



“We Grew Stronger... We Grew Together”

As the Class of 2023 strode down the aisles of the Saroyan Theatre on a glorious day in May, family and friends numbering more than a thousand jumped to their feet with wild applause. Amid the jubilation, it was impossible to hear the string trio that was playing Haydn’s “Andante” for the procession.



Valedictorian **Carragan Kennedy-Renae Huerta**



Honorable **Pahoua C. Lor** (Law '08) gave the commencement address

Thus began SJCL’s 50th commencement ceremony and conferment of the newest Juris Doctors - 34 of them this year - as they prepared to join the noble profession of advocating for the rule of law. The ovation seemed an appropriate tribute, after the uniquely difficult years these graduates had endured. Having survived both law school and global disaster, these achievers - coiffed and robed in the symbolic finery that proclaimed they had made it through the lot - radiated relief, and appeared eager to begin their career journeys.

As speakers shared felicitations and advice from the podium, the graduates savored the moments that had seemed so very long in coming. Class Valedictorian Carragan Kennedy-Renae Huerta, 27, spoke about the uncertainties of beginning law school under the cloud of a worldwide pandemic, and shared her incredible story of strength and persistence.



A Message From the Dean

Congratulations SJCL graduates on amazing accomplishments! SJCL's last three graduating classes (2020, 2021, and 2022) have passed the California Bar Exam at a level that satisfies the American Bar Association standard for bar passage.

Under ABA Standard 316, at least 75% of a class must pass the bar exam of their state within two years of graduation. The class of 2020 achieved 75% within 2 years and now stands at 80%. The class of 2021 achieved 82% within two years. Finally, the class of 2022 has achieved 75% in a single year.

Seven ABA-accredited schools did not achieve the 75% pass rate within two years of graduation for their most recent class with two years of opportunities. Another eight ABA schools barely met that criteria.

The State Bar requires state-accredited law schools to report their Five-Year Cumulative Pass Rate. State Bar Accreditation Standards require that a school have a Five-Year Cumulative Pass Rate of at least 40%. SJCL's 2022 Five-Year cumulative pass rate was 76.3, the highest of the state-accredited schools. SJCL's 2023 Five-Year Cumulative Pass Rate is now 79.9% (ah, that .1 of one percent!!). The State Bar has not yet posted the 2023 rates for all the state-accredited schools, but there is a good chance SJCL will remain in the top spot.

Equally exciting, the passage rates are strong across genders and races/ethnicities. For the two classes that have had two years of opportunities, the results have been:

	Class of 2020	Class of 2021
Males	79%	88%
Females	81%	75%
Hispanic	83%	80%
White	67%	81%
Asian	86%	100%
Native American	100%	100%

One population is significantly missing. There was no black graduate in either of these years. One individual who so identified graduated in 2022 and passed the bar. Fortunately, with increased recruitment focus on demonstrating to all populations that law school is within their grasp, there were seven black students in the SJCL student population for academic year 2022-2023. The effort to bring more people of color into the practice of law in the San Joaquin Valley must continue, but SJCL has never had to deny admission to one individual to allow admission of another. There has always been room for every applicant who demonstrates a reasonable prospect of success in the study of law.

These results demonstrate the hard work, first, of SJCL students, along with faculty, and staff. At SJCL individuals of all backgrounds are admitted. They pass the bar. They get great jobs and do spectacular things in the community!

A huge CONGRATULATIONS to all!

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Contents



Features

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 4 Aye, Mon Capitaine! | 19 Bar Passers |
| 6 Alumni News | 20 Diversifying the Law |
| 8 Educational Law | 21 Where Are They Now? |
| 10 Generative AI | 22 SJCL on the Move |
| 16 Traynor Moot Court | 23 Giving Back |
| 18 Alumni Appreciation | |

Vision: *To be the premier provider of legal education, scholarship, and service in the San Joaquin Valley.*
Mission: *To educate and develop individuals to become highly skilled attorneys and problem solvers who will benefit their communities through public and private service. In seeking this vision and attaining this mission, SJCL shall embody the values of civility, excellence, integrity, intellectual inquiry, and service.*

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Rayma Church (Left) in Antarctica last February. Rayma retired and closed her firm, Church Law Group, in April 2023.

Aye, Mon Capitaine – to The Loop!

