



**Sturm College of Law**  
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

**Professional Mentoring Program**

# Juris Doctorate Program Discussion Topics

Suggested Discussion Topics for the 2026/27 Academic Year

# 1L Program

Fall 2026

## Welcome to the Profession

- Discuss the role of lawyers and the judiciary in our society;
- Discuss what law practice is and the purposes of the legal profession;
- Discuss how to keep balance in one's life during law school; and
- Discuss the Student's preparation in law school, including the use of study aids and study groups.

## Research and Writing

- Discuss the purposes of memoranda, pleadings, motions, orders, opinion letters, and other forms of legal writing;
- Discuss relevant issues surrounding legal writing, such as techniques for effective legal writing (including emails to clients, opposing counsel, and judges) and common mistakes; and
- Discuss techniques and resources for efficient and effective research.

## Career Overview

- Discuss, generally, the differences between criminal law practice, civil litigation practice and transactional law practice;
- Discuss potential differences between large firm, small firm, government, in-house and non-profit practices;
- Discuss the Student's long-term career goals and ways to achieve those goals; and
- Discuss different career paths and identify resources for exploring paths.

## Introduction to Law School and the Legal Profession

The 1L Program seeks to ease students' transition into the study and practice of law by providing them basic information about the legal profession and legal education.

## Spring 2027

### Ethics

- Discuss, generally, the ethics rules attorneys must follow;
- Discuss recurring ethical issues the Mentor encounters in practice; and
- Discuss a real-world ethics situation in which the Mentor has been involved or about which the Mentor is aware.

### Introduction to the Legal Community

- Discuss the American Bar Association, Colorado Bar Association, local Bar Associations, and Inns of Court;
- Discuss Continuing Legal Education requirements and ways to satisfy those requirements;
- Discuss Denver Area judicial districts and the location of courthouses; and
- Discuss major private and public legal entities, including large firms, the judiciary, and large government offices with in-house counsel.

### Professionalism

- Discuss the role of professionalism in an attorney's career;
- Discuss the consequences of a lack of professionalism;
- Discuss the unwritten customary rules of civility and etiquette among lawyers and judges in the community; and
- Discuss establishing a reputation and how reputation can positively or negatively impact an attorney's practice.

### Substance Abuse & Mental Health

- Discuss how attorney work – replete with its heavy work-loads, unpredictability, high stakes, and exposure to trauma exposed clients – can cause stress;
- Discuss the Mentor's experiences with stress, substance abuse, and mental health issues, whether in other attorneys or in the Mentor; and
- Discuss ways to mitigate and manage stress so that it does not manifest into substance abuse or mental health issues.

*Note:* The Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program (COLAP) provides free confidential assistance to lawyers and law students who are struggling with stress, substance abuse or mental health problems. There is no shame. Contact COLAP at [coloradolap.org](http://coloradolap.org) or at (303) 986-3345.

# 2L Program

Fall 2026

## Networking

- Discuss the importance of networking to one's legal career;
- Discuss specific examples of how the Mentor's networking has helped his or her career;
- Discuss the pitfalls and benefits of social networking;
- Discuss professional social networking; and
- Discuss how the resources of the Office of Career Development & Opportunities can be helpful.

## Interacting with Supervisors and Senior Attorneys

- Discuss how new associates and interns should act to maximize their chances of succeeding during their first year at a job; and
- Discuss ways new associates and interns can develop a friendly, yet professional, relationship with supervisors.

## Career Paths

- Discuss what the Student's career goals were before law school, during his or her first year, and how they have changed since then;
- Discuss resources available to the Student to pursue his or her current goals; and
- Discuss reconciling job expectations with actual experience and maximizing career satisfaction.

## Interacting with Clients and Other Attorneys and Refining Career Goals

The 2L Program is designed to educate students about interacting with clients and other attorneys and to focus on a more specific career path.

## Spring 2027

### Ethics

- Discuss common malpractice and grievance traps and ways to avoid them;
- Discuss the role of the Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel, the grievance and investigation process, and malpractice insurance;
- Discuss potential resources for dealing with complicated ethical issues, including conflicts of interests; and
- Discuss practices to maintain client confidentiality.

### Case Evaluation

- Discuss the Mentor's process for evaluating and engaging clients;
- Discuss the best ways to evaluate a potential case and how to decide whether to accept a proffered representation; and
- Discuss specific examples of times when the Mentor misevaluated a case and what the Mentor learned from this experience.

