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IN THE MILE HIGH CITY



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We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of our generous sponsors for their support. Your contributions have played a crucial role in making this event possible and ensuring its success. Your commitment to supporting the professional development of pre-law advisors is truly appreciated, and we are grateful for your partnership in advancing this important work.



SOUTHWEST
ASSOCIATION OF
**PRE-LAW
ADVISORS**



Western Association
of Prelaw Advisors

The Wild {South} West – Facing Change Together

Welcome to Denver!

We are so excited to be together for the next few days to connect, learn and explore the landscape of pre-law advisement together on the beautiful DU Law campus. Whether you're just starting your journey and are looking to connect with colleagues or are looking to deepen your knowledge and reconnect with your peers, we hope you will find valuable insights, resources and connections to navigate the world of pre-law advising. We look forward to an engaging and inspiring experience together.

Your WAPLA and SWAPLA conference chairs,

Chris Shortell & Kelly Kavalier



Conference Overview

Thursday, April 3

All events at [Hotel Indigo](#) (1801 Wewatta St, Denver, CO 80202)

- 2:30 PM – 5:30 PM Registration/Check-In
 - 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM Pre-Conference Session
 - Journey of the New Pre Law Advisor (Shawn Archer)
 - 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM Opening Social Reception sponsored by LSAC in the Ambler Restaurant
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Friday, April 4

All events at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law

- 8:00 AM – Registration/Check-In (hotel lobby)
- 8:15 AM – Meet in lobby for travel to DU Law
- 9:00 – 9:45 AM – Breakfast & Networking at DU Law (additional registration/check-in)
- 9:15 – 9:45 AM – Optional tours of DU Law
- 9:45 – 11:00 AM – Keynote Speaker and Q&A
 - The Joy of Lawyering (Nicole Cásarez)
- 11:10 – Noon – Session 1 Breakouts
 - LSAC's Advising Portal (Kyle McEntee)
 - Establishing a Law School Pipeline Program (Melina Martinez & Hannah Taube)
 - Navigating AI in Law School: AI Certification, Policies, and Ethics (Alyson Alber & Koary Lutz)
- Noon – 1:15 PM – Lunch sponsored by AccessLex
 - Sponsor Fair
 - Optional Roundtable Discussion – Advising in Rural Areas (Jessica Velasco)
- 1:20 – 2:10 PM – Session 2 Breakouts
 - Mock Admissions Panel (Jill Nikirk, Jay Shively, Cary Cluck, Alicia Cramer)
 - Advising Justice-Impacted Applicants (Gayla Jacobson)
 - Faculty as Pre-Law Advisors: Building Sustainable Solo Programs (Jana Mathews)
- 2:20 – 3:10 PM – Session 3 Breakouts
 - Succeeding in law school: What students do today CAN determine their tomorrow (Susan Patrick)
 - Empowering Pre-Law Advisors: Navigating Law School Fit and Communication for First-Generation Pre-Law Students (Angela Ambers-Henderson)
 - The Real Scoop on Waitlists (Stephen Brown)
- 3:10 – 3:30 PM – Coffee & Snack Break
- 3:30 – 4:20 PM – Session 4 Breakouts
 - A New Era of JD Applications (Isabel Moreno, Joseph Lindsay, & Cathy Casiano)
 - The Next Generation of American Indian and Alaska Native Attorneys & Judges: Pre-Law Summer Institute and Pathways (Rodina Cave Parnall & Scott Willie)
 - New tools and services from AccessLex Institute to help you engage in service, aspiring law students (Teria Thornton & Zachary Smith)
- 4:20 – 4:30 PM – Daily Wrap Up
- 5:00 – 6:00 PM – Optional LSAT Contest Night with TestMasters – Green Russell Room (Hotel Indigo)

Saturday, April 5

All events at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law

- 8:30 AM – Meet in lobby for travel to DU Law
- 9:30 – 10:00 AM – Breakfast & Networking at DU Law
- 10:00 – 10:50 AM – Session 5 Breakouts
 - Tilting at Windmills? Exploring the Lex Fellowship and Other Pre-Law Study Abroad Opportunities (Chris Riley & Karantha Fenley)
 - I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know: Lessons learned after hopping the fence from pre-law advising to law admissions (Martha Kirby)
- 11:00 – 11:50 AM – LSAC Update (Katya Valasek)
- 11:50 - Noon – Grab a boxed lunch sponsored by TestMasters
- Noon – 1:00 PM Lunch & APLA Business Meetings
 - SWAPLA
 - WAPLA
- 1:00 PM – Conference ends

Keynote: The Joy of Lawyering

A personal journey to legal education and the importance of legal education.



