

CALIFORNIA WESTERN

SCHOOL OF LAW / San Diego

Associate Dean for Career and Professional Development
California Western Law School
San Diego, California

THE SEARCH

California Western School of Law (California Western or CWSL), a private, non-profit, independent law school located in San Diego, California, seeks an experienced, data-driven leader to serve as Associate Dean for Career and Professional Development (Associate Dean). This is an exciting opportunity to help shape the future of CWSL and the Career and Professional Development Office (CPDO) by strengthening employment outcomes, expanding employer and alumni partnerships, and implementing a strategic, data-informed approach to supporting student success.

Accredited by both the ABA and the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC)¹, California Western is the oldest law school in San Diego and has a distinguished tradition of preparing outstanding legal professionals to serve in California and around the world. CWSL has been on a steep ascent over the last few years, dramatically increasing its first-time bar passage rate from 48% in 2023 to over 71% in 2025. CWSL's incoming credentials have similarly surged, resulting in a current median LSAT of 157 and a 3.54 median undergraduate GPA for the incoming Fall 2026 class.

CWSL operates a full-time day program and a part-time evening program that attracts professionals and nontraditional students. The school enrolls approximately 650 students, and at least a third of CWSL's students identify as first-generation college students. Many of CWSL's students are San Diego residents who intend to begin their legal careers in San Diego or elsewhere in California. Between 6 and 9 percent of the incoming class have ties to the military.

California Western has a strong reputation for academic training that combines practical and theoretical learning. The school operates an array of programs designed to develop core skills and on-the-ground thinking. It is home to the [California Western Innocence and Justice Clinic](#), which focuses on innocence work and exonerations; the [Community Law Project](#), a pop-up clinic providing an array of legal services and advice to indigent individuals; and the [New Media Rights Clinic](#), which provides assistance in a number of legal areas, including First Amendment rights, data and privacy protection, and intellectual property

¹ WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 1080 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 500, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001

rights. These hands-on programs enable students to apply their learning to the world of legal practice, allowing them to gain experience as they make an impact on the community around them.

Reporting to Dean and President Miriam Baer, the next Associate Dean will provide vision and leadership for Career and Professional Development, ensuring that all California Western students receive the guidance, resources, and opportunities necessary to achieve their professional goals. The Associate Dean will provide structure, accountability, and data-informed decision-making to the office while supporting a talented and committed team. The Associate Dean will also develop systems and strategies to maintain meaningful engagement with alumni and faculty, monitor career progression, and strengthen post-graduate support. Success in this role will require a collaborative leader who can cultivate partnerships across the law school, develop relationships with employers in San Diego and beyond, build a high-performing team, and position the California Western careers function to meet the evolving needs of students and graduates alike.

California Western Law School has retained the national executive search firm, Isaacson, Miller, to assist in this important recruitment. Confidential inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

CALIFORNIA WESTERN LAW SCHOOL

Chartered in 1924, California Western obtained accreditation from the American Bar Association in 1962 and became a member of the Association of American Law Schools in 1967. Today, it remains one of approximately 15 independent, non-profit law schools in the country and is also accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

California Western offers an innovative, student-focused [Juris Doctor](#) (JD) degree program that operates on a traditional academic semester system, as well as a flexible, part-time evening format that was most recently ranked 55th in U.S. News' ranking of part-time JD programs. Students may also enroll in a joint JD/MBA with San Diego State University. Within the JD program, CWSL offers six [areas of concentration](#): Business Law, Criminal Justice, Intellectual Property, Privacy and Media Law, International Law, Labor and Employment Law, and Social Justice.

The faculty has adopted the following tangible learning outcomes to ensure that students are prepared to succeed when they graduate from law school:

Foundational Knowledge and Skills

CWLS students will be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of substantive legal rules and doctrine.
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Use legal rules and doctrine to analyze legal issues.
- Conduct effective legal research.

Lawyering Skills

CWLS students will be able to:

- Gather facts to further client goals.
- Counsel clients objectively, respectfully, and effectively about the best ways to solve or prevent problems.
- Draft professional documents.
- Advocate and negotiate effectively for clients in a legal setting.

Professionalism

CWLS students will be able to:

- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, empathy, civility, and cultural competence.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the Rules of Professional Conduct.
- Exercise sound professional judgment.
- Engage in pro bono work and public service.

