

Dr. Chris Holly

Partner



cholly@cooley.com

+1 202 728 7074

Washington, DC
San Francisco

Agricultural Sciences and Technology
Patent Counseling and Prosecution
Intellectual Property

Life Sciences and Healthcare
Patent Counseling and Prosecution – Life Sciences

Climate Tech
Wellness
Biotechnology

Chris is a life sciences patent attorney partnering with emerging companies and venture capital funds seeking to create and monetize disruptive innovation. His practice spans a wide spectrum of technological fields, with a core focus on biotechnology, biopharma, synthetic biology, microbiology, cell therapy, agriculture and food innovation.

Chris works closely with emerging companies to protect and monetize cutting-edge technologies through strategic patent portfolio development. His goal is to craft intellectual property (IP) strategies that not only secure strong exclusivity but also support critical business milestones – whether it is raising capital, achieving a successful acquisition, preparing for an initial public offering or launching commercially. By aligning patent strategy with business objectives, Chris helps translate complex science into scalable, investor-ready assets that unlock long-term value.

Chris is a member of the Fellows of the American Bar Foundation, an honorary society recognizing distinguished attorneys, judges, law faculty and legal scholars worldwide. In 2021, he was named a Rising Star by the National Law Journal for his accomplishments in IP law. Chambers consistently ranks Chris among the country's top patent lawyers, noting that he "enjoys a growing reputation for his patent prosecution work." Clients describe him as "amazing to work with," praising his responsiveness, strategic insight and practical guidance.

Chris has counseled life sciences clients in a range of technical areas, including:

- Synthetic biology
- Cellular therapeutics
- Machine learning and artificial intelligence applied to biological systems
- CRISPR gene editing
- Industrial biofermentation
- Recombinant host cells
- Recombinant microbes for the production of compounds of interest
- Metagenomics
- High-throughput (HTP) genomic engineering
- Agricultural biotechnology
- Next-generation plant breeding
- Gene-edited plants

- Traditional plant breeding
- High-tech precision agriculture
- Agricultural biologicals
- Microbiology
- Microbiome
- Nitrogen fixation technology
- Food innovation
- Planetary health
- Climate technology

Chris obtained a PhD in biological sciences from Mississippi State University, and his research resulted in significant insights that led to the publication of several peer-reviewed scientific articles. During his last year of graduate research, Chris was selected as the university's top PhD research associate.

Chris is a frequently invited speaker on IP strategy for life sciences startups, having delivered dozens of presentations to audiences that include venture firms, accelerator programs, industry conferences and leading research institutions.

Media engagements

- Interviewee, "Tech Lawyer Talks Plant Patent Protection," Farm Progress, April 23, 2019
- Interviewee, "Inside Views: Innovation and Regulation of Gene-Edited Vegetables: An Interview With IP Lawyer Chris Holly," Intellectual Property Watch, March 5, 2019

