

Strategic Plan

2026 - 2030

Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors

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MAPLA Strategic Planning Committee

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Introduction & Executive Summary

The Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors (MAPLA) Strategic Plan for 2026–2030 establishes a comprehensive framework to guide the MAPLA Board of Directors in fulfilling its role as the primary regional partner and authority for pre-law advisors across twelve Midwestern states. Developed through the work of a dedicated MAPLA Strategic Planning Committee, this updated plan directly builds upon the foundation of the 2021-2025 strategic plan to effectively address evolving institutional landscapes and legal education trends over the past five years. To ensure the strategy grounded itself in the realities of the field, the committee conducted a rigorous SWOT analysis based on organizational data and administered a strategic planning survey that captured key insights from both current MAPLA members and non-member advisors across two-year and four-year institutions.

To operationalize these findings, the strategic plan outlines targeted initiatives to expand member engagement, reduce financial barriers, and embed equity into every facet of the organization. MAPLA will expand outreach to non-member advisors in the Law School Admission Council database, form a Big Ten Academic Alliance subgroup, and launch a specialized task force to support two-year community college advisors. Recognizing that university budget limitations frequently restrict professional development, the board will establish a dedicated Conference Scholarship Fund and provide members with customizable Institutional Advocacy Toolkits to demonstrate the value of MAPLA attendance to campus leadership. Concurrently, MAPLA will advance diversity, equity, and inclusion across the region by expanding the Racheter DEI Award, promoting subsidies for Minority-Serving Institutions, and partnering with organizations serving underrepresented communities.

In addition to expanding access, the plan enhances core educational offerings while safeguarding the integrity of the profession. MAPLA will implement a standardized New Pre-Law Training curriculum paired with peer mentorship, deliver monthly webinars in partnership with MALSA, explore resuming regional drive-in events, and expand its digital resource repository. Finally, as non-institutional commercial entities expand, MAPLA will publish an official position statement defining the unique ethical standards and scope of campus-based advisors. Together, these coordinated actions will direct the ongoing work of the MAPLA board, ensuring the association remains the premier regional authority empowering Midwest pre-law advisors to guide the next generation of legal professionals.

Erin Reichelt, Chair
MAPLA Strategic Planning Committee

Mission

The Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors (MAPLA) empowers faculty and staff advisors to provide informed, high-impact guidance to students exploring legal education and careers. We achieve this by fostering a collaborative community through specialized professional development, expert networking, and expanded access to regional and national resources.

Vision

MAPLA aims to be the premier regional authority and community for pre-law advising, ensuring every advisor in the Midwest—regardless of institutional size or resource level—has the support and expertise needed to cultivate the next generation of legal professionals.

Values

Integrity: We value the delivery of individualized, honest, and independent advice to prospective law students as the foundation of our profession.

Community & Mentorship: We are committed to a culture of knowledge-sharing and formal mentorship, leveraging the deep expertise of our seasoned members to support the growth of new and experienced advisors alike.

Equity & Access: We champion broad access to pre-law advising and legal education, striving to eliminate barriers for underrepresented students and supporting advisors in navigating changing institutional and regional landscapes.

Innovation & Relevance: We prioritize timely, hot-topic professional development that addresses the evolving nature of the legal field and the diverse institutional needs of faculty and staff advisors.

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 multi-day caravan of Law School Fairs that brings admissions representatives 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 & Objectives

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

MAPLA should continue outreach to new PLAs through the LSAC database. 447 Pre-Law Advisors are on the LSAC Database, and our members represent 28% of that number. While we have made a solid increase since our goal set in 2021 to increase members by 10%, we are not quite there yet.

At the distribution of the strategic planning survey in 2025, 36% of respondents were not members of MAPLA, and 10% had never been members. The most common reason for not joining was a lack of professional development funding, but there was a small percentage that reported not seeing the value in a MAPLA membership (11%). This group is who we should target by communicating the benefits of membership more clearly when reaching out to advisors on the LSAC directory who are not currently members of MAPLA.

Objective: Engage in more targeted and structured recruitment and support for new pre-law advisors

- **Action:** Partner with the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) to integrate MAPLA-specific promotional materials and recorded welcome messages into the curriculum for regional LSAC Newcomers Training sessions.
- **Action:** The Recruitment & Membership Director will perform monthly searches of the LSAC PLA database to identify newly designated pre-law advisors within the Midwest footprint.

