

# PROVIDENTIAL STORY OF THE HOLLORAN CENTER AND ITS MISSION

The Providential story of the Holloran Center is about building an increasing national pilgrim fellowship/coalition of donors, faculty, and staff committed to changing legal education to give more attention to fostering each student's growth toward the professional values and all of the skills needed to be a lawyer. Since the founding of the Holloran Center in 2006, donors, faculty, and staff with highly complementary strengths have Providentially come together to create a national movement around the only comprehensive theory of legal education: professional values are the foundation for and drive excellence at all of the professional skills that a law graduate needs to serve others well in widening circles of care over a career.

## THE HOLLORAN CENTER'S MISSION AND COALITION OF DONORS TO PROVIDE RESOURCES

The Holloran Center started with a strong mission and resources that flow from Tom Holloran's life and purpose. Tom always lived as a servant leader, using his gifts to lift up others. In 1985, Tom joined the University of St. Thomas Business School and started teaching a business leadership course. Neil Hamilton started teaching the first Business Ethics course at a law school in 1988. Both had the same teaching goal of fostering each student's love of neighbor lived out through service in professional life. Providentially, Tom and Neil first met in 1991 and shared visions of joining forces to teach ethical leadership with law students.

Tom was very involved with the University of St. Thomas's decision to re-open its law school, which happened in 2001, and in

the hiring of the founding faculty which included Neil (who came from William Mitchell) and Jerry Organ (who came from the University of Missouri). Tom transitioned from the Business School to the Law School in 2002, and in the fall of 2003, Tom and Neil created and offered the first leadership course at a law school.

In 2005, John Stout at the Fredrikson & Byron law firm and Ron Lund, General Counsel of Medtronic (both organizations where Tom had played important leadership roles) brought to Neil's attention the opportunity to honor Tom by requesting funding to support ethical professional education efforts from a significant criminal fine levied in a case in front of U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson. Thinking about helping students grow to be servant leaders like Tom, Neil had a vision of the Thomas Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions with a mission "to provide innovative interdisciplinary research, curriculum development, and programs focusing holistically on the formation of both students and practicing professionals into ethical leaders in their communities."

Neil submitted the proposal and received a founding grant of \$500,000 to provide an initial endowment for the Center. The team of Dean Tom Mengler, Ron Lund, and Neil secured additional operating grants and endowment gifts, particularly from the Medtronic Foundation, Medtronic friends of Tom's, and the Fredrikson & Byron law firm. Later gifts came in from others, including Jake Marvin honoring Steve Tourek, and all of the gifts led to a total endowment, including endowed faculty positions, of \$11,200,000 as of 2026. All of the donors are listed on the Holloran Center's website and on the last page of this program.

The Holloran Center and the Law School are extremely grateful to the donors who have made possible a strong national movement committed to the Holloran Center's mission.

## THE PROVIDENTIAL PILGRIM FELLOWSHIP OF FACULTY AND STAFF COMMITTED TO THE MISSION

These resources led to the founding of the Holloran Center in June of 2006 with the team of Tom Holloran and Hank Shea as Fellows, Mary Edel Joyce as Coordinator, and Neil as Director. In the initial years, Hank focused on public programs, Tom and Neil on curriculum and funding, and Neil on research.

The pilgrim fellowship team grew Providentially with key people adding complementary skills. Jerry Organ came on board as Associate Director in 2010. Beginning in 2017, the Holloran Center welcomed Holloran Fellows Lou Bilionis, Barbara Glesner Fines and Kendall Kerew. Norm Linnell was a Fellow for a number of years and Dennis Monroe became a Fellow and stepped in to co-teach Ethical Leadership with Neil after Tom was no longer in a position to continue teaching. In the last few years, the Holloran Center added David Grenardo as Associate Director and Felicia Bennett as our Coordinator. Throughout the last two decades, the Holloran Center has been blessed with the assistance of a significant number of research assistants who provided invaluable work to advance the mission of the Holloran Center.

## THE FRUITS OF OUR EFFORTS

We have endeavored to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us and believe our record of productivity over the last two decades speaks volumes about the power of the Holloran Center's mission:

- Together with our Holloran Fellows, we have published four books and at least one hundred articles that address aspects of professional identity formation, with Neil Hamilton leading the field in terms of articles and citations.
- We have facilitated 15 Summer Workshops along with several school-specific workshops. Nearly 300 faculty and administrators from nearly 50 law schools participated in these workshops (some multiple times).

- We have hosted eight Symposia and nearly a dozen conferences.
- We have organized panels/discussion groups and made presentations on professional identity formation at dozens of professional conferences.
- We have received grant funding for three survey projects – the first multi-school study of law student well-being in 2014, a follow up survey on law student well-being in 2021 at nearly 40 law schools, and a survey focused on the student formation experience in first year professional development courses – and have engaged in other surveys of competencies legal employers are looking for in new lawyers.
- We have created and maintained the Learning Outcomes Database, the Professional Development Database, and the Professional Identity Implementation Blog.
- In collaboration with nearly three dozen faculty and administrators from around the country, we have generated over a dozen “Holloran Competency Milestones” – stage-development rubrics focused on professional identify formation learning outcomes.
- We have built a movement focused on professional identity formation in legal education that resulted in a new accreditation standard in 2022 that requires law schools to provide substantial opportunities for law students to develop their professional identity.
- With the support of a generous gift, we commenced the Tourek Marvin Peer Mentor Program in the 2024-2025 academic year. This program involves 2Ls and 3Ls coming alongside and supporting 1Ls through 1:1s and small group meetings.
- Most recently, we have collaborated on generating the Rule of Law Materials, including foundational principles, supplemental definitions, a set of learning outcomes and a Rule of Law Milestone, and this summer will be working with West Academic to publish a set of teaching materials focused on professional identity formation and the rule of law.
- We are holding our first Annual Conference and Awards Dinner on Saturday, April 25, 2026.

As we reflect on the past 20 years and look to the next 20 years, we are grateful for Tom Holloran's personification of ethical leadership, Neil Hamilton's vision, and the friends of Tom Holloran who provided financial support to bring Neil's vision to life. We are grateful for having the opportunity to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us and to see our efforts to promote professional identity formation beginning to bear fruit in a number of ways.

Our hope is that the Holloran Center can continue to be a national leader in the professional identity formation field and to nurture a growing pilgrim fellowship of people committed to helping legal education foster each student's growth toward professional values and excellence at all of the professional skills that a law graduate needs to serve others well in widening circles over a career.



*The Holloran Center team, left to right: Associate Director David Grenardo, Co-Director Jerry Organ, Co-Director Neil Hamilton*