

## Harvard Law School Shield Design

### Background

In 1937, the Harvard Corporation authorized the use of decorative seals for 20 units across Harvard, including the University, Harvard College, eleven graduate schools, and seven residential houses. The seals, designed in 1936 by Pierre de Chaignon la Rose A.B. 1895 on the occasion of the University's Tercentenary, were largely based on early benefactors or were arms connected with the persons or families for which the houses were named. The seal created for Harvard Law School was based on the family crest of Isaac Royall, Jr. whose 1779 bequest to Harvard College would eventually endow the first professorship of law at Harvard.

In 2016, historical research revealed that Isaac Royall, Jr. had earned his wealth through the labor of enslaved people. This finding sparked community discussion and student activism against the continued use of the Royall crest in light of the profoundly immoral basis for the family's philanthropy. Harvard Law School's then-Dean Martha Minow appointed a committee, chaired by the Carl F. Schipper, Jr. Professor of Law Professor Bruce Mann, to consider whether to recommend that the Corporation retire the shield. After a process soliciting the input of HLS faculty, students, staff, and alumni, the committee concluded that, while some believed that retaining the shield would serve as an important reminder of "the pervasiveness of the legacy of slavery and its continuing impact on the world," many within our community "are more likely to see the shield as a distasteful symbol of the past rather than as an opportunity to learn from that past." Based on the committee's recommendation, Dean Minow requested, and received, the Corporation's permission to stop using the Royall crest as the Law School's shield. In communicating the Corporation's approval to discontinue the shield, President Drew Faust and Senior Fellow William Lee invited the School to propose a new shield that would reflect its values.

In 2020, Harvard Law School Dean John Manning convened a working group to develop a new shield that represents the broad character and values of Harvard Law School. The HLS Shield Working Group was charged with gathering input broadly from the HLS community and working with a design team to develop and recommend a new shield that would not only reflect the School's character and values but also work well within Harvard University's larger suite of shields. The Working Group, which consists of faculty, students, staff, and alumni, includes:

- Annette Gordon-Reed '84, Carl M. Loeb University Professor (Working Group Chair)
- John Arciprete, Chief of Operations
- I. Glenn Cohen '03, Deputy Dean, James A. Attwood and Leslie Williams Professor of Law and Faculty Director of Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy, Biotechnology and Bioethics
- Daniel Eaton '89, former president of the Harvard Law School Association and a Partner with Seltzer Caplan McMahon Vitek
- Edi Ebiefung '22
- Melodie Jackson, Associate Dean for Communications and Public Affairs
- Catherine Katz '23
- Amreeta Mathai '12, Staff Attorney with the ACLU's Racial Justice Program
- Jessica Soban '07, Associate Dean for Student Services

## **Community Engagement**

To ascertain the appropriate criteria to guide the design of a new shield, members of the HLS Shield Working Group solicited input from members of the HLS community. Over the past year, the Working Group held more than a dozen discussions with a diverse set of HLS stakeholders, including faculty, students, staff, and alumni. To start, all JD, LLM, and SJD students, faculty, and staff were invited to participate in focus groups, and everyone who indicated interest was able to do so. Focus groups were also held with the Law School's Student Government leadership teams for both AY2019-2020 and AY2020-2021, and the Harvard Law School Association leadership, including the HLSA President, the HLSA Executive Committee, and the presidents of the alumni association's many local clubs and shared interest groups. The Working Group also gathered input from the Law School's leadership. In addition, members of the HLS community were invited to submit ideas and input via [hlsshield@lists.law.harvard.edu](mailto:hlsshield@lists.law.harvard.edu).

## **Key Findings**

Each of the meetings generated robust discussions about Harvard Law School and what it means to individual stakeholders. While there was no consensus on a single concept that should be depicted on the Harvard Law School shield—and, in fact, the very notion that HLS could be confined to “one idea” was viewed as antithetical to the school's values—several strong themes emerged again and again across all stakeholder groups. These common conceptual threads are as follows:

### ***Theme 1: A Diverse and Pluralistic Community***

Harvard Law School is simultaneously grand in scope, truly excellent, and diverse along many, many dimensions. It is one of the biggest law schools in the country, with an unmatched breadth and depth. It's been compared to a bustling city because of its physical footprint, the extensive opportunities and activities available to its students each day and every year, its student body hailing from most U.S. states and countries in the world, and its large and energetic full-time and adjunct faculty representing a broad array of disciplines and expertise. One will find at HLS an almost endless array of subjects, approaches, methodologies, ideologies, aspirations, backgrounds, and experiences. Many students cite this breadth and scope and diversity as a reason they came to HLS. Within such a large community, they are able to find the opportunities and people that allow them to shape and give flight to their professional aspirations, whatever those might be. Harvard Law School's breadth and scope is also reflected in its more than 39,000 alumni living across the globe, forming many local and geographically networked communities, both personal and professional. The School's reach is unparalleled.

