

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Advancing Oversight.  
Strengthening Democracy.





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*Good governance  
requires good  
oversight.*

*-- Senator Carl Levin*

## Reflecting on 2021 and the Legacy of Carl Levin



2021 was a year like no other, marked by an unprecedented attempt on January 6th to disrupt a presidential election, the massive impact of the covid pandemic, and the passing of Carl Levin, a giant of the United States Senate who devoted his career to making government work better for everyone.

In my conversations with Carl last year, it was clear he was horrified by the events of January 6th and disappointed by the U.S. response to the pandemic, but he was not without hope. Carl was both a relentless optimist and a patriot. His patriotism was grounded in a realistic appraisal of politics and the rules of democracy. As much as he revered our country and loved his hometown of Detroit, Carl knew that democracy was a fragile enterprise and that government had to address the real concerns of Americans with integrity and transparency or our democracy would falter.

Democracy, in Carl's view, was a conversation between the government and the people who voted their representatives into power. That conversation had to be based on facts, and it was the highest calling of a legislator to pursue those facts and share them forthrightly with the American people. Legislatures, unlike any other democratic institution, have the power to convene far-reaching public inquiries and compel documents and witnesses, all for the purpose of giving the public a window into the activities of government and of private actors who hold a public trust. Carl taught us how to do that work with integrity, bipartisanship, and excellence.

In 2021, when levels of public confidence in our democratic institutions sank to dangerously low levels, the Levin Center's work to share and amplify Carl's philosophy took on greater urgency than ever. And as you'll see in the following pages, the Center did more than ever in 2021 to help legislators understand how to do oversight and to build the public's understanding of the importance of legislative fact-finding.



As we reflect on the events of 2021, the loss of our Founder and namesake, and the work the Levin Center has done to carry on his legacy, we can take inspiration from the fact that Carl – even as his health was declining – kept working to ensure the future of the Center because he believed so deeply in its mission. To all of you who have supported the Levin Center in countless ways throughout this challenging year, let me, on behalf of our entire team, thank you and renew our promise to work as hard as we can in 2022 to advance oversight and strengthen democracy.



Jim Townsend  
Director  
February 2022





# Our Year in Numbers

Clerk Oversight  
Workshop

1

Awards

Oversight Boot Camps

2

Career Panels

EU Parliament Workshops

3

Oversight Fellows

State Workshops

Research Assistants

Hearing  
Appearances

5

Reports and  
Studies

4

6

Podcast Episodes

Summer Interns in  
Washington, D.C.

7

Panel  
Discussions

# 2021 Timeline



## January

Launched 'Oversight Matters' podcast series



## February

Hosted three Congressional Oversight Training Sessions



## March

Co-hosted the Wayne Law's Journal of Law in Society symposium on opioid addiction care



## April

Gave a workshop at the EU Parliament's 2021 Innovation Day



## May

Hosted our panel discussion 'State Legislative Oversight and the Pandemic'



## June

Our oversight scholar, Professor Kristin Taylor, presented her work on oversight of disaster response policies





### July

Testified before the Pennsylvania State House



### August

Held our bi-annual Congressional Oversight Boot Camp



### September

Joined the Council of State Government West's Annual Meeting in Colorado Springs



### October

Launched our new website on levin-center.org



### November

Hosted Deputy Secretary of Defense Dr. Kathleen Hicks at Wayne Law



### December

Announced Oregon State Senator Sara Gelser Blouin as the winner of our 2021 Carl Levin Award

