

CALIFORNIA WESTERN SCHOOL OF LAW / San Diego

Executive Director of Advancement and Alumni Engagement
California Western School of Law
San Diego, California

THE SEARCH

[California Western School of Law](#) (California Western or CWSL), a private, non-profit, independent law school located in the heart of San Diego, California, seeks a strategic, collaborative, and dedicated Executive Director of Advancement and Alumni Engagement to serve as its chief development and alumni relations officer. The Executive Director (ED) will join during an exciting time for the CWSL community as the school welcomes President and Dean (President/Dean) Miriam Baer. The ED position presents a unique opportunity to implement a culture of philanthropy, re-establish alumni engagement, lead and mentor a growth-phase team, and partner with President/Dean Baer to define strategic priorities that elevate CWSL's profile while staying true to its mission of making legal education accessible and of developing practice-ready, successful lawyers in all fields and sectors.

As a contributing member of President/Dean Baer's leadership team, the ED will serve as the principal advisor on all aspects of developing and executing a productive advancement program that improves annual and major giving, creates and deepens professional partnerships with industry and community leaders, and cultivates a strong alumni network of lawyers and law-adjacent professionals. The ED will guide and support the president/dean in her role as CWSL's leading spokesperson and fundraiser, acting as a thought partner, co-strategist, and coach. They will also collaborate with peers and leaders across the school to advance shared goals. The ED will broaden and diversify CWSL's philanthropic revenue base, increasing the number of donors, engaged alumni, and contributions – both unrestricted and restricted – for student scholarships, major gifts, centers, clinics, bar support, and other top initiatives. The ED will be looked upon to drive donor identification and solicitation efforts, expand and foster philanthropy-forward relationships, implement and assess progress toward institutional fundraising objectives, and partner collaboratively across CWSL's internal and external constituencies. The ED will further be tasked with mentoring and growing a team, and providing the President/Dean and Board of Trustees with real-time data.

This is an exceptional role for an aspirational advancement professional to exercise leadership and become an agent of impact for a mission-driven institution with a rich history and untapped philanthropic potential. With at least five years of leadership experience, this individual must have the ability to build and elevate a comprehensive advancement program, fully leveraging key constituencies in philanthropic efforts and guiding the strategy to create a lasting and sustainable impact for CWSL. The ideal candidate

will possess a keen understanding of fundraising best practices and will be data-informed in their approach to building program infrastructure, leading and mentoring a team, as well as developing a vision, goals, and buy-in. Exceptional communication and negotiation skills, political savvy, flexibility, and interpersonal agility to navigate an academic and professional community will be essential. In addition, candidates must demonstrate a deep appreciation for and an ability to articulate the educational mission and aspirations of CWSL. Fundraising experience in higher education in graduate or legal studies is strongly preferred. A bachelor's degree is required and familiarity with legal education is highly preferred.

California Western School of Law has retained the services of Isaacson, Miller, the national executive search firm, to conduct the search. Inquiries, nominations, and applications may be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

LEADERSHIP

Miriam Baer, President and Dean

Miriam Baer joined California Western School of Law on July 1, 2025, following nearly a decade in legal practice and nineteen years of service and teaching in higher education. From 2022 to 2025, she served as Vice Dean and Centennial Professor of Law at Brooklyn Law School, where she taught and published extensively on business law and criminal law, and was a frequent commentator on white-collar crime and its enforcement.

A widely cited and recognized scholar, Baer authored *Myths and Misunderstandings in White-Collar Crime* (Cambridge University Press), which examines public misconceptions of the legal system when tasked with prohibiting and enforcing the nation's fraud and corruption laws. Baer's work has been featured on numerous podcasts and is the subject of several academic book reviews. She also co-authored a leading casebook and study aid in white-collar crime and contributed chapters to several leading scholarly compilations on criminal law, corporate theory, and corporate compliance.

Baer has published over 30 articles and essays in leading law review publications, including the Columbia Law Review, Virginia Law Review, Texas Law Review, Michigan Law Review, Northwestern University Law Review, Minnesota Law Review, and the Yale Law Journal Forum.

Baer is an elected member of the American Law Institute and a fellow of the American Bar Foundation. Prior to entering academia, Baer served as an assistant general counsel for compliance with Verizon and prosecuted crimes as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. She began her career clerking for the Honorable Jane R. Roth, United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, and spent two years practicing litigation for the law firm of Cravath, Swaine and Moore.

Finances and Philanthropy

California Western School of Law operates on a fiscal year from August 1 to July 31. The school derives the majority of its revenue from tuition and fees, supplemented by philanthropic support and grant funding. In Fiscal Year 2024, the school's operating budget, as measured by expenses, exceeded \$27.6 million. In the same year, the school secured over \$2.1 million in philanthropic contributions and grants. Its endowment was valued at approximately \$35.4 million.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ADVANCEMENT AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Reporting to President/Dean Baer, the ED will lead and oversee the advancement strategy and efforts for the CWSL's development and alumni relations office. The ED will collaborate with CWSL leaders, volunteers, key faculty, and staff across the school to create and execute an effective and sustainable fundraising and alumni engagement program that will broaden the base of philanthropic support for CWSL's emerging priorities.