These characteristics fuel energy and engagement—the productive inquiry, investigation, disagreement, and debate that define the best of a profession that is built on the idea that hearing all sides will deepen knowledge, further understanding, and bring us closer to truth. Our stakeholder groups reaffirmed that there is no single characteristic or value or way of thinking that is fully representative of Harvard Law School. HLS proudly reflects many schools of thought, perspectives, and viewpoints, and it encourages challenging conversations, dissenting views, and robust discussions about problems that don't have easy answers. HLS is an institution that trains

its students to engage openly with not only the questions but the views that challenge their own. At Harvard Law School, one will find talented, committed, people who see the law and the world differently from one another, who disagree about important things. Asking questions is core to the traditional Socratic method used in classrooms, and to the varied innovative approaches to teaching used throughout our classrooms and clinics, where no claim or assumption goes untested.

Students at HLS find this engagement both demanding and transformative. They draw strength and humility from working through the challenge. Some likened the experience to having your entire way of thinking taken apart and put back together again. This idea of evolution and growth was expressed in many conversations. Students may come to the school with certain world views or preconceptions and find themselves understanding things in very different, more nuanced ways, by the time they leave. No less important, the process of engagement they experience here prepares them for a lifetime of openness, inquiry, curiosity, and learning.

Harvard Law School, in other words, reflects a kind of endlessness, with no single path pointing to an immutable truth. It is a place of complexity and nuance, with lines of inquiry crossing, expanding, changing, and blurring in the always unfinished pursuit of knowledge, learning, and truth. And it teaches students to approach their professional lives, whether in law or the many other endeavors its alumni pursue, with that spirit.

*“Dean Kagan called HLS ‘the New York City’ of law schools. I think she meant to highlight not only the diversity of the student body, the faculty, etc., but the value associated with a school of its size. Everyone had an opportunity to find their niche and thrive. And the combination of the law school’s size and its global reputation I think ultimately made it a collaborative, rather than a competitive, experience.”*

— HLS ALUMNA

*“HLS is unique in the breadth and depth of what it offers as learning opportunities not only in the academic realm but also life experiences. So, not only its faculty is outstanding but also its students, alumni and staff. When I was getting ready to travel to Cambridge and start my HLS experience, a friend of mine told me, HLS is like going with unlimited funds into a humongous market where anything you need, know or like is available. ... This is exactly how I felt HLS was. I could spend my whole life there, and continue to learn and expand my knowledge and experience.”*

— HLS ALUMNUS

*“There’s a dynamism at HLS. It’s not a static or singular thing. ... It is constantly building or constantly searching for the truth about what justice or what the law should be. A demanding journey of continuing to seek justice.”*

— HLS ALUMNA

*“There’s a variety of architecture [at HLS] that mirrors both the march of history as well as the variety of ideas and opportunities.”*

— HLS STAFF MEMBER

*“From the LLM perspective, there’s a lot of programs out there but I don’t think anyone has to think too much when they get into Harvard Law School. The global impact and the diversity of*

*the students, faculty and, most of all, the opportunities that the school opens up make it the top choice.”*

