



COLLEGE OF LAW

MELISSA D. MORTAZAVI

Second Century Presidential Professor of Law

melissa.mortazavi@gmail.com

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

University of Oklahoma College of Law, Norman, OK

Second Century Presidential Professorship, Fall 2021-present

Professor of Law, Fall 2020- present

Associate Professor of Law, Fall 2015-2020

- Chair: Faculty Collaboration Center Building Project (2023-present); Chair, Accommodations Policy Committee (2023-present); Law Review Advisor, (2018-present); Chair, Curriculum Committee (2021); Chair Faculty Hiring Committee (2021); Chair: Provost Advisory Committee on Women's Issues (2020-2021); Chair: Covid Safer Committee Diversity Subgroup; Law School Diversity Liaison (2019-Spring 2022); Black Law Students Organization Faculty Adviser (2017-Spring 2022). Black Law Students Organization Faculty Adviser (2017-Spring 2022)
- Courses: *Torts, Professional Responsibility, Administrative Law, Agricultural & Food Law*

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, July 2022-August 2024

- Oversaw staff of up to 22 people and five departments: Registrar; Faculty Support, IT, Building & Maintenance, and Deans Suite Office Reception
- Please see *infra* for specific projects and initiative

University of Colorado Law School, Boulder, CO

Visiting Professor of Law (Research residency), Fall 2021

Brooklyn Law School, Brooklyn, NY

Visiting Assistant Professor of Law, 2012-2015

- Courses: *Torts, The Legal Profession, Professional Responsibility*

EDUCATION

University of California, Berkeley School of Law, J.D., 2005.

Notes & Comments Editor, *California Law Review*; President, *American Constitution Society*

- Honors: American Jurisprudence Award, Legal Ethics; Allen F. Broussard Fellowship; FLAS Fellowship (Farsi)

Cornell University, B.A. in Government & Theatre, 2001

- Honors: Magna cum laude; Distinction in All Subjects; Phi Beta Kappa; Conger Wood Fellowship; Cornell Alumni Scholarship; Cornell Ambassador

FEDERAL JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP

The Honorable Beverly B. Martin
United States District Court, Northern District of Georgia

2006-2007

LAW SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION & SERVICE

FUNDRAISING & FISCAL INITIATIVES

- Conceived of, proposed, launched, and successfully fundraised for the creation of the first ever (in the history of OU) crowdsourced capital campaign to create the Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher Chair in Civil Rights, Race, and the Law. Involved negotiating new donative instruments with OU Foundation and working closely with foundation staff.
 - Fully funded chair with over a \$1,100,000 endowment less than one year after launch
 - 75% of fund contributors were new first-time donors
 - Recruited and hired outstanding faculty member of color for position
- Oxford Scholars Program: Proposed, devised, and executed new recruitment program targeting high achieving in-state students that maximizes recruiting benefits while minimizing financial impact.
- Additional Fundraising: Collaborated regularly with events and development team on CLE programming presenting at Major Kuntz conference annually, recording videos for order of the Owl & giving day initiatives, attended major conferences for recruiting, hosted donors and alumni at sporting events and dinners.
- Using Fiscal Resources to Maximize Retention:
 - Salary Equalization Program: identified key high performing staff members who were paid significantly under-market or peers and successfully advocated for pay adjustments as well as, in one case, additional support staff person.
 - Advocated successfully for pay adjustment for maintenance staff to align with market rates to increase racial equity, address structural inequity, and retain staff.
 - Created and wrote proposal currently under review to waive parking permit fees for lowest earning staff as a means to acknowledge and address inequity issues.
 - Early Childhood Scholarship program: developed and proposed program to allow the children of faculty or staff under the age of 5 to receive scholarships to qualifying early childcare providers, thus rendering the choice to stay at the law school working during this particularly finite time of financial hardship economically viable

FACULTY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

- Finalized and Obtained Provost Approval for the first ever rank renewable term faculty promotion policy. 6 Professors have been promoted under this policy to date.
- Increased transparency between administration and faculty through creating the website repository as an appendix to the faculty handbook so new policies adopted by the faculty and administration can be found easily.
- Improved collegiality through emeritus equalization: Historically, only our tenure track faculty have received emeritus status. Upon petitioning to the Provost, was able to gain emeritus status for the first time for a renewable term member of our faculty.
- FMLA Reform: piloted for the first time a faculty service alternative to traditional FMLA accommodation.

