HUSCH BLACKWELL

Aleks O. Rushing

PARTNER

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OVERVIEW

As a partner and licensed teacher, Aleks is driven by a singular mission: making schools safer for students.

Aleks counsels educational institutions nationwide—from pre-K through higher education—on the full spectrum of legal issues that arise in today's rapidly evolving educational landscape. She represents schools of all sizes across the country, including emerging schools and school networks, helping them create environments where every student can thrive. Her practice encompasses investigations, compliance, litigation, and the legal and operational issues involved in launching and expanding schools.

"Aleks provides excellent client service and genuinely focuses on the challenges and needs that face the university. She truly listens and takes time to build strong collaborative relationships so she can better understand our challenges and provide value-added solutions. She goes beyond the letter of the law in order to partner with those she serves to provide big-picture problem solving. She doesn't just focus on the issue at hand, but the greater context of the university as a whole and the goals we are trying to accomplish."

— Chief Financial Officer of Private University

Industry

Education

Services

Collegiate Athletics

Emerging Companies & Venture Capital

Higher Education

K-12 Education

Litigation & Alternative Dispute Resolution

Nonprofit Organizations & Religious Institutions

Title IX

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Clients rely on Aleks for her acumen in conducting and guiding sensitive internal and external investigations. With deep experience in responding to internal and Office of Civil Rights complaints, Aleks skillfully manages reports stemming from alleged student or employee misconduct involving criminal activity, hazing, and discrimination and harassment based on sex (Title IX, VAWA, Title VII, and EPA); race and national origin (Title VI and Title VII); disability (ADA, Section 504, and IDEA); and age (ADEA), among others. She prepares confidential, privileged reports and supports institutional decision-makers throughout the process—particularly in cases involving current and historical sexual misconduct, athletic department compliance, student death by suicide, and board-mandated reviews. Aleks is highly experienced in helping schools respond strategically to allegations of physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse, safeguarding both students and institutional reputation.

A recognized leader in compliance, Aleks regularly advises on student conduct, discipline, alcohol and other drugs, admissions, dual enrollment, the Clery Act, data privacy, artificial intelligence, and parental disputes, ensuring that schools' actions are both effective and legally sound. She also advises clients on the formation, launch, and expansion of schools, including regulatory compliance, zoning considerations, state application processes, licensure, accreditation strategy, governance structure, student and employee policies, enrollment practices, and other startup requirements. Aleks has significant experience advising on issues involving students with disabilities, including ADA, Section 504, and IDEA compliance; accommodations and modifications; discipline and threat assessment considerations; service and support plans; accessibility; and disputes involving parents, students, and regulators. She also counsels school leaders, boards, and senior administrators on high-level policy matters affecting students with disabilities, including disability-access frameworks, inclusive program design, grievance and appeals processes, documentation standards, and institution-wide strategies for aligning student support obligations with operational realities. Aleks helps institutions interpret disability laws, implement practical accommodations, and develop proactive policies to promote accessibility while mitigating risks associated with potential harassment, discrimination, and denial-of-access claims. Aleks also advises organizations that serve or host minors—including colleges, universities, religious institutions, nonprofits, and youth-serving programs—on their heightened legal duties. She helps clients develop and implement robust policies, procedures, forms, and training to address child abuse reporting, health and safety, and risk mitigation, ensuring the protection of minors and preservation of community trust.

Aleks provides comprehensive counsel on all aspects of employment law, assisting schools with hiring, vetting, and onboarding practices; drafting and reviewing handbooks, contracts, and policies; and advising on performance management, leave, and benefits. For new and expanding schools, she helps leadership teams build compliant employment, student, and governance frameworks from the ground up so they can open and operate with confidence. She guides schools through complex workforce challenges such as harassment and discrimination claims, union relations, terminations, and reductions in force, always focused on proactive risk management and fostering a positive school culture. She also regularly advises school leaders and boards of trustees on a full spectrum of governance matters, including bylaw review, board best practices, fiduciary duties, and compliance with evolving legal standards. Aleks helps institutions strengthen governance frameworks through policy development, training, and strategic consultation on issues such as conflicts of interest, whistleblower protections, and document preservation and retention.