Click here to find out more





**Advancing Oversight.  
Strengthening Democracy.**



## Honoring Senator Carl Levin

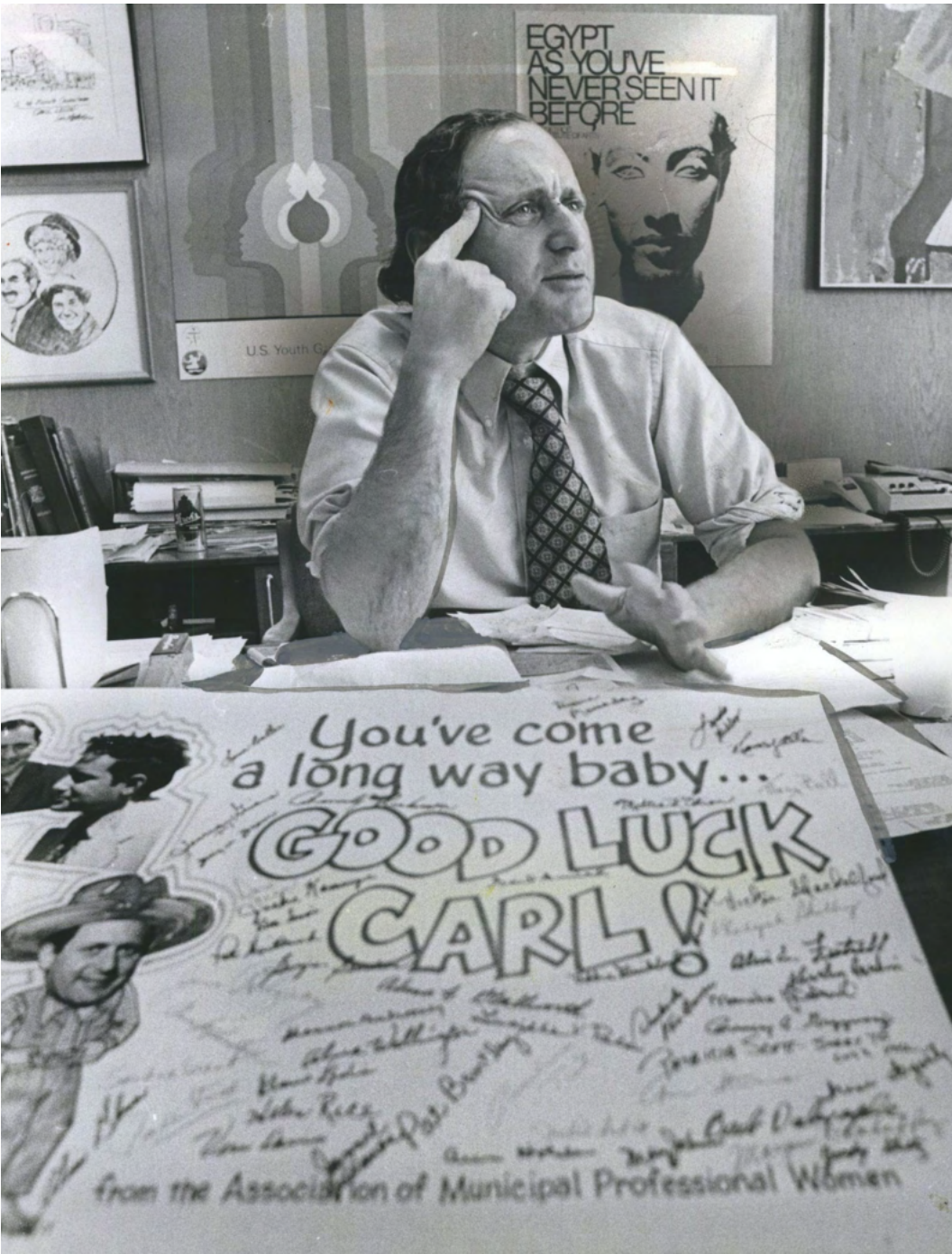
The Levin Center, the entire state of Michigan, and the country suffered a terrible loss this year with the passing of our chair and namesake, Carl Levin. Despite battling cancer in his 80's, Carl continued to lead, guide, and build the Levin Center and to engage staff and students with his knowledge, character, wisdom, and good humor. We miss him greatly.

When Carl retired from the Senate in January 2015, he and his wife, Barbara, moved back to Detroit full time, living within walking distance of the center of downtown. He loved Detroit, and there was no question but that when his service of 36 years at the U.S. Capitol was over, he would return to his hometown. He also wanted to work with young lawyers, contribute to the revitalization of his community, and continue to promote his approach to good governance, an important part of which was bipartisan, fact-based oversight. He chose to establish the Levin Center in the heart of Detroit to accomplish those goals.

Much has been written about his service to Michigan as the longest serving U.S. Senator in Michigan history. His accomplishments are legion, in particular his never-ending efforts on behalf of Michigan workers and families, the auto industry, our national defense, our financial system, Michigan's natural wonders, and a responsive and effective government. Underlying all of his work was his deep respect for the rights of individuals, his reverence for equal justice under the law, and his faith in the capacity of Americans to work together despite political divides. He was in all ways a humanitarian, caring as much about addressing the challenges of one individual as those of our nation.

Carl was thankful for the gracious welcome he received from Wayne State University and Wayne State Law School and for the generous support of so many for the work of the Levin Center. And we at the Levin Center could not be more grateful for the opportunity to have known and worked with Carl and to do our best to carry on his powerful and important legacy. May we live up to his high standards and enduring values.