- Reviewed faculty pay structures to ensure overload teaching was sufficiently and consistently compensated.
- Organized Faculty Meetings to rotate timing burdens more equitably. Sought an action-based model of meetings where information is disseminated in advance to maximize time for discussion. Asked the Dean to keep comments to the end.
- Chairperson, Lou & Connie Miller Faculty Collaboration Center: (ongoing) overseeing \$750,000 renovation of significant portion of the law school into a faculty facing collaboration center. Includes budget management, extensive stakeholder meeting and coordination to discern how a major donation should be used to renovate existing faculty library space. Employed a volunteer based committee structure to encourage broad and open participation. Successfully moderated competing interests. Project currently in build phase.
- Office Space Allocation: Concerted effort to catalog and equitably allocate space at the College of Law with an eye towards long term expansion of office space. **Successfully obtained architectural bids and funding to create 4 new faculty office spaces, which were completed in January of 2024.**
- Increase faculty profiles and morale through award nominations: successfully assembled submission package to support a senior professor for statewide award. Only non-administrator to receive this award.
- Sought and obtained approval from the Dean to create a full-time Visiting Assistant Professor position which is supporting a recent graduate of color's transition from practice to academia
- Diversified adjunct faculty through interviewing and actively soliciting applications broadly from new parties. Directly mentored new professors from practice in the drafting of syllabi, course construction, exam drafting, and provided in-class observation.

COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVORS WITH MAIN CAMPUS & COMMUNITY

- Worked closely with the Provost office and faculty to successfully draft and gain approval for the first rank-renewable term promotion policy for law school rank renewable term faculty
- Coordinating with Main Campus ADRC department regarding reasonable accommodation and articulation of what constitutes a “fundamental alteration” of the program.
- Met monthly with Vice Provost Sarah Ellis and order Associate Deans campuswide to identify with the Provost's office pain points and potential solutions. Worked on strategy to respond to implementation of Gov. Stitt's statewide executive order.
- Supporting our Federal Courts and Building Connections to the College of Law: Negotiated an MOU with the U.S. District Court of the Western District of Oklahoma to have OU Law be the court's regular emergency home and facility. These discussions also lead to a commitment for the 10th Circuit to sit in session at the College of Law.
- Coordinated, researched, and drafted guidance with Office of Legal counsel and EEO office to ensure legal compliance and clarity regarding hiring policies, committee composition, and appointment.
- Collaborating on professional identity formation with OU Medical school sharing of ideas and programs.
- Meeting with Office of Legal counsel to manage litigation risk and legal compliance for the College of law in both employment and student facing matters.
- Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial: in conjunction with main campus and community

centennial organized panel of distinguished experts from nationally recognized organizations to discuss reparations.

- Supporting expanded pipeline initiative for public school students focused on low-income communities.
- Working closely with main campus building and facilities management to maintain and upgrade law school facilities.
- As chairperson of University of Oklahoma Provost's Advisory Committee on Women's Issues, presented committee's research and proposal reforming FMLA policies that led to OU's first ever paid family leave policy. Advocated and obtained institutional membership to National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity (NCFDD).