BY DIANE SKOUTI BAIZA, ALUMNI COORDINATOR

Rayma Church (Law '91) has plans – lots of 'em. The most eminent involves a flight to Vermont to pick up a load of antique bicycles (circa 1800's), and then drive them across the country in a rented cargo van. She plans to stop along the way to visit friends and far-flung law school chums (like Shannon Pell - Law '06, who lives out of state). Why, you might ask, would a very successful attorney and managing partner of a firm, with a 30+ year-career in law, be hauling old bicycles around in a van? Because, as of April 2023, Rayma is retired. Her firm, Church Law Group, is now closed.

"I wanted to take advantage of still being able to hike, etc.," she said as she reflected on her career and life thus far. (Rayma has climbed Half Dome and the Grand Canyon, gone on safari in Africa, and gone diving in Papua, New Guinea). It is highly unlikely she will be sitting by a fire knitting tea cozies...ever.

A 2018 inductee into the SJCL Hall of Fame, Rayma credits involvement in the YMCA Youth-in-Government program, and mock state legislature for bringing out her love of advocacy even as a youngster. She made a name for herself early in her career with a win in the election law case of Gooch v. Hendrix, whose verdict still stands today ("Look it up!" she said).

With the retirement of Emerson Church Law founder James D. Emerson in 2016, Rayma took on the role of managing partner. Her driving force has always been a desire to assist people with problems. "In dispute resolution either an agreement has gone bad, someone has gotten hurt, or something was damaged," she says. Her aim has always been to use the law to make it right.

Rayma was one of the first women inducted into the San Joaquin Valley ABOTA Chapter, and is admitted to practice in California before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, the Northern, Central

and Eastern Districts of the U.S. District Courts of California, and the Western District of Missouri. She is a member of the National Women's Political Caucus of Fresno County and serves as an arbitrator for the Fresno County Bar Association. In 2018 she became a certified Trial Technology Master through the Federation of Defense and Corporate Counsel.

"But the best part of my career," Rayma said, "was the people. The people I worked with and the people I learned great things from." Rayma says she was fortunate to have fellow alum Bob Williams (Law '75) as her supervising attorney when she was starting out. "His coaching and support kick-started my career like rocket fuel!"

She says one of her biggest challenges was learning to walk the line between standing up for what was right, and screwing up. "I tell young lawyers, particularly women, to find a savvy mentor who can help you develop the ability to read the

room, and the chess board. Jim Emerson taught me so much about both of these. Ask for input from people willing to tell you the truth, or who see things differently than you," she said. Being collegial and courteous, Rayma added, will build your reputation, and will be rewarded.

In order to fulfill some of her more ambitious retirement plans, Rayma is buying a 44-foot boat and heading for The Great American Loop – also known as the boating adventure of a lifetime!

The Loop (as it's called by seafarers), is a year-long, nearly 6,000-mile journey through the eastern United States and Canada's interconnected water passages. The route takes boaters counterclockwise from the Gulf and Atlantic Intracoastal Waterways to the Erie Canal, Great Lakes, Canadian Heritage Canals, and Mississippi and Tennessee Rivers, according to National Geographic's "Travel". Seaworthy vessels, from auspicious yachts to humble kayaks, must be able to handle what is referred to as "big water," like the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico, when traversing The Loop.

Some "Loopers," (the title one earns after piloting The Loop) compare the experience to European canal-boat trips, but those who have done it are rare. Fewer than 200 boaters make the trip each year, many of whom are retirees. The first step toward the journey for Rayma is becoming certified as a boat captain. "This falls under the category of learning new skills to ward off brain atrophy!" she says.

Rayma's retirement plans also include revisiting her creative side, to paint. "Travel is a social activity; painting is a solo-mental thing for introverts like me who need alone-in-my-head-time," she said.

As far as good advice? Rayma says Kathy Hart (Law '77) gave her a tip that she heeded years ago and found to be invaluable. "Have good friends who are NOT in the legal business," she said. "Lawyers talk shop too much!" Rayma's illegal (or better put, non-lawyer) friends have been with her through thick and thin for more than twenty years. "That's the very best way to prevent brain atrophy – because they will always challenge you with new topics and discussions!"

We have a feeling Rayma won't need to worry much about brain atrophy. We wish her a spectacular and happy retirement. Bon voyage, Mon Capitaine!

Alumni Mix it Up

The Alumni Association sponsored an Alumni/Student mixer at The Point in June. Hors d'oeuvres, laughs, catching up with friends and meeting fellow grads makes for a very pleasant wind-down after work. Be sure to join us for the next one!



Alumni urge students to reach for the stars (and a J.D.)



