

Joshua Aaron Jones

Inclusive Excellence Activities Statement

From an undergraduate practicum teaching music to elementary school students with profound disabilities using modified musical instruments to my current efforts in the law school setting, diversity and inclusiveness have guided my career and work. As a lawyer and a professor, I have worked diligently to ensure inclusive access to justice and educational access. I bring diversity, and I encourage students to share their diversity so that we can build a sense of security and respect that furthers our community of inquiry.

Activities Related to Service

In private practice, my solo law firm had a strong reputation for representing clients who were often unseen and who sometimes felt too intimidated by the profession. Those marginalized clients often shared that they had delayed finding legal assistance for fear of stigmas that may disperse from such a conservative industry. While other firms in northwest Florida shied away from controversial topics that supported our diverse neighbors, I welcomed those cases. I routinely handled LGBTQ+ matters and often collaborated with Equality Florida and the ACLU. I represented many non-traditional families in matters as diverse as they were, especially in family law.

While living and working in Pensacola, Florida, I co-founded Gulf Coast TIDE (now Pensacola Pride), which developed allied support for the LGBTQ+ community. That was during the ballot initiative that enshrined a same-sex marriage ban in the Florida Constitution. Nevertheless, our group created an equality sticker campaign for business doors and windows, and we appeared at City Council hearings many times to support free speech and our right to hold a public event – the precursor to Pensacola’s current Pride event. I also was a founding member of the Pensacola LGBT Film Festival (now called Stamped), approaching its 13th year.

At Indiana University McKinney School of Law, I served as the Lambda Law advisor and was on the Diversity Committee. Indiana University requires that each college have a diversity and inclusion plan, which is reviewed every five years. My appointment there coincided with IU McKinney’s strategic review, and I was thrilled to serve that effort. Though I have not yet served on the California Western diversity committee, I hope that when I do, my experience can help establish stronger protocols that better support inclusivity.

Meanwhile, I have been on the AALS SOGII section’s executive committee for three years and am currently its chair.

Inclusive Excellence in Teaching

While practicing, I served as an adjunct professor and often drew inspiration from actual cases. That approach helped me develop hypotheticals and assignments incorporating diverse characters and legal issues. In my fifth year of full-time teaching, I still begin each hypothetical

from a point of diversity. For example, this academic year, my students explored topics such as learning disabilities and transgender rights in education. This summer, my students will write an appellate brief about pregnancy discrimination. These projects in legal writing provide opportunities to train students about access to justice issues and how to write with culturally sensitive awareness and language. The intentional effort has been successful. Students often comment that they never knew a person like the client in our hypothetical, and course evaluations prove that I go above and beyond to create an inclusive environment that broadens students' multicultural awareness.

Inclusive Excellence Related to Research and Creative Activities

My scholarship considers education law, family law, and professional development. I look for intersectional topics, especially between LGBTQ+ issues in family and education. While earning my LL.M at McGeorge School of Law, I published a piece about using Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the ADA to gain support for transgender students, and my first publication after becoming a full-time law professor proposed that Title IX requires that law schools disaggregate SOGI data. I am presently working on a paper that analyzes the wave of legislation attacking gender-affirming care for minors and academic freedom compared to education reforms during the German Weimar Republic.

Personal Perspective

As a gay man and a person who overcame a lesser socio-economic childhood in rural Alabama, I have experienced the lows of discrimination and the highs of unfettered support at truly inclusive institutions. I practice what I profess; my law firm motto was "A Diverse Practice for a Diverse Community," and that same philosophy has served me well in creating inclusive classrooms that foster a community of inquiry. With my personal story of diversity, I want to help the academy better assess the current state of diversity, diversify initiatives based on relative site data, and measure outcomes through the early years of legal employment. I want to help the legal industry move beyond the concept of diversity as a list of percentages for static labels. My view of an inclusive law industry is one of principled action, and I strive to help law students value that commitment.