Legal publications

- Co-author, "[How MAHA Is Taking Shape at the State Level](#)," Law360, December 2025
- Co-author, "[UPOV Releases Explanatory Notes Further Defining Protection for Essentially Derived Varieties](#)," Cooley alert, February 2024
- Co-author, "[What's at Steak: USDA Solicits Comments on Cultured Meat Labels](#)," Cooley alert, October 2021
- Co-author, "[IP Protection for Vegetatively Reproduced Plants: New Paths Forward](#)," Journal of the Patent and Trademark Office Society 101 (3), p. 374, June 2021
- Co-author, "[EPO: Plants and Plant Materials Not Patentable if Exclusively Obtained by Essentially Biological Process](#)," Cooley alert, May 2020
- Co-author, "[Federal Circuit Report: Syngenta Ruling Impacts Process Patent Owners](#)," IP Litigator 26 (2), pp. 24 – 27, March/April 2020
- Co-author, "[Syngenta Confirms Section 271\(g\) Infringement Does Not Require Single Entity Perform All Steps of Patented Method](#)," Cooley alert, December 2019
- Author, "[Gene Edited Crops: The Next Generation of Plant Breeding Innovation](#)," IPPro, May 2019
- Co-author, "[EPO's Approach to the Patentability of Plant-Related Inventions](#)," Cooley alert, March 2019
- Co-author, "[Helsinn Confirms Longstanding Law Concerning 'On-Sale' Bar](#)," Cooley alert, January 2019
- Co-author, "[2018 Farm Bill Enacted with Important Provisions for Plant IP and Cannabis-Related Business](#)," Cooley alert, January 2019
- Author, "Procurring Germplasm and Trait-Based Patents," Seed Innovation and Protection Alliance newsletter, April 2017
- Co-author, "[Inside the Minds – Trends in Agriculture: GMOs and Organics](#)," Thomson Reuters, August 2016
- Author, "[The Book of Wisdom: How to Bring a Metaphorical Flourish Into the Realm of Economic Reality by Adopting a Market Reconstruction Requirement in the Calculation of a Reasonable Royalty](#)," Journal of the Patent and Trademark Office Society (JPTOS) 92 (2), p.156, 2010
 - Cited and quoted by a US district court discussing a court's discretion in considering post-

negotiation evidence in calculating a reasonable royalty for patent infringement – *On Track Innovations Ltd. v. T-Mobile USA, Inc.*, 106 F. Supp. 3d 369, 409 (SDNY, 2015)

- Profiled in a recent meta-analysis of patent legal research being cited by federal courts in judicial opinions – see Timothy Gatton and Lee Peoples, “The Journal of the Patent and Trademark Office Society in Judicial Opinions,” *JPTOS*, Vol. 104, pp. 183 – 208, 2024

International speaking engagements

- Presenter, “Plant Patents in the US,” Intellectual Property Protection for Plant Innovation 2015, 7th International Conference, presented by the FORUM Institute, Amsterdam, December 3 – 4, 2015

Domestic speaking engagements

- Presenter, “Faulkner, Comparative Mythology, & a Synthetic Biology Haiku,” Biomixer at SynBioBeta, presented by Biomixer, in conjunction with GRIDX and SOSV-SF, San Francisco, California, May 4, 2026
- Panelist, “The Critical Support Needed Beyond Capital to Successfully Scale Climate Innovations,” South Asian Climate Showcase, presented by Bay Area South Asian Climate Association, in conjunction with Momentum Capital, San Francisco, April 21, 2026
- Co-presenter, “Preparing Your Company for IP Diligence: Building a Defensible, Scalable Portfolio,” Cooley’s Agtech and Foodtech Legal Series, February 26, 2026
- Presenter, “Invalidated: Tales from the Biotech Trenches,” BITS in Bio and Frontier Tower, San Francisco, California, February 19, 2026
- Co-presenter, “From Idea to IP – Building Defensible, Investable Innovation,” in conjunction with AgStart Incubator’s Learn from a Leader Series and Carlsen Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Woodland, California, November 13, 2025
- Presenter, “Commercializing University Technology: Inventorship vs. Authorship vs. Ownership,” C2C: Concept to Commercialization series, University of Miami – Coulter Center for Translational Research, Miami, Florida, October 14, 2025
- Co-presenter, “Startup Success – IP Strategies for Attracting Venture Capital Investment,” AgStart Incubator, Woodland, California, April 9, 2025
- Panelist, “Getting Your House in Order: Preparing Your AgTech Start-Up for Investment Success,” World Agri-Tech Innovation Summit, San Francisco, March 11, 2025
- Presenter, “CRISPR Gene Editing and Commercialization in University Research – Navigating a Complex Legal Landscape,” University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, February 3, 2025
- Presenter, “Gene Editing & Intellectual Property Rights Update,” American Seed Trade Association’s Field Crop Seed Convention, Orlando, Florida, December 10, 2024
- Panelist, “Research Security and Agricultural Research and Technology,” National Science, Technology, and Security Roundtable, presented by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, hosted by Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, March 7, 2024
- Panelist, “International Intellectual Property Issues – Agricultural Technology and Seed Patents,” American University Washington College of Law Intellectual Property Symposium, Washington, DC, March 1, 2024
- Presenter, “Inventorship vs. Authorship vs. Ownership,” C2C: Concept to Commercialization series, University of Miami, Miami, March 14, 2023
- Presenter, “IP Protection & Freedom to Operate in the Seed Business,” in conjunction with the University of California, Davis, Seed Biotechnology Center course, “European Plant Breeding Academy VI,” Davis, California, June 20, 2022
- Co-presenter, “Cannabis Patent Protection and Litigation Strategy,” in conjunction with the University of California, Davis, Seed Biotechnology Center course, “Hemp Breeding and Seed Production,” Davis, California, online virtual course, November 2 – 4, 2021
- Panelist, “Domestic and Global IP Challenges Facing Universities,” Seed Innovation and Protection Alliance’s Education Unit, virtual event, June 25, 2021