Professor **Peter Wasemiller** (Law '82) has referred or recommended several students to law school. Among them: Raquel Chavez (4L), Maranee Forsyth (3L), Darren Stemwedel (Law '12), Kelly Campbell-McKay (Law '23), Samuel Kylo (Law '97), and Bob Schmalte (Law '91)

In this issue, as part of the on-going Alumni Appreciation Campaign, we highlight Professor Peter Wasemiller (Law '82) with the Distinction of Inspiring Students to the Legal Profession. Peter has for 40 years fulfilled a lifelong desire to work in higher education. He has served as both an administrator and college professor throughout his career. His decision to enroll in law school was based on the hunch that a robust academic background (right up there with medical school) could help him to realize that goal.

Prior to 2015, when he was appointed to his current role as Program Director of Paralegal Studies at Fresno City College, he taught a wide range of classes including business and ethics law, political science, non-profit organizations, sports and ethics law, human resources, and even a class within the school of natural sciences. At his undergraduate alma mater, Fresno Pacific University, Peter served at various times as head of alumni relations, human resources, and grants and research, in addition to the teaching.

Such an illustrious career in education deserves recognition on its own merit, but we wish to acknowledge another aspect of the impact Professor Wasemiller has had, on the legal community.

As an inspirer of dreams and encourager of goals, Peter has motivated, guided, compelled, and recommended numerous undergraduate students toward law school. Several of them have ended up here at SJCL, and their success stories are an inspiration.

"It was my SJCL Con Law professor, Mary Louise Frampton, who was a Harvard graduate and a legend," Peter says, "who kept telling me I was an academic. She said she saw it in me, which helped me to understand the extra value of a law degree." Having worked as a clerk in a law office during school, Peter says he realized he enjoyed the research and investigative parts of law more than what he saw the attorneys doing.

Peter says his favorite teaching subject is Intro to Paralegal Studies because it covers a lot of territory, but only surface-deep, to provide an overall understanding of the legal system. "I'm here to stamp out legal and judicial ignorance in America!" he says. "For most people, their knowledge of the legal system comes from the TV show "Law and Order" and the elementary school videos "Schoolhouse Rock!"

Peter likens the job of a paralegal to that of a nurse in the medical field. "I tell (my students) to think about the people they will be helping – to realize they can't take this job any less seriously," he said. "Your legal clients are scared, afraid of the unknown, and going through a crisis. Even the attorney can't tell them how it's going to come out. It's serious business."

During our current Alumni Appreciation Campaign to recognize graduates who have encouraged students to pursue their own law career dreams, we salute and thank Professor Peter Wasemiller. He, and his fellow SJCL alumni who, like him, take the time to notice and guide those students who may not realize their own potential, are the driving force behind each new entering class of law students.

We know there are many SJCL alumni out there, just like Peter Wasemiller, who are encouraging and motivating would-be attorneys to consider law school. Please let us know if you were inspired or otherwise encouraged to enroll in law school by an earlier graduate. We want to hear from you, and to thank them for their contributions to the career dreams of students, and the health of the local legal community!

*Share your story by completing
the brief form at:*

www.sjcl.edu/story

Biden Nominates Former SJCL Professor to Federal Court



SJCL Professor, Judge **Ana de Alba**, originally from Dos Palos, CA, has been nominated by President Biden as a candidate for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

As he continues to build on a promise to “ensure that the nation’s courts reflect the diversity that is one of our greatest assets as a country,” President Biden announced this spring, his intention to nominate two federal judicial candidates who are “extraordinarily qualified, experienced, and devoted to the rule of law.” They also both happen to be female, Hispanic, and for one of them...a previous SJCL professor.

Civil Rights instructor Ana de Alba has served as a United States District Judge for the Eastern District of California since 2022. She served as a Superior Court Judge in Fresno County from 2018 – 2022, having been appointed by then California Governor Jerry Brown. While at the superior court, Judge de Alba was the co-chair of the Civil Grand Jury Oversight Committee; chair of the Merit Selection Panel for the Reappointment of Magistrate Judge Barbara A. McAuliffe; a member of the Central Valley Regional Advisory Council/Law Pathway Central Valley; a member of Governor Newsom’s Regional Judicial Selection Advisory Committee; a member of the executive committee of Governor Newsom’s California Judicial Mentorship Program; a member of the Family and

Juvenile Law Advisory Committee; and a member of the Advisory Committee on Providing Access and Fairness.

