

October 14, 2020

Dear Berkeley Law alumni,

I hope that this message finds you and your loved ones safe and healthy at this difficult time.

As always in these quarterly messages, I want to update you on all that is happening at the Law School.



It continues to be a strange time for the school and our graduates. As I mentioned in my summer note, all of our classes are online this semester, and we recently learned from Chancellor Carol Christ that the university will begin the Spring 2021 semester online as well. Our faculty and students have adapted remarkably well to this, but everyone is looking forward to the day when we can safely return to the building and in-person classes.

We are trying hard to make the fall term a rich and enjoyable experience for all. Here are a few of the creative ways we are moving forward:

- We created new one-unit classes for our 1Ls and LL.M.s, with one instructor and no more than 10 students, looking at various aspects of the law. For example, I am teaching a course on civil liberties in a pandemic and tremendously enjoying it.
- Almost every Monday, we have a program on race and the law. Topics have included: race and policing; race and health care; race and the criminal justice system; race and the environment; race and legal education; and race and elections. You can find recordings of the programs here: [Race and the Law Series](#).
- We also created virtual hallways and virtual study halls for students, faculty, and staff to meet outside of classes.
- And we are hosting many community gatherings, such as trivia nights and craft nights.

Community is an important part of our identity and we will continue to look for ways to ensure that we remain connected during the pandemic.

**Admissions.** There is good news and bad news on admissions for the current academic year. On the good news side, we have an extraordinarily strong and diverse J.D. class. There are 350 1Ls, 25 higher than our goal of 325. Fewer students chose to defer than we expected. Our median LSAT and GPA are identical to a year ago, which were the

highest in our history. The Class of 2023 is an especially diverse class. Over 60% are women and almost 50% are students of color. Continuing the trend of the last few years, we have again increased our African-American enrollment, which has grown from 12 in 2017, to 28 in 2018, to 33 in 2019, to 41 this year. We also have increased the number of our Latinx, Asian-American, and Native-American students. This is a reflection of the tremendous hard work of so many alumni, students, and faculty who assist the Admissions Office with their recruitment efforts.

Unfortunately, because of restrictions on visas and travel, we had a very significant decrease in our LL.M. enrollment. We dropped from 390 students a year ago to 156 this year. We miss having the larger LL.M. class and all that these students add to the Law School. This has also created a serious financial challenge for us. My hope is that graduate enrollment will rebound next year.

**Bar exam.** After much uncertainty, our 2020 graduates took bar exams online in California and many states on October 5-6. As in the past, the Alumni Office will host a California Bar Swearing-In Ceremony for our newest Berkeley lawyers, this time virtually. More information about the date and event will be sent to Class of 2020 graduates in the coming weeks.

**Student Hiring.** On-campus interviewing for second-year students interested in law firm jobs was postponed in August. They will now participate in the “Winter Interview Program” from January 15-22. It is hard to tell at this point what the job market will look like for these students.

**Public Service.** Our faculty and students remain very active in pro bono projects, and our clinics and centers have had tremendous success on legislative initiatives. Here are short descriptions of the work undertaken at the Law School on bills recently signed by California Governor Gavin Newsom.

- **Death Penalty Clinic, Assembly Bill 3070, *Diversifying the jury box*:** Beginning January 1, 2022, this bill will prohibit a party from using a peremptory challenge to remove a prospective juror on the basis of the prospective juror’s race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, or religious affiliation, or the perceived membership of the prospective juror in any of those groups.
- **Environmental Law Clinic, Senate Bill 312, *Detoxifying cosmetics*:** Consumers can soon read ingredient lists to see if toxic chemicals were used to add fragrance to products like shampoo, moisturizer, lipstick, and sunscreen.
- **Policy Advocacy Clinic, Senate Bill 1290, *Outlawing collection of juvenile fees*:** Thousands of California families with youth in the juvenile justice system will no longer be asked to pay back outstanding fees charged before 2018.
- **Policy Advocacy Clinic and East Bay Community Law Center, Assembly Bill 1869, *Repealing unjust criminal fees*:** In the first reform of its kind nationwide, the law will require counties to write off an estimated \$15.9 billion in outstanding charges.
- **Berkeley Center for Consumer Law & Economic Justice, Assembly Bill 1864, *Protecting consumers from financial predators*:** Consumers will be better protected from abusive and predatory consumer finance companies, thanks to Assembly Bill 1864, which significantly revamps the Department of Business

Oversight, giving it more power to oversee financial technology companies, payday lenders, debt collectors, and other service providers not currently regulated by the agency.

