

An open letter from DeFi to US business and law schools

18th March 2026

To the deans and faculty councils of the leading US business and law schools,

We write to you on behalf of a broad coalition of 20+ leading decentralized finance (DeFi) projects and advocacy groups — including the Blockchain Association, DeFi Education Fund, Solana Policy Institute, Aave Labs, Messari, Dune, ETHGlobal, zeroShadow, Origin Protocol and more — led by 1inch, the DeFi ecosystem. Collectively, we represent a broad and passionate cross-section of the DeFi industry.

Our purpose with this letter is simple: to respectfully urge higher education institutions across the United States to further integrate digital assets, blockchain, and decentralized finance into their business and legal curricula. American business and law schools have long set the global standard in higher education — and DeFi is the next frontier in maintaining that standard. As the appetite for DeFi education among students continues to grow, so too does the importance of their familiarity with the economic and commercial systems of the future. That familiarity, combined with the values instilled through higher education, will prove essential in responsibly addressing integration of DeFi systems into businesses.

In spite of this pressing need for practical academic instruction, most DeFi curricula today remain theoretical and focus primarily on the technological aspects of this fundamental change. We offer our support in addressing the widening gap between the skills your graduates possess and the financial infrastructure they will be expected to navigate as future business and legal leaders.

I. The structural shift already underway

DeFi technology has become a critical part of the global financial ecosystem. This once fringe concept previously held at an arms length by major financial institutions, has now been implemented by those very same institutions, including BlackRock, Franklin Templeton, JPMorgan and even the NYSE itself. Regulators who once vilified DeFi now rush to understand and monitor it. The impact of this adoption in the broader business and legal world has been and will continue to be immense. However, change in industry must be met by change in education. Otherwise a whole generation of business and legal leaders risks being left behind. The students of today are the leaders of tomorrow, but today's students cannot become tomorrow's leaders if they are unequipped to lead in their field.

Academic instruction in DeFi is also critical to combat misinformation and misunderstanding. It is wrong to think, as some do, that DeFi and crypto technologies lack practical uses or are somehow deviant to the public good. Stablecoins eliminate cross-border payment friction. Lending protocols generate seamless yield for investors. Tokenised assets trade around the clock. The theoretical phase is over. Ideas have already become infrastructure.

The global blockchain education market is projected to grow from around USD 240 million in 2023 to roughly USD 3.07 billion by 2030, according to Virtue Market Research¹. The global DeFi market in total, was estimated at USD 26.94 billion in 2025 and is projected to reach USD 1.42 trillion by 2033, growing at a CAGR of 68.2% from 2026 to 2033²

¹ Global Blockchain Ecosystem in Education Market Research Report – Size, Share, Growth Analysis | Forecast (2024 – 2030)," published July 2024, [Virtue Market Research Report](#).

² Decentralized Finance Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Component..., And Segment Forecasts, 2026 - 2033," [Grand View Research Report](#).

The question for academia is not whether graduates will be faced with DeFi technology in their professional careers. On that point there is no debate. The question is whether graduates will be armed with the knowledge to lead in a DeFi world, or whether they will be disadvantaged by their incomplete education.

II. What we are asking for

We are not suggesting drastic changes to the curriculum. Instead, we propose a supplementary pillar, to ensure your students are familiar with decentralized technologies and their applications.

Just as DeFi technology complements existing financial structures, digital asset literacy should be a complement to existing course structures. Specifically, the following:

- First, foundational education in blockchain architecture and decentralized technology applications should be a core module in leading business and law schools, rather than being treated as electives.
- Second, students should be educated about decentralized finance mechanisms such as automated market makers, liquidity provision, on-chain governance, and smart contract risk. These are truly novel financial structures, which are fundamental to DeFi, and do not have a direct equivalent in traditional finance education.
- Third, students should have the opportunity to learn the frameworks for regulatory analysis specific to digital assets, thus equipping students to evaluate evolving compliance environments across jurisdictions.
- Fourth, business and law schools should integrate engagement with live DeFi systems, decentralized autonomous organizations, and on-chain data as a teaching tool, in the same way that they might use Bloomberg terminals or live portfolios to connect theory and practice. By examining real-world transaction flows, liquidity provision, governance of decentralized autonomous organizations, smart contract execution, and risk events as they happen, students can gain a real-world understanding of how DeFi works.

III. The cost of inaction

Academic institutions that train future business and legal professionals play a decisive role in shaping professional norms, analytical frameworks, and ethical standards of industries. That role carries with it a responsibility to understand the technological innovations and applications shaping the economy which an institution's graduates will enter.

Much of the talent entering the digital asset industry today is self-taught — often technically sophisticated but lacking the institutional grounding in financial regulation, risk management, legal analysis and fiduciary responsibility that formal education provides.

This presents a risk for the industry itself. The failures that have destabilized the digital asset ecosystem in the past, including the downfall of several large centralized platforms, reflect in part a deficit in the governance, risk, and compliance culture that can only come from rigorous education and instruction in best-practices.

IV. The role DeFi will play in this new educational landscape

The organizations below are already pursuing these goals and increasingly engaging with students directly on campus. We fully recognize and respect the independence of academic institutions in designing their

curricula and research agendas. Our intention is not to prescribe content but to offer collaboration and industry insight where it may be useful. The decentralized technology industry sponsors student conferences, coordinates hackathons, funds research projects, and establishes student-led blockchain groups around the world. Our goal is to promote technical literacy, responsible innovation, and informed discussion among the next generation of leaders from the US.

Today we have a rare opportunity to formalize and enhance the genuine enthusiasm we see from students today. The DeFi community is ready to help design coursework, engage in guest speaking, create participation opportunities in live protocols and decentralized autonomous organizations, co-author case studies, assist with student research, and establish formal internship and fellowship opportunities. By taking an active role in helping academic leaders empower their students, members of the DeFi community can help ensure that students not only learn about the theoretical underpinnings of decentralized finance but also have the practical skills to operate effectively within the dynamic decentralized financial ecosystem.

The next generation of financial and legal leaders deserves an education that prepares them for the financial system they will inherit. Nothing in this letter should be interpreted as a request for endorsement of any specific organization, protocol, or commercial activity. This letter is intended solely to encourage academic engagement and education regarding digital assets and decentralized financial technologies. It does not constitute investment advice, financial promotion, or solicitation relating to any specific digital asset, protocol, or product.

Signed,

1inch
Solana Policy Institute
Blockchain Association
DeFi Education Fund
Aave Labs
Mellow
De.Fi
Symbiosis
zeroShadow
Origin Protocol
Dune
Reown
Symbiotic
Recoveris
Beefy
Kiln
ETHGlobal
MyEtherWallet (MEW)
Delphi Digital
Messari
REP