Prior to joining the bench, Judge de Alba was a partner at Lang, Richert & Patch of Fresno. While working as an attorney, she established a first of its kind worker’s rights clinic which provided free legal information to low wage workers throughout the Central Valley. She also served on the boards of several nonprofit legal service agencies, in addition to the board of the Fresno County Bar Association. She served as the chair of the Pro Bono Services Section prior to that.

If confirmed, she would be only the fourth Hispanic woman to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

Since taking office, President Biden has nominated 160 individuals to federal judgeships. Of those, 124 have been confirmed by the Senate. The two most recent nominees would join an illustrious list intentionally designed to bring the diversity of the nation to the judicial system and create one of the “most diverse judicial slates of nominees in U.S. History”, according to the White House.

SJCL Professor Miiko Anderson Wins Congressional Award



SJCL’s Professor Miiko Anderson has been awarded the Suzanne McDaniel Memorial Award for Public Awareness, by Congressman Jim Costa. The award honors individuals who have used their voice to support and bring change at the national level, for crime victims. Professor Anderson was recognized at the annual Congressional Crime Survivors and Justice Caucus awards ceremony in Washington D.C. during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week (April 23-29, 2023).

In addition to teaching Human Trafficking at SJCL, Professor Anderson is a certified Criminal Specialist and Senior Deputy District Attorney at the Fresno District Attorney’s Office, where she prosecutes domestic violence, sexual assault, and

human trafficking cases. “As a prosecutor and criminal specialist, Miiko Anderson is leading the charge in protecting our most vulnerable populations from exploitation and violence,” Congressman Costa said. “Miiko has prosecuted some of the most challenging cases in Fresno County, holding perpetrators accountable and securing justice for victims and their families.”

Professor Anderson said the award is not only an honor but also “a reminder of the courage and resilience of the survivors of abuse. It is an honor to walk alongside them, amplify their voices, and witness in their journey. I dedicate this award to their bravery and strength,” she said.

SJCL congratulates Professor Anderson and thanks her for service to the community and law school.

Education Law & Optimal Learning

BY DIANE SKOUTI BAIZA, ALUMNI COORDINATOR

Karen Lee has a passion for the well-being of others. Her vocation as a Registered Nurse could be considered proof enough, but there is something more. Ten years ago, Karen and her husband took in a toddler as a foster child. He was two years old. This baby boy had been born with malformed intestines, which developed an issue that caused all but a very small portion to be removed. The procedure had rendered this boy dependent on a central IV line and port for intravenous nourishment, and around the clock care.

“His care is more than a full-time nursing job would be outside the home,” Karen says. But she was willing and able to assume

executive functions, like time management, organization, starting and staying on task - that do him in. In the first grade, Zeus was getting up out of his chair and running around in circles. He just had to fidget. He couldn't control it. He managed this way, even staying at grade level, until the 4th grade. That was when his behavioral issues became too great.

“He was at school for 7 hours every day but was getting nothing done. He would come home with all the day's work and then try to cram it in before his medications wore off. It just wasn't working,” Karen said.

Karen's solution was to try taking him out of the classroom to minimize

distractions. She homeschooled Zeus through the school district's homeschool program, and he did better. Then COVID hit. The virtual learning provided by the school district included pre-taped video lessons. Once the district mandated that all students return to the classroom, Zeus' program was discontinued. The district could only

offer him a return to the in-person classroom, or a video-based program that was pre-recorded and was not the same curriculum the rest of the students were learning.

Because Zeus was under the age limit to be immunized against COVID, he could not return to the classroom, but there was no program available for him to successfully homeschool either. In the meantime, the semester had already begun, and he was falling behind. Numerous requests and meetings with the school district did nothing to resolve the situation, so Karen sought help elsewhere.

“There was this underlying disappointment that the school district was intimidating us toward something that was not

optimal for our son. He needed something that was outside their mold,” she said. That's when Karen learned about SJCL's BREN Clinic and Director/Attorney Jodie Howard.

With a mission of equity for those individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, to obtain the education services, community services, and related support they need to reach their full potential, the BREN clinic has helped countless families struggling to find proper and fair learning solutions for their children.

For Zeus, Jodie began with a phone call, followed up by a letter. She requested the school district provide an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which thoroughly tests a child's abilities, and produces a legally binding document that requests services for a child who is struggling within the usual system. The district had previously told Karen that Zeus did not need special services because he was working at grade level. But that was before his program had been discontinued.