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When disputes escalate and litigation becomes necessary, Aleks brings a proven track record of vigorously defending educational institutions in court while seeking strategic resolutions that serve clients' best interests. She has served as first chair in federal and state jury and bench trials, as well as in federal appellate proceedings, representing schools in a wide range of disputes—including student discipline, constitutional challenges, employment, desegregation, school funding, personal injury, and board governance matters.

As education law grows increasingly complex, Aleks is known for her responsiveness, transparency, and ability to navigate high-stakes situations. Her approach is rooted in a "client plus-ing" and service-first team philosophy, recognizing that, just as every student learns differently, every client faces unique challenges. Aleks invests time on campus with clients, proactively identifying risks, building strong relationships, and designing practical, tailored solutions that foster healthy, inclusive, and safe learning environments. Whether counseling an established school through a sensitive matter or helping founders and boards move from concept to opening day, Aleks brings practical judgment, education-sector fluency, and a steady focus on student safety and institutional success.

Experience

INVESTIGATIONS

- Led investigation related to minors on campus and alleged criminal activity at institution in two phases: review of hundreds of thousands of documents and conduct interviews of dozens of employees and former students.
- Led Title IX investigations involving stalking, sexual harassment, sexual assault and violence, domestic violence and retaliation.
- Led investigation related to freedom of expression issue involving alleged student misconduct on social media.
- Conducted climate review at public institution regarding regarding sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking reporting measures and resources.
- Conducted investigation at institution regarding potential sexual misconduct and hazing, which included interviews with multiple coaches and players from numerous sports teams.
- Served on investigative team at private institution regarding potential misconduct by coaches, which included interviews with multiple coaches and players across men's and women's teams and alumni.

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Experience

COMPLIANCE AND U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- Advised a portfolio of more than 100 K-12 schools across more than 36 states on education regulatory, operational, and compliance matters, with anticipated expansion to all 50 states and Puerto Rico.
- Represented a group of more than 81 schools across seven states that provide services exclusively to students with special needs, including schools receiving federal and state funding, private-pay schools and hybrid funding models.
- Advised multi-state school operators from formation through launch and ongoing operations, including regulatory compliance, zoning, state application processes, licensure, and other startup requirements.
- Led team in assessing a private university's efforts to respond to and mitigate risks associated with student death by suicide and collaborated with client to design an approach with at-risk students that is consistent with national best practices and applicable legal obligations.
- Conducted dozens of trainings for clients regarding Title IX, sexual harassment, informal resolution, athletics, alcohol and other drugs, race issues in admissions, pregnancy and parenting, accommodating LGBT students and employees, Clery Act, FERPA, First Amendment issues, investigation best practices, promoting equity and inclusion, updates in federal and state law, and student handbooks.
- Conducted and prepared audit regarding Title IX equity in athletics.
- Advised dozens of preschools, daycares, and k-12 schools on regulatory and compliance matters involving licensing, accreditation, safety issues, and homeschooling related matters in advance of broad expansion.

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Experience

- Developed strategic communication plan for education nonprofit facing vendor termination by documenting course of dealing and proposing practical solutions, resulting in client's reinstatement as approved vendor and preservation of several hundred thousand dollars in annual revenue.
- Prepared client's change of control application and change of ownership application notifying accreditor and U.S. Department of Education of proposed change.
- Assisted college in receiving approval of recertification application from U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid Office.
- Assisted college in removal from U.S. Department of Education's Heightened Cash Monitoring in order to receive positive composite score following ED's finding of change in ownership resulting in change of control.
- Developed comprehensive biannual federal legal updates relevant to school districts' policies and procedures.
- Obtained insufficient evidence finding on behalf of client from the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights on student's disability harassment, academic adjustments and retaliation allegations.

