

100 YEARS / CALIFORNIA WESTERN SCHOOL OF LAW / San Diego

Search for the President and Dean
California Western School of Law
San Diego, California

California Western School of Law (California Western or CWSL), a private, non-profit, independent law school located in San Diego, California, seeks an experienced, entrepreneurial academic leader to serve as President and Dean (President/Dean). Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President/Dean will serve as the chief executive and academic officer of CWSL. The President/ Dean will work in collaboration with the Board, faculty, staff, alumni, and students to shape and execute on a strategic plan consistent with CWSL's vision which will position California Western for continued success and prominence well into the future.

This is an exciting time to join the CWSL community as the school celebrates its centennial and enters its second century. Chartered in 1924, California Western was accredited by the American Bar Association in 1962 and became a member of the Association of American Law Schools in 1967. Today, it remains one of the few independent, non-profit law schools in the country, and also was recently accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission. As the oldest law school in San Diego, California Western has a distinguished tradition of preparing outstanding legal professionals for service in California and throughout the world. Today, CWSL enrolls approximately 660 students; women comprise around 60 percent of the student population, over 50% of students identify as members of an ethnic minority and approximately 42 percent of CWSL's students are first-generation. With seven military bases in the San Diego area, California Western takes pride in its commitment to assisting service members transitioning into the next phase of their careers. California Western has a strong reputation for academic programs that combine practical and theoretical learning, and the school operates an array of internship programs, centers, and institutes. The school is home to the California Western Innocence and Justice Clinic, the Community Law Project, the Trademark Clinic, and the nationally acclaimed New Media Rights Clinic. These hands-on programs offer students the ability to apply what they learn in the classroom to the world of law practice, allowing them to gain experience as they impact the community around them.

The next President/Dean of California Western will join the institution at a pivotal moment for both the institution and for legal education throughout the world. The marketplace for legal education across the nation is changing rapidly: people applying to law school as students are confronting high tuition, increased debt levels, and a rapidly changing job market. Increasingly, law firms are demanding students who are not only prepared to practice law but are also adept at using technology and are comfortable working in global contexts. The President/Dean will work with faculty and staff to tackle the challenges

CWSL faces while leveraging its many strengths to ensure its continued success and vitality in a highly dynamic environment.

The successful President/Dean candidate will be an inspiring, collaborative, and strategic leader with a clear vision for how California Western will continue to deliver outstanding academic programs that weave together teaching, service, and research, helping the law school forge a distinctive identity and elevate its reach and impact locally and nationally. The President/Dean will successfully address several opportunities and challenges, which are described in detail later in this document:

- ***Chart a clear path forward for California Western School of Law.***
- ***Develop a robust resource and infrastructure base that will allow CWSL to realize its ambitious objectives.***
- ***Recruit, develop, and inspire an exceptional faculty and staff.***
- ***Identify opportunities to improve bar passage and career placement for CWSL students.***
- ***Collaborate closely and effectively with CWSL's Board of Trustees.***

A complete list of the desired qualifications and characteristics of the President/Dean can be found at the conclusion of this document, which was prepared with the assistance of Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm. All confidential applications, inquiries, and nominations should be directed to the parties listed at the conclusion of this document.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA WESTERN SCHOOL OF LAW

California Western offers an innovative, student-focused [Juris Doctor](#) (J.D.) degree program, provided on a traditional academic semester system and also on a flexible, part-time evening program format. Students may also enroll in a joint JD/MBA (with San Diego State University). Within the JD program CWSL offers six optional [areas of concentration](#) (AOC) in Business Law; Criminal Justice; Intellectual Property, Privacy, and Media Law; International Law; Labor and Employment Law; and Social Justice.

- The Business Law concentration blends theory and practice for students interested in business, entrepreneurship, and transactional law. Features include internships, pro bono or paid work, classroom and practicum courses, and a rigorous writing requirement that puts new skills on full display for a prospective employer.
- The Criminal Justice practice area of concentration gives students advanced training in trial advocacy skills and theory, as well as hands-on experience to hit the ground running as advocates within the criminal justice system. This distinction can help students stand out to employers looking for practice-ready attorneys with litigation skills. Through this concentration, students can participate in hands-on experiences in the sessions of the National Trial Skills Academy or in special programs like the [California Western Innocence and Justice Clinic](#).
- The Intellectual Property, Privacy, and Media Law Concentration allows students to focus on national and international issues associated with the ownership, use, and regulation of technological advancements, data, and creativity. Lawyers in these fields foster groundbreaking

innovation and cultural phenomena at IP-focused law firms, university technology transfer offices, technology and entertainment companies, and non-governmental organizations that work in the public interest.