# Awards & Programs



## Carl Levin Award for Effective Oversight

Oregon State Senator Sara Gelser Blouin was awarded the 2021 Carl Levin Award for Effective Oversight for her extraordinary legislative oversight work in the Oregon State Senate investigating child foster care contracts and Oregon's child welfare system at large. Nominated by Oregon Secretary of State Shamia Fagan, the award's Selection Committee recognized the outstanding efforts made by Senator Gelser Blouin to conduct her oversight investigations in a bi-partisan way with full dedication to uncovering the facts.

## Award for Excellence in Oversight Research

The Levin Center Award for Excellence in Oversight Research, which carries a cash prize of \$2,500, honors scholarly papers that examine important oversight issues at the national, state, tribal, local, or international levels and that contribute to efforts to improve public policy. In 2021, the award was given to Professors Kevin Stack and Michael Vandenberg of Vanderbilt University Law School. Their paper, "Oversight Riders," addressed an important appropriations mechanism long overlooked as a way to create personal incentives for Executive Branch officials to comply with congressional information requests. The paper was published in the Notre Dame Law Review in January 2022.



**Kevin Stack**



**Michael Vandenberg**





# Oversight Fellows

2021 saw the launch of our Oversight Fellows Program. This is an annual, non-resident oversight fellowship for one or more early-career scholars to promote and advance research in oversight. The fellowship offers between \$10,000 and \$20,000 and requires a scholarly paper on issues related to congressional or state-level oversight. The Fellows present the resulting research paper at an event sponsored by the Levin Center, and the papers may also be published in a law review or journal sponsored by Wayne State University Law School. This year we sponsored three Oversight Fellows:



**Kenneth Lowande**, Assistant Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at the University of Michigan. He studies American political institutions with a particular interest in presidential power, congressional oversight, and the bureaucracy. Professor Lowande is using the fellowship to develop a measure of the quality of legislative oversight by assessing oversight hearing questions.



**Claire Leavitt**, visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science and Policy Studies at Grinnell College, 2021-2023. She was a Congressional Oversight Fellow working for a House of Representatives committee in Washington, D.C., in 2019. Professor Leavitt is using her fellowship to assess Congress' oversight performance based on its responsiveness to high-risk problems in the Executive Branch.



Devin Judge-Lord

**Devin Judge-Lord**, political scientist studying interactions among Members of Congress, interest groups, and the federal bureaucracy. Judge-Lord received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2021 and will be a Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard University for the 2021-2023 academic years. Judge-Lord is using his fellowship to improve, integrate, and publish two large datasets that systematically measure different aspects of congressional oversight of the federal bureaucracy.

*Click here for more*





# Levin Center at Work



# Congressional Workshops

## Congressional Boot Camp

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The Levin Center along with the Project on Government Oversight and the Lugar Center hosted two, two-day boot camps on how to conduct bipartisan, fact-based, effective congressional oversight. These are intensive sessions conducted on a bipartisan basis with instructors experienced in oversight. The session in February was attended by 18 congressional staff; the session in August was attended by 27 congressional staff. To date these boot camps have trained nearly 300 congressional staff on valuable oversight techniques. Participant evaluations strongly praise the sessions' instructors, the quality of the materials presented, and the bipartisan atmosphere.

## Committee Clerk Workshop

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The Levin Center also hosted our third annual workshop for committee clerks on how to assist and organize a committee doing an oversight investigation. The February 5th virtual workshop had 13 attendees, and again, evaluations were very positive and appreciative.

Click here for more



# State Workshops

The pandemic did not stop the Levin Center from continuing to offer virtual and in-person workshops to state legislatures and with partner organizations. **California's** March 2021 virtual workshop focused on spending oversight. **North Carolina** also had a virtual workshop featuring the steps for an effective investigation and recommendations for enhanced oversight. Ben Eikey visited Lincoln, **Nebraska** in October for a half-day oversight workshop featuring presentations from their Fiscal Office, Performance Audit, and Ombudsman. Reception was positive, and interest in our workshops continues to grow in other state legislatures.



The Levin Center conducted direct workshops with state legislatures, and we partnered with organizations to provide oversight workshops at conferences. The **Council of State Governments – West** and the **National Council of Insurance Legislators** invited the Levin Center to present and conduct workshops at their conferences, bringing our work on bipartisan, fact-based oversight to an even broader audience of state legislators. We are looking forward to future collaborations with both organizations in the future.



# International Work

The Levin Center has been invited on several occasions to share its knowledge about how legislative bodies can best conduct oversight with members of the European Parliament. In April the Levin Center offered a one-hour online session for the **European Parliament's 2021 Innovation Day** on how to make investigative hearings more effective. Elise Bean and Ben Eikey shared information and ideas with over 200 nonpartisan civil servants of the EU Parliament.



