



March 2020

Dear Berkeley Law Alumni,

Although it is a bit early, I wanted to send my quarterly message to you now to share what is happening in the Law School and also some recent good news about rankings.

Dealing with COVID-19

Our paramount focus has been on protecting the health of our students, staff, and faculty. On Tuesday, March 10, we went to all classes being conducted by distance learning, mostly through Zoom, a web-based video conferencing tool. I have been stunned by how well our instructors and students have adapted to this. One student wrote me yesterday, "I will echo that, at least amongst my professors this semester, their ability to transition from in-class to Zoom was incredible." Of course, distance learning is just not the same as being in a classroom together. But I also have heard much enthusiasm from many students and faculty about how well instruction is going over Zoom.

Although I hold out hope that there will be a point in the semester when we can return to in-person instruction (I am always the optimist), even if we resume in-person classes at some point, students still will have the option to participate remotely and faculty will be able to teach remotely if they choose to do so.

We have cancelled all Law School events. For example, we cancelled our Admitted Students Weekend, which was scheduled for this past weekend and would have brought 400 admitted students from all over the country to Berkeley Law. Our Assistant Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid, Kristin Theis-Alvarez, has planned a full slate of online activities to help us to recruit the Class of 2023. I am grateful for the many alumni who are assisting with reaching out to our admitted students.

Most of all, I have tried to convey in my messages to the Law School that we are all in it together. In my almost three years here, I have seen time and again that Berkeley Law is a very special community, a place of extraordinary warmth and caring. I have seen it in the way people treat each other and, when needed, take care of each other. We have had many challenges—fire and smoke, power outages, and now coronavirus. We will try to provide our students the best possible education under unprecedented and difficult circumstances.

Rankings

Also, at a time of great stress and uncertainty, I wanted to share good news. Rankings are only one measure of a law school's quality. They certainly don't measure all of the wonderful things about our community, our commitment to public service, or the excellence of our teaching. Nor can we deny their existence, and they do give us a sense of how we are regarded by others and how by some metrics, however flawed, we compare to other law schools. In the last two weeks, a number of rankings have come out and I regard them overall as quite good news.

Quacquarelli Symonds—a global higher education think-tank—ranks international

educational institutions in various disciplines. Their 2020 ranking of law schools came out on March 3, and we are ranked seventh in the world (behind Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, Yale, Stanford, and London School of Economics and Political Science) and fourth in the U.S.

Law.com does an annual “Go-To Law Schools Big Law” report based on which schools sent the highest percentage of their graduating class into associate jobs at the nation's 100 largest law firms. Of course, this is important to us, but we also care very much about placing our students in judicial clerkships, government, and public interest jobs which are not part of this (and indeed reduce this particular ranking). This year, Berkeley Law was ranked eighth in the nation in the report, released on March 8.

Finally, on March 17, *U.S. News & World Report* released its annual rankings. Berkeley Law is ranked ninth (in a tie), up a spot from 10th (in a tie) from last year. There are now a number of specialty rankings done by *U.S. News* as well, and we did quite well in these areas (in some instances in ties with other law schools):

- #1 Intellectual Property
- #1 Environmental Law
- #3 Contracts and Commercial Law
- #3 Criminal Law
- #4 Business Law
- #7 Constitutional Law
- #8 Clinical Education
- #11 International Law
- #15 Trial Advocacy

I think this recognizes the breadth of our excellence in so many different fields. Although I realize that rankings are problematic, altogether these rankings are a reflection of our being a terrific law school.

Our rankings are a result of the enormous hard work of the Law School's faculty, staff, and students. They also are a product of essential support from our alumni.

Online instruction and alumni gatherings

Obviously, we are not able to hold in-person alumni gatherings at this time. But we continue to provide the free Berkeley Boosts webinars available to graduates through our Executive Education program—<https://executive.law.berkeley.edu/berkeley-boosts>. I hope you will look to Berkeley Law for professional enrichment opportunities.

Take care!

Never before has the phrase “take care” seemed more important. Never before has the phrase “we’re all in this together” seemed more apt. I feel so very fortunate to be part of this wonderful community. Please don’t hesitate to let me know if I or the Law School administration can be of assistance in any way. My email is echemerinsky@law.berkeley.edu and my phone is 510-642-6483.

Warm regards,

Erwin

