



Katie Jo Lunningham

Senior Associate

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Related Services

Litigation ■ Appellate ■ Education ■ Privacy, Cyber & Data Strategy ■ Class Action & Multidistrict Litigation

Katie Jo Lunningham practices complex commercial and appellate litigation with an emphasis on issues affecting institutions of higher education, data privacy litigation, class actions, and complex commercial disputes. Katie Jo has extensive experience drafting substantive trial motions and appellate briefs, and has defended clients in multiple state and federal jurisdictions, and in arbitration. She is recognized by *The Best Lawyers of America*® “Ones to Watch” for Commercial Litigation.

Katie Jo has also served as an alumni-elected regent on the Baylor University Board of Regents since 2018, giving her unique insight into the nonprofit and education industries. Katie Jo’s board services gives her a deep understanding of the institutional risks, administrative challenges, and student life issues facing colleges and universities.

Before joining Alston & Bird, Katie Jo practiced higher education law and commercial litigation at another Am Law 100 law firm where she represented institutions of higher education in civil litigation, including cases involving constitutional claims, federal and state regulatory issues, and employment disputes.

Katie Jo served as an inaugural law clerk for the Hon. Elizabeth L. Branch of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. In 2015, she was awarded a Burton Distinguished Writing Award by the U.S. Library of Congress for Excellence in Legal Writing for her academic article on higher education and administrative law.

Representative Experience

- Served as outsourced in-house counsel for a nonprofit education system to assist the Office of General Counsel with pre-litigation, regulatory, and compliance matters.
- Counsel to companies in the health care industry defending against putative nationwide class action lawsuits and multidistrict litigation following data breaches.
- Obtained a summary judgment ruling in favor of a national law firm and individual lawyer facing legal malpractice and breach of contract claims. Successfully defended the clients on appeal.
- Represented a publicly traded proprietary education company in federal arbitration and litigation before multiple state and federal courts.
- Defended a proprietary institution on appeal, resulting in affirmance of multi-million-dollar settlement resolving students’ false advertising claims.

- Represented higher education clients in appeals before state and federal courts, including defending university officials of a public institution in an interlocutory appeal from a denial of qualified immunity.
- Conducted internal investigations into alleged compliance violations and employee misconduct.
- Counsel to colleges and universities on federal and state regulatory compliance, athletics compliance, discrimination complaints, and government investigations.
- Defended a public university in a First Amendment challenge to institutional speech policies.
- Advised educational institutions during Title IV program reviews, accreditation disputes, and gender-equity audits.

Professional & Community Engagement

- Baylor University Board of Regents, alumni-elected regent; Audit, Compliance, & Risk Management Committee, vice chair (2023–2024)
- U.S. Senate Youth Alumni Association

Education

- University of Notre Dame (J.D., 2015)
- Baylor University (B.A., 2011)

Admitted to Practice

- Missouri
- Texas (Not Admitted)