

July 15, 2020

Dear Berkeley Law Alumni,

As I write this quarterly message at the beginning of July, it is hard to believe that 2020 is half over and all that has occurred over the last several months. Most important, I hope that this finds you and your loved ones healthy and safe at this difficult time.



Things have changed so dramatically for all of us, obviously including for the Law School. On March 17, we – and the rest of the Berkeley campus – shifted to all online classes. Our building has been closed since then. We could not have commencement on May 15, though we did all we could to celebrate our graduates. But despite all of this we have continued to provide what makes Berkeley Law special: excellent classes, a strong commitment to public service, an intellectually excited environment, and a warm community.

After careful and detailed planning for possible in-person classes, I concluded that it would be best – for the education of our students and the health of those in our community – to have almost all classes taught remotely for the fall 2020 semester. Our plans revealed that we at most could have very few in-person classes in the Law School and those would involve a small number of students spread out in large rooms, with most participating remotely. Online classes seem educationally best under these circumstances and also the least risk for spreading a serious communicable disease.

We are working very hard to do all we can to provide an excellent legal education for our students in the fall semester. We have created many new classes and community experiences. For example, we created almost 40 new one-unit classes for 1Ls, each with a professor and no more than 10 students. We also will have new classes for upper-level, JSP, and international students. In March, we began a weekly series on legal issues posed by

COVID-19. In June, we began a new series examining issues of race in the law. The first focused on race and policing and subsequent programs examine issues like race and public health, race and elections, race and criminal justice, race and education, race and the environment, and race and legal education.

A crucial aspect of what makes Berkeley Law special is our public mission. Our terrific pro bono program, of course, will continue through the fall semester. Our clinics and centers are continuing to do enormously important work. For instance, here is an article about the work being doing by our students in the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice:

<https://www.law.berkeley.edu/article/henderson-center-racial-justice-summer-fellows-combat-inequities/>. Also, the Death Penalty Clinic just released a major report on race discrimination in jury selection in California: <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/article/new-report-shows-ongoing-racial-discrimination-in-ca-jury-selection/>

We will continue throughout the summer and fall to have countless speakers and programs on a huge variety of topics. Many, of course, will focus on legal issues concerning COVID-19 and the long overdue need to deal with racism throughout society.

To be candid, my greatest concern right now is our budget and how to handle significant loss of revenue without compromising our educational program or having to lay off any of our terrific staff. Our LL.M. program – which last year provided \$18 million (16% of our revenue) – is being greatly affected by the pandemic and the travel restrictions. We will provide our LL.M. students an excellent experience via online classes, but I expect we will lose about \$10 million in expected revenue. For example, our summer LL.M. program, which had 160 students a year ago, had 83 this summer. Making this even more difficult is that the campus expects to lose a large amount of money because of state budget cuts and COVID-19 and has cut its contribution to the Law School by \$4.3 million for the coming fiscal year.

We are doing all we can to save money, and to increase revenue, and to use our reserves. But to say this is the most challenging time we have faced fiscally, even after earlier prior difficult years, is a great understatement. But we just cannot compromise the quality of Berkeley Law in any way.

One of my disappointments is that we will not be able to host an in-person reunion weekend. I have enormously enjoyed meeting the alumni each year, as over 500 people come to reunions. But we still want to honor and celebrate our graduates in milestone anniversary years – the 5th through 50th reunion classes. So please save Friday, October 2, 2020 on your calendar for Alumni

Reunion 2020 – Virtual Edition. Details to follow. And I already look forward to and hope that we will be able to have the best in-person reunion ever in fall 2021.

I know that this is a difficult time in so many ways. But I hope we all can take comfort from being part of the wonderful community that is Berkeley Law. Thanks to each of you for being a part of it and for anything you can do to help make it better.

With every good wish to you and your loved ones,

Warm regards,

Erwin

Berkeley Law

