THE POWER OF THE LAW
A small, committed law school in rural Vermont is quietly changing the world. Join us.
WE ARE COMMITTED TO DEVELOPING...

WORLD CLASS THINKERS AND DOERS

Our students participate in clinics and externships that give them experience acting as court-appointed attorneys for children, representing underserved clients, conducting leading-edge research, and working with community groups. They take part in national trial advocacy, environmental and civil rights/civil liberties moot court competitions, and in arguments before the Vermont Supreme Court. They are scientists, hackers, hikers, and musicians; they are talented, sometimes quirky, restless, engaged, entrepreneurial self-starters and self-selectors who believe in community; they are idealists interested in practical training; they are friends, activists, and kick-ass lawyers.

Our alumni walk the talk across the U.S. and in 23 countries around the world. They are change agents who go into public and nonprofit sectors at nearly twice the national law school average, who see a law degree as the start not only of constructive careers but of meaningful lives. They defend, litigate, and advocate on behalf of wetlands and clean air and threatened habitats; on behalf of new immigrants, incarcerated mothers, and low-wage farm workers. They create value. At rallies and protests, public hearings, information sessions, organizational meetings, school board meetings, food banks: they show up.

PLUGGED IN: Jehmal Hudson JD ’06, House Liaison for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. “At VLS I learned how to be an advocate,” he says. “I see FERC as my client when I’m on the Hill. I advocate for them.”
EPA CREW: Thirteen of the 36 Vermont Law School alumni and students working at the Environmental Protection Agency in the summer of 2013. Vermont-trained graduates have quietly penetrated the public sector in the areas of energy and the environment in numbers that will move the dial in the coming decades.

WHAT POWER LOOKS LIKE

In our communities and our world, law is how we divide our rights and responsibilities. It’s how we organize our corporations and co-ops, how we structure markets, how we create policies and regulations, how we agree and how we resolve disagreements. Students truly interested in making an impact on the world — in the private, public, or social sector — need the tools of the law in order to know how to get things done.

As a growing population puts ever-increasing stresses on our resources and our environment, conflicts over rights and responsibilities become inherent. Climate-change models now predict catastrophic environmental and social impacts by the year 2050. “That span between now and 2050 represents the span of careers of the people sitting in our classrooms right now,” notes Vermont Law School President & Dean Marc Mihaly. “It’s important to change policy now. But it’s more important to train the generation that will make new policy for 2050. That’s their shot, and they know it.”

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We have reached a historic moment. The environment has moved from an issue in society to the issue. Every thinking person in industry, finance, government, NGOs — no matter the sector — is coming to terms with how human activity is affecting the planet. The urgency and interest have created an area of the law that is so complex that it’s almost no longer a single field: It’s land use. It’s pollution control. It’s fisheries. It’s carbon sequestration. It’s energy.

If you care about the environment, energy policy is the single most important influence. If you care about energy, environmental realities are the single most important constraint. In America, where 40 percent of all carbon emissions come from power plants making electricity, the disputes about these issues are settled through the legal system. Vermont Law School — with the nation’s top-ranked environmental law program, with its law-firm-within-a law-school Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic, with its extraordinarily well-connected network of alumni — has gone toe-to-toe with state and federal agencies and multinational corporations, and has shaped environmental law and policy at the highest level. And always with the long view in mind.
NEW WAVE: Scott Cullen JD ’96, a lifelong surfer who discovered a new passion as a law student in the hills of Vermont, played a pivotal role in shutting down the Department of Energy’s leaking nuclear reactor at the Brookhaven National Laboratory. His success as the lead counsel for the anti-radiation group Star Foundation led to his hiring as executive director of the Grace Communications Foundation, an innovative nonprofit that leverages marketing and philanthropy in causes for a more sustainable world.

OF THE LAW

WHAT ELSE ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

It’s a time-honored reason: Talented young people who want to keep their options open but who don’t yet have a plan for using their talent choose to attend law school. We think of the question differently here. Our students come from a variety of backgrounds, but they share one trait: they know they want to make a difference. At Vermont Law School they become engaged with the issues of our time: they learn, first-hand, in the classroom and on the ground, what it means to work on behalf of children, to represent new immigrants who have no access to the law, to advocate for communities who feel powerless in the face of powerful economic interests, to fight for the health of the planet and for human rights. Their degrees are just the start of diverse career paths that lead to high-level positions with influential agencies; they become organizers of grassroots movements; partners in top law firms; and leaders in organizations such as The World Bank, USAID, and Earthjustice. And so we ask again: You have one lifetime. What else are you going to do?
STANDING UP: Discharged Private Alex Manning JD ‘06 became an unofficial spokesperson for the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell when she shared her personal story for the first time at a VLS community-wide colloquium in 2005. “To me, big things start in little bitty towns,” says Manning, now practicing family and criminal law with Hughes & Manning LLP in Atlanta. “South Royalton is my Selma, Alabama.”

TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

PRINCIPLE FIRST

Lots of law schools around the country initially supported the repeal of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy on gays serving in the U.S. military. But when the schools risked losing federal funding for not allowing military recruiters on campus, only two of them — one in Minnesota, the other, Vermont Law School — stood up for what they believed was right. Professor Jackie Gardina, who served on the board of the Service Members Legal Defense Network, recalls, “It’s not that we didn’t like the military. We wouldn’t welcome any employer on campus who wouldn’t accept applications from all of our qualified students.” The principled stance cost the school between $300,000 and $500,000 a year between 1999 and September, 2011, when the policy was repealed.

While some law schools were passive in their opposition, Vermont Law School was a vocal, national leader. Its faculty presented white papers on the policy’s legal issues. Some 20-40 students traveled each year to Washington to lobby Congress. They held bake sales to fund their trips, VLS faculty and staff members made donations, and DC-area alumni opened their homes for lodging. On campus, the administration used its recruiting policy as an ongoing opportunity to articulate and defend the school’s position — and to keep the conversation alive in a community that is unusually engaged in matters of fairness and matters of principle.
The world is changing, the law is changing. Vermont Law School is nimbly — perhaps uniquely — positioned to train the leaders who will shape that change.

In the area of how our country grows and distributes its food, the current body of law is planted in conventional, commoditized, industrial-scale mass production. At the same time, a more sustainable, diverse, local food movement has taken root — one that will require creative new policies and legal tools, new standards and regulations, new markets, and new innovations to flourish and endure.


A tiny handful of legal centers have sprung up to shepherd that new body of law. One of them, Vermont Law School’s Center for Agriculture and Food Systems, is located in a state known for sustainable practices and progressive entrepreneurs. Vermont Law School offers its students and faculty the chance to get their hands dirty with real farmers while having access to some of the country’s leading thinkers in the environment and agriculture. It’s an incredibly fertile place.
OUT OF THE SHADOWS: Leaving his family and a life of torture behind in eastern Africa, “Daniel” has been desperately seeking asylum with the help of Vermont Law School students and Erin Jacobsen JD ’11, Lead Staff Attorney with Vermont Immigration and Asylum Advocates. As Daniel’s case works through the complex U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service backlog, he holds onto hope thanks to students and alumni such as Jacobsen. “Erin. She’s like my mother,” he says. “She cares about me.”

JUSTICE FOR ALL AMERICANS
Victims of torture, low-income farm workers, incarcerated mothers, and abused children – these are the real-life clients of the Vermont Law School’s South Royalton Legal Clinic. In one clinic project, VLS students work with Vermont Immigration and Asylum Advocates to provide legal guidance to recently-arrived immigrant survivors of torture. The work exposes students to a larger world of injustice — and instills in them a deeper sense of the power of the law.

Since 1979, the second-largest poverty law center in Vermont has relentlessly worked to help protect the state’s most vulnerable citizens. Under the supervision of full-time staff attorneys, SRLC students have worked pro bono on more than 2,000 formal cases and consulted on many thousands more. Their important work is as basic as explaining disability benefits and as profound as keeping families together.
A WORLD OF HURT: As chief legal advisor on sustainable development and international environmental law at the World Bank, Charles “Chuck” Di Leva JD ’78 faces the high stakes of a warming climate and an exploding population in the developing world. The urgency of his work is pushing a historically bureaucratic organization to respond quickly and creatively to challenges on the ground. Right: Flags of the World Bank’s 188 member nations.

BECAUSE THE
STATUS QUO
IS NO LONGER
ACCEPTABLE
THE COUNTRY’S TOP ENVIRONMENTAL LAW PROGRAM

Founded in 1978, the Environmental Law Center at Vermont Law School has the largest graduate environmental law program in the country, and consistently ranks among the nation’s best by U.S. News & World Report. The multi-disciplinary program positions graduates to take lead roles in solving the world’s most complex and significant problems. We have planted a flag here for a simple reason: Because you can’t solve the world’s problems without educating the world’s problem solvers.

CENTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS
Established in 2012, CAFS provides support, research, and leadership for community-based agricultural systems, sustainable agriculture advocates, agencies, food hubs, incubators, and farmers.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES LAW CLINIC
Since 2003, the ENRLC has provided a hands-on, structured, supportive learning experience in which students develop real-world skills in environmental litigation, administrative processes, and client counseling.

ENVIRONMENTAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION
Thirty years ago VLS launched one of the nation’s first programs to teach the skills of dispute resolution — negotiation, mediation, and arbitration — that today have become even more critically important to environmental professionals.

ENVIRONMENTAL TAX POLICY INSTITUTE
By analyzing the ways in which taxation can be used to address environmental problems, the institute seeks to better inform the public policy debate about the role of environmental taxes at the local, state, and federal levels.

INSTITUTE FOR ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
The IEE has become a national and world resource on energy law and policy with an advanced curriculum in energy and regulatory law. Students learn how to use the law to shape policies that encourage energy efficiency, advance renewable energy and promote energy security and justice.

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW AND POLICY
Environmental issues are global issues, and Vermont Law School offers a curriculum of more than a dozen international environmental courses, enhanced by study opportunities through partnerships with leading foreign universities.

LAND USE INSTITUTE
All of the legal and planning aspects of current land use issues are considered at the institute, including sustainable development, ecology planning, siting of energy installations, permitting processes, and the scope of eminent domain.

U.S.-CHINA PARTNERSHIP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LAW
Founded in 2006, the partnership strengthens environmental laws and expertise in China and builds capacity among individuals and academic, government, and private-sector institutions to solve pollution and energy problems.

WATER AND JUSTICE PROGRAM
This program seeks to advance the idea that water is a public, common-pool resource, and uses water law, environmental justice, and policy initiatives to further this aim. Student research associates contribute to reports, conference presentations, legal analyses, and articles.
As part of one of the top-ranked schools in the nation, Vermont Law School offers three Juris Doctor programs, two Master's degree programs, and three LLM (Master of Laws) programs—all created to produce leaders who want to change the world. We also offer online options for both of our Master's degree programs and two of our LLM programs.

**JURIS DOCTOR (JD)**

**ACCELERATED JURIS DOCTOR (2 YEARS)**

Vermont Law School’s Accelerated Juris Doctor program (AJD) offers an extraordinary opportunity for highly motivated and focused candidates to complete their law degree in only two years and for only two-thirds the cost of a traditional program. The program was strategically designed to allow accelerated students the chance to diversify their studies with electives and participate in both academic and experiential opportunities.

AJD students take courses in a small cohort beginning in the summer, and in the fall join their first-year JD peers while also having the opportunity to take upper-level courses and participate in student groups and activities. The second summer, AJD students take advantage of Vermont Law School's world-renowned Summer Session. Potential summer tracks include Clinical/Experiential, Environmental, Dispute Resolution, and General Practice or Interdisciplinary Summer tracks include Clinical/Experiential, Environmental, Dispute Resolution, and General Practice or Interdisciplinary.

Students finish their degree by spring of their second year. Because they’re prepared to sit for state bar exams in July, AJD students return to work a full year ahead of their traditional JD-track peers.

**JURIS DOCTOR (3 YEARS)**

The core JD curriculum focuses on legal doctrine and analysis, emphasizes the broader social context of the law, and provides education in the skills and values needed for effective law practice. Our flexible JD program offers an opportunity both for concentration in a particular area of the law and for a broad preparation suited to general practice in all 50 states. Last year, VLS students sat for the bar in 33 different states.

As one of the top-ranked schools for externships and experiential learning, JD students can participate in a wide range of hands-on learning opportunities, including the following:

- Center for Agriculture and Food Systems
- Center for Applied Human Rights
- Center for Legal Innovation
- Criminal Law Clinic
- Dispute Resolution Clinic
- Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic
- Environmental Tax Policy Institute
- Institute for Energy and the Environment
- Judicial Externship Program
- Legal Writing Program
- Legislative Clinic
- Semester-in-Practice Program
- South Royalton Legal Clinic
- US-China Partnership for Environmental Law
- Water and Justice Program

**EXTENDED JURIS DOCTOR (4 YEARS)**

Students with family, work, or life circumstances that preclude them from enrolling in the traditional three-year JD program have the opportunity to take fewer credits per semester and graduate in four academic years. Students in our extended program have the ability to select the first-year sections that work best with their personal schedules.