—HLS STUDENT

## ***Theme 2: Leadership that Changes the World for the Better***

One of the nation’s oldest law schools, Harvard Law School has produced transformative leaders from generation to generation, in field after field, in every corner of the globe. Again, the Working Group heard that HLS alumni follow no one path or template for the contributions they make. HLS alumni have made important, game-changing contributions in private practice, public interest, government service, entrepreneurship, finance, technology, nonprofits, education, professional sports, the arts, and beyond. Countless HLS alumni have served as U.S. Supreme Court Justices, judges, cabinet officers, senators, representatives, governors, mayors, diplomats, not to mention two U.S. Presidents and a First Lady. More broadly, across the globe, they have served as heads of state, cabinet ministers, justices, judges, and legislators. They have founded or helped run major public interest organizations, advancing civil rights and civil liberties; fighting poverty, inequality, and racism; providing counsel to indigent defendants; promoting access to justice; protecting the environment; and countless other forms of service. They have been CEOs and General Counsels of established Fortune 500 firms and game-changing start-ups. They have been generative scholars and inspiring teachers. They have been great artists, musicians, actors, writers, producers, and directors. And they have been innovative practicing lawyers, finding creative new ways to serve their firms’ clients, to improve the legal system and the administration of justice through law reform and bar activity, and to provide vital pro bono service to those in need.

Harvard Law School has also played a transformative role in legal education and legal scholarship. The case method developed by Harvard Law School Dean Christopher Columbus Langdell in the late 1800s—and much maligned at the time—remains, even as teaching techniques and programs have evolved, the primary method of classroom instruction at almost all law schools. The Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, which was the very first student practice organization providing services to indigent clients, became a model for integrating legal practice and student learning in law school and the foundation of clinical education. Later, the Law School’s Legal Services Center again struck new ground, creating a community legal services center staffed by Law School faculty and students. Today, clinics are cited again and again as a critical component of the HLS experience and as a way that students can gain invaluable and significant real-world experience. And through the generative scholarship of both its faculty and its alumni, HLS has played a pioneering role in launching important new fields of inquiry and schools of legal thought, including the ideal of judicial restraint, the field of federal courts, the Legal Process School, and Critical Legal Studies.

Stakeholders proudly see themselves as part of HLS’s legacy of excellence, even while also appropriately asking difficult questions and challenging the conventions of the past. Common themes again inform what Harvard Law School connotes to its community. There are many ways to contribute, many ways to lead professional lives of impact. Though members of the HLS community may disagree about how to do so, they have a shared commitment to doing something important, something that will have impact, something larger than themselves—and to improving the lives of others, from their clients to their communities to the world at large. Many of the students and faculty who spoke with the Working Group talked about the desire to create change as the driving force in their decision to come to HLS. In this theme, again, one sees a breadth of

perspective, a dynamism in the pursuit of change, and a limitlessness in the sense of what can be accomplished.

*“HLS is transformative. It is a place that provides growth and transformation for many people who come here. You come in and you are one person, and you leave with a whole new set of tools—tools that you can use to go out into the world and improve things.”*

— HLS STUDENT

*“It really is a transformative experience in many ways, and it enables you to do so much when you come out. You are the same person as you were when you got here, but now your words carry so much more weight. You become more knowledgeable and you understand people’s perspectives more. It also equips you to advance your perspective and your passions.”*

— HLS STUDENT

*“HLS is the best there is. I like both the opportunity as well as the responsibility to give back.”*

— HLS FACULTY MEMBER

*“HLS has a stellar faculty, alumni, students, and staff. It also has a culture of merit and excellence, and hopefully, of opportunity. And it has vast resources of virtually every type, an extraordinary history and legacy, and therefore, a significant responsibility, in the legal profession and in society. But what may make it unique, or at least one of a very small number of law schools, is how all of this comes together to make a kind of mystique.”*

— HLS ALUMNA

*“HLS has the most weight and influence in the law school world. What I’m most proud of is Christopher Columbus Langdell because he helped HLS found how law is taught in this country. I am also proud of how this school produces leaders. It doesn’t just stand for individual leadership. It produces many leaders and it stands for—and is—an institution that leads other institutions.”*

—HLS STUDENT

*“Law is a service that you are putting into practice. The skills and the knowledge you obtain open up so much and give you the flexibility to do a lot of different things. And the association of law to the Harvard name enables so much.”*

— HLS STUDENT

*“HLS reminds me of my high school’s motto in Ghana: ‘When they sit, we shall stand. When they stand, we shall be outstanding. And when they out stand, we shall be the standard.’”*

—HLS STUDENT

### ***Theme 3: The Fundamental Pursuit of Law and Justice***

Many of those we spoke to mentioned being attracted to how “foundational” or “elemental” the law is. They saw it as an essential part of the fabric of civilization, embodying commitments to the rule of law, equal justice under law, due process, and democratic self-governance, among others. Members of our community also recognized the law’s complexity. Lawyers deploy facts and arguments and reason to make broad commitments to justice concrete and actionable. In other words, law provides a process for society to work out what justice entails and the means by which

we give life and meaning and content to that fundamental concept. The Law School trains our students not only how to invoke the legal process in advocating for justice, but also how to criticize and seek to change the process itself.