- Presenter, “Emerging Technologies Seeking Patent Protection,” American Seed Trade Association’s Policy & Leadership Development Conference, Washington, DC, June 20 – 24, 2021
- Panelist, “Putting Biologicals Into Action: What Does a Pest Management Strategy Led by Biologicals Look Like?” World Agri-Tech Innovation Summit, virtual event, March 10, 2021
- Co-presenter, “Cannabis Patent Protection and Litigation Strategy,” in conjunction with the University of California, Davis, Seed Biotechnology Center course, “Hemp Breeding and Seed Production,” Davis, California, online virtual course, October 27 – 29, 2020
- Co-presenter, “America’s Newest Crop: IP Protection, Product Development, and Enforcement for Hemp Innovation,” Lawline webinar, June 4, 2020
- Presenter, “Inventorship vs. Authorship vs. Ownership,” C2C: Concept to Commercialization series, University of Miami, Miami, online Zoom seminar, April 27, 2020
- Presenter, “Regulatory & Technological Advancements – Catalysts for AgTech Innovation Driving a Dynamic IP Landscape,” American Seed Trade Association’s 59th Vegetable & Flower Seed Conference, Monterey, California, February 1 – 4, 2020
- Presenter, “Protecting New Innovation – Landscape for Gene Edited Products,” American Seed Trade Association’s CSS & Seed Expo, Chicago, December 9 – 12, 2019
- Presenter, “Innovation – As New Technologies Emerge, How Does It Change the Way We Protect Them?” American Seed Trade Association’s CSS & Seed Expo, Chicago, December 9 – 12, 2019
- Co-presenter, “Cannabis Patent Protection and Litigation Strategy,” in conjunction with the University of California, Davis, Seed Biotechnology Center course, “Hemp Breeding and Seed Production,” Davis, California October 29 – 30, 2019
- Presenter, “AgTech IP: Recent Trends and Developments – The Times They Are A-Changin’,” Sakata Seed America Annual Research Meeting, Sacramento, California, October 9, 2019
- Co-presenter, “AgTech IP, Enforcement, and Litigation: A Discussion on Patent Assertion and Defense, With an Update on Ensuring Broad and Enforceable Claims,” California Seed Association Mid-Year Meeting, Monterey, California, October 8, 2019
- Co-presenter, “Protecting Plant Innovation: Hemp, CBD & Plant IP Laws Under the 2018 Farm Bill,” Lawline webinar, May 7, 2019
- Panelist, “Technology Showcase: Five Start-Ups Present Seven-Minute Pitches,” World Agri-Tech Innovation Summit, San Francisco, March 19, 2019
- Presenter, “IP Strategies for Protecting Plant Innovation: Next Generation Breeding Technologies From Molecular Markers to Gene Editing,” Seed Innovation and Protection Alliance Education Unit, in conjunction with the American Seed Trade Association’s 58th Vegetable & Flower Seed Conference, Orlando, Florida, February 3, 2019
- Co-presenter, “IP Strategies for Protecting Important Plant Germplasm,” seminar given to official Japanese delegation, hosted by the American Seed Trade Association, Alexandria, Virginia, February 2, 2017
- Presenter, “Procuring Germplasm and Trait-Based Patents,” Seed Innovation and Protection Alliance Education Unit, in conjunction with the American Seed Trade Association’s 56th Vegetable & Flower Seed Conference, Orlando, Florida, January 29, 2017
- Presenter, “Patent Notice: How to Get the Word Out on Your Patents,” Seed Innovation and Protection Alliance Education Unit, in conjunction with the American Seed Trade Association’s 56th Vegetable & Flower Seed Conference, Orlando, Florida, January 29, 2017
- Presenter, “Exploring the Differences Between Inventorship, Authorship, and Ownership on the Road to Commercializing University Intellectual Property,” 2016 C2C: Concept to Commercialization series, University of Miami, Miami, April 14, 2016
- Co-presenter, “Patents: Monetizing Innovation,” University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, October 13, 2015
- Presenter, “Inventorship vs. Authorship vs. Ownership,” University of Miami Life Science & Technology Park, Medical Center Campus, Miami, July 28, 2015
- Co-presenter, “Patenting Genes, Biomarkers, and Other Natural Products in a Post-Myriad World,” University of Florida Sid Martin Biotechnology Incubator, Alachua, Florida, June 11, 2014