Once the assessment was complete, the school district reversed course and gave Zeus a medical allowance for home-hospital school. This provided him with the same curriculum as the students in-class, and a teacher who would come to his home for 5 hours a week.

The next step was to prepare as best they could for middle school. During the last half of 6th grade Zeus returned to the classroom to see how he would do. It was determined that a charter school would be his best option. Karen helped to create his curriculum and he is able to do the work at home. The program fulfills his IEP and he is doing well. Karen says that the BREN Clinic was instrumental in getting Zeus' IEP, which led them to their current successful solution. The IEP assessment is often a hurdle when trying to obtain specialized help for a child who is struggling. Karen says the best-case scenario is to identify the optimal learning methods for the individual child. “Zeus does much better this way,” she says. “This whole thing, and what is most important, is about what works best for him,” Karen said. Zeus is now receiving his best education scenario, which is what the BREN Clinic is all about.

that job, and eventually, she and her husband adopted the boy. His name is Zeus.

That first year, Karen had trouble keeping Zeus out of the hospital. Even her expert care was not enough to overcome the difficulties brought about by his condition. As he began to grow, another issue emerged. Having been drug exposed while he was in utero, Zeus was also saddled with severe ADHD. It wasn't until he reached school age that it became apparent. “He is not delayed, he has no developmental disabilities: he is very sharp, very funny, a prankster!” says Karen. But he struggles immensely with his attention span.

Mom Karen says Zeus, now age 12, has no trouble with academics. It is his



Visalia Law & Justice Academy Visits SJCL

Students enrolled in the Law & Justice Academy at Visalia’s Redwood High School spent a day at SJCL in March to gain some firsthand knowledge about law school and the process of becoming an attorney.

As part of the Visalia School District’s College & Career Readiness Department, the Law & Justice Academy is one of eight Linked Learning programs designed to provide high school students with real-world information, experiences, and connections with professionals from the industry sector of their academy.

In addition to enrollment in a special academic curriculum for all four years, the high schoolers participate in field trips, mentorships, job shadowing, and internship opportunities. College- prep courses offered through the academies help students meet admission requirements to the University of California or the California State University system.

The experiences they gain prior to college can help them discover their passions and talents, as well as widen the range of postsecondary options once they graduate. Research shows that students of all demographic profiles who participate in Linked Learning have higher persistence and graduation rates than their peers in traditional programs. They are also more likely to be on track with the requirements of higher education.

Having already served internships in the Tulare County Public Defender and District Attorney’s Offices, the students from the Law & Justice Academy are already determined to study and practice law.

During their visit, the students heard presentations on the pathway to law school and immigration law, took a campus tour, ate lunch, and sat in the courtroom for a Q & A session with current law students.



Panel Q&A: **Diana Malcolm** (Law '23), **Christina Rodriguez** (Law '23), and **Vladimir Pacheco** (Law '23) answer questions from Redwood high school students.

Generative AI: Author? Inventor? Legal Nightmare?