Nicole
Casarez

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Nicole Casarez is an attorney and an emeritus professor of the University of St. Thomas in Houston, where she taught courses in wrongful convictions, media law, media ethics and journalism. As a visiting professor of law, she has also taught constitutional law, privacy law and First Amendment law at the University of Houston Law Center. She has a bachelor of journalism as well as a law degree from the University of Texas, and a masters in communication/public relations management from the University of Houston. She has written extensively about First Amendment, privacy and criminal justice issues, and is a member of the American Law Institute. She was named Texas Law's Distinguished Alumna for Community Service in 2014. Casarez received national media attention in connection with her representation of Texas death row inmate Anthony Graves, who was exonerated in the fall of 2010. She retired from teaching in 2021 and currently lives in Colorado.

Conference Session Details

THURSDAY: PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION

Journey of the New Pre Law Advisor (Shawn Archer)

Explore the challenges and successes of my prelaw advisor career to date. I start with Day 1 of pre-law advising, navigate through the Honeymoon phase, Law Fair, 1st Lap (semester), and round it off with where I am today. This is a great opportunity for newer advisors looking to make connections and more established advisors looking to collaborate.

FRIDAY: SESSION 1 BREAKOUTS

LSAC's Advising Portal (Kyle McEntee)

Learn about LSAC's new prelaw advisor portal with new reports, resources, and more.

Establishing a Law School Pipeline Program (Melina Martinez & Hannah Taube)

Learn more about establishing and running a pipeline program for undergraduate and graduate students interested in legal careers from Portland State University's Student Legal Services team. Since 2012, they have overseen the successful Explore the Law (ETL) program, a two-term program that pairs current students with attorney mentors and presents weekly sessions on different topics to help students prepare for law school and careers in the legal field. The program largely serves populations underrepresented and from non-traditional backgrounds; helping to promote a tight-knit and supportive legal community, assisting in both recruitment and retention efforts. For more on ETL, see: <https://www.pdx.edu/student-legal-services/explore-law>.

Navigating AI in Law School: AI Certification, Policies, and Ethics (Alyson Alber & Koary Lutz)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing many sectors, including education and the legal field. For law students, understanding AI's implications is crucial for future practice. This presentation will cover law school policies on the acceptable use of AI: in the application process, the classroom and ultimately in practice. Additionally, the conversation will highlight Case Western Reserve University School of Law's new pilot program on AI certification for law students and explore ever-evolving ethical concerns around AI in both educational and legal settings.

FRIDAY LUNCH OPPORTUNITIES

Sponsor Fair

Before or after lunch stop by to visit with our sponsors at their tables. Learn more about products and services available for you and your students.

Advising in Rural Areas (Jessica Velasco)

Are you supporting students in a rural area or do you want to learn more about supporting students from rural areas? Grab your lunch and join us for a roundtable discussion with others from rural areas to share ideas. We'll explore ways to promote the legal profession in areas that don't have easy access to internships and law schools. Collectively we'll brainstorm as we network and connect with others about pre-law programming from our home campuses.

FRIDAY: SESSION 2 BREAKOUTS

Mock Admissions Panel (Jill Nikirk, Jay Shively, Cary Cluck, Alicia Cramer)

Join seasoned law school professionals from across the country for a fun, captivating, and enlightening presentation that promises to demystify law school admissions as our expert panel reviews faux law school applications and considers the questions they raise.

This panel offers a unique opportunity to peer behind the curtain into the art of crafting a standout law school application. Our experts will review mock admission files, providing a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond the numbers to provide insight into the discernment process of law school admission committees. With their combined wealth of experience, they will delve into the crucial questions and issues that can make or break an application.

