presenters

### **Treasurer**

MAPLA Treasurer shall be responsible for the management and oversight of the financial affairs of the organization. These duties shall include:

- Financial management of MAPLA, including collecting monies, maintaining bank accounts, selecting banks, reconciling bank accounts, and resolving outstanding debts and reimbursements
- Create an annual budget, prior to March 31, in consultation with the Board of Directors, that supports the organization's goals and drives decision-making, to be approved by the Board, and monitors and compares actual revenues against such budget
- Preparing periodic reports to the Board on revenue and expenditures
- Engaging a CPA to prepare the annual tax report