LITIGATION

- Achieved appellate victory for university client in the Ninth Circuit, securing complete dismissal of plaintiff's appeal challenging the denial of a preliminary injunction and defeating the appeal.
- Secured motion to dismiss filed on behalf of college client in litigation involving claims by former student alleging race and gender discrimination claims stemming from alleged hazing.
- Secured motion to dismiss filed on behalf of university client involving COVID-tuition remission requests on behalf of proposed class action of thousands of students.

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Experience

- Secured motion to dismiss filed on behalf of university client in litigation involving claims of conspiracy, Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), civil rights violations and due process violations.
- Successfully mediated claims for university clients involving issues such as Title IX, disability discrimination and breach of contract claims against current students and athletic conferences.
- Successfully briefed opposition of plaintiff's motion to proceed under pseudonym on behalf of university in litigation involving disability discrimination and Title IX claims.
- Obtained dismissal with prejudice of employment discrimination case pending in federal court without client's depositions being taken or briefing motions for summary judgment.
- Secured motion to dismiss with prejudice filed on behalf of university client on constructive discharge and intentional infliction of emotional distress claims.
- Successfully negotiated dismissal with prejudice on behalf of client regarding copyright, negligent hiring and contract claims.
- Successfully obtained dismissals for university client of motions to dismiss and transfer venue in small claims and breach of contract matters.
- Drafted award-winning amicus brief that successfully resulted in U.S. District Judge Barbara J. Rothstein issuing a preliminary injunction order in connection with the U.S. Department of Education's recent rulemaking that would have directed hundreds of millions of dollars toward private schools and away from public school districts nationwide.
- Drafted award-winning amicus brief for the U.S. Supreme Court on behalf of the Council of Great City Schools – nonprofit coalition of 69 largest urban U.S. public-school systems in support of respondent school district in Endrew F. v. Douglas County School Dist. RE–1, 580 U.S. ___ (2017).
- Successfully obtained partial unitary status for public school district subject to desegregation order in facilities, non-instructional staff and administrative staff.

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Experience

- Counseled and assisted multiple public school districts to comply with desegregation orders and consent decrees pending in federal courts throughout the country.

Recognition

- *Best Lawyers: Ones to Watch® in America*
    - Education Law, 2024 and 2025
- JD Supra Readers' Choice Awards, Top Author, Education, 2025
- Missouri Bar Pro Bono Wall of Fame, 2016-2022
- *St. Louis Business Journal*
    - 30 Under 30, 2019
- Education Law Association, August Steinhilber Award for Best Brief Writing in the Appellate Courts, 2017, 2021, 2023

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Education

- J.D., University of Illinois College of Law
  - *summa cum laude*
  - Order of the Coif
  - Rickert Award for Excellence in Advocacy; Rickert Award for Excellence in Service
  - Lisnek Award for Excellence in Trial Advocacy
  - Illinois Trial Team, Coach
  - Education Law & Policy Society, Co-Founder & President
- B.S., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
  - *summa cum laude*
  - Illinois Trial Team, President
  - Illinois Professional Educator License, 2012-Present

Admissions

- Missouri
- Illinois
- U.S. Supreme Court
- U.S. Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit
- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court, Western District of Missouri
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Southern District of Illinois
- U.S. District Court, Northern District of Indiana

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Community Leadership

Aleks has an active pro bono practice. As the Partner Liaison of the firm's pro bono legal intake clinic with Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, she dedicates significant time to representing low-income families in St. Louis, victims of domestic violence, and indigent clients with a variety of legal issues in state and federal court. Examples of the legal clinic's work featuring Aleks and other firm attorneys, including the following:

- assisting a working mom and military wife retrieve a security deposit;
- helping a mother transfer guardianship of her son, who suffers from cerebral palsy, to another relative when the mother faced a life-altering medical condition;
- gaining expungement for a diverse client to clear her criminal record based on stolen identity;
- effectuating a deceased mother's wishes to transfer property to her children upon her passing; and
- assisting an elderly widow in setting up a power of attorney so that her daughter can help her manage her legal affairs.

JD Supra Readers Choice Awards - Top Author 2025

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