What You Can Expect:

- In-depth analysis of mock admission files: Witness firsthand how admissions committees evaluate applications, what sets remarkable candidates apart, and how to avoid common pitfalls.
- Expert discussions on applicant questions: Explore complex issues that law school hopefuls often grapple with, from personal statements to recommendation letters, and gain clarity on presenting their best selves.
- Insider knowledge from the other side: Learn how admissions professionals think and make decisions, enabling you to strategically help your advisees tailor their applications to stand out.
- Proven strategies for success: Acquire practical tips and techniques that will empower you to aid them in compiling applications that reflect their strengths, aspirations, and potential.

This presentation should provide valuable insight for anyone seeking to navigate the competitive landscape of law school admissions. By the end of the event, you will be equipped with the tools to better capture the attention of admissions committees.

Advising Justice-Impacted Applicants (Gayla Jacobson)

This session is designed to help prelaw advisors navigate the evolving landscape of character and fitness sections in law school applications and provide meaningful support to formerly incarcerated or justice-impacted individuals. As part of broader efforts to confront the systemic inequities in the legal profession, many law schools are reassessing how they evaluate applicants' past conduct. This session will explore the nuances of these changes, the challenges faced by justice-impacted applicants, and strategies advisors can employ to empower individuals who may feel excluded from pursuing legal education.

Faculty as Pre-Law Advisors: Building Sustainable Solo Programs (Jana Mathews)

A significant number of pre-law advisors are faculty members, many serving as the sole advisor at their institutions with minimal stipends or single course release as compensation. Join an experienced faculty pre-law advisor to explore concrete strategies for building sustainable programs within these constraints.

Three critical challenges:

1. Time management: How to structure a manageable pre-law program while also balancing one's commitments in the areas of teaching, research, and institutional service.
2. Resource allocation: Which services to prioritize and which to strategically forgo.
3. Program sustainability: Creating systems and documentation that survive advisor transitions.

Participants will leave with concrete tools for building sustainable pre-law programs that complement rather than compete with their primary faculty responsibilities.

FRIDAY: SESSION 3 BREAKOUTS

Succeeding in law school: What students do today CAN determine their tomorrow (Susan Patrick)

Contrary to Elle Wood's famous line, law school (and getting into it) is hard. Legal education requires strong reading comprehension, critical thinking, and analytical skills. Not every student who wants to attend law school has had the opportunity to develop these skills to the level needed for success in law school. In this session, we will discuss how we can help students develop these skills before applying to law school or at the very least during their final semesters of undergrad.

We will examine pre-law advisors and undergraduate courses' role in helping students develop the skills necessary for success in law school. In addition, we will review how these skills influence student performance in and out of the law school classroom by walking through a law school essay problem, discussing the sample answer while also looking at some student samples and how at Liberty Law, we have worked with those students to improve their skill set and ultimately succeed in law school.

At the end of the session, you will be able to:

- Guide students on what skills are necessary before they begin law school.
- Identify what law professors are looking for in student work.
- Develop individual plans for students who desire to attend law school but have a weaker skill set.

Empowering Pre-Law Advisors: Navigating Law School Fit and Communication for First-Generation Pre-Law Students (Angela Ambers-Henderson)

This interactive session will equip Pre-Law advisors with tools and strategies to better support first-generation pre-law students in understanding law school fit and effective communication with law schools.

By the end of the session, Pre-Law Advisors will:

- Have an improved understanding of law school fit for first-generation pre-law students.
- Enhanced communication strategies between advisors, students, and law schools.
- Have increased confidence in advising first-generation pre-law students.

The Real Scoop on Waitlists (Stephen Brown)

April is waitlist season, so let's delve into the mysteries of law school waitlists: why students get waitlisted, what it actually means for their chances, and how they can improve their odds of being admitted. We'll discuss the factors that influence waitlist decisions, from academic qualifications to institutional priorities, and explore strategies that applicants can use to increase their chances of being selected. Featuring insights from a range of law schools this presentation will offer a comprehensive view of the waitlist process, addressing common misconceptions and providing practical advice for pre-law advisors assisting prospective law students as they navigate this uncertain phase of their application journey.