Then, the **European Parliament office in Washington, D.C.** inquired about a virtual oversight workshop for their office. This workshop took place in November 2021 and discussed congressional oversight followed by a simulated investigation. Feedback was positive, and the Levin Center was thankful to have been able to share oversight expertise with our leaders from the European Parliament.



# Model Oversight Hearings

The Levin Center teamed up with the YMCA's Youth & Government (Y&G) civics programs across the country in several states to deliver an oversight hearing exercise. Built with the help of volunteers at Wayne State Law School, this year's oversight scenario was on school resource officers and the use of social media algorithms to detect potentially threatening language. High school students played the role of committee members investigating the issue and worked together to uncover facts and prioritize questions. Feedback from high school students was highly positive.

Click here to listen to our Y&G  
podcast episode



# Events



**January 22**

2020 Research Award Winner presentation entitled "*Weaponizing the Office of Legal Counsel*" by Professor Emily Berman, University Houston Law Center.

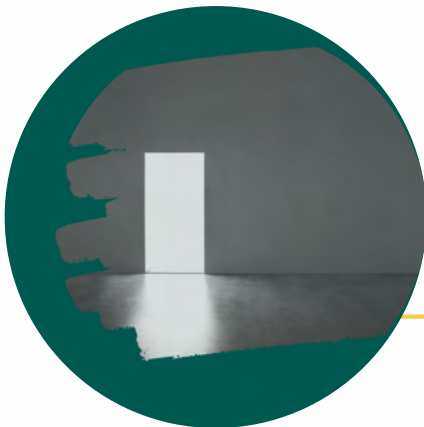
**March 10-12**

Wayne Law's Journal of Law in Society symposium "*Opioid Paradigms: How Crisis Can Inform Change*" co-hosted by the Levin Center



**April 9**

"*Corrections and Re-Entry: Legislative and Community Efforts for a Successful Transition after Prison*" panel discussion co-hosted with Wayne State's Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice



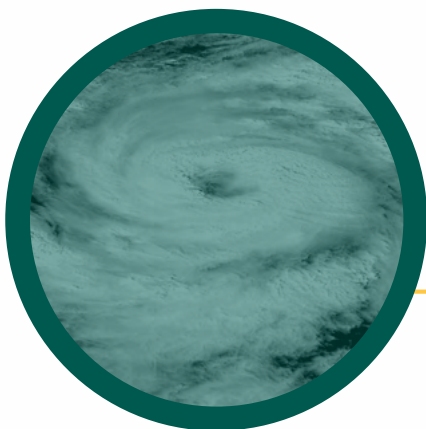
**May 4**

"*State Legislatures & the Pandemic: Conducting Oversight on Emergency Government Contracts*" - panel discussion



**June 14**

"*Oversight of U.S. Disaster Policy, 2016 - 2020*" - presentation by the Levin Center's 2020 Oversight Scholar Professor Kristin Taylor





**October 8**

*"Life after McGahn"* - panel discussion co-hosted by the Levin Center and POGO's Constitution Project

**October 21**

*"Asking Better Oversight Hearing Questions"* - An online workshop for state lawmakers



**November 8**

*"What Detroit Means to our Nation's Defense Industrial Base"* - A Conversation with Deputy Secretary of Defense Dr. Kathleen Hicks

Check our website for more





## Congressional Testimony



### June

Testimony before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts on enforcing congressional subpoenas of the executive branch.

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### November

Testimony before the House Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress on how to strengthen Congress' oversight capacity.

## State Testimony



### June, Pennsylvania

Testimony before the Pennsylvania State Legislature about gaps in state contract oversight and recommended best practices during Pennsylvania House hearing.

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### September, Michigan

Testimony before the Michigan State Senate Oversight Committee about the state's capacity for oversight of government contracts.

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### October, Nebraska

Testimony before the Nebraska unicameral State Legislature about the state's capacity for oversight including recommendations for improvement.

Check our website for more





# Partnership with Wayne Law



# Summer Internships

This is the sixth year the Levin Center has sponsored summer legal internships with oversight committees in the U.S. Congress. With the six interns in 2021, the Levin Center has now given 25 Wayne State University law students the opportunity to work in Washington, D.C., on a congressional committee. For the past two years, due to COVID, a few students worked remotely from Detroit, several worked remotely from their temporary housing in D.C., and others were able to work in person.

The legal interns work with congressional staff under the supervision of an experienced attorney engaged in conducting oversight on behalf of a congressional committee. While we use the term “interns,” these budding attorneys-to-be are given significant responsibilities, similar to that of a committee counsel. Their duties include legal research, memos for staff and Members, question preparation for both hearings and interviews, report preparation, and document review. The experiences are exceptional, and an added benefit is developing connections and relationships with congressional staff who can support them on their career paths. The legal internships also expose our students to broader elements of the federal government, public policy, lobbying, and the role of the press.