The ED is responsible for developing and managing annual and long-term development plans, including achievable goal-setting for fundraising, constituent engagement, and donor base expansion. The ED will lead by example and carry a portfolio and personally identify, cultivate, solicit, and steward major and principal gift prospects. The ED will oversee a three-person staff, with the potential for expansion as appropriate, and manage team performance as well as provide coaching, training, and mentorship to inspire greater levels of productivity.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Establish a comprehensive data-informed development and engagement strategy for CWSL's philanthropy and alumni engagement efforts in collaboration with the president/dean and senior leaders.
- Assess the current development and engagement program and create and implement a multi-year strategy to strengthen and enhance the systems, policies, and practices to support a best-in-class operation and maximize CWSL's fundraising potential.
- Serve as the president/dean's primary philanthropic advisor and strategic partner, supporting her role as principal spokesperson and fundraiser for CWSL in gift cultivation and solicitation for transformative gifts and high-profile engagement.
- Similarly, systematically engage, guide, and support the administrative deans and faculty in the fundraising process, assisting them to build and strengthen alumni and friend relationships and leverage the interest and support of high-potential alumni and philanthropic partners.
- Personally cultivate, solicit, and steward a portfolio of major and principal gift prospects.
- Oversee the performance management of the CWSL philanthropy and alumni engagement department responsible for the production of major gifts, annual giving, donor relations, and alumni engagement. In these efforts, implement the use of performance metrics tools, including

prospect moves management reports, strategy development reports, individual metric reports, and other performance analytics using Salesforce.

- Lead, support, and mentor CWSL's advancement staff of three, promoting a culture of excellence, collaboration, and professional growth. Exercise a leadership style that constructively supports, organizes, and inspires a team and operation, setting clear direction and priorities. Model a culture of open and transparent communication, respect, inclusion, high achievement, and overall professionalism that translates to both internal and external community members.
- Liaise with the school's Board of Trustees who provide operational and financial oversight to the school and meet on a quarterly basis.
- Provide oversight to the 28-member Alumni Association Board of Directors to develop strategic initiatives that strengthen alumni relationships with CWSL's base of over 11,000 graduates and drive increased affinity engagement and advocacy across key constituent groups.
- Work closely with President/Dean Baer and Board of Trustee members to develop strategies that will enhance and strengthen trustee and alumni boards and create a volunteer structure that fosters a culture of philanthropy. Assist in the identification, recruitment, and cultivation of new foundation and alumni board members and volunteers, identifying key leaders with an affinity for the mission of CWSL.
- In partnership with the Dean Baer and the senior director of marketing and communications, help to bolster brand identity and awareness and ensure alignment of key messaging that leverages the uniqueness, strengths, and aspirations of CWSL and its leadership in a way that results in philanthropic support for funding opportunities.
- Demonstrate a strong sense of teamwork and a commitment to an environment of mentoring and support within the CWSL administration and faculty.

Qualifications and Experience

- A minimum of five years of fundraising and managerial leadership experience within a comprehensive advancement program. Higher education experience is preferred, ideally within a law school or professional school. Knowledge of the legal community is a plus.
- Demonstrated experience in executing high-impact development and alumni relations programs with a tangible increase in philanthropic productivity. Understanding of the full range of engagement tactics to deploy for a growing alumni base, utilizing modes of communication, engagement, and programming that will appeal to the broad and varied demographics of the alumni constituency.
- A proven track record of success in personally cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major gifts from individual and institutional donors. Principal gift fundraising experience is strongly preferred.
- Demonstrated experience engaging advisory board members and volunteers in philanthropy.
- Commitment to working in a team environment with shared goals; sound judgment and integrity; willingness to try new approaches and take appropriate risks; and a high level of energy, enthusiasm, and dedication to the mission and objectives of the CWSL.

- Demonstrated ability to work well with people at all levels of an organization, across a broad range of backgrounds; respect and appreciation for each individual. This individual must possess a high level of comfort working with prominent legal figures and distinguished members of the judiciary and legal community.
- The intellectual depth, maturity, self-awareness, and confidence to establish credibility and garner the trust of volunteers, philanthropic partners, senior leaders, academic partners, colleagues, and staff.
- Demonstrated experience utilizing data, metrics, and CRM tools to inform strategy and as a foundation for development programs; impeccable attention to detail and superb follow-through. Familiarity with Salesforce is a plus.
- Superior written and oral communication skills with the ability to eloquently and succinctly communicate a vision and process to senior leaders and other key audiences and constituents.
- Willingness and ability to travel and work evenings and weekends, as needed, to meet philanthropic partners or otherwise represent the school.
- A bachelor's degree is required.

LOCATION AND COMPENSATION

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.

The anticipated salary range for this position is **\$165,000 to \$180,000**, commensurate with experience and subject to other negotiated benefits. The salary of the finalist selected for this role will be set based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to departmental budgets, qualifications, expertise, education, licenses, specialty, and training. The stated hiring range represents CWSL's good faith and reasonable estimate of the range of possible compensation at the time of posting.

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/
executive-director-advancement-and-alumni-engagement](https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/california-western-school-law/executive-director-advancement-and-alumni-engagement)

Rachel Ellenport is leading this search with Christina Garrison and Rebecca Lyons
Isaacson, Miller

ADDENDUM

California Western School of Law

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 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. CWSL enrolls approximately 650 students. Women comprise around 60 percent of the student population, over 50 percent 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.

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.

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 with 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.

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

Board of Trustees

The school is governed by a 17-member Board of Trustees that includes members of the judiciary, the practicing bar, academia, and the business world. Numerous members of the Board are graduates of CWSL. Trustees provide fiscal oversight of all law school operations, and provide key insights gained through their years of practice and work in the private and public sector. These and other functions are guided by traditional principles of academic governance, and a culture of transparent communication and trust.

To learn more about the CWSL's Board of Trustees: https://www.cwsl.edu/about/board_of_trustees.html