As a law professor, Trubek created the Institute for Legal Studies, which stands for the complex intersections of law, economics, and social justice. Often at the fore of movements to recognize the globalization of law, he took the lead from his earliest days as a young State Department lawyer advising the Agency for International Development in Brazil, David Trubek has followed a passion for the complex intersections of law, economics, and social justice. Often at the forefront of critical re-examinations of legal theory and practice, he has had a significant impact on his fields of study and on the institutions in which he works. As a law professor, Trubek created the Institute for Legal Studies, which stands today as a hub of scholarship, debate, and influence in the use of social science to enhance legal analysis.

In 1990, he brought his dynamism to UW-Madison’s international resources as Dean of International Studies, bringing the campus’s historic global reach to new prominence. His leadership strengthened and expanded federally-funded National Resource Centers for area and language studies, and established the campus as the institution with the largest number of such centers. His tenure also led to a significant expansion in the number, types, and world regions available for campus study abroad.

Trubek continued his scholarship in critical legal theory while dean, emerging at the fore of movements to recognize the globalization of law. He took the lead in organizing conferences to examine global trends in the aftermath of the Cold War, and provided and mentored younger colleagues who wanted to initiate global studies within their own disciplines.

He has been honored with the Chevalier dans l’Ordre des Palmes Académiques, the government of France’s highest honor, and the Law and Society Association’s Harry Kalven Prize. He serves on a Research Council Committee to review the effectiveness of federally funded international education programs.