GOVERNANCE, ACADEMIC OVERSIGHT, & INNOVATION

- General Duties: Curriculum oversight, scheduling for classes and faculty meetings, oversight of registrar and exam process, academic status of students, building and IT oversight (until Fall 2023), collaboration with admissions, character bar certification, consideration and approval of directed legal research projects, consideration and approval of certificate program applications and substitutions, approval of transfer credit, faculty staffing assignments, reporting obligations oversight, assist in U.S. New Strategic planning, building staffing issue management, ADHC and EEO Compliance and collaboration with main campus, general responsiveness to any internal issues as they arise on an as-needed basis at the College of Law.
- Weekly meetings with other Deans, direct reports, faculty and staff members
- Completion of annual evaluations and nominated staff members for campuswide awards (one obtained in Spring 2024!)
- Worked closely with Dean of Students to develop programs, materials, and other implementation of ABA 205 and 303 requirements.
- Completed annual higher education learning outcome reports, Denver reports, and portions of annual ABA and US New Reports
- Increased visibility and access to Title 9 and other reporting systems at the law school.
- Drafted and informed law school of statewide policies regarding time off for voting to support faculty and staff democratic participation
- New Courses taught at OU in my tenure as Associate Dean: Animal Law (first time); prosecution practicum (first time); Disability Law (first time in over 10 years); Public Health Law (first time); Equality and the Law (second time ever offered); Evolution of Minority Rights(second time ever offered).
- Overseeing curriculum committee in the first comprehensive curricular review in 15 years and the first revising of learning outcomes in 8 years in preparation for 2026 site visit.
- Drafting and implementation of Chat GPT Policy.
- Exam Administration Reform:
 - Hired and collaborated on training temporary workforce of proctors to provide in-room exam oversight .
 - Drafted and implemented first uniform exam instructions for administration.
 - Began program to track exam length and type to report to faculty in Fall 2024.
 - Worked with Registrar to facilitate required ADA accommodations and other emergency situations during exam period.
- Adjunct Review and Oversight

- Created written policies regarding oversight.
- Regular review of adjunct testing materials and canvas pages.
- Annual in-person training.
- Updated training manual.
- Chair, Curriculum Committee (2020-2021)
 - Successfully Drafted and Passed First Law School Grade Normalization Policy.
 - Developed online platform for Grade Normalization Policy & New Course Proposals.

BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS: ACCESS, ENVIRONMENTAL UPGRADES, & SYSTEMS MODERNIZATION

- Green Initiative Building Project: Proposed pathway and gained approval to seek existing building LEED certification.
 - Worked with the College of Architecture to obtain energy audit, and the OKC Green Building Collective and other external vendors to collect ideas and bids on aspects of this remodel. These discussions include HVAC, lighting systems, alternative energy capture, charging stations, and water reclamation systems.
 - Significant Steps towards goal already achieved (funded and completed):
 - 1.2 Million dollars move of law school off of independent external HVAC systems and to a tie-in main campus subterranean chiller loop. Projected energy savings: 30% over current system. .
 - All lighting transitioned to LED lighting, including main atrium spaces.
 - Elimination of use of disposable water bottles as norm. Obtained communal water dispensers for events.
 - Transitioned to biogradable cups, plates and cutlery
 - Conversion of default printing to double sided black and white.
 - Advocacy for installation of EV charging station (in progress).
- Increased disability access at the College of Law by seeking and installing actuators throughout public spaces and necessary faculty office space, converting 3 classrooms to full accessibility (for faculty member and students); putting all classrooms on a timeline to full accessibility as norm for each classroom by 2028.
- IT Modernization & Oversight
 - Modernized IT infrastructure from a dated internal platform that hadn't been updated since 2005 to a modern Salesforce apparatus.
 - Negotiated external vendor contract terms regarding IT build in Pardot Salesforce Operating System and in creating a custom bucket build for admission. IT projects successfully completed on designated timeline.
 - Installed building wide, digital clock system to accurately synchronize all classrooms and common spaces.
 - Wrote and implemented first Audio/Visual Document retention policy
 - IT department: standing professional staff of 5, rotating student staff of an additional 6 employees.

NATIONAL SERVICE

- Secretary, AALS Torts Section (2024-2025)
- Treasurer, AALS Torts Section (2023-2024)
- Chair, AALS Professional Responsibility Section (2022-2023)

- Executive Officer, Chair Elect, AALS Professional Responsibility Section (2021-2022)
- Executive Officer, AALS Torts Section (2020-2023)
- Executive Officer, Secretary, AALS Professional Responsibility Section (2019-2021)
- Chairperson, Academy of Food Law and Policy (2019-2020)
- Board Member, Academy of Food Law and Policy (2017-2019)
- Executive Committee, AALS Professional Responsibility Section (2016-2019)
- Executive Committee, AALS Agricultural Law Section (2015-2017)
- Conference Committee, Academy of Food Law and Policy (2017-2019)
- Historic District Commissioner, City of Norman, OK (2015-2017)
- Judge, We the People Competition, Norman High School (2015-present)

SCHOLARSHIP

SCHOLARSHIP: LAW REVIEW PUBLICATIONS

Torts & Personhood, 76 ARKANSAS L. REV. 4 (2024).

