Pursuing an LL.M. is a substantial commitment—personally, financially, and professionally. It requires a tremendous amount of work, and for many students this comes on top of a full load of work and family responsibilities. Is it worth it?

This is a personal decision you will have to make for yourself. However, LL.M. programs are increasingly important for many reasons. As the legal profession has become more competitive over the last two decades, firms have pulled back from offering the mentoring and training that junior lawyers need to develop their talents to the fullest. Lawyers now grow their knowledge and skills in a piecemeal fashion, as the work that crosses their desks dictates. This means lopsided development, where many attorneys know a great deal about small areas of the law, but lack the confidence and abilities that come with a mastery of the law and the skills needed to take their practice to the next level.

These problems are all the more important in a field like real estate, which is undergoing major changes. Real estate lawyers used to concern themselves with topics like conveyancing, mortgages, leases, title insurance, partnership law, and taxes. These continue to be critical, but today we have to add areas like REITs, REMICs and mortgage securitization, international real estate transactions, environmental liabilities and permitting, community benefit agreements, and bankruptcy law, to name just a few areas of increasing prominence. A J.D. program simply can't cover all of this, nor can a lawyer count on "picking it up" in practice.

An LL.M. provides a coherent plan of professional development, teaching the wide range of knowledge and abilities that are needed to thrive in a sophisticated real estate practice with demanding clients. An LL.M. is more than an additional year of law school; it is training that assumes you have the basic knowledge and competence of a lawyer, and that you want to excel in your practice and are willing to do what it takes to accomplish that goal. Toward this end, our program features a mix of full-time faculty teaching doctrinal courses and foundational skills, along with leading lawyers from the New York bar teaching small sections that focus on advanced knowledge and practice skills. These classes allow for the type of one-on-one learning and close feedback that firms have largely abandoned.

An LL.M. can be valuable to people at various points in their careers. Firms are increasingly reluctant to hire associates who can't "hit the ground running," which gives LL.M. candidates an important leg up in seeking a rewarding and challenging first position. The advanced training available in the LL.M. in Real Estate program is also valuable to experienced lawyers looking to focus a broader practice on the real estate area or just hone their skills. And it provides a valuable route for lawyers who may have been out of practice for a period of time and are seeking to re-enter the profession. Every candidate's reasons for pursuing an LL.M. are unique, which is why we tailor our curriculum to each student's needs.