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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 18, 2022

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IAALS Announces Brittany Kauffman as Next CEO, Paves Way for New Growth and National Impacts

Strategic Review Process Charts a Strong Future for IAALS and its Next Leader

DENVER, CO (August 18, 2022)—IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, announced today that it has named Brittany Kauffman as its new chief executive officer, effective immediately. Kauffman has been serving as interim CEO since May 2022, and previously served as a senior director overseeing IAALS' programmatic strategy, projects, and research. IAALS has also announced that Jim Sandman will be taking on the role of chair of IAALS' board of advisors this fall, and that Judge Jeremy Fogel will be serving in a senior advisory role.

“Over the 10 years of Brittany’s time at IAALS, she has become trusted and respected by staff and partners nationally and internationally for her follow-through and attention to excellence, her mastery of IAALS’ areas of focus, and her passion for the mission,” said Rebecca Love Kourlis, IAALS’ founding executive director, who led a recent review committee to assess the strategic future of IAALS. “After dozens of internal and external conversations and deep dives into IAALS’ work and opportunities, the committee unanimously chose Brittany to lead IAALS forward. IAALS is an indispensable part of the transformative changes happening in the civil legal system, and Brittany is the right transformational leader to forge the path into the future.”

IAALS was founded in 2006 by University of Denver Chancellor Emeritus Daniel L. Ritchie, Denver attorney and bar leader John E. Moye, business leader and philanthropist Charles C. Gates, and Rebecca Love Kourlis, who stepped down from the Colorado Supreme Court to serve as the founding executive director. Driven by concern over a legal system increasingly under attack from outside forces—a system that was often failing to deliver justice—the group established IAALS to focus on independent, non-partisan, research-based reform for the nation’s civil justice system.

In light of dramatic changes within the American legal landscape in the past several years and a recent leadership transition, IAALS spent the last three months undertaking a full strategic assessment. With Kourlis as chair, the committee drew from the executive committee of IAALS, the staff of IAALS, the leadership of the University of Denver, and key supporters, advisers, and stakeholders. The committee spoke with hundreds of legal system stakeholders, partners, and community members about the future of IAALS, and the consensus was clear: IAALS’ continued work is invaluable and imperative. They then worked to create a strategic direction to best position IAALS for the future, including choosing Kauffman as its next leader.

“IAALS has been my home for the last decade. I have lived and breathed this work, alongside our committed staff and incredibly supportive partners,” said Kauffman. “I am so honored to step up into this critical position,

especially at this time. I know the value of IAALS and the power of this work to transform our system and, ultimately, transform the lives of so many by increasing access to justice. IAALS' historical work is invaluable, the current need for change is imperative, and the future is ripe with possibility. I'm grateful to the committee for the trust they've put in me to lead us all into that future, and I'm excited about IAALS' prospects for transformative impact."

During her career at IAALS, Kauffman has led numerous civil justice and judiciary reform efforts across the United States, serving as a facilitator, expert liaison, and consultant to state and federal courts, rules committees, civil justice task forces, and bar organizations. From legal and empirical research and analysis to the development of national recommendations—as well as support for implementation—Kauffman has brought IAALS' mission to life by making our civil justice system more accessible, efficient, and relevant to the people it serves. Examples include Kauffman's work with the Conference of Chief Justices' Civil Justice Improvements Committee, which developed a set of 13 recommendations for transforming civil justice in our state courts, and the American College of Trial Lawyer's Task Force on Discovery and Civil Justice. Following CCJ's issuance of the recommendations, Kauffman has worked with numerous court-appointed task forces and committees at the state level to tailor the recommendations for implementation. Kauffman also serves on the Legal Services Corporation Rural Justice Task Force and as a commissioner and member of the executive committee of the Colorado Access to Justice Commission.

"We have long seen IAALS as a jewel for DU. Through research and innovation, IAALS advances trust in the American legal system, makes it more accessible to more people, and is vital to the legal profession, legal education system, and to our nation as a whole," said University of Denver Chancellor Jeremy Haefner. "We are thrilled to see IAALS enter the next phase of its important history at DU with Brittany at the helm. Her institutional knowledge and clear understanding of the important connection between IAALS and DU will serve us all."

IAALS has also created the role of consultant and senior advisor to the CEO, to be filled by the Honorable Jeremy Fogel, a member of IAALS' board of advisors, long-time partner in IAALS' work in civil justice reform in the federal courts and a leader in ensuring an ethical, resilient, and independent judiciary. Judge Fogel is the executive director of the Berkeley Judicial Institute, former director of the Federal Judicial Center in Washington, D.C., and a former United States district judge. His assistance in this role will enable IAALS' convening and thought leadership in a powerful way.

"IAALS is a unique and extraordinarily valuable resource for our country's civil justice system. It does applied research of consistently high quality," said Judge Fogel. "It is consistently non-ideological and non-partisan. And it has shown the ability to convene diverse groups of both innovators and established leaders in a wide range of practice areas. It has been a privilege to be a member of its board of advisors, and I look forward to our new collaboration."

In addition, Jim Sandman—a global thought leader on issues of civil justice and access to justice—has agreed to serve as the new chair of IAALS' board of advisors. Sandman is a current board member, a member of IAALS' US Justice Needs Advisory Committee, and an engaged partner across numerous areas of IAALS' work. Jim is distinguished lecturer and senior consultant to the Future of the Profession Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania Law School. He is also president emeritus of the Legal Services Corporation, the largest funder of civil legal aid in the United States.

"I am thrilled to take on this new role with IAALS, which is uniquely poised to solve the most significant problems in America's civil legal system," said Sandman. "IAALS' creative, comprehensive, and pragmatic work has made it a national force for making the legal system work better. And I am excited about working with Brittany Kauffman, my former colleague at Arnold & Porter, for whom I have enormous respect."

“Key to IAALS’ success is the work that is to come from this team, with a deep dive into IAALS’ value proposition, increased synergy with the university, and opportunities to effect innovative change in our justice system,” said Kauffman. “The strategic review process—and all of the critical conversations we have had with our partners—have highlighted that IAALS’ impartial process of research, collaboration with experts and stakeholders, user-centered design, empirically driven evaluation, action-plan creation, and implementation makes IAALS unique and is key to IAALS’ impact. This approach will continue to drive our work, and our impact, as we move into this next phase.”

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About IAALS

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, is a national, independent research center dedicated to facilitating continuous improvement and advancing excellence in the American legal system. Our mission is to forge innovative and practical solutions to problems within the American legal system.