Where Neutrality Stop and Reality Begins: Why Selecting Class and Lead Counsel Without Considering Identity is Unethical, 74 UC HASTINGS L. REV. 1403 (2023).

Incivility as Identity, 2020 MICH. ST. L. REV. 939 (2020).

Institutional Independence: Lawyers and the Administrative State, 87 FORDHAM L. REV. 5 (2019).

Code of Silence, 5 CARDOZO L. REV. 40 (2019).

Food, Fracking and Folly, 50 ARIZ. ST. L. J. 2017 (2018).

Rulemaking Ex Machina, 117 COLUM. L. REV. ONLINE 6 (2017).

Tainted, 81 BROOKLYN L. REV. 1463 (2016) (*cited in the 3rd Restatement of Torts*).

Tort at Democracy: Lessons from the Food Wars, 57 ARIZONA L. REV. 929 (2015).

Blind Spot: The Inadequacy of Neutral Partisanship, 63 UCLA L. REV. DIS. 16 (2015).

A No-Fault Remedy for Legal Malpractice?, 44 HOFSTRA L. REV. 471 (2015).

The Cost of Avoidance: Pluralism, Neutrality, and the Foundations of Modern Legal Ethics, 42 FLA. ST. U. L. REV. 1(2014).

Consuming Identities: Law, School Meals, and What it Means to Be American, 24 CORNELL J. OF L. & PUB. POLICY 1 (2014).

Lawyers Not Widgets: Why Private-Sector Attorneys Must Unionize to Save the Legal Profession, 96 MINN. L. REV. 1482 (2012).

Are Food Subsidies Making our Kids Fat? Tensions Between the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act and the Farm Bill, 68 WASH. & LEE L. REV. 1699 (2011).

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

A Radical Assertion, JOTWELL (January 11, 2024).

Homogeneous Diversity, JOTWELL (JUNE 6, 2022).

An Honor or a Curse? The Untold Story of Shortlisted Female Jurists, JOTWELL (JAN 20, 2020).

Professional Responsibility as a Limitation on Executive Power, JOTWELL (DEC. 6, 2018).

HONORS/AWARDS

SERVICE & SCHOLARSHIP

- 2023 OU Trailblazer Award 2023 (highest diversity related award at OU, afforded to one person annually selected from all 4 OU Campuses for their DEI work)
- 2022 Dean's Placement Award For Outstanding Faculty Scholarship
- 2022 Peer Nominated and selected to become a Fellow of American Bar Foundation
- 2021 PRESIDENT'S ASSOCIATES SECOND CENTURY PROFESSORSHIP (CAMPUS WIDE)
- 2020-2021 Dean's Institutional Impact Award
- 2021 Center for Academic Excellence NCFDD Fellow (Norman campuswide)
- 2019 NOMINEE FOR THE FRED C. ZACHARIAS PRIZE FOR SCHOLARSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY
- 2019 Dean's Placement Award For Outstanding Faculty Scholarship (2)
- 2018 Citation by the American Law Institute in the Third Restatement of Torts
- 2018 Dean's Placement Award For Outstanding Faculty Scholarship

TEACHING

- 2023 GRADUATION FACULTY PRESENTER (STUDENT SELECTED)
- 2022 AALS TEACHER OF THE YEAR
- 2022 OUTSTANDING FACULTY MEMBER OU COLLEGE OF LAW (STUDENT SELECTED)
- 2021 CENTER FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE NCFDD FELLOW (CAMPUS WIDE)
- 2021 CENTER FOR FACULTY EXCELLENCE FELLOWSHIP (CAMPUS WIDE)
- 2020 AALS TEACHER OF THE YEAR
- 2020 OUTSTANDING FACULTY MEMBER OU COLLEGE OF LAW (STUDENT SELECTED)
- 2016 COLLEGE OF LAW MERRILL TEACHING NOMINEE

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Debevoise & Plimpton LLP, New York, NY. *General Litigation Associate*, 2005-2006; 2007-2011