- **Action:** Deliver a standardized digital onboarding package to these newly identified advisors, featuring a recorded video welcome message from the MAPLA Board highlighting member benefits.
- **Action:** Work with Technology and Membership Board members to develop a “Why MAPLA” section of the website.
- **Action:** Coordinate with the Communications Director to feature newly onboarded advisors in the *MAPLA Minute* newsletter to build early community engagement.
- **Action:** Each board member will investigate 1-2 states to determine pre-law advisors, and send a customized message to PLAs in their assigned states.
- **Action:** Establish Big Ten Academic Alliance Pre-Law Subgroup to spread awareness of MAPLA within Big Ten institutions.

Objective: Build relationships with community colleges in the region

- **Action:** The Recruitment & Membership Director, in tandem with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Director, will execute a targeted campaign to identify faculty and staff handling pre-law inquiries at two-year institutions.
- **Action:** Establish a specialized community college task force within the DEI Committee to explore the distinct resource needs of two-year institutions and transfer students.
- **Action:** Develop and distribute promotional materials highlighting how MAPLA membership benefits community college advisors, specifically focusing on clearing pathways for diverse and non-traditional student populations.

Goal #2: Continue to provide financial support for members

Data from prior organizational assessments shows that institutional funding challenges—specifically the lack of university budgets to cover membership fees and travel costs—are a top reason why some regional advisors drop or never secure MAPLA membership. To ensure equitable access to professional development, MAPLA must expand direct financial assistance and equip members with corporate and administrative justification tools to advocate for institutional support.

Objective: Provide Scholarships to conferences to reduce financial barriers to attendance.

- **Action:** The Treasurer will dedicate a specific amount "Conference Scholarship Fund" within the annual budget to subsidize registration and travel costs for the annual conference and regional drive-in events.

- **Action:** Define transparent application criteria prioritizing first-time attendees, resource-constrained institutions.
- **Action:** Partner with pre-law stakeholders to explore matching grants or unique funding support for expanded scholarship fund opportunities
- **Action:** Explore partnership opportunities with other APLAs for joint conferences, ensuring new points of collaboration and increased sponsorship opportunities.

Objective: Improve information and resources for members to assist in advocating to campus leadership to justify attendance at conferences and membership.

- **Action:** Create an "Institutional Advocacy Toolkit" containing template letters to supervisors, expense-benefit analyses, and data showing how MAPLA attendance aligns with institutional student-success goals.
- **Action:** Include materials tailored specifically to the unique professional paths of faculty advisors (e.g., tying MAPLA service to tenure or promotion files) and staff advisors (e.g., tying attendance to career advancement and retention metrics).
- **Action:** The Technology & Website Coordinator will host these downloadable toolkits within the password-protected, member-only section of the MAPLA website.

Goal #3: To continue to support diverse, underrepresented individuals in their journey to learn about legal studies and legal careers, both through professional engagement within the pre-law advising field as well as the legal field.

In September 2021, MAPLA adopted a four-year strategic plan that included a new vision, mission, and values statement as well as strategic goals and objectives. One of these goals was “To encourage, expect, and re-commit to diversity, equity, and inclusion in MAPLA membership, culture, programming, advising, and law school applicants.” As a result of this goal, MAPLA created a DEI member position. The position holder was responsible for overseeing DEI efforts in MAPLA related to programming communications, conferences, as well as other efforts. In addition to these efforts, the late Don Racheter established the Racheter DEI Award, funding MAPLA memberships for PLAs at minority servicing institutions.

In 2025, the MAPLA Board, as part of its efforts to update its Strategic plan, conducted a survey among members to ask what they believed should be included in the organization's future goals. Results from the 2025 MAPLA Strategic Planning Survey have been helpful in reframing the organization's goals and

objectives. The survey yielded 52 responses, 64% of the responses coming from current MAPLA members.

Out of the responses, when asked about what MAPLA should focus on during the next five years, 28% of the responses indicated that MAPLA should focus on encouraging greater diversity in the legal profession. Additional input from respondents made clear that MAPLA should continue to work to encourage greater diversity in the legal profession, as well as to encourage greater diversity in the pre-law advising profession and among the MAPLA members. To this end, MAPLA will continue to offer scholarships and stipends when available.

