

BENJAMIN AFTON CAVANAUGH

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1401 N. Charles St.
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EDUCATION

- JD** St. Mary's University School of Law May 2013
Magna Cum Laude; Dean's Scholar; Harlan Society (top10% graduate); Staff Writer for Volume 14 and Executive Editor for Volume 15, The Scholar: St. Mary's Law Review on Race and Social Justice
- BA** St. Edward's University, History, GPA 4.0 May 2010
Thesis: "Should the United States government provide legal counsel to the poor in civil cases?"
- AA** Austin Community College, Paralegal Studies May 2008

TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

University of Baltimore School of Law, Baltimore August 2024 to Present
Assistant Professor of Law

- Teaching the first-year Introduction to Lawyering Skills, and upper-level Trusts and Estates.
- Specializing in Property Law, Trusts and Estates, Estate Planning, Legal Research, Legal Writing and Rhetoric, and Lawyering Skills.

St. Mary's University School of Law, San Antonio January 2017 to July 2024
Service Professor of Law and Assistant Dean

Accomplished professor with over seven years of experience developing and teaching a robust curriculum that builds core legal skills, analysis, and substantive law for 1L, 2L, and 3L students in both online and in-person settings. Successfully mentored legions of law students through doctrinal courses, intensive writing programs, bar exam preparation, and innovative experiential learning while receiving consistent praise for teaching excellence across modalities.

Key Achievements

- Developed and instructed courses for 1L, 2L, and 3L students, including Introduction to Legal Communications, Analysis and Professionalism, Principles of Legal Analysis, Fundamentals of Law and Analysis, Experiential Legal Analysis, Bar Prep for Credit, and Estate Planning.
- Created an innovative experiential curriculum and taught Estate Planning course to 35-45 students per semester, incorporating client interviewing, legal writing, statutory analysis, legal research, and substantive topics in Wills, Estates, and Trusts law.
- Instructed a range of legal skills courses, including Legal Methods, LCAP, Experiential Legal Analysis, and Bar Prep for Credit, covering topics like legal writing, research, communication, professional identity formation, and bar exam preparation, with class sizes ranging from 20 to 40 students per semester.

- Designed and implemented innovative lawyering skills curriculum for the nation's first completely online Juris Doctor program.
- Implement innovative active learning techniques, including client interviews, supervising attorney presentations, will and incapacity document drafting, and Generative A.I. training and editing to increase student participation and critical thinking in both online and in-person courses.
- Initiated the Fundamentals and Principles programs – respectively, a curricular and co-curricular academic intervention class for students.
- Ensured St. Mary's continues to outperform bar pass predictions based on admissions data, particularly in the lower GPA range of the class.
- Oversaw the Raise the Bar Program and the use of data by coaches to guide individual bar takers to success on the bar exam.
- Transitioned the Bar Prep for Credit course to material focused on the Uniform Bar Exam, covering the specific bar subjects that data show are weakest in the St. Mary's student body.
- Developed and instituted comprehensive academic workshop programming for the 1L and 2L classes throughout the fall and spring semester.
- Worked with the National Conference of Bar Examiners to start a pilot program to fund students during their bar study (to ensure they do not have to work while preparing for the bar exam). We were one of three schools chosen nationally for this pilot.

St. Mary's University School of Law, San Antonio
Law Success Instructor

January 2017 to June 2018

Helped law students to prepare for success in law school, on the bar exam, and in the practice of law. Dedicated educator with a proven history of developing impactful academic support programs, building robust online resources, and compassionately counseling students through crises. Recognized for collaboration and leadership abilities that significantly expanded bar exam preparation and skills training, all while maintaining an excellent reputation among students for quality instruction and caring guidance.

Key Achievements

- Collaborated in the transformation of the Raise the Bar program (an extracurricular bar exam coaching program) to increase bar taker participation by over 100%, including the build out of a robust online component.
- Led a team in the creation of the skills library and its conversion to an online platform.
- Consistently receive positive and successful reviews from students in course evaluations.
- Demonstrated commitment and reputation for fostering quality education in the family spirit through thoughtful student counseling.

PUBLICATIONS

Journal Publications

Families Behind Bars: Inheritance Rights for the Dependents of the Incarcerated (work in progress).

Nursing the 1L Mind: Teaching Nursing Clinical Judgment to Help Cure Analytical Ills (work in progress)
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progress).

Statutory Time Travel and Tax Discrimination: Expanding Tax Return Amendment Limitation Rules to Allow Same-Sex Couples to Recoup Tax Overpayments, ___ UMKC Law Review ___ (forthcoming Spring 2025).

The Next Generation Professional: An Opportunity to Reframe Legal Education to Center Student Wellness, 51 HOFSTRA LAW REVIEW 775 (2023).

Testing Privilege: Coaching Bar Takers Towards “Minimum Competency” During the 2020 Pandemic, 23 THE SCHOLAR 357 (2021).

Rich Dad vs. Poor Dad: Why Leaving Financial Education to Parents Breeds Financial Inequality & Economic Instability, 34 CHILD. LEGAL RTS. J. 59 (2013).

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Cavanaugh Quintanilla, PLLC, Austin, Texas

March 2015- March 2020

Co-Founder & Managing Member

Oversaw management of practice that was 40% real estate, 40% business law, and 20% wills & estates law with direct responsibility for all legal work and day-to-day management of business affairs including providing leadership to three direct reports. Provided consistent training and professional development. Led marketing and networking efforts to grow law firm and increase active case load.

Key Achievements

- Successful preparation, presentation, and relationship building through reports on legal trends to local chambers of commerce, client industry meetings, and investment firms leading to the growth of the law firm.
- Deliberate cultivation and creation of a positive law firm environment for the team that placed a value on fostering professional development and innovation.