- Co-presenter, “Patenting Genes, Biomarkers, and Other Natural Products in a Post-Myriad World,” University of Miami Life Science & Technology Park, Medical Center Campus, Miami, April 1, 2014
- Co-presenter, “Pursuing and Circumventing Patents in a ‘First to File’ Regime,” University of Miami, Coral Gables Campus, Miami, April 1, 2014
- Presenter, “From Bilski to Myriad: Statutory Subject Matter Jurisprudence in the Roberts’ Court,” continuing legal education (CLE) seminar given to the international corporate legal team of Life Technologies, hosted at Life Technologies corporate office, Frederick, Maryland, July 22, 2013
- Co-presenter, “The Supreme Court’s Myriad Decision and What It Means for Your Business,” Baker Donelson webinar series hosted to a live international audience, Washington, DC, June 28, 2013
- Presenter, “Claim Drafting Issues for Bio-Pharma Companies,” Tennessee Intellectual Property Law Association, CLE seminar, Nashville, Tennessee, May 10, 2013
- Presenter, “Ethics and the Office of Enrollment and Discipline,” Tennessee Intellectual Property Law Association, CLE seminar, Nashville, Tennessee, May 4, 2012
- Presenter, “Inequitable Conduct After Therasense and in Light of the New Supplemental Examination Provisions of the America Invents Act,” 2012 Baker Donelson Intellectual Property Symposium, New Orleans, March 20 – 22, 2012

Education

University of Mississippi School of Law JD, magna cum laude, 2011

Mississippi State University PhD, Biological Sciences, 2008

Millsaps College BS, Biology, 2004

Admissions & Credentials

Admitted to practice in Washington, DC

Mississippi

Registered to practice before the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO)

Tennessee

Not admitted to practice in California

Court Admissions

US District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi

US District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi

US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit

US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit

US Supreme Court

Rankings & Accolades

Chambers USA: Intellectual Property: Patent Prosecution – District of Columbia (2021 – 2026)

The Legal 500 US: Patents: Prosecution (Including Re-Examination and Post-Grant Proceedings) (2024 – 2025)

Fellows of the American Bar Foundation: Elected Member

Seed World: Top Ten Next Generation Leaders

Super Lawyers: Rising Star

The National Law Journal: Rising Star

Memberships & Affiliations

American Intellectual Property Law Association

American Seed Trade Association

Patent & Trademark Office Society

Seed Innovation and Protection Alliance