- The Area of Concentration in International Law provides students with a rigorous overview of international and comparative law. At California Western, students interested in international law can pursue several unique opportunities. Students may be invited to join the International Law Journal, one of the oldest international law publications in the country. Students may apply to join the school's celebrated Jessup International Law Moot Court Team. California Western has a vibrant International Law Society as well as other student organizations that address international and comparative law issues. Additionally, students may participate in an externship that focuses on international or comparative law in their third year.
- The Social Justice Law concentration blends practical work and relevant coursework for students who are interested in public interest law positions following graduation. Features include internships, pro bono or paid work, classroom and practicum courses, and a rigorous writing requirement that demonstrate a dedication to a future career in the area of social justice.
- Employment Law and Labor Law are high demand areas of practice in the current legal market, offering students a wide range of professional opportunities: From working in the private sector to the public sector, from representing private employers to working with labor unions, from representing employees to working with administrative or governmental entities, students specializing in this field will find themselves equipped for a broad range of careers. This concentration is designed to provide students with a rigorous introduction to labor and employment law. The concentration will allow students to take the courses needed to prepare to practice in the highly specialized field and will represent to prospective employers that they have the knowledge, training, and experience to hit the ground running in this area.

California Western's Clinical Externship Program is an essential component of the JD curriculum and engages 70% of third-year students. The Program builds upon students' strong doctrinal and practice foundation developed in their first two years of law school. The 13-week Program gives third year students the opportunity to earn between five and ten academic credits for legal work in not-for-profit agencies, private law offices, courts, corporations, or government agencies. In these settings, students engage in legal work and acquire valuable insights and skills that prepare them for practice. The Program develops and promotes confidence, problem-solving skills, and professionalism that lead to becoming practice-ready attorneys.

California Western is deeply committed to the academic success of its students during law school and beyond. The law school is home to an Academic Achievement department that supports every student. Both the department's director and the director of bar support programs are full-time faculty members, and the department's course offerings and outreach programs are staffed by a large team of full-time instructors and adjunct faculty. The CWSL faculty recently implemented an extensive curriculum reform package that went into effect in August 2024; changes to the academic program were informed by a detailed statistical study that used institutional data on coursework to identify correlates with bar

success. Every first-year student is now enrolled in a for-credit, one-unit academic support course, and selected second-term students are enrolled in a three-unit for-credit academic support course that reinforces their multiple choice testing and exam-writing skills.

California Western's brand rests on five core pillars:

- **Making Law Accessible** – looking beyond traditional indicators to identify students who demonstrate the potential to be good lawyers.
- **Making Law Applicable** – education that is doctrinal and experiential, providing students many opportunities to put new knowledge into practice.
- **Pursuing Justice** – work rooted in real-world matters of legal consequence that benefit both California Western students and society.
- **Giving Back** – California Western students contribute more than 15,000 hours of pro bono work every year.
- **Nurturing a Welcoming and Supportive Community** – ranked among the top 20 most diverse law schools, California Western welcomes and celebrates students from all walks of life.

CWSL supports diverse co-curricular activities on campus, including bar committees and legal organizations that provide students with opportunities to gain hands-on experience and carry out professional networking within the legal community. California Western students, advised by faculty members, produce both the California Western Law Review and the California Western International Law Journal, one of the oldest international law journals in the nation. There are also diverse opportunities available for students to carry out pro bono work, through standing relationships with more than two-dozen public-interest organizations. The school's internship program frequently places students with the U.S. and state Courts of Appeal; U.S. District Courts; U.S. Attorney's Offices; trial courts and other legal settings.

