

NEWS RELEASE

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UCM and MU Agreement Creates Faster Pathway to Law Degree at Less Cost

WARRENSBURG, MO (Sept. 30, 2020) – Students who want to pursue a career in law now have a pathway to help expedite their career goal thanks to a cooperative agreement between the University of Central Missouri and the University of Missouri School of Law.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing this new opportunity for students was signed during a ceremony Sept. 24 in the Elliott Student Union auditorium. It makes possible a nonexclusive partnership between MU’s law school and UCM to jointly offer the Three-Three J.D. (Juris Doctorate) Program. It enables high-caliber, highly motivated students to enter the three-year MU law school program after completing their junior year at UCM, thereby reducing their academic journey to becoming a lawyer by one year. After completing first year law courses, students utilizing this pathway will then have their UCM degree conferred.

“Mizzou Law is delighted to strengthen our partnership with the University of Central Missouri. We take pride in providing an excellent legal education that is accessible and affordable for Missouri students,” said Lyrissa Lidsky, dean and Earl F. Nelson Professor of Law at the MU School of Law. “The Three-Three Program helps qualified UCM students to shorten their time to completing their undergraduate and law degrees. We look forward to seeing more UCM alumni become Mizzou-made lawyers.”

UCM students wishing to matriculate under the agreement with the law school at MU must meet the following criteria:

- 3.5 grade point average
- Any UCM major is eligible to participate

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- Completion of the law School Admissions Test (LSAT) after the second year of the three-year program
- Completion of all general education requirements; and
- Completion of all requirements within the major (unless excepted by the program director and appropriate division chair).

Lidsky signed the Three-Three agreement with Roger Best, UCM president, after she spoke to a group of students and faculty. She was joined by J.R. Swanagan, the MU law school's assistant dean of admissions and financial aid, who commented about the strong connections students will make with people in the legal community. He said Mizzou Law is a school with alumni who want to "convey to the next generation what they have experienced and pay it forward." Many of these law school graduates include UCM alumni.

"I think this is a marvelous opportunity. Statistics show that most people decide on going to law school very early, as early as elementary and middle school," Lidsky told students. "Most of the time, people decide to go to law school before they enter high school. So for those people who know their path and know what they want to do, programs like this Three-Three Program provide a way to get where you want to go faster. I absolutely love that."

Best talked briefly about the value of collaborative experiences between UCM and other institutions to create new opportunities for students.

"One thing you'll find that we all have in common is that we are all very passionate about our students, and ensuring there are pathways for each of you that will facilitate your success," he said. "We are very appreciative of the University of Missouri School of Law and the personal engagement with Dean Lidsky and what that means for all of our students. We very much look forward to our students being able to complete this program."

Courtney Goddard, vice president of University Advancement and executive director of the Alumni Foundation, noted after the ceremony, "As someone who proudly represents the University of Central Missouri as its Vice President of Advancement and also calls the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law my alma mater, I take great pride and satisfaction in knowing that tomorrow's brightest students will be able to experience both of these amazing institutions and realize their career goals even faster under this accelerated path."

While the university does not offer a law degree, it does provide a pre-law (non-degree) program that will help students study law from a variety of perspectives and disciplines and obtain a solid introduction to the field. Political Science, Criminal Justice and Criminology, and Business Law collaborate to provide a diverse practical orientation to the study of law. A solid base also is provided through the Legal Studies Minor and other experiences. Most legal classes include a diverse group of majors with varied interests; law school, public

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office, business leaders, and many others. More information about the pre-law program is available at <https://www.ucmo.edu/academics/programs/majors/pre-law/index.php>.

To learn more about the Three-Three J.D. Program, contact Benecia Carmack, assistant professor of criminal justice and criminology and pre-law student advisor, at bcarmack@ucmo.edu or 660-543-4950.

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Cutline Information:

Roger Best, president of the University of Central Missouri and Lyrissa Lidsky, dean and Earl F. Nelson Professor of Law at the University of Missouri School of Law, sign the Three-Three J.D. (Juris Doctorate) Program Memorandum of Understanding creating a faster, more affordable pathway from UCM to an MU law degree. Joining them for the signing ceremony Sept. 24 were, back row from left, Jose Mercado, dean of the UCM School of Business and Professional Studies; Phil Bridgmon, UCM provost and vice president for academic affairs; Michael Sawyer, chair of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Courtney Goddard, vice president of University Advancement and executive director of the Alumni Foundation; Patrick Streck, professor emeritus, Office of Alumni and Development; J.R. Swanagan, MU law school's assistant dean of admissions and financial aid; James Staab, professor of political science; Benecia Carmack, assistant professor of criminal justice and criminology and pre-law student advisor; and Steven Popejoy, professor in the School of Business Administration, Division of Business Strategy.

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