

# ASU Law's latest initiative aims to prepare future lawyers for the AI era

**Sean Harrington, nationally recognized leader in the integration of artificial intelligence and legal practice, will direct**

By Dolores Tropiano, ASU News  
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## Story highlights

The new AI and Legal Technology Studio will give ASU Law students hands-on experience with emerging technologies that are rapidly transforming the legal profession.

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Arizona State University is at the forefront of AI education, and that goes for all disciplines.

According to a 2024 American Bar Association survey, ASU's [Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law](#) was one of only 20% of law schools that were actively teaching or training students in artificial intelligence and its legal implications.

Now, it's building on that momentum by welcoming its first cohort to the new [AI and Legal Technology Studio](#) this fall.

The studio is designed to give students hands-on experience with emerging technologies that are rapidly transforming the legal profession, and then use that experience to impact the community.

It's part of an ongoing effort to drive innovation at the intersection of law and emerging technologies.

"ASU is way ahead of the curve," said [Sean Harrington](#), a nationally recognized leader in the integration of artificial intelligence and legal practice who will serve as director of the studio. "When it comes to hands-on training, the gap is even wider."

Harrington's work will focus on translating fast-moving AI advancements into practical legal tools, curriculum and partnerships that empower students and serve the broader legal community.

"It's about being forward-looking," Harrington said. "We're building for where the legal profession is going, not where it's been."

## Two paths, one purpose

The studio is designed around two purposes: public impact and private innovation.

The first focuses on access to justice, working directly with partners such as the Maricopa County Courts to identify and solve real legal challenges facing Arizonans. [Angela Banks](#), interim dean of ASU Law, said it aligns closely with the university's mission.

"One of the goals in the ASU Charter is advancing research and discovery that's of public value," Banks said. "The work the studio is going to be doing to address access-to-justice issues is really something of public value."

Through collaboration with judges and court leadership, students will help tackle issues ranging from court efficiency to public legal education.

"One of our goals is helping regular people get better legal outcomes," Harrington said. "That might mean building tools or improving AI literacy so people understand how to navigate the system."

And as one of the largest and most centralized court systems in the country, the partnership with Maricopa County offers a unique opportunity for immediate, large-scale impact.

"If you improve something here, you're helping tens of thousands of people almost overnight," Harrington said.

This summer, online JD students have been developing materials to help both court staff and self-represented litigants use AI tools responsibly and effectively. Other potential projects include automating routine legal processes such as restraining orders or eviction filings — areas where limited resources often create barriers. Even small improvements — such as optimizing court scheduling — could significantly reduce wait times for hearings.

"In legal aid clinics, people line up for hours and still may not get help," Harrington said. "If you automate parts of that process, suddenly everyone can be served."

The second purpose is focused on legal tech entrepreneurship — giving students the training and resources to build AI-powered applications.

“It’s about empowering students to build the next legal tech startup,” Harrington said. “We’ll give them the tools, the training and the support to actually create something real.”

Revenue generated from private-sector innovation could help sustain public-interest work — a model Harrington describes as cyclical.

“The idea is that one side can help fund the other,” he said. “There’s not a lot of funding for access to justice, but there is in the AI space.”

## Filling a gap in legal education

The studio is not the first ASU Law initiative aimed at students interested in science and technology — the [Center for Law, Science and Innovation](#) has long focused on the intersection of emerging technology and the legal profession.

“The law school has been in the space of science, law and innovation for a long time,” said Banks, Charles J. Merriam Distinguished Professor of Law. “We were the first law school to have a center in this space, and as a result, we get a lot of students with scientific backgrounds who might be interested in patents or some other sort of areas of law.”

The studio will enhance the academic offerings to ASU Law students in multiple ways.

Banks said it not only gives students background knowledge, but also hands-on experience developing the kinds of tools that become another asset they can bring into their careers.

“Our students are already doing a fairly good job of competing for jobs in large law firms,” she added. “And I think that this additional ... skill set (is) going to make our students more prepared to practice law in an era in which AI is becoming a feature of legal practice. They are going to be able to walk into their jobs with a much better understanding of what tools are available and new ways that it might be able to be used in legal practice.”

All of that helps distinguish ASU Law students in the hiring process.

“This additional skill set will help make them even more marketable — it will give that extra little edge,” Banks said.

## Innovation beyond the classroom

The AI and Legal Technology Studio is part of a broader push at ASU Law to integrate AI into legal education and operations.

Harrington is working with interdisciplinary teams from the [Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering](#) to develop a proprietary AI-powered educational platform for the college’s online JD program.

The tool will help track student learning in real time and provide additional support in a fully online environment — an area of growing importance as legal education evolves.

“This kind of collaboration across disciplines is something ASU does really well,” Harrington said.

[Edward Garcia](#), senior director of IT for ASU Law, is collaborating with Harrington on the technology infrastructure and AI tools that support the studio's work.

One recent project involved creating a chatbot for Harrington's legal AI course using class recordings, lecture transcripts and presentation materials.

Garcia said the goal is to expand similar AI-assisted learning tools to additional courses and improve efficiency across the law school.

"We're trying to embrace it where a lot of schools are not," Garcia said. "We're getting ahead of the curve and doing really exciting things."

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*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

## Main image



Sean Harrington is the director of the new AI and Legal Tech Studio at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University. The studio will serve justices and partners like Maricopa County Courts to identify and solve real legal challenges facing Arizonans. It will also train students in legal tech entrepreneurship, providing resources to develop AI-powered applications. Photo by Charlie Leight/ASU News