

# A Strategic Plan for 21st Century Legal Education at the

## *Thomas M. Cooley Law School* Adopted by the Board of Directors January 19, 2002

The Thomas M. Cooley Law School focuses on legal education skills and practice unlike any other in the country. This focus on practice preparation ensures the school will remain committed and responsive to the changes facing the school and legal profession. Cooley strives to be expansive and innovative in its use of resources and technology. It will lead by delivering knowledge critical to future practitioners. The school will enhance its human and financial capital and organizational structure to maintain focus.

In the 21st century, Cooley's challenge is to help entering students meet their highest potential. We are proud of our strengths and past achievements, but will not stop there. The future of the legal profession demands that we challenge our human resources to achieve goals that will secure a position for the Thomas M. Cooley Law School among the very best law schools in the country.

### *Role of Today's Law School*

Cooley's special role for the 21st century is to teach students the practice skills necessary when entering the profession. The school also seeks to discover, analyze, integrate, interpret, and apply new thinking and ideas that will make it and its students more competitive in the 21st century. In these times of increased economic competitiveness, it is increasingly important that the faculty learn from its research about the new trends and forces affecting the law, and that it disseminates and discusses that knowledge with students in an arena of self-discovery and awareness.

### *Mission*

The Mission of the Thomas M. Cooley Law School is to prepare its graduates for entry into the legal profession through an integrated program with practical legal scholarship as its guiding principle and focus.

The preparation for practice mission means that Cooley graduates must: (1) master the basic fundamentals and skills required for the competent practice of law and repre-

sentation of clients; (2) master the substantive knowledge and skills required for passage of the bar examination and admission to the bar; and (3) understand and embrace the legal, moral, ethical, and professional responsibilities of lawyers.

### *Vision Statement*

The Thomas M. Cooley Law School's vision for the coming decade is to be:

1. America's largest law school;
2. The best law school in the country at preparing its graduates for the practice of law;
3. The most affordable unsubsidized private law school in the nation;
4. A leader in the innovative and flexible delivery of legal education; and
5. Financially strong.

### *Vision Strategies*

In order to become the largest law school in America, the school intends to:

1. Reduce its current academic and non-academic attrition rates;
2. Increase its enrollment of students whose LSAT scores are at or above the median;
3. Expand through strategic partnerships and alliances; and
4. Open new markets, perhaps with additional degree programs, branch campuses, and distance education.

In order to become the best at practice preparation, the school intends to:

1. Create a comprehensive assessment system that measures the success of our students and graduates in mastering practice and analytical skills, passing bar examinations, and embracing professional responsibility;
2. Effectively deliver legal education with superior results, including high bar-passage rates and high employment rates among graduates;
3. Enhance programs and courses to help graduates prepare to practice law with professionalism and good character; and
4. Introduce state-of-the-art facilities for teaching practice skills.

In order to become more affordable, the school intends to:

1. Continue to keep its tuition in the bottom quarter among private law schools;
2. Provide a "best value" in legal education;
3. Increase enrollment; and
4. Enhance its need-based scholarship support.

In order to be a leader in innovation, the school intends to:

1. Adopt an aggressive approach to change;
2. Increase the school's use of technology to enhance the education of Cooley students in the use of technology;
3. Create new programs and classes to prepare students for practice; and
4. Introduce new modes of delivery of legal education.

In order to be the most affordable unsubsidized private law school in the nation, the school intends to:

1. Find outside resources that provide the flexibility to pursue opportunities;
2. Increase the number and donation levels of alumni and friends who contribute financial support through fund-raising;
3. Grow the school's Endowment Fund; and
4. Examine the current cost structure to reduce expenses.

### *Strategic Initiatives*

1. The board will become more active in its governance of the affairs of the law school. It will reorganize the board with a new committee structure, which includes an Executive Committee, an Audit Committee, a Bylaws Committee, a Fund-raising Committee, a Nominating Committee, and a Strategic Planning Committee.
2. The board and the president will define the roles and responsibilities of senior management, including the responsibilities of corporate officers for Academics, Administration, Budget and Finance, Operations, and Technology.



The school's bylaws should be amended to reflect the changes necessary.

3. The board and president will review the present status and future needs regarding the physical plant and the infrastructure to support technology.
4. The board and president will review current financial policies and practices of the school, including review of the balance sheet, capital investments, programmatic investments, and the efficiency of the current cost structure.
5. The board and president will develop new products, services, and markets, including consideration of new degree programs, branch campuses, and partnerships and associations with other educational institutions.
6. The board and president will develop and enhance fund-raising capacity and efforts.
7. The board and president will undertake efforts to ensure that graduates will meet the mission of preparation for practice, for bar examination passage, and for the moral, ethical, and

professional responsibilities of law practice.

8. The board and president will take measures to educate and build awareness among the bench, bar, legal educators, potential law school applicants, and the law school community of the value of a Thomas M. Cooley Law School legal education.
9. The board will accept members to its ranks and elect the school's officers in a systematic manner, to insure the board will be independent, diverse, and informed, and will support the school's mission and vision.

### *Implementation*

Every element of Cooley Law School shares the responsibility for implementation of this strategic plan. Acceptance of this responsibility and dedication to the plan will assure its successful implementation and secure a prominent role for the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in American legal education.

Every element of Cooley Law School shares the responsibility for implementation of this strategic plan. Acceptance of this responsibility and dedication to the plan will assure its successful implementation and secure a prominent role for the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in American legal education.