Many stakeholders underscored the importance of these rule of law concepts and, more generally, of HLS's commitment to truth and to law and justice. They emphasized the critical importance of learning to think like a lawyer, to marshal evidence and arguments, to analyze legal problems contextually and systemically. With the intensified national focus on longstanding evils of racism, inequality, poverty, abuse of power, intolerance, and threats to democracy, stakeholders emphasized that law is not merely a concept or ideal, but an immense source of power. This power, they said, can be abused, or it can be used to solve deeply rooted problems, address ills and injustices, and improve the lives of others. Understanding and practicing law brings personal empowerment and access to a greater power to effect change.

Because HLS is such a storied institution, the people the Working Group spoke with recognized that studying here signifies not only being a part of history but also having an opportunity to help shape it. Interviewees mentioned feeling a palpable sense of responsibility to do something meaningful with their HLS degrees. They spoke of building on the past, but looking toward the future.

In short, the third theme reflects a deep sense of law's importance and its potential to further the ends of justice—to make palpable differences in people's lives. As with the other two themes, it leavens that aspiration with a sense of humility—the realization that law provides an ongoing, multi-generational process for society's answering complex, interconnected, and evolving questions about what justice entails.

*“Law is such an important part of our society—how we organize our lives, what our business structures looks like, what our politics look like, the Supreme Court. Law is at the center of the many debates in our world, in a way that you can't find in many other countries.”*

— HLS FACULTY MEMBER

*“An important theme is the aspiration of the law. That this is an unending process of pursuing justice and the notion that the law itself is aspirational, imperfect, and always in a process of evolution. It's why students come to the law school, and why people look to the law school.”*

— HLS FACULTY MEMBER

*“Truth and the rule of law are central to who we are. They are foundational values and something that we have all come to appreciate.”*

— HLS ALUMNUS

*“Some expression of service and justice and law would be a powerful statement about what HLS has been and will be for all of its constituencies, for society at large, and for the world.”*

— HLS ALUMNUS

*“Justice, equality and liberty under the rule of law are key.”*

— HLS STUDENT

*“The same things attracted me to HLS and to the law when I applied to law school in 1978 or so that keep me engaged in the profession to this day—to change the world and make it better, at least a little bit, every day.”*

— HLS ALUMNA

## **Design Approach**

Using these themes as inspiration, our design team created and presented a number of possible shield approaches to the Working Group, which in turn recommended the attached design approach as its top choice.

This elegant new design is reflective of Harvard Law School’s character and the themes discussed above. The use of these expanding or diverging lines, some with no obvious beginning or end, conveys a sense of broad scope or great distance—the limitlessness of the School’s work and mission. You will also see in some applications how these radial lines can allude to the latitudinal and longitudinal lines that define the arc of the earth, conveying the global reach of the Law School’s community and impact. These lines can also evoke the numerous paths of fulfillment and contribution that are open to an HLS graduate. And the multifaceted, radiating form—a form inspired by the architectural detail found in both Hauser Hall and Austin Hall—seeks to convey dynamism, complexity, inclusiveness, connectivity, and strength. The traditional elements of the shield speak to the school’s history and grounding, while the more modern forms convey its ongoing evolution and aspirational nature. When combined with color, the multiple radiating lines express an internal energy, light, and strength, conveying a community with many facets and nuances, none of which alone defines it.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the shield makes explicit Harvard Law School’s commitment to truth, law, and justice, underscored by the Harvard *veritas* printed across three open books and the incorporation of *lex et iustitia*.

These are some of the many aspects that prompted the HLS Shield Working Group to select this design as its top choice. The Working Group believes that the new shield not only conveys what the school stands for, but it also embodies many of the attributes consistently identified by members of the HLS community. The new shield also pairs well with Harvard University’s family of shields.

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<sup>1</sup> As you will see in some of the applications, this faceted form can incorporate images of the HLS community—our shield can “contain multitudes” (people, places, programs, images of outcomes).

<sup>2</sup> Architectural detail found Hauser Hall and Austin Hall served as additional sources of inspiration for the new shield design.