California Western has a base of thousands of alumni located across the nation and around the world, among them more than 100 federal and state court judges. Notable alumni include: Anthony J. Battaglia, senior U.S. District Court judge for the Southern District of California; Scott C. Black, former Judge Advocate General of the United States Army; Shana Dale, former Deputy Administrator of NASA; M. James Lorenz, senior U.S. District Court judge for the Southern District of California; Bruce E. MacDonald, former U.S. Navy vice admiral and Judge Advocate General of the Navy; Afa Ripley, Jr., former Attorney General of American Samoa; Margaret Catharine Rodgers, U.S. District Court judge for the Northern District of Florida; David Roger, retired District Attorney of Clark County, Nevada; Kevin Sandkuhler, retired Brigadier General in the United States Marine Corps; Judith Haller, Associate Justice, California 4th District Court of Appeal; Thomas A. Nassif, former U.S. Ambassador to Morocco; Michael M. Tsai, former Minister of National Defense, Taiwan; Edward T. Brady, former Justice, North Carolina Supreme Court; and Wayne L. Peterson, former Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California, San Diego County.

To learn more about CWSL, visit www.cwsl.edu.

ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT AND DEAN

The incoming President/Dean will be the public face of the law school in its engagement with alumni, students, the legal community, community leaders, potential donors, and the media. The President/Dean provides leadership in developing, implementing, and maintaining course curriculum and internship programs that respond to community needs and prepare law students for success in their careers. Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President/Dean is responsible for advancing the overall mission of the law school, including successful implementation and accountability for strategic planning, accreditation, enrollment, facilities, fundraising, and community relations. They will oversee a cabinet comprised of a Vice Dean for Academic Affairs; an Associate Dean for Teaching and Assessment; an Associate Dean for Faculty Research; a Dean of Students; an Assistant Dean of Admissions, Financial Aid, and Campus Diversity; an Associate Dean of Library and Information Resources; a Senior Director of Marketing and Communications; and a Senior Director of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE PRESIDENT AND DEAN

Chart a clear path forward for California Western School of Law

Upon joining the California Western community, the President/Dean will engage with stakeholders at all levels to promote dialogue about where the institution stands today and where it should be heading in the future. Demonstrating a commitment to collaborative leadership, the President/Dean will facilitate candid discussions focused on addressing important questions regarding how California Western should update its curricula, programs, and services to be more effective in attracting a diverse and qualified student body and how it can most effectively serve students to enhance their success.

Based upon this community conversation, the President/Dean will lead the advancement of an inspiring vision and strategy that will define the future path for the institution. The vision should articulate how California Western can achieve excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service and come to be better known as a leading center for producing highly prepared attorneys and creative problem-solvers. The vision will serve as a tool for recruiting faculty and students, raising funds, and establishing the framework for the continued development and creation of degree programs and curricula, as well as clinics, internships, and other opportunities, which will enhance the California Western academic experience.

Develop a robust resource and infrastructure base that will allow CWSL to realize its ambitious objectives

CWSL aspires to advance a quality education and experience for its community: prioritizing student recruitment and academic success; ensuring bar exam passage and job-placement post-graduation; and advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging for its student body, among other key initiatives. The President/Dean will need to be an effective fiscal manager to address strategic investments while diligently managing complex fiscal realities.

Located in the heart of San Diego, CWSL operates in a dynamic and resource-rich environment. The incoming President/Dean is well positioned to take advantage of the city's local philanthropic sources and growing alumni base. Responsible for creating and participating in activities that support fundraising, the President/Dean will set ambitious fundraising goals and should be skilled in stewarding donors and securing resources from a wide range of sources. The incoming President/Dean should have experience managing diverse revenue streams and building relationships with donors. They will use their exceptional interpersonal skills to articulate the identity of and vision for CWSL to excite donors, while leveraging their financial acumen to effectively manage resources and ensure the School has a healthy and sustainable future.

Recruit, develop, and inspire an exceptional faculty and staff

CWSL's faculty and staff are indispensable to student success and are highly committed to the success of the School's reach and impact in Southern California, nationally, and globally. The incoming President/Dean will invest time, energy, and resources into employee retention efforts and professional development opportunities for faculty and staff whose work can be taxing. The ideal candidate will display exceptional interpersonal and management skills and will be both present and accessible internally and externally. They will inspire loyalty and dedication to CWSL's mission and promote its values of inclusion and excellence. This individual will be committed to ensuring a healthy workplace environment for faculty and staff at all levels, and will have experience managing conflicts, mentoring, and recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance. The incoming President/Dean will embrace and advance a culture of shared governance to ensure all voices are heard and acknowledged in times of stability and uncertainty.