The Law Office of John W. Pleuthner, Austin, Texas

March 2013 – March 2015

Associate Attorney, Law Clerk

Versatile associate adept at conducting legal research, drafting memoranda, conducting depositions/hearings, preparing motions and discovery documents, interviewing clients, drafting wills, and managing social media and websites. Skilled at attracting and retaining clients through responsive communication and dedicated client service. Proficient in procedural documentation, case preparation, and law office administration.

PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED LECTURES

Cavanaugh, Afton (2024, May). *Nursing the IL Mind: Teaching Nursing Clinical Judgment to Help Cure Analytical Ills*. AASE Annual Conference, Boise, Idaho.

Cavanaugh, Afton, Panelist (2023, November). *ChatGPT in the Classroom*. LexCon, AccessLex

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Chicago, Illinois.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2023, August). *Editing with ChatGPT: Taking Advantage of Tools that Allow us to Place the Focus Back on Legal Analysis in the Classroom*. Excellence in Teaching Legal Research & Writing Online Conference, William and Mary University. Virtual Conference.

Afton Cavanaugh and Zoe Niesel (2023, May). *Supporting the ABA's First Fully Online J.D. Program*. AASE Annual Conference, Santa Clara, California.

Afton Cavanaugh and Sigrid Vendrell Polanco (2022, May). *Building Communities for the Bar Exam*. AASE Annual Conference, San Antonio, Texas. Conference Host.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2021, Oct.). *The Bootcamp Model: A Path to Giving First Generation Students a Head Start*. AASE Bi-Annual Diversity Conference, City University of New York School of Law. Virtual Conference.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2021, May). *Imposter Syndrome in the Classroom: Starting the Mental Health Conversation from Day One*. AASE Annual Conference, American University Washington College of Law.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2020, July). *Panel Moderator, Difficult Conversations on Racial Equity When Educating Law Students*. AALS Section on Academic Support. Virtual Webinar Series.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2020, June). *Meetings in the Age of Social Distancing: Using Virtual Small Group Meetings to Advance Classroom Objectives and Help Students Feel Less Isolated*. Excellence in Teaching Legal Research & Writing Online Conference, William and Mary University. Virtual Conference.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2019, Oct.). *Developing Conscious Lawyers: Using the 1L Skills Curriculum to Increase Awareness Student Sensitivity to Poverty and Homelessness*. AASE Bi-Annual Diversity Conference, Chicago, Illinois.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2016, Apr.). *Working with Trans Clients: Insight for Future Counselors*. Texas State University. Guest Speaker, Round Rock, Texas.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2016, May.). *Make Your Contracts Work for You*. Real Estate Staging Association. Guest Speaker, Austin, Texas.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2013, Mar.). *Bluebook Basics*. St. Mary's University. Guest Lecturer, San Antonio, Texas.

Cavanaugh, Afton (2009, Nov.). *Growing Up Homeless & Hungry in Austin*. St. Edwards University. Meeting, Austin, Texas.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Association of Academic Support Educator's 11th Annual Conference
University of Idaho College of Law Boise, May 20-23, 2024

Lone Star Legal Writing Conference
Houston Law Center, April 19, 2024

Association of Academic Support Educator's 10th Annual Conference
Santa Clara University School of Law, May 23-25, 2023

Leaving Langdell Behind: Reimagining Legal Education for a New Era
University of Minnesota Law School, October 7, 2022

Association of Academic Support Educator's 9th Annual Conference
St. Mary's University School of Law, May 24-26, 2022

Central States LRW Conference
University of Kansas, October 21-22, 2021

Association of Academic Support Educator's Diversity Conference
Virtually Hosted by CUNY Law, October 14-15, 2021

Association of Academic Support Educator's 8th Annual Conference
Virtually Hosted by American University Washington College of Law, May 24-27, 2021

Excellence in Teaching Legal Research & Writing Online Conference
Virtually Hosted by William and Mary University, June 2020

Legal Writing Institute's One-Day Workshop
St. Mary's University School of Law, December 13, 2019

Association of Academic Support Educator's Diversity Conference
DePaul University College of Law, October 3-4, 2019

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association of Academic Support Educators (AASE), 2019-Present
Host School Representative Elect (Board); Host School Representative (Board); Programming Committee Chair

Association of Legal Writing Directors, 2021-Present
Member

Legal Writing Institute, 2021-Present
Member; Academic Support Committee Member; Webmaster

AALS Section on Academic Support, 2019-2021
Executive Committee Member

SERVICE AND COMMITTEES

Service to Law Schools

Curriculum Reform Committee, 2023-2024
Chair, Orientation Committee, 2021-2024
Bar Passage Committee (ex officio), 2021-2024
ABA Self-Study Executive Committee, 2021-2022
DEI Committee, 2021-2022
SABA Scholarship Review Committee, Nov. 2018

Service Supporting Legal Academia

Conference Organizer

Association of Academic Support Educator's 10th Annual Conference, 2023 Association of Academic Support Educator's 9th Annual Conference, 2022

Conference Co-Organizer

Association of Academic Support Educator's 8th Annual Conference, 2021
Association of Academic Support Educator's Diversity Conference, 2021
Legal Education's Next Generation: Embracing Online, ChatGPT and Technology in Pedagogy and Practice Preparation, St. Mary's University School of Law

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Ending Community Homelessness Coalition (ECHO)
Board Member, Austin Texas, 2016-2017

Council on At-Risk Youth
Board Member, Austin Texas, 2016-2020

Austin Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce
Board Member, Austin Texas, 2016-2019

Pfluger Haus Foundation
Board Member, Austin Texas, 2016-2018