# Law schools embrace ai to equip future lawyers with essential skills



In response to the growing prominence of artificial intelligence (AI) in the legal profession, law schools across the United States are increasingly integrating AI-focused coursework and clinical experiences into their curricula. This trend marks a shift from initial caution at the advent of AI technologies like ChatGPT in 2022 to a more proactive embrace of AI tools as essential components of legal education.

Northwestern University’s Pritzker School of Law epitomises this educational evolution. Daniel W. Linna, director of its law and technology initiatives, indicates the legal education sector is transitioning from experimentation to substantive curricular reforms. “Now is when the rubber meets the road,” Linna told ABA Journal, emphasising the need for real tools and measurable results in both courses and legal service delivery.

The stakes are high for law students preparing for careers increasingly influenced by AI. Megan Ma, executive director of Stanford Law School’s Legal Innovation through Frontier Technology Lab, framed the challenge: young lawyers must “quickly level up” and develop advanced issue-spotting skills akin to senior lawyers. To address this, Stanford and other institutions are deploying AI-centric learning opportunities that enhance both theoretical understanding and practical skill.

Data from the ABA Task Force on Law and Artificial Intelligence’s AI and Legal Education Survey strengthens this narrative: 55% of responding law schools have instituted AI-specific classes, 32% offer formal AI use opportunities through interdisciplinary programs, and 83% provide experiences such as clinics where students engage with AI tools hands-on.

Notably, Case Western Reserve University School of Law became the first to mandate AI training for first-year law students. Its “Introduction to AI and the Law” certification course, developed with AI education company Wickard.ai, covers foundational AI concepts, large language models, and ethical and regulatory frameworks including the American Bar Association’s Formal Opinion 512. Practical exposure to AI legal software such as Spellbook, CoCounsel, and Gemini is a core aspect of the program, led by Oliver Roberts, who also teaches similar initiatives at Washington University in St. Louis and George Washington University Law School.

Other schools have expanded AI offerings in various forms. Suffolk University Law School added three AI-related courses this academic year, focusing on topics ranging from generative AI in legal service delivery to emerging regulatory frameworks. Meanwhile, the University of Miami Law School’s Miami Law & AI Lab created an innovative tool called ClassInsight, which allows professors to receive near-instant assessments of student understanding during lectures. Lab director Or Cohen-Sasson noted an unexpected benefit: “Students that didn’t use to participate before are now participating more in class,” feeling more confident after personalised feedback.

Vanderbilt Law School's approach underscores the need for continual updates in teaching AI due to rapid technological advances. Mark Williams, co-director of Vanderbilt’s AI Law Lab and professor of law, commented on the challenge: “Half of the substantive material that we cover in this class is probably going to be outdated by the time that you graduate.” Nevertheless, he emphasises the importance of imparting frameworks for critical evaluation of AI that remain relevant over time. He views such education as a competitive edge for students entering the legal job market.

Beyond the classroom, AI-enabled simulators provide students with immersive training experiences. Stanford’s CodeX lab developed an M&A Negotiation Simulator that uses generative AI to mimic the personalities and thinking of senior lawyers involved in mergers and acquisitions. According to Megan Ma, this “downloads their brains” into AI agents, enabling learners to engage with realistic negotiation scenarios, refine strategic communication, and practise problem-solving in a low-risk virtual environment. Despite some limitations, such as occasional AI misinterpretations, the tool offers valuable training in handling complex negotiations and adversarial tactics.

Similarly, Suffolk Law’s AI and the Law class utilises AI tools created by David Colarusso, co-director of the Legal Innovation & Technology Lab, to study active cases and perform simulated motions and trials. Colarusso developed an AI judge bot, Moot a Case, which interacts with students by questioning them based on its analysis of submitted briefs, providing a dynamic platform for practising oral arguments. Other tools like Go Socrates and Distill & Question facilitate interactive legal analysis and prereading, enhancing students' engagement with case material. Colarusso highlighted that these tools give unprecedented insight into students’ thought processes: “For the first time, I could see what they’re thinking as they’re engaging with the case and their thought process in a way that I never before could.”

Clinical programs have also embraced AI integration. Suffolk Law’s Legal Innovation & Technology Lab, in partnership with the American Arbitration Association, launched the Online Dispute Resolution Innovation Clinic to assist pro se litigants in Massachusetts with simplified divorce proceedings. Suffolk Law dean Andrew Perlman described the legal documents as “a mess” currently, and the clinic as a means to improve both court and litigant experiences through a workflow that guides users via AI-powered interviews and automated form completion. Suffolk students are involved in community consultation and are helping to design this platform, which will officially launch in the autumn. The model aims for replication in other jurisdictions over time.

At Vanderbilt, students working in the AI Law Lab are developing an end-of-life planning tool to aid in preparing wills and advanced directives, with an eye towards deployment through legal aid organisations in Tennessee. Mark Williams commented that such tools “reach people who are never getting touched by the legal market,” expanding access to legal services.

The development of AI tools in legal education and services demands both deep legal expertise and rigorous validation to ensure accuracy and reliability before deployment, Williams stressed. The cautious but increasing willingness to incorporate AI reflects evolving confidence in the technology’s role.

Megan Ma summarised the current atmosphere: “We’ve just come out a little bit from hesitation of the use of AI … It takes time.” This gradual acceptance is manifested in a diverse array of courses, simulations, clinics, and tools aiming to equip future lawyers with the skills required in a legal landscape transformed by artificial intelligence.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)