

5th Annual Innovation and Technology Law Conference: Deep Innovation Dives

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Since 2018, the Seattle University School of Law has featured an annual conference on innovation and technology. This year's conference builds on past themes, which started with the initial conference held in 2018, Blockchain and FinTech: Innovation and Regulation (sponsored by the law firm of Fenwick & West LLP); followed by 2019's theme of RegTech: The Transformation of Regulation & Compliance (sponsored by Perkins Coie LLP); 2020's conference theme of Data Justice: Legal and Policy Issues in Data Collection, Usage, and Ownership (sponsored by Perkins Coie LLP), and 2021's theme of Innovating for the Social Good (sponsored by Perkins Coie LLP). The annual innovation conference is part of the law school's Summer Institute for Technology, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship program (SITIE), which offers a unique curriculum of cutting edge courses to help equip students with the skillset and values they need to represent start-ups and more established companies in Seattle's regional tech hub. Since 2015, the law school has offered SITIE's signature course, the Immersion Course: Lawyering for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.¹ This intersession course has featured site visits (virtual ones from 2020-2022) with in-house legal counsel (and oftentimes corporate officers) of regional companies as Microsoft, Expedia, Zillow, T-Mobile, DocuSign, Starbucks, Chef, SubPop Records, Zulily, and more. Immersion students attend the annual innovation conference as their final class session, and the conference benefits from their active participation and engagement with the speakers and themes.

Over the years, the innovation conference has highlighted emerging technologies, particularly blockchain distributed ledgers, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and data as a catalyst for business innovation. The conference routinely confronts the balance of technology's potential to solve social problems with the risks for aggravating existing societal inequities. A pivotal illustration of this tension was the panel discussion in the 2020 Data Justice conference around the privacy and racial justice concerns of facial recognition technology, but this year's conference confronted that tension too in settings that ranged from the impact on racial and gender equity of employment hiring using artificial intelligence and the impact on the environment of blockchain mining-based validations. Additionally, the innovation conference has emphasized the skillset that lawyers and law students need to bridge any divides with innovators. To add value to their breakthroughs, this year featured the talents and experiences that diverse in-house counsel can bring to innovative companies. We aim to educate our students in emerging and essential technologies² so that they can be part of the exciting possibilities of

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¹ In 2022, the SITIE program also offered the following courses: Artificial Intelligence Law: Practice and Theory; Counseling Startups: Law, Regulation and Fundraising; and The Role of In-House Counsel: Lawyering within an Organization.

² We assigned students in our Immersion course a textbook to help them understand several vital technologies and their applications—STEVE BROWN, THE INNOVATION ULTIMATUM: HOW SIX

solving problems, or adding efficiencies that technology makes possible, while also being aware of any ethical or other limitations of technology-based approaches and solutions.

This year's conference, with the title of Deep Innovation Dives, focused on areas of emphasis in both the annual Immersion course and the past innovation conferences, emphasizing the legal profession and legal services, health care, and financial services. The Seattle region is a leader in innovation in these sectors, but the virtual format of the conference has allowed us to bring in speakers from other regions, as we did this year with the co-founder and CEO of Suited, a firm deploying artificial intelligence for hiring decisions.

The first 2022 conference panel built on discussions at the 2021 conference around the possibility of designing and authorizing a regulatory sandbox in Washington to expand access to legal services (in the furtherance of access to justice) through online delivery of legal services and other innovations, as informed by the Utah and Arizona sandbox models detailed in the 2021 conference.³ Additionally, the first panel of the 2022 conference featured a deep dive into the innovation in the hiring of lawyers by law firms using artificial intelligence toward the goal of better hiring outcomes, including racial equity. The second panel showcased diversity in the context of in-house lawyering in a panel featuring the challenges faced, resilience, and skillset of several Seattle University School of Law graduates who are all women of color working at high profile innovative companies—Microsoft, T-Mobile, Amazon, and Providence. The third 2022 panel, a deep dive moderated discussion into health equity and research, showcased a new data partnership arising during the pandemic and poised for health research breakthroughs to save lives. Finally, a financial services panel comprehensively explored the depths of Financial Tech, Decentralized Finance, Web3 (a blockchain World Wide Web), and non-fungible tokens (NFTs).⁴ These panels are detailed in depth by summaries included as part of this online symposium edition, with links to the panel recordings.

Particularly evident this year was the broad diversity of presenters, with seven women of color presenting, as well as speakers and moderators from diverse backgrounds that include law professors, in-house counsel, and CEOs and founders of financial institutions and technology companies.

Looking ahead to 2023, the innovation conference will continue to append to the Immersion course, and to draw from the core technologies that businesses rely on to disrupt underserved markets or to stay relevant in their sectors, and as well to impart the skills, and the critical thinking of moral and ethical limitations, that flow from an in-depth understanding of the

STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES WILL RESHAPE EVERY BUSINESS IN THE 2020S (2020),
<https://www.wiley.com/en-us/The+Innovation+Ultimatum%3A+How+six+strategic+technologies+will+reshape+every+business+in+the+2020s-p-9781119615439>.

³ For the 2021 legal services panel, *see*
<https://media.law.seattleu.edu/hapi/v1/contents/permalinks/Cw3d5YJc/view>.

⁴ Financial innovation—FinTech for short—has been a focus of every innovation conference so far under the guidance of Professor Joseph Vincent, who teaches the law school's cluster of FinTech courses to LLM, MLS, and JD students and moderated the 2022 FinTech panel.

application of these technologies in law and society. In step with Seattle University School of Law's mission "at the heart of law" to educate powerful advocates for justice, we present in this online symposium format the compelling and timely themes and panels of the fifth annual innovation and technology law conference for broader consumption and viewership.