FRIDAY: SESSION 4 BREAKOUTS

A New Era of JD Applications (Isabel Moreno, Joseph Lindsay, & Cathy Casiano)

The landscape of JD applications has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from a relatively streamlined and consistent process to a highly personalized, institution-specific experience. This can leave even the most savvy applicants feeling unsure of how to best prepare themselves for the rigorous application cycle. From AI and expanded electronic applications to diverse interview formats, the inclusion of short-essay questions and multiple prompts for personal statements, the ways in which law schools are gathering applicant information have diversified. The introduction of an ABA LSAT variance adds another layer of complexity to an already multifaceted process. This session will explore the evolution of JD applications, examining how these changes allow applicants to more fully share their unique experiences and qualifications.

This discussion will provide an overview of the strategies law schools are employing to assess applicants holistically, equipping attendees with tools to bolster their advising practices as they guide their students through the increasingly tailored application landscape.

The Next Generation of American Indian and Alaska Native Attorneys & Judges: Pre-Law Summer Institute and Pathways (Rodina Cave Parnall & Scott Willie)

Join us for an insightful session designed to inform and inspire advisors about the unique opportunities and resources available for American Indian and Alaska Native students considering law school. Led by experts from the American Indian Law Center, Inc. (AILC), the nation's oldest Indian-managed legal and public policy organization, this session will provide an update on the programs and initiatives AILC has championed since its founding in 1967.

In this session, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how to effectively engage with and support American Indian and Alaska Native students throughout their journey to law school and beyond. The discussion will highlight the critical need for more tribal attorneys, judges, and professors, as well as strategies for advising students who aim to fill these essential roles within their communities.

Attendees will leave equipped with practical tools to support prospective law students, insights into the rich cultural and academic backgrounds of these students, and a renewed sense of purpose in helping to shape a diverse and inclusive legal profession. To learn more about AILC: <https://www.ailc-inc.org/>

New tools and services from AccessLex Institute to help you engage in service, aspiring law students (Teria Thornton & Zachary Smith)

Staying up to date with the latest tools and services is key to providing comprehensive support to aspiring law students. Join us to explore the updated suite of free tools and services from the nonprofit AccessLex Institute designed to enhance your engagement with aspiring law students. Our experts will showcase innovative resources and platforms that support student success from application to graduation, including a new step-by-step guide to law school admissions.

LSAT CONTEST NIGHT *hosted by TestMasters*

Test your LSAT knowledge for cash and swag prizes! You do NOT need to be an attorney - in fact you don't have to have taken the LSAT to participate and potentially win! Participants will face a series of challenging LSAT questions and compete for cash prizes from TestMasters: **\$500 for first place, \$250 for second place, and \$100 for third place.** Enjoy sodas and snacks while having a blast with your fellow advisors! (*event for pre-law advisors only*)

SATURDAY: SESSION 5 BREAKOUTS

Tilting at Windmills? Exploring the Lex Fellowship and Other Pre-Law Study Abroad Opportunities

(Chris Riley & Karinthia Fenley)

The Lex Fellowship offers pre-law students a unique opportunity to explore international law through visits to European law firms. But is it a transformative experience or an aspirational challenge that might not fit every student?

In this session, two pre-law advisors—one from a small private university and the other from a large public institution—will share their insights after attending a first-time PLA site visit to Lex Fellowship - Madrid. They will explore the program's benefits, such as networking, exposure to global legal practice, and challenges like cost and suitability for different student profiles. Beyond the Lex Fellowship, the presentation will discuss alternative opportunities, including other international pre-law programs and innovative experiential learning options. Advisors will gain practical tools to evaluate programs, recommend experiences tailored to their students' goals, and even develop new opportunities at their institutions.

In the spirit of Don Quixote, we'll ask: Is the Lex Fellowship a bold opportunity worth pursuing or a challenge best approached with caution? Join us for this engaging exploration of study abroad and alternative pre-law opportunities.