In support of the above goals, California Western has deployed a Clinical Externship Program that has become a highly respected component of the JD curriculum and engages a significant number of third-year students. Serving as a capstone, the program builds upon the strong doctrinal and practice foundation developed in students' first two years of law school and allows them to earn between five and ten academic credits in their final year of law school for legal work in not-for-profit agencies, private law offices, courts, corporations, or government agencies.

CWSL supports diverse co-curricular activities on campus, including its Competitive Advocacy Program, which has won numerous national moot court awards; committees and legal organizations that provide students opportunities for professional networking; the California Western Law Review and the California Western International Law Journal, one of the nation's oldest international law journals; and numerous interest-based and affinity organizations.

California Western interacts with thousands of alumni across the nation and around the world, including more than 200 state court judges. Among its alumni are the Honorable Michael Groch, the current presiding judge of the San Diego Court, the Honorable Anthony J. Battaglia, Senior Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of California, San Diego County Supervisor Monica Montgomery Steppe, and San Diego Councilmember Sean Elo-Rivera. The law school's 10,000+ graduates also include a number of highly talented private attorneys working in small, medium-sized, and Am Law 250 law firms, as well as in-house counsel advising corporations throughout the United States.

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

Leadership

Miriam Baer, President and Dean

Dean 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. Baer has published over 30 articles and essays in leading law review publications and is a frequent commentator on white-collar crime and its enforcement.

Dean Baer, who recently joined the Louis M. Welsh American Inn of Court in San Diego, is an elected member of the American Law Institute and a fellow of the American Bar Foundation. Prior to entering academia, Dean 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 of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit and spent two years practicing litigation at the law firm of Cravath, Swaine and Moore.

CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

The [Career and Professional Development Office \(CPDO\)](#) supports students and alumni through a [range of resources](#), including employer recruitment, data collection and trend analysis, career advising, professional development programming, résumé and cover letter reviews, mock interviews, and networking opportunities. In addition to recruiting employers to the office and determining their immediate and long-term needs, the office helps students clarify their professional goals, develop the skills and tools needed to navigate the legal marketplace, and pursue opportunities across a range of practice settings.

The CPDO also serves as an important bridge between California Western and the legal community, maintaining relationships with employers and alumni across the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. Through career fairs, on-campus and virtual recruiting, employer partnerships, alumni engagement, and employment outcomes reporting, the office connects students and graduates to career opportunities while supporting California Western's broader commitment to student success and lifelong professional development.

ROLE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEAN

Reporting to CWSL President and Dean Baer, the Associate Dean will lead the CPDO with a strong emphasis on measurable outcomes and disciplined execution of strategic goals. The Associate Dean will provide strategic leadership for the CPDO and advance efforts to support students and alumni in their career aspirations across all sectors of the legal profession. The Associate Dean will oversee a staff that

includes at least four counselors (at either the Assistant or Associate Director level) and at least one full-time operations-focused staff member.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE ASSOCIATE DEAN

Build a data-driven culture and reporting infrastructure for the Career and Professional Development Office

California Western has elevated its institutional profile significantly in recent years, improving its overall reported first-time [bar passage](#) rate to over 71% in 2025, and its ultimate bar passage rate to approximately 85% for the graduating class of 2023. The school recently hired [six new full-time faculty](#), whose expertise includes fields such as criminal law and federal defense, civil and appellate litigation, cybersecurity and compliance, immigration and comparative law, and housing rights and social justice. CWSL has been favorably cited by the *preLaw Magazine* and *The National Jurist* for its programs in [Criminal Justice](#), [Law and Technology](#), and [Intellectual Property](#). The law school's faculty is highly engaged and well known across numerous legal and academic communities. Full-time and adjunct professors frequently mentor and advise students on career paths and course selection. As part of its curricular reform efforts, the faculty has formed an AI Task Force to better understand the pedagogical and marketplace implications of generative AI. The law school's Competitive Advocacy Program has also elevated its profile, resulting in a number of impressive achievements in national moot court competitions.

While the CPDO has a deep commitment to supporting students on a human level, in the current environment, it needs a leader who can help it strengthen its analytic skills and reporting practices, leverage employment and market data more strategically, and establish systems that support informed decision-making aligned with the leadership's goals for the institution.