### Practical Aspects of Working in a Law Environment

- Discuss roles and responsibilities of paralegals, secretaries and other office personnel and how to establish good working relationships with others in the same office who are support staff, colleagues, or senior attorneys;
- Discuss office politics and common pitfalls to avoid while working in a law office; and
- Discuss the pros and cons of private firm practice, solo practice, public interest/government practice, and in-house counsel practice.

# 3L Program

Fall 2026

## Job Searching & Managing Law School Debt

- Discuss job-search strategies, distinguishing the effective and less effective; and
- Discuss practical ways to manage law school debt.

## Client Development

- Discuss how client development is the lifeblood of law practice and how it impacts an attorney's prospects for promotion; and
- Discuss methods of client development that have been successful for the Mentor and discuss other techniques for business development, including any relevant ethical concerns and best professional practices.

## Client Communication

- Discuss the importance of client communication and how to maintain good ongoing communication, including the use of retention and fee agreements, keeping clients informed about matters, confirming things in writing, being on time, etc.;
- Discuss proper legal counseling techniques, and duties and responsibilities of advising clients;
- Discuss techniques for dealing with an unreasonable, dishonest, or otherwise difficult client; and
- Discuss the responsibilities of the client and the lawyer in decision-making and the best ways to involve a client in his or her case.

## Finding a Job and Transitioning to Practice

The 3L Program strives to bridge the final gap between law school and law practice. Discussions focus on job searching and transitioning into the workplace.

## Spring 2027

### Ethics

- Discuss common malpractice and grievance traps and ways to avoid them;
- Discuss the role of the Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel, the grievance and investigation process, and malpractice insurance;
- Discuss potential resources for dealing with complicated ethical issues, including conflicts of interests; and
- Discuss practices to maintain client confidentiality.

### Life Balance Issues, Stress & Time Management

- Discuss techniques for finding a balance between career and personal life, and the importance life balance has in reducing stress, substance abuse and health risks;
- Discuss the Mentor's non-legal formal and informal extra-curricular activities and how they are unique from law practice; and
- Discuss time management skills and techniques practiced by the Mentor.

### Welcome to Law Practice

- Discuss the Student's short-term and long-term goals moving into law practice;
- Discuss the prospects of the Mentor and Student participating in the Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program (CAMP); and
- Discuss how the Mentor-Student relationship transitions from law school to practice.

# Destination Meetings

*(Can be done during any year)*

## Courthouse Tour

- Tour a courthouse together; and
- View a courtroom and discuss the judges' chambers, technology, where the parties sit, and precautions to take when discussing a case in the courthouse.

## Networking Meeting

- Attend a Bar Association meeting, an Inn of Court Dinner, or an alumni event together; and
- Discuss and practice networking together.

## Visit the Mentor's Office

- Visit the Mentor's office; and
- Discuss support staff's roles, research resources, billing systems, and electronic and hard-copy document management.

## Attend a Sports Game

- Attend a Broncos, Nuggets, Rockies, Avalanche, Rapids, or Pioneer game together.



# Calendar

## Professional Mentoring Program

| <u>Name</u>                                               | <u>Date</u>              | <u>Time</u>    | <u>Location</u>       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>1L Orientation (#1)</b>                                | Tuesday, Sept. 8, 2026   | 7 am – 9 am    | Moot Court (165)      |
| <b>1L Orientation (#2)</b>                                | Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2026 | 6 pm – 8 pm    | Moot Court (165)      |
| <b>2L/3L/4L Kick-Off Breakfast *</b>                      | Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2026  | 7 am – 9 am    | Forum                 |
| <b>1L Orientation (#3)</b>                                | Thursday, Sept. 17, 2026 | 6 pm – 8 pm    | Moot Court (165)      |
| <b>1L Orientation (#4)</b>                                | Saturday, Sept. 26, 2026 | 1 pm – 2 pm    | Moot Court (165)      |
| <b>Breakfast Social *</b>                                 | Thursday, Jan. 21, 2027  | 7 am – 9 am    | Forum                 |
| <b>Volunteer Appreciation Reception &amp; Hockey Game</b> | Friday, Feb. 19, 2027    | 5:30 pm – 7 pm | Forum & Magness Arena |
| <b>Meeting #1</b>                                         | Sept. 15 – Oct. 15, 2026 |                |                       |
| <b>Meeting #2</b>                                         | Oct. 16 – Nov. 15, 2026  |                |                       |
| <b>Meeting #3</b>                                         | Feb. 15 – Mar. 15, 2027  |                |                       |
| <b>Meeting #4</b>                                         | Mar. 16 – Apr. 15, 2027  |                |                       |

\* Denotes an event that has no programming. Mentors and students can come and leave throughout the allotted time.