Identify opportunities to improve bar passage and career placement for CWSL students

The ideal candidate will have experience overseeing and supporting curricular and administrative programs and decisions that allow the law school to remain compliant with ABA bar passage requirements, providing every graduate with a meaningful opportunity to become licensed to practice law.

Collaborate closely and effectively with CWSL's Board of Trustees

California Western has a large and committed Board, and the President/Dean will be charged with developing a positive working relationship with them, continuing past successes and fostering new areas for growth and collaboration. This will include effective relationship-building with individual Board members and maintaining ongoing, informative, and reciprocal communication with the Board as a whole. A close partnership with the Board will help the President/Dean guide CWSL's mission and future in support of the School's strategic goals. The President/Dean will also work closely with the chair of the

Board to ensure board governance processes are effective and appropriate to supporting the mission of CWSL.

Because CWSL is structured and governed as an independent, nonprofit corporation that owns and operates a fully accredited law school, the President/Dean reports to the Board of Trustees, and that Board has the fiduciary responsibility to advance the mission and preserve the school's assets, including its goodwill. The advantage of this independent structure for the President/Dean is the absence of bureaucracy that is common in a larger university setting resulting in the ability to be nimble, respond to opportunities and work with the Board and the faculty to create innovative programs. As an independent law school California Western is approached from time to time to consider strategic opportunities and undertakings with other academic institutions. While CWSL is committed to its mission as an independent law school, the President/Dean will be expected to collaborate with the Board in assessing any future proposals that might benefit the school's mission and the welfare of its students and other stakeholders.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The President/Dean will exemplify the qualities and characteristics expected of a highly visible leader and respected educator. The ideal candidate should have a record that includes experience in senior administrative roles in legal academia.

The candidate should have familiarity working with accrediting bodies, including the ABA (American Bar Association), AALS (Association of American Law Schools), and WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges). The candidate must have experience managing complex operations, teams, and budgets in the legal education context, and should have familiarity with and interest in overseeing an institution's financial and fiscal health.

This individual should have a background as a legal academic that includes experience in law school teaching and a demonstrated record of producing, or commitment to encouraging, legal scholarship. The President/Dean will have an aptitude for, and commitment to, advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging for the benefit of the entire CWSL community. In addition, the incoming President/Dean will also display the following qualities and characteristics:

Strong listening and communication skills: The candidate must demonstrate an ability to understand and engage various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, prospective students, alumni, and members of the Board.

Ability to work well with others: The candidate should be highly collaborative and should excel at engaging in teamwork, working with diverse groups, and fostering a sense of community. This includes nurturing faculty, staff, and student relationships to create cohesive, effective groups. The candidate should be empathetic, personable, and affable.

Leadership: The candidate must have the ability to exercise decisive, strong leadership in different situations. The candidate must be able to articulate and work toward a strategic vision on behalf of the institution.

Honesty and integrity: The candidate must have an honest character, which is vital for establishing trust and transparency and fostering a positive institutional environment.

Adaptability and flexibility: The candidate must demonstrate an ability to adjust to changing circumstances and new ideas in the law school environment.

LOCATION

California Western is in downtown San Diego, a thriving metropolitan region located three hours south of Los Angeles and just 20 minutes north of Baja, Mexico. San Diego is known for having an enviable year-round climate--the average daily temperature ranges from 65 degrees in January to 77 degrees in August. With 267 days of sunshine a year on average, residents have easy access to recreational activities along 50 miles of beaches. The campus is located near the 1,017-acre Balboa Park and the world-famous San Diego Zoo and Old Globe Theater complex. Live cultural events thrive at the San Diego Repertory Theatre, San Diego Opera and San Diego Symphony. The Gaslamp Quarter, Seaport Village, Horton Plaza, and Old Town offer a variety of restaurants, shops, sights, and entertainment. To learn more about San Diego, please see www.sandiego.org.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website for the search:

<https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/california-western-school-law/president-and-dean>.

Electronic submission of materials is required. For best consideration, please submit materials by February 7. The anticipated salary range for this position is \$340,000 to \$360,000 commensurate with experience and subject to other negotiated benefits.

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