I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know: Lessons learned after hopping the fence from pre-law advising to law admissions (Martha Kirby)

This interactive session will look behind the curtain of the law school admissions process from the perspective of a former pre-law advisor turned law school admissions representative, to help current pre-law advisors better assist their students. As a pre-law advisor, what did I have right...and wrong? What did I only partially understand? What likely varies by law school vs. what is fairly consistent in law schools' admissions processes? Would I advise differently knowing what I know now? And perhaps most importantly, to what extent do the different roles serve the same, and different, constituents and how does that influence the perspective each brings to the law school admissions process?

SATURDAY: PLENARY SESSION

LSAC Update (Katya Valasek)

This session will cover the most recent updates from the Law School Admission Council and include a review of the current test taking, application, and enrollment trends based on the most recent admission cycle data.

SATURDAY LUNCH: APLA BUSINESS MEETINGS

Grab your lunch and join us for a lunch business meeting. If you're not a current member, no worries – all are welcome! To help you decide which might be a better fit for networking and community here are the regions broadly served by each APLA (although we are always open to colleagues regardless of location).

WAPLA (Western Association of Pre-Law Advisors): Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, & Wyoming

SWAPLA (Southwestern Association of Pre-Law Advisors): Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma & Texas



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Friday, April 4

Time	Session	Floor	Room
9:00 – 9:45 AM	Check – In (if not done at hotel)	1 st Floor	Lobby
	Breakfast & Networking	2 nd Floor	Lobby
9:15 – 9:45 AM	Optional Tours of DU Law	2 nd Floor	Lobby
9:45 – 11:00 AM	Keynote: The Joy of Lawyering	2 nd Floor	Room 255
11:10 – Noon (Session 1)	LSAC's Advising Portal	1 st Floor	Room 170
	Establishing a Law School Pipeline Program	1 st Floor	Room 155
	Navigating AI in Law School: AI Certification, Policies, and Ethics	2 nd Floor	Room 255
Noon – 1:15 PM	Lunch – Sponsored by AccessLex	2 nd Floor, Room 255 1 st Floor, West Patio Deck (weather permitting)	
	Optional Round Table Discussion – Advising in Rural Areas (grab lunch and take with you)	1 st Floor	Room 155
	Sponsor Fair	2 nd Floor	Lobby
1:20 – 2:10 PM (Session 2)	Mock Admissions Panel	1 st Floor	Room 155
	Advising Justice-Impacted Applicants	1 st Floor	Room 170
	Faculty as Pre-Law Advisors: Building Sustainable Solo Programs	2 nd Floor	Room 255
2:20 – 3:10 PM (Session 3)	Succeeding in law school: What students do today CAN determine their tomorrow	1 st Floor	Room 155
	Empowering Pre-Law Advisors: Navigating Law School Fit and Communication for First-Generation Pre-Law Students	2 nd Floor	Room 255
	The Real Scoop on Waitlists	1 st Floor	Room 170
3:10 – 3:30 PM	Coffee & Snack Break	2 nd Floor	Lobby
3:30 – 4:20 PM (Session 4)	A New Era of JD Applications	1 st Floor	Room 155
	The Next Generation of American Indian and Alaska Native Attorneys & Judges: Pre-Law Summer Institute and Pathways	2 nd Floor	Room 255
	New tools and services from AccessLex Institute to help you engage in service, aspiring law students	1 st Floor	Room 170
4:20 – 4:30 PM	Daily Wrap Up	In your Session 4 location	
5:00 – 6:00 PM	Optional LSAT Contest Night with TestMasters	Green Russell Room (Hotel Indigo)	



Saturday, April 5

Time	Session	Floor	Room
9:30 – 10:00 AM	Breakfast & Networking at DU Law	2 nd Floor	Lobby
10:00 – 10:50 AM (Session 5)	Tilting at Windmills? Exploring the Lex Fellowship and Other Pre-Law Study Abroad Opportunities	1 st Floor	Room 155
	I Didn't Know What I Didn't Know: Lessons learned after hopping the fence from pre-law advising to law admissions	2 nd Floor	Room 280
11:00 – 11:50 AM	LSAC Update	2 nd Floor	Room 280
Noon – 1:00 PM Lunch & APLA Business Meetings	SWAPLA	2 nd Floor	Room 280
	WAPLA	1 st Floor	Room 155
1:00 PM	Conference Ends – Thank you!!		