*"I loved my internship experience....I am so grateful to have been selected for this internship because a door of opportunities that I did not know existed has now opened for me."*

*"My work experience was highly valuable and has already allowed me to interview with a number of law firms for positions next summer, who have all been interested in my Senate experience."*







**Thea Barrak** – Senate Committee on Finance, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR), Chair.

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**Calder Burgam** – Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Senator Gary Peters (D-MI), Chair.

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**Fatima Dakroub** – House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, Rep. James Clyburn (D-6th SC), Chair.

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**Yara Gayar** – House Committee on Financial Services, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-43rd CA), Chair.

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**Benjamin Neumann** – Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Spending Oversight Subcommittee, Senator Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Chair.

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**Andrew Vaillencourt** – Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA), Chair.

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# Student Opportunities

## Career Panels

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- Career Paths in State Government (Spring 2021)
- Career Paths in Federal Agencies' General Counsel's Office (Fall 2021)

## The Future of Oversight

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Daina Robinson, former Levin Center 2019 intern, was hired as Counsel for the House Committee on Oversight and Reform!



*I am so grateful that the Levin Center not only equipped me for a career on the Hill, but it is the reason I have my current position as Counsel for the House Committee on Oversight and Reform. ... The mentorship and support from the Levin Center's liaisons has been incredible.*

## Journal of Law in Society Symposium

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Every year we support a symposium sponsored by either the Journal of Law in Society or the Wayne Law Review. The 2021 symposium entitled "Opioid Paradigms: How Crisis can Inform Change" was hosted by the Journal of Law in Society and drew on healthcare legal experts to discuss new policy solutions to improve access to opioid addiction care.

## Youth and Government Volunteers

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Every year, Wayne Law students join our Youth and Government model oversight hearing experience as volunteers doing legal research and drawing up role summaries for the witnesses enacting the model hearing.



# Outlook 2022



# Meet Jennifer Selin



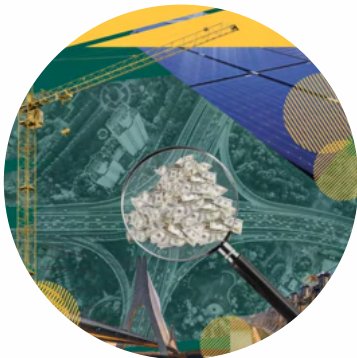
## Jennifer Selin

Co-Director, Washington D.C. Office

Jennifer Selin joined our team as the new Co-Director of the Levin Center's Washington Office! Jen comes to the Levin Center from the University of Missouri where she was Kinder Institute Assistant Professor of Constitutional Democracy. She earned her PhD from Vanderbilt University and her JD from Wake Forest University and has written extensively about administrative law, legislative oversight, and related areas. Jen will bring all of that knowledge and expertise to the work of strengthening the Center's engagement with scholars and building the field of oversight.



# Work in Progress



## Oversight Symposium

Join our Symposium on March 25, 2022 co-hosted with the *Wayne Law Review*: "Oversight, Infrastructure, and Federalism: Ensuring Transparency, Accountability, and Effectiveness of U.S. Infrastructure Investments"



## New Headquarters

Our new office headquarters office suite at the Wayne State Law School is nearly completed, and we cannot wait to unveil the new Levin Center home! Our new office space was made possible thanks to the Mort and Brigitte Harris Foundation's generous donation.



## Oversight Reports Database

In 2021, the Levin Center launched a data collection effort to create the first-ever repository of congressional oversight reports. We plan to make the collection available to the public in 2022.



## State Oversight Academy

Throughout 2021 we developed the concept for the State Oversight Academy (SOA) - the first and only national institute dedicated to promoting effective oversight by state legislatures and elevating bipartisan fact-finding as an essential legislative function. When launched, the SOA will house the Levin Center's state oversight workshops, news, and resources.





# Thanking our Supporters

## Wayne Law Leadership

We warmly thank the Law School's leadership including **Dean Rick Bierschbach**, **Associate Dean Susan Settlage**, and **Associate Dean Chris Lund** for their ongoing support of our mission and programs.

**Dean Bierschbach**



## Faculty Advisory Committee

**Professor Jack Mogk**

Faculty Advisory Committee Chair



Professor Linda Beale

Professor Hillel Nadler

Professor Sanjukta Paul

Professor Brad Roth



## Our Funders

We warmly thank our foundation funders and many generous individual donors whose support in 2021 made our work possible.





# Advisory Board



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