- Engaged in all aspects of commercial litigation, arbitration, and investigations in federal and state courts. Principal cases involved products liability, professional ethics and corporate governance, food and drug law, sustainable resource and energy management, and securities investigations.
- Challenged the detention of Guantanamo detainees in motions and submissions to district, appellate and Supreme Court. Briefed significant voting rights actions in the 2008 election.
- Legal Aid Society of New York Pro Bono Award 2007 & 2008, Diversity Committee; Litigation Mentorship Chair, Pro Bono Committee

Thompson & Stedler, Berkeley, CA. *Law Clerk*, Summer 2003

Prof. Steven Shatz, University of San Francisco Law School. *Research Assistant*, 2003

Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, CA. *Special Education Teacher*, 2002

BAR ADMISSIONS

California

New York

United States District Court of Southern District of New York

United States District Court of Eastern District of New York

REFERENCES

- **Andrew M. Coats**, Dean Emeritus of the College of Law, Director Emeritus of the Law Center, Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation Presidential Professor, Arch B. & Jo Anne Gilbert Professor of Law, amcoats@ou.edu
- **Sarah Ellis**, Vice Provost for Faculty, University of Oklahoma, sjr@ou.edu
- **Rebecca Lucas**, Registrar (direct report), University of Oklahoma College of Law, rlucas@ou.edu
- **Stacey Tovino**, Associate Dean for Faculty Development and Research and John B. Turner LLM Program Chair in Law, University of Oklahoma College of Law, Stacey.Tovino@ou.edu
- **Steven Gensler**, Gene and Elaine Edwards Family Chair in Law and President's Associates Presidential Professor, University of Oklahoma College of Law, sgensler@ou.edu

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

- “Owning Legal Practice.” International Legal Ethics Conference, Amsterdam (2024).
- “One Rule: Truth and Lawyers,” Legal Ethics Schmooze Workshop, Denver Law (2023).
- “New Scholars Workshop,” American Association of Law Schools (2023) (*commentator and organizer*).
- “Where Neutrality Stop and Reality Begins: Why Selecting Class and Lead Counsel Without Considering Identity is Unethical,” Ethics in Complex Litigation Conference, UC Hastings (2022).
- “The Politics of Practice,” International Legal Ethics Conference, UCLA (2022).
- “Torts as Personhood,” New Scholarship Series, University of Tennessee (2022).
- “Torts as Personhood,” Faculty Scholarship Colloquia (spring), University of Oklahoma (2022).
- “Incivility as Identity,” Feminist Theory Workshop (Summer 2021).
- AALS PR Section Summer Workshop Series (Selection Committee, Organizer and Moderator)(July 2020).
- “Food Litigation and the Torts Paradox,” Georgia State Law School, Academy of Food Law and Policy Annual Conference (Dec. 2019).
- “Challenges to Teaching Professional Responsibility” Southeastern Association of Law Schools (August 2019).
- “Code of Silence,” University of Arkansas (March 2019).
- “Institutional Independence: Lawyers and the Administrative State,” American Association of Law Schools (January 2019).
- “Lawyers as Intermediaries” & “Code of Silence,” Melbourne University, International Legal Ethics Conference 8 (December 2018).
- “Institutional Independence: Lawyers and the Administrative State,” Fordham Law School (October 2018).
- “Regulatory Factions,” Harvard Law School, Academy of Food Law and Policy Annual Conference (October 2018).
- “Socio-Technical Imaginaries of Food and the Paris Accords,” Arizona State University, Sustainability Conference (May 2018).

“Food, Fracking and Folly,” Oregon Law School (March 2018).

“Conspiracy of Silence,” UCLA School of Law, Legal Ethics Schmooze, (July 2017).

“Current Issues in Food Litigation,” Texas Bar Association Agricultural Law Conference (May 2017).

“Food, Fracking and Folly,” Arizona State University, Sustainability Conference (May 2017).

“Conspiracy of Silence,” Tulsa School of Law (January 2017).

“New Scholars Workshop,” American Association of Law Schools (January 2017) (*commentator and organizer*).

“Conspiracy of Silence,” University of Oklahoma College of Law, Junior Faculty Workshop (December 2016).

“Justice for Sale: Ethics and Lawyer Debt,” Southeastern Association of Law Schools (August 2016).

