Debates about the compatibility of intellectual property and human rights often focus on landmark judicial cases, treaty negotiation and interpretation, and national legislation and policy. Participants in these debates, however, often form their attitudes and frames of analysis well before moments of crisis and decision. In developing countries, professional education and technical assistance training tend to entrench an IP maximalist view among policy makers, disposing them toward IP maximalist agendas in negotiations and often leading to national policies that go beyond even the most controversial TRIPS Plus treaty terms.

This presentation examines the politics and economics of this expertise bias among policymakers. We then address each of the conference’s three themes - cultural expression, participation and access to medicines - in proposing a curricular platform as a toolkit for human rights minded IP scholars, policymakers, and activists to provide professional training on access to medicines law and policy with greater convenience and lower costs. Scholars, activists and policy makers have been successful in promoting more balanced approaches to IP in major international organizations like WIPO and the WHO as well as national institutions in both the global north and south. However, the high costs and pedagogical challenges of teaching more balanced IP outside of elite universities reduces the frequency and availability of such training. In contrast, the financing of training and assistance programs by corporations and countries promoting maximalist agendas is not in short supply. Drawing on the design and teaching of an access to medicines law and policy class at Duke University, the authors propose a hybrid open curricular platform for teaching access to medicines (MOOC + open access textbook + interactive scenario based curricula). Such a platform would support a wide variety of educational activities, maximize learning outcomes, and promote the building and strengthening of policy networks.