

Seattle U Law, AccessLex Partner to Tackle Central Washington Legal Desert Crisis

A five-year partnership with AccessLex helps Seattle U Law tackle Central Washington's legal desert crisis and boost student success.

SEATTLE, WA, UNITED STATES, October 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Seattle University School of Law](#) has announced a groundbreaking, one-of-a-kind partnership with [AccessLex Institute](#)® to address the legal desert crisis in Central Washington and support the academic and bar success of students at the law school. Through a new generous five-year grant from AccessLex, the law school will launch the Central Washington Hybrid Hub Pipeline Initiative, working out of Heritage University on the Yakama Nation Reservation.



View of Sullivan Hall, the home of Seattle University School of Law

“

By investing in Central Washington students, we're creating a virtuous cycle where local residents become local lawyers who serve local needs.”

*Anthony E. Varona, Seattle U
Law Dean*

This new pipeline-to-licensure collaboration with AccessLex follows the success of Seattle U Law's earlier Heritage PLUS Pipeline Program, which opened pathways for students from historically underrepresented backgrounds to pursue law degrees. This partnership will extend and expand upon that mission to create a sustainable pipeline from Central Washington's colleges and residents to law school and, ultimately, back into (or never leaving) their local communities.

Building a Pathway to Justice in Central Washington

Central Washington, including the Yakima Valley, faces a critical shortage of attorneys, particularly in public-interest and criminal justice roles. The region's rural character, limited higher-education institutions, and absence of a brick-and-mortar law school have contributed to what experts call a “legal desert.”

Local bar associations have reported persistent job vacancies despite offering signing bonuses aimed at attracting lawyers, substantially limiting access to lawyers and legal services, especially for historically underrepresented and marginalized communities, in the region's burgeoning communities.

Seattle U Law's new program seeks to change that by cultivating legal talent from within Central Washington itself. By providing aspiring lawyers with academic support, mentorship, and exposure to the legal profession, the initiative helps them see a law degree not only as an attainable goal but also as a means to serve their home communities.

"The extraordinary generosity of AccessLex will help us turbocharge our Central Washington Hybrid Hub

pipeline efforts, providing access to affordable legal education to promising students already in Central Washington who, ultimately, will become licensed attorneys helping bridge the justice gap in that sprawling legal desert," said Anthony E. Varona, Dean of the Seattle University School of Law.

"By investing in Central Washington students, we're creating a virtuous cycle where local residents become local lawyers who serve local needs," Varona said. "We thank AccessLex Institute for appreciating the value and potential in our hybrid hub and pipeline initiatives. It was clear to us from the start that our access-driven missions were very much aligned."

A Hybrid Model Rooted in Place and Purpose

Through the partnership, students in Seattle U Law's Flex JD Program will be able to complete their legal education while remaining in Central Washington, accessing the resources of Seattle U Law's Central Washington Hybrid Hub at Heritage University. There, they can access physical study spaces, library resources, intellectual life and alumni networking events, clinical or externship opportunities, and adjunct-taught law courses originating from Central Washington, all without leaving their families, jobs, or communities.



A class at Seattle University School of Law



Anthony E. Varona is the Dean of Seattle University School of Law

“This collaboration with AccessLex allows us to bring law school to the people,” said Bree Blackhorse, the inaugural director of the Central Washington Hybrid Hub and an Assistant U.S. Attorney based in Yakima. “The partnership will open doors to law students who might never have thought this path possible and, in doing so, will help close the justice gap across Central Washington.”

Participants in the pipeline initiative will receive mentorship, guidance on admissions and financial planning, LSAT preparation, and professional-identity formation activities. Each year, the program will host intensive weekend sessions and extended workshops to build confidence, community, and the skills required for law-school admission and success.

Strengthening Diversity and Access to Justice

The partnership is also expected to increase diversity within Washington’s legal profession. With Yakima County’s population being more than 50 percent Latinx and 7 percent Native American, the program naturally fosters racial, ethnic, and geographic diversity among future law students and practitioners.

Empowering Future Legal Leaders Through Comprehensive Support

A key component of this partnership will bring [Helix Bar Review](#) by AccessLex® directly into the Seattle U Law curriculum, giving every JD student access to exceptional, results-oriented bar preparation. By connecting innovative academic success resources during law school with exceptional comprehensive post-grad bar exam support, this initiative is designed to help graduates pass the bar on their first attempt.

“This first of its kind collaboration with Seattle U Law embodies the AccessLex Institute commitment to supporting aspiring lawyers across the full spectrum from admission to law school to admission to practice,” stated Christopher P. Chapman, President and CEO of AccessLex Institute. “And it further highlights our shared commitment with Seattle U Law to increase access to legal education for historically underrepresented communities.”

About Seattle University School of Law

Founded in 1972, Seattle University School of Law offers nationally ranked JD, MLS, LLM, and SJD degrees in the heart of Seattle. Students benefit from renowned faculty, top-ranked legal writing and clinical/experiential programs, innovative technology, international, and business law programs, and one of the richest curricula in the nation. Seattle U Law—the most diverse law school in the Pacific Northwest—leads the way in flexible legal education for working professionals with the only part-time, hybrid online JD program in Washington state and hybrid hubs in Central Washington, South Sound, and Anchorage, Alaska.

Seattle U Law graduates are leaders and lawyers with the practical skills, knowledge, and drive to make a real difference for their clients and communities. The school is committed to educating ethical lawyers and leaders who advance justice, with programs emphasizing academic excellence, inclusion, and service to others. More information about Seattle University School of Law can be found on their website at law.seattleu.edu.

Alicia Kan

Seattle University School of Law

+1 206-398-4009

akan@seattleu.edu

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[YouTube](#)

[X](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/858527905>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2025 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.