The Associate Dean will bring rigor, consistency, and transparency to the collection, analysis, and proactive use of career outcomes data. The Associate Dean will have the opportunity to build confidence in the accuracy and usefulness of office data, develop meaningful metrics and dashboards, and provide regular, actionable insights that demonstrate progress toward performance indicators and institutional goals. This work will be critical to assessing outcomes, identifying trends, and informing future career services strategies.

Enhance employment outcomes through intentional employer and alumni partnerships

California Western is one of two ABA-accredited law schools in San Diego. It is an anchor institution within Southern California law circles and boosts a broad regional alumni network. It is the mission of the Dean to elevate the law school's profile by promoting the law school's many programs and achievements and by engaging with the San Diego legal community as well as private and public sector employers in California and neighboring states. Through proactive engagement and outreach, the next Associate Dean will engage and expand California Western's network of employer and alumni partnerships to support

strong student employment outcomes. Under the Associate Dean's leadership, Career Services will develop a more strategic and proactive approach to relationship-building, with a focus on creating sustainable pathways to employment for students and graduates. Leveraging the law school's extensive alumni network, established reputation within the San Diego legal community, and growing tools for alumni engagement, the Associate Dean will be positioned to strengthen existing partnerships, cultivate new relationships, and align outreach efforts with evolving workforce needs and student interests.

Serve as a key member of the leadership team, partnering with the President/Dean and institutional stakeholders to advance strategic priorities

The Associate Dean will have the opportunity to leverage California Western's many institutional strengths, including its engaged alumni community, supportive faculty, collaborative leadership culture, and strong reputation within the legal profession. Working closely with colleagues across the law school, the successful candidate will help align Career Services initiatives with broader institutional priorities, strengthen partnerships that support student success, and position Career Services as a strategic contributor to the school's mission and future growth.

Assess, develop, and lead a high-performing Career Services team

The Associate Dean will have the opportunity to strengthen the Career Services office's effectiveness and impact by building team capacity, enhancing functional expertise, and establishing clear structures for accountability and success. The successful candidate will align staff around shared goals, support professional development, and ensure the office is well-positioned to serve students in an evolving legal employment landscape. Through thoughtful leadership and operational discipline, the Associate Dean will help cultivate a high-performing team focused on delivering strong outcomes for students and the institution. This will include making sure the offer has coverage across key networks, ranging from private law firms to DA offices, etc.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Required

- Earned J.D. from an ABA-accredited law school
- Significant prior experience within a law school career services office
- A capacity for leading and developing managers and senior staff, including goal setting, performance evaluation, coaching, and team development
- Ability to build high-performing teams and foster accountability for measurable outcomes in a professional services or higher education environment
- Data-informed leader with strong analytical skills and the ability to develop, interpret, and leverage reports, metrics, and dashboards to guide decision-making
- Strong knowledge of National Association for Law Placement (NALP) standards and ABA employment reporting requirements

Preferred

- Experience with career services CRM and data platforms (e.g., 12Twenty) and data visualization tools (Excel, Tableau, Power BI)
- Experience leading and developing multi-person teams through periods of growth, change, and organizational enhancement
- Track record of building strategic partnerships with employers that enhance student outcomes and career opportunities
- Strong financial stewardship skills, including budget planning, resource allocation, and fiscal management
- Familiarity with California and San Diego legal community

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 \$185,000, commensurate with experience and subject to other negotiated benefits. The salary of the finalist selected for this role will be determined by 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 possible compensation range at the time of posting. Given the highly collaborative and student-facing nature of the role, the Associate Dean is expected to maintain a full-time, on-campus presence.

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](#).

Sean Farrell, Partner
Robin Dougherty, Managing Associate
Drew Chang, Senior Search Coordinator
Isaacson, Miller

California Western School of Law is committed to using the law to prevent and solve human and societal problems. In conjunction with our mission - to train ethical, competent, and compassionate lawyers, we value the different perspectives among our students, alumni, faculty, and staff, as well as in the larger communities of which we are a part.

The law school is an Equal Opportunity Employer and provides reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants with disabilities upon request.

.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by California Western Law School. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by California Western Law School would supersede any conflicting information in this document.