



Professor Andrew Kaufman

Better Together

Maine Law and the University of Maine Graduate and Professional Center teaming up is not just mutually beneficial – it helps the entire state of Maine

By **Patty McCarthy**

The University of Maine School of Law’s academic program is enriched by collaborations that help students, faculty, and staff throughout the University of Maine System discover innovative solutions that help the entire state of Maine.

The Law School has experienced significant support for these collaborations in the past few years as the University of Maine Graduate and Professional Center, known simply as the Maine Center, has come into its own and taken the lead to make sure such connections happen. The Maine Center is cultivating a collaborative culture that brings together the students, faculty, staff, and programs of Maine Law, the University of Maine’s Graduate School of Business, and the University of Southern Maine’s Muskie School of Public Service and the Cutler Institute of Health and Social Policy. With the advent of the latest extraordinary gift from the Harold Alfond Foundation, those disciplines will soon be joined by engineering, computing, and data sciences. Joining forces in this interdisciplinary way allows program participants to gain a rich, multifaceted understanding of subjects that will help them to meet the needs of civic, non-profit, business, and legal communities in Maine and beyond.

“Too often, everybody gets siloed in their departments and schools,” says Andrew Kaufman, professor of practice and consultant to Maine Law Dean Leigh Saufley. “It often doesn’t occur to the law faculty to talk to the business faculty or the business faculty to talk to the engineering faculty. What the Maine Center is doing – and what adds tremendously to its value – is creating an atmosphere where effective collaboration across lines can occur. They’re getting people to talk to each other, and

from these conversations, very constructive work can happen.”

These kinds of cross-disciplinary endeavors are critically important for

the times we’re living in, says Greg Powell, chairman of the Harold Alfond Foundation, which last fall earmarked \$55 million for the Maine Center as part of its \$240 million investment in the University of Maine System.

“What the Maine Center is facilitating with the Law School and other System schools is an exciting – and necessary – part of the University System’s role in promoting a prosperous future for Maine. The Alfond investment is meant to put wind in the System’s sails,” he says. “Binary education is of limited relevance in the modern economy. What is really important is multidimensional education that allows students to draw from different disciplines to understand the context of real problems and use their creativity to solve them.”

Maine Law is involved in numerous Maine Center-driven collaborations, including the following.

Understanding the COVID-19 Pandemic: Resilience & Recovery

In June 2020, the Maine Center teamed up with the Muskie School of Public Service to offer a free interdisciplinary webinar series about the COVID-19 pandemic. Designed and hosted by the Muskie School’s director, Firooza Pavri, the series explored the impact of the pandemic on all facets of life – and ways to recover from it. The series was so popular that it was continued in the fall for an 11-session series that drew 460 enrolled participants. Lecturers were Maine Law and other System faculty

and guests in the fields of public health, policy, law, social work, and business, ranging from Dr. Nirav Shah, director of the Maine Centers for Disease Control, to Maine Law Refugee and Human Rights Clinical Professor Anna R. Welch.

Acquisition Transactions: Execution and Risk Management – Legal and Business Perspectives

Kaufman spent a great deal of time in 2020 working remotely with Jason Harkins, associate dean and associate professor of management for the University of Maine Business School, to hammer out a new course. He and Harkins are co-teaching a cohort that includes both law and M.B.A. students.

“We’re really excited about this because we’ve long wrestled with how to make the teaching and learning for business and law students together more effective,” says Kaufman. “What we’ve invariably found is that it’s very difficult for a law student to paratroop into a business school course, particularly an upper-level course, because the courses presume an understanding of foundational principles that law students often lack. And vice versa.”

Kaufman says the new collaborative course will “provide valuable skill development for both law and graduate business students by giving each exposure to how their colleague looks at, thinks about, and analyzes situations. We’ll use a hypothetical business acquisition transaction – Company A is going to buy Company B – and go through the steps you go through as a lawyer or a business executive working together – because that’s what happens in real life.”

Converting the Certificate in Compliance program to an entirely online format

Kaufman also directs Maine Law’s popular Certificate in Compliance program for compliance professionals seeking to develop and enhance their skills and others looking to enter the field. The program had been moving toward an online delivery format to make it more accessible, and COVID-19 hastened those plans. As of this semester, it’s entirely online.

The Certificate in Compliance is a non-J.D. program that was launched by Maine Law in 2017 to meet a community need, Kaufman explains. The Compli-

Professor Kaufman worked with Ross Hickey '01, USM’s assistant provost for research integrity and MeRTEC’s director, to develop the Certificate in Compliance program. The program is now available fully online.



ance Certificate program has the enthusiastic support of numerous businesses and institutions, including Avangrid, Unum, USM’s Center for Technology and Enhanced Learning, MeRTEC, Maine Medical Center Research Institute, and WEX – all of which have a need for skilled compliance officers.

Kaufman and Ross Hickey '01, USM’s assistant provost for research integrity and MeRTEC’s director, developed the program. Kaufman notes that the Maine Center has been instrumental in moving it online and is providing much-appreciated financial backing, including a scholarship for a participant who had been a lawyer in Rwanda before immigrating to Maine. She found the compliance field would make use of her skills, and she was hired for a compliance job with a Portland financial services firm, an achievement she credits to her program participation.

An important feature of the program has been its networking component, and the online courses include live virtual sessions that allow people to interact and share their experiences.

Giving more weight to outside experience

Collaborations facilitated by the Maine Center have also led to an increase in internship and externship opportunities for law students.

In the summer of 2020, the Maine Center funded a pilot cohort of 23 students for its new Graduate Internship Program that provides students focused on its disciplines – law, business, policy, and public health – with paid work experience in settings ranging from

BP’s Oysters to E2Tech to the Arctic Futures Institute.

Matthew Fortin, a 2L at Maine Law, participated in the cohort through a self-guided project with an attorney mentor and says he appreciates the opportunity it gave him to familiarize himself with the legislative process and network with other System interns. He looked into creating a bill to require licensing for home contractors in Maine, an effort that has failed numerous times in the state Legislature. Although the proposal has not yet been accepted by the Legislature – in part because of the Legislature’s early spring adjournment in 2020 – Fortin gained valuable experience by researching related bill attempt histories, testimony, public hearings, and work sessions and obtaining an enlightening political perspective from current lawmakers, including two of his Maine Law classmates who serve in the Maine Legislature.

Future Projects

The Maine Center has its eye on future collaborations that could lead to micro-credentialing across campuses, new course offerings, a new degree program, and even the potential of a new building.

“The expertise, creativity, and willingness to collaborate of Maine Law faculty and staff have been instrumental in delivering the interdisciplinary programming that has enabled the Maine Center to meet the early stage goals of the Harold Alfond Foundation grant,” says Maine Center Ventures CEO Terry Sutton. “We look forward to continuing this partnership with Maine Law to advance these important initiatives for Maine’s future.”

For information on supporting Maine Law and the University of Maine Graduate and Professional Center, please contact Maine Law’s Office of Advancement at 207.780.4521 or lawalum@maine.edu.