Objective: Ensure MAPLA promotes broad participation and engagement in membership, activities, programming, communications, and culture

- **Action:** Promote subsidies for professionals at minority serving institutions through LSAC to MAPLA Members
- **Action:** The DEI Director and Communications Director will continue to share DEI spotlights in MAPLA Minute
- **Action:** The DEI Director and Membership Director will coordinate to promote the Racheter DEI award, increasing membership and professional development opportunities

Recognizing the wide range of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and educational pathways represented within the MAPLA community, the organization should ensure that representatives at all levels promote a welcoming and collaborative professional environment by taking actions that encourage participation, engagement, and access in membership, activities, programming, communications, and organizational culture.

- **Action:** Share DEI resources on LinkedIn, in addition to MAPLA Minute
- **Action:** Explore partnership opportunities with organizations that serve underrepresented communities

Goal #4: Enhance programming and professional development support to members

MAPLA's core mission centers on promoting informed advising by delivering continuous, high-quality professional development. Because our membership is split evenly between faculty and staff who manage varied institutional workloads, our programming must remain multi-tiered, highly accessible, and actionable. This goal expands physical, digital, and structural training opportunities for advisors at all stages of their careers.

Objective: Host regional events to increase localized networking and engagement.

- **Action:** Recruit from board members to serve as Chair to plan and execute regional events during non-PLANC years.
- **Action:** Solicit and secure midwestern law schools to serve as host sites, ensuring geographic diversity across the footprint so members can attend without significant travel expenses.

Objective: Provide guiding resources to members on how to host local pre-law events.

- **Action:** Utilize the PLANC Best Practices Guide that provides step-by-step guidance on organizing law fairs, panel discussions, admissions caravans, and local mock trial/moot court events.
- **Action:** The Professional Development Director will compile sample agendas, budgeting templates, and marketing strategies from seasoned members to include in the playbook.

Objective: Improve and ease access to resources shared through the website.

- **Action:** Maintain and expand the password-protected online resource bank, categorizing materials into sub-sections such as teaching syllabi, undergraduate awards, and administrative advocacy.
- **Action:** The Technology & Website Coordinator will implement a streamlined user-submission portal to encourage ongoing member-to-member sharing of handouts and presentation slides.
- **Action:** Spotlight resources in the MAPLA Minute to promote to members.

Objective: Deliver regularly scheduled monthly webinars on timely pre-law topics.

- **Action:** The Professional Development Director will collaborate with the webinar representative from the Midwest Alliance for Law School Admissions (MALSA) to coordinate a regular monthly calendar.
- **Action:** Record and archive all monthly webinars within the online member portal to serve as an asynchronous resource for advisors unable to attend live sessions.

Objective: Implement structured training of pre-law advisors.

- **Action:** Design a standardized curriculum for a "MAPLA New Pre-Law Training" that provides baseline legal education advising training (covering LSAT trends, holistic admissions, and financial aid counseling).
- **Action:** Utilize the "Roles & Responsibilities Best Practices" document from PLANC to share with new pre-law advisors as they are joining MAPLA.

- **Action:** Leverage the peer-to-peer mentorship program to pair newly trained advisors with seasoned mentors for real-time case consultation during their first year of practice.

Goal #5: Establish MAPLA as a professional regional authority to support pre-law advisors

As the pre-law landscape expands to include various national entities, vendor services, and commercial operations, MAPLA must continue to cement its role as the premier, independent voice for institutional pre-law advising in the Midwest. MAPLA's core value lies in providing individualized, honest, and independent advice. Delineating our unique institutional perspective from external, non-institutional entities will reinforce MAPLA's authority and protect the integrity of the advising profession.

Objective: Delineate between MAPLA and non-institutional pre-law advisors (private consultants, AccessLex, LSAC).

- **Action:** Draft and publish an official MAPLA Position Statement that defines the unique ethical duties, scope, and value of institutional, campus-based pre-law advisors as distinct from private commercial consultants.
- **Action:** Position MAPLA as the essential regional resource that helps advisors contextualize data and offerings from national partners (like LSAC and AccessLex) specifically for Midwest campus dynamics.
- **Action:** The Communications Director and President will weave this identity narrative into marketing materials, list-serv updates, and public messaging to highlight MAPLA's role as the definitive advocate for institutional advisors.