Widely recognized as a leading white collar investigations and cybersecurity lawyer, Jim Garland credits his upper-level course work in the Woodrow Wilson School (now SPIA) with delivering an education that he has carried with him in his post-Princeton life. He learned “the value of close, careful study and exacting analysis, undertaken collaboratively,” as well as the importance of keeping an open mind, “to appreciate difference, and to take account of opposing views to build consensus.” These tools serve him well as a member of the three-person executive committee that leads Covington & Burling, the global law firm headquartered in Washington, D.C.

Garland’s experience at Princeton instilled in him a desire to make a difference in his communities and the broader world. After law school at the University of Virginia and a clerkship with a federal appellate judge, Garland joined Covington in 2001 and immediately took on substantial pro bono projects to balance out his busy commercial practice. One of Garland’s significant early pro bono cases, assigned in 2004 and supervised by Covington partner Eric Holder, was to represent Brian Ferguson, a Black college student wrongly convicted of murder in West Virginia. In 2008, Garland successfully argued Ferguson’s case before the West Virginia Supreme Court, obtaining rarely granted post-conviction relief that ultimately led to Ferguson’s freedom. That same year, Garland was elected partner at Covington, Barack Obama was elected president, and Holder was tapped to be U.S. Attorney General. At Holder’s request, Garland left Covington to join the Obama administration as Deputy Chief of Staff and
Counselor to the Attorney General, in which role he advised senior DOJ officials on a range of criminal, national security, cybersecurity, and surveillance matters.

Garland returned to Covington at the end of 2010 and resumed an active pro bono practice, taking on death penalty cases in Alabama and Georgia. Through this work, Garland came to collaborate with the Southern Center for Human Rights, the Atlanta-based nonprofit whose mission is to work for “equality, dignity, and justice for people impacted by the criminal legal system in the Deep South.” Since 2014, Garland has been a member of the Southern Center’s board of directors, working to advance that organization’s mission during a time of critical need and amidst a national reckoning on racial justice. He currently serves on the Southern Center board’s executive committee and chairs its nominations and governance committee.

Garland’s corporate representations have made an impact as well. He notes that he “came of age as a lawyer in the post-9/11 era,” when government responses to the global terrorist threat, combined with dramatic changes in technology, brought novel and complex issues to the forefront. He feels “fortunate to advise leading companies on cutting-edge disputes and investigations arising at the intersection of government surveillance, international relations, privacy, and security.” As just one example, Garland led the Covington team representing Microsoft in a 2016 Supreme Court case challenging the extraterritorial reach of federal search warrants seeking data stored overseas. More recently, he has been deeply involved in helping U.S. and multi-national companies
respond to the complex legal, policy, and security challenges arising out of the war in Ukraine.

All the while, Garland has played substantial leadership roles in his firm, serving for several years as hiring partner and head of Covington’s white collar investigations practice and, more recently, as a member of the firm’s management and executive committees. Garland still makes time to be active in his local community, volunteering with his family and broad circle of Princeton friends and classmates to make D.C. “a more humane and equitable place to live and work.”