- **East Bay Community Law Center, Assembly Bill 2463, *Keeping people from losing their homes*:** Homeowners will no longer be at risk of losing their homes because of small debts like medical or credit card bills, thanks to Assembly Bill 2463, which prevents home foreclosures for debts as low as \$625.
- **East Bay Community Law Center, Assembly Bill 901, *Sending young people to community programs, not probation*:** Assembly Bill 901 ensures that California youth having trouble at school or at home are sent to community-based programs instead of probation and the juvenile justice system.

I know I speak for our entire community in congratulating all of the students, staff, and faculty who worked tirelessly to bring about these important changes in the law. For more information, please click here: [Change Makers](#).

***Alumni Activities.*** When we realized that our new students would not be able to enjoy the normal on-campus orientation program this August, alumni jumped into action. Over 260 graduates signed up to be "Alumni Guides," welcoming 220 1Ls and transfer students to the Law School just as classes began. The Alumni Guides also checked back with their students in September. Thank you to all the alumni who volunteered for this project. It was very successful and we plan to keep this activity as part of our Berkeley Alumni in Residence (BAIR) program.

We held our annual Alumni Reunion celebration, albeit virtually, on October 1-2. By all accounts, it was a success. Over 460 people attended some or all of the sessions. Virtual class receptions and lounges were held for our anniversary classes, the classes ending in 0s (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010) and 5s (1975, 1985, 1995, 2005, 2015).

The CLE programs, Supreme Court Review, Town Hall, student journal event, and affinity group mixers were open to all alumni. I am grateful to all of the speakers and to all who attended. You can watch the CLE programs here: [Alumni Reunion 2020](#).

Finally, let me offer my appreciation to all of the alumni who marked reunion this year by making gifts to the law school. I will use these resources to ensure that Berkeley Law continues to thrive.

We very much look forward to holding an in-person reunion next fall. Our classes ending in 0s & 5s will be invited for a belated in-person celebration, along with our graduates in classes ending in 1s & 6s.

In the meantime, we are continuing with virtual alumni programming. A schedule of alumni events can be found here: [Alumni Events Calendar](#). And I, of course, will continue to do regular quarterly Town Halls for our alumni via Zoom. The next one will be scheduled early in the new year.

We are also expanding our Regional Engagement Alumni Chapters (REACH) program to Washington, D.C. in early 2021. To learn more about how to volunteer with this chapter, please contact Doreen de Roque in the Alumni Office: [ddeRoque@berkeley.edu](mailto:ddeRoque@berkeley.edu).

**Law School's finances.** I will be candid. This is a very difficult time for the campus and the Law School. The campus estimates that it will lose \$340 million because of COVID-19. This fiscal year, the Law School has lost about \$9 million in international student revenue and campus has cut Law School funding by \$2.5 million. My commitment is to absorb this without compromising our educational program in any way, without lessening the resources available for student scholarships, and without laying off any staff. We are working hard to do this by economizing, by leaving unfilled staff positions open, and by enrolling the larger J.D. class. But despite all of this, I estimate we will have a \$3 million deficit this year.

So once more I turn to you, our alumni. We need your help in these difficult times. Anything you can contribute will be enormously appreciated. Your generous support makes a huge difference. You can make a gift here: [Make A Gift](#).

As always, please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance in any way. I can be reached at [echemerinsky@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:echemerinsky@law.berkeley.edu) or 510-652-6483.

With best wishes to you and your loved ones for continued good health,

Warmly,

Erwin



Berkeley Law

