

PRESS RELEASE

Baker Donelson Partners with Richmond Law to Launch Legal Business Design Challenge Program

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Baker Donelson, widely recognized as one of the legal industry's most pioneering and innovative law firms, is partnering with the University of Richmond School of Law to launch the Legal Business Design Challenge, a new program on legal innovation and entrepreneurship.

Under the leadership of new program director and faculty member Josh Kubicki, this new Richmond Law program seeks to advance design-driven innovation and entrepreneurship capabilities in students, lawyers, faculty and researchers. Its goal is to accelerate and instigate the building of new business ventures and forward-thinking solutions designed to address critical challenges facing the future of our legal systems, services and businesses.

The Legal Business Design Challenge is the cornerstone of Richmond Law's first course offered within the new program. The course, Practice Design & Innovation, will equip students with the two critical skills of building a successful professional service offering: 1) defining an actionable evidence-based strategy, and 2) designing an operating model to execute it.

"This new program will have a 'bias towards action' wherein we reach beyond the walls of the school to directly engage in the market," said Prof. Kubicki. "The Legal Business Design Challenge is a real-world situation wherein a legal services business, we call the 'innovator-in-residence,' presents the class with an actual strategic and/or operational challenge that it is currently considering," he explained. "Students are expected to conduct research, apply critical thinking and analysis, and use business design methods to develop an actionable and evidence-based recommendation to the innovator-in-residence leadership team."

The Legal Business Design Challenge is a unique approach to design innovation in legal services, one that is based on creativity and business rigor. Students will work in teams throughout the course and will actively collaborate with their innovator-in-residence mentors.

Baker Donelson is the inaugural innovator-in-residence. Both the chairman and CEO, [Tim Lupinacci](#), and the chief client solutions group officer, [David Rueff](#), are the executive sponsors, with members of the Firm's Client Solutions Group working as mentors to the students.

"We are truly excited and honored to have this opportunity," said Mr. Rueff. "It fits perfectly with our Firm's commitment to advancing our client service approach, which always seeks to add quality and value through improvement, innovation and creativity," he added. "Working together with Prof. Kubicki's class allows us to tap into the energy and creativity of second- and third-year law students while directly advancing their education regarding the business of law and the current state of the market. Also, exposing our teams to the power of business design is an immensely valuable attribute of this program."

Bold Duck Studio, the leading legal business design agency, is serving in an advisory role to Baker Donelson as well as the Challenge overall. Given the agency's unique and seasoned experience in designing new legal service models, their participation helps ensure that the students will have access to proven tools and methods that have been honed and shaped to be most effective in the legal services arena, Prof. Kubicki explained.

"Our work, experience and research continue to advance within the legal business design arena and we are seeing more demand for it from in-house and firm teams," said Kim Craig, co-founder of Bold Duck Studio. "Partnering with a firm like Baker Donelson and the Practice Design and Innovation class is a no-brainer for us given our commitment to business design, both in applying it and researching the best ways to integrate its value directly into teams and organizations. This project presents a unique opportunity to participate at the ground floor of design education and application in legal education while also introducing design into another law firm."

Over more than 20 years, Baker Donelson has grown its suite of innovative solutions, making it among the most expansive in the legal industry today. The Firm's lawyers and employees are hardwired to approach the practice of law in new and creative ways to advance clients' legal and business goals by understanding the issues clients face and delivering value as they perceive value. Baker Donelson's Client Solutions Group (CSG) is an in-house department composed of nonbillable lawyers and professionals who work hand-in-hand with attorneys and clients to identify and implement client-focused solutions. These nationally recognized professionals are subject matter experts in project management, process improvement, pricing, data analytics, knowledge management, artificial intelligence/machine learning, litigation support, and research. Unlike other firms that charge for these services, Baker Donelson's CSG team members assist the Firm's lawyers at no additional cost to clients and often serve as dedicated liaisons and advisors to their in-house counterparts.