Thank you to our sponsors!

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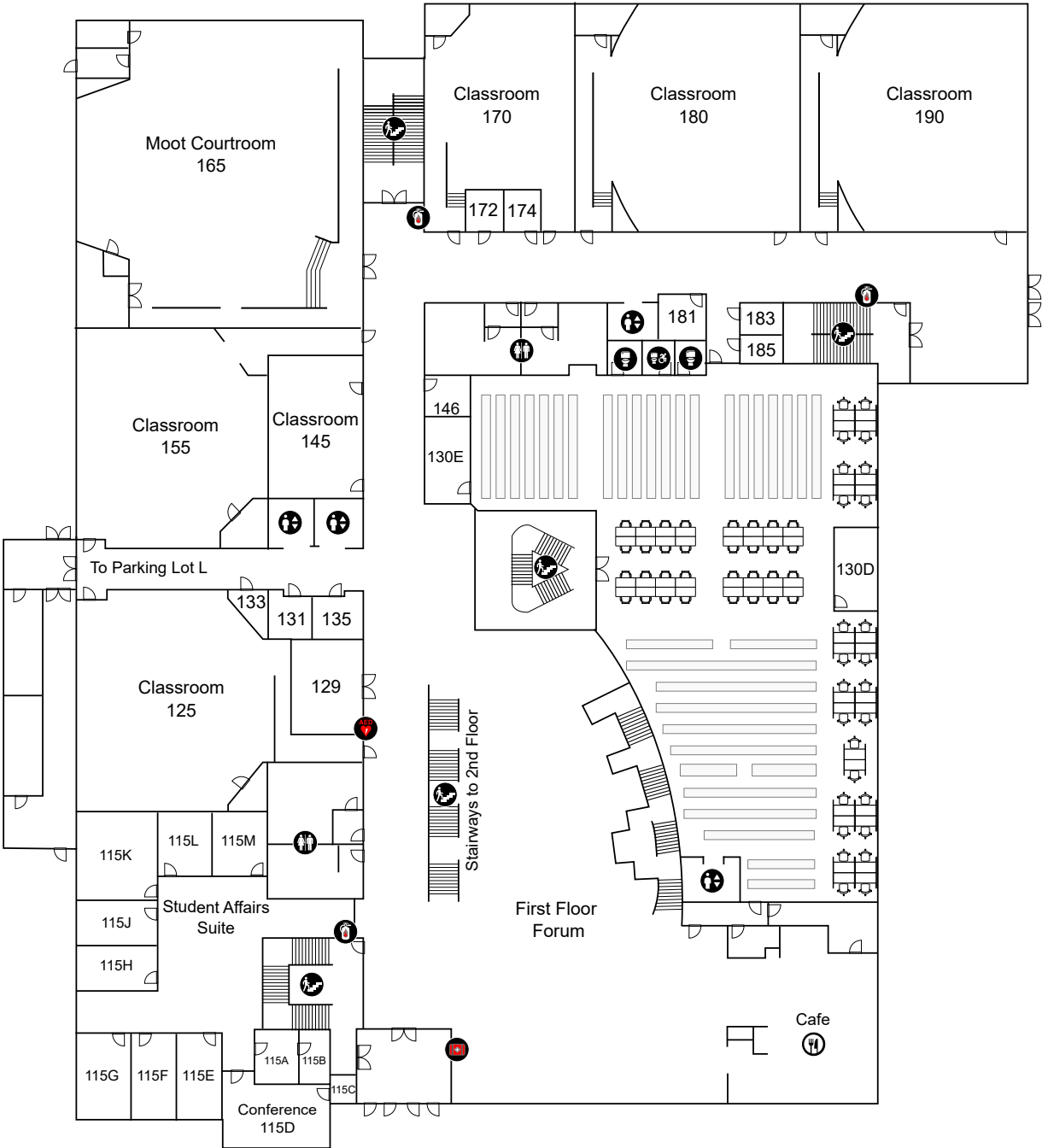
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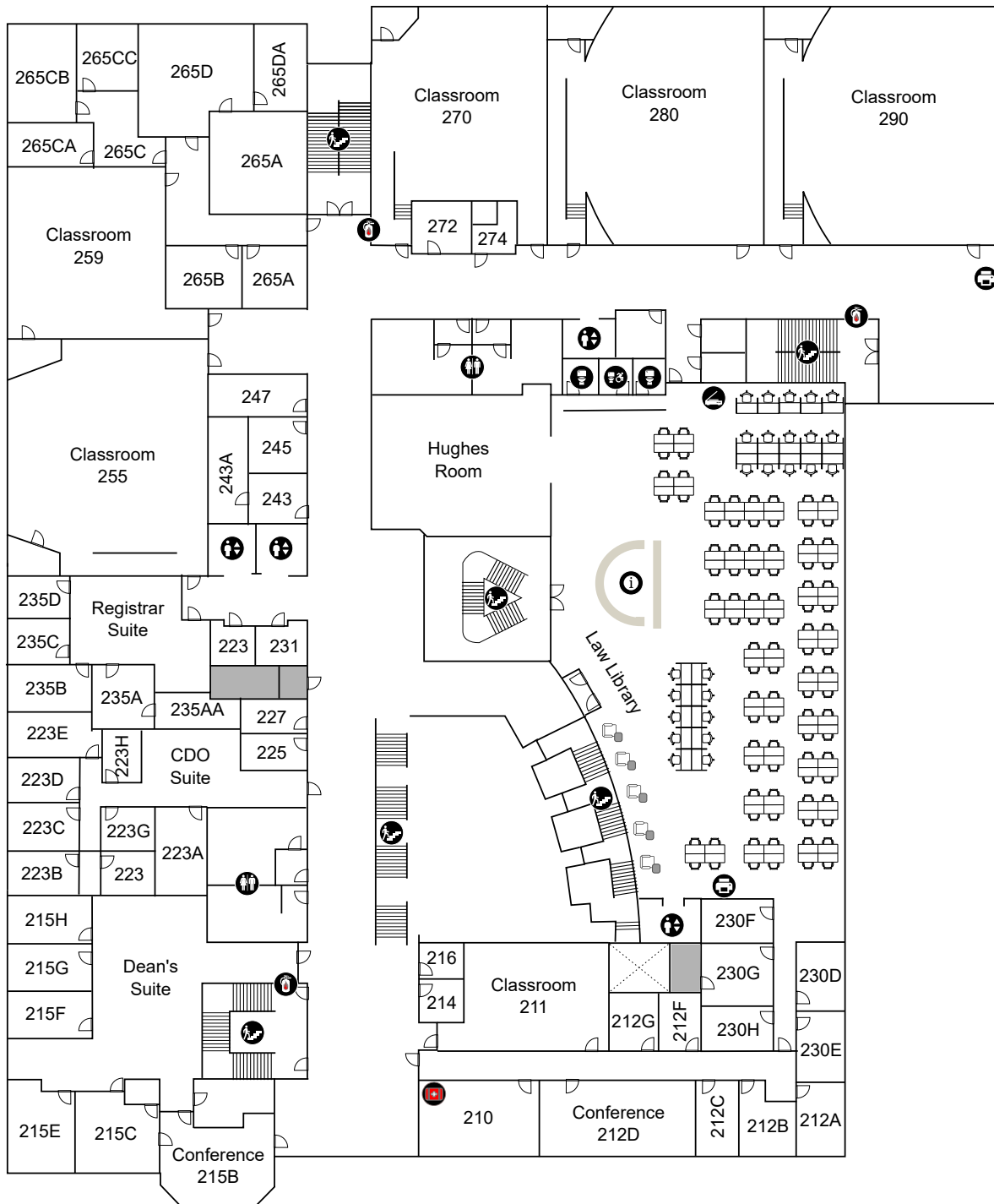




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- Automated External Defibrillator
- First Aid Kit

Floor 2

Ricketson Law Building



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- Fire Extinguisher
- First Aid Kit

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