Students have the option of taking the summer off or enrolling in the joint JD/MELP program.

**MASTER'S DEGREES**

A master's degree from Vermont Law School is different. Instead of studying theories about how to change policy, our master's candidates learn the law and how to use it to effect change. By studying advocacy, regulations, legislation, and markets, they acquire the tools to create a more sustainable world. All of our Master's degrees can be pursued jointly with our Juris Doctor program and online.

**MASTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY (MELP)**

Our MELP program is focused on the political, scientific, and communications aspects of environmental law, with an added emphasis on economics and advocacy. Our innovative curriculum is comprised of traditional law offerings and MELP-specific courses in writing and advocacy designed to benefit graduates in the public and private sectors. Flexible options allow candidates to complete the program in as little as 12 months. Experiential learning opportunities with states and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and advocacy groups ensure that MELP graduates are prepared for real-world situations the first day on the job.

**MASTER OF ENERGY REGULATION AND LAW (MERL)**

The MERL degree provides students with practical training in public advocacy and writing for a legal and policy audience, opportunities for independent research with support from faculty, and externships at organizations around the country and the world. Designed to be completed in as little as 12 months, the MERL provides students with a broad-based understanding of the intersection of energy and law, regulation, policy, and economic analysis.

**LLM DEGREES**

Like the Master's Degrees, the LLMs require one year of study and can also be pursued part-time. These programs are geared toward students interested in pursuing specialized careers in environmental and energy law or higher education. All of the LLM degrees can also be taken online, except for the LLM in American Legal Studies.

**LLM IN AMERICAN LEGAL STUDIES**

The Master of Laws in American Legal Studies is designed for students who hold a law degree from an institution outside the United States. As one of the few American Legal Studies degree programs that includes all of the course requirements to be eligible for the New York and Washington, D.C., bar exams, LLM prepares foreign-trained lawyers to practice in important cities in the United States.

**LLM IN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW**

The LLM in Environmental Law is a 30-credit degree program whose cornerstone course is the Graduate Seminar, in which guest speakers lead discussions on a variety of current environmental issues. Many LLM students will choose to complete an externship, research project, teaching practicum, or thesis based upon their professional goals. The curriculum also offers a number of experiential learning opportunities with states and federal agencies, advocacy groups, and international organizations.

**LLM IN ENERGY LAW**

The LLM in Energy Law degree program is designed for students who wish to pursue intensive study and training in the field of energy law and policy. New demands for energy conservation and the rise of alternative energy technologies, along with the serious environmental problems associated with traditional power generation, are creating a host of new law and policy challenges for energy companies, private law firms, regulators, and legislators. Students graduating with the LLM in Energy Law from Vermont Law School will have expertise to perform the sophisticated legal work needed to address these challenges.
This campus is different. It’s got the ingredients most people seek when they want to restore themselves—natural beauty, a surprising sense of quiet, and a powerful sense of community.

Vermont Law School is a place where students can see farmers bring eggs to market in the morning and where they can take a hike between classes. Where faculty, male and female, straight and gay, participate in a drag revue. It’s a place where classes get cancelled after a major tropical storm so students can help neighbors clean up. Where they can work in a legal clinic with local residents in need—including single mothers and neglected children who otherwise would have no access to the law. The environment here is not an abstraction; it’s the point.

This is a place where law school students actually have fun. Where they are immersed in a diverse community of risk-takers and advocates who actually want to change the world, not fit into it. Where classmates inspire each other and become friends for life.

In Vermont there are no billboards, because our faculty helped create the laws 40 years ago which prohibit them. There are more CSAs here per capita than in any other state. Civil unions began here. Our power comes from wind, solar, and hydro sources.

The alchemy of this place is difficult to define but hard to overstate. It’s transparently obvious to people who are here. We call it SoRo, but the map says South Royalton, Vermont.

Join us.

A WORTHY RITUAL: Law students hang out on a Thursday night at The Worthy Burger, a craft beer and burger bar housed in an old train depot near campus. Featuring micro-brewed beer and organic and locally grown food, the unusual restaurant symbolizes the fresh approach for which Vermont Law School is known. Says faculty member Stephanie Farrior, “Everything about this school reminds us that we’re all part of something larger than ourselves.”