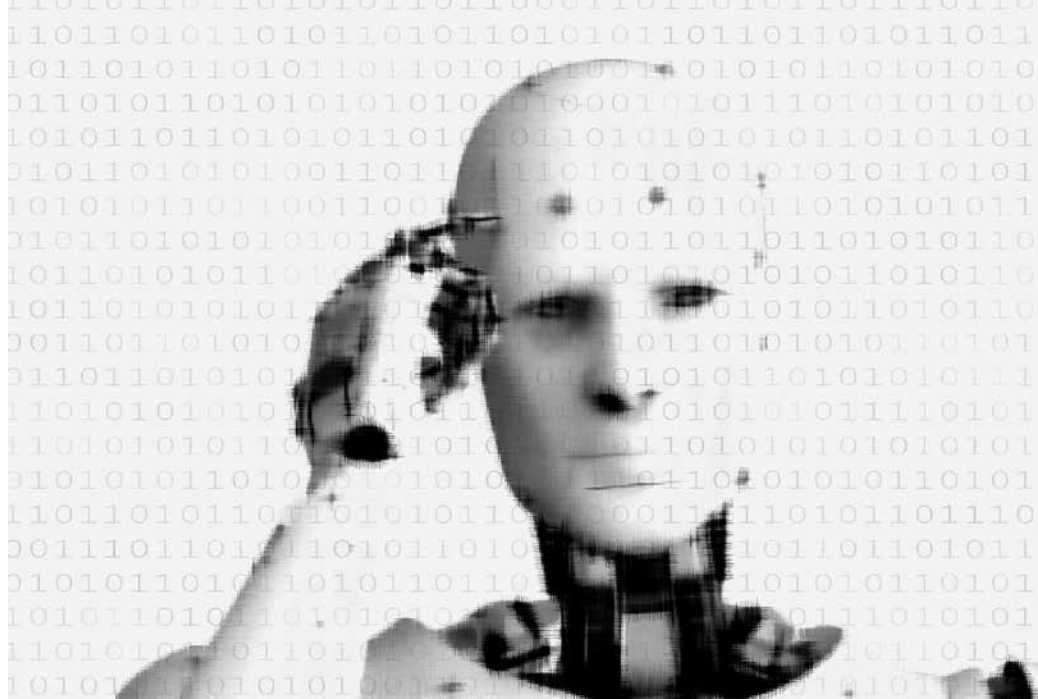
BY MARK MILLER, ADJUNCT FACULTY

The advent of generative artificial intelligence (AI) which is capable of generating content based on “learned” features, patterns and characteristics, has opened a Pandora’s Box of legal and ethical issues. While all of these must be explored as generative AI advances, one of the most fundamental issues in intellectual property circles is the effect that generative AI is having on the meaning of an “author” under U.S. copyright law, and an “inventor” under U.S. patent law. Both U.S. patent law and U.S. copyright law are founded on Article I, Section 8, clause 8 of the Constitution, which gives Congress the power “[t]o promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing, for limited times to authors and inventors, the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.”

Copyrights

Turning first to U.S. copyright law, 17 U.S.C. § 102 provides that “Copyright protection subsists . . . in original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression...”. It is well established that only a minimal amount of creativity is required in order for a work of authorship to be entitled to copyright protection. However, that creativity must embody the intellectual conception of its author. So, the question is whether this can be provided by AI.

One of the first cases to address the use of machines in the creation of original works of authorship was the case of *Burrow-Giles Lithographic Co. v. Sarony*, 111 U.S. 53, 4 S.Ct. 279 (1884). In the *Burrow-Giles* case, the Supreme Court addressed the question of whether a photograph that was created using a camera and a film development process was entitled to copyright protection. After all, a photograph is a mere reproduction of physical features of an object using mechanical and chemical processes resulting in predictable outcomes, with no place for novelty, invention or originality. An analogous argument may be made for generative AI. In the *Burrow-Giles* case, the photograph was found to represent copyrightable subject



matter because before the mechanical and chemical processes took place, a human had to select and arrange the subject matter in front of the camera (a photograph of Oscar Wilde), including such things as the lighting, the angle, and in this case, the costume, the draperies and other accessories found in the subject photograph. The court found that this selection and arrangement was the product of the author’s intellectual invention and therefore entitled to copyright protection.

The U.S. Copyright Office produces a Compendium of U.S. Copyright Office Practices for guidance in copyright applications that is updated periodically. Based in part on the *Burrow-Giles* case above, section 306 of the Compendium has long provided that “The U.S. Copyright Office will register an original work of authorship, provided that the work was created by a human being.” Section 313.2 of the Compendium was recently amended to state that the copyright office “will not register works produced by a machine or mere mechanical process that operates randomly or automatically without any creative input or intervention from a human author. The crucial question is ‘whether the “work” is basically one of human authorship, with the computer [or other device] merely being an assisting instrument, or whether the traditional elements of authorship in the work (literary, artistic, or musical expression or elements of selection, arrangement, etc.) were actually conceived and executed not by man but by a machine.’” This means that, as of the date of this article, AI may not be considered an author.

However, recognizing that humans may interact with generative AI in producing original works, in March 2023, the Copyright Office provided a policy statement to clarify practices involving works that contain material generated by the use of AI technology. The policy statement reiterates that only human beings may be considered authors, and that material created through generative AI in response to a prompt is created by the machine, not by the human providing the prompt, since it is the machine which determines the expressive (copyrightable) elements of the output. However, once that output is created, a human being may change, modify, manipulate or rearrange the output. In these cases, limited copyright protection may be allowed, but only as to those human-authored changes, and not to the original AI generated output. As a result, at least for the present, the copyright office and the courts must deal with each copyright application and each AI generated work on a case-by-case basis.

Patents

The status of inventors under U.S. patent law is more clear than the status of authors under U.S. copyright law. A recent case from the Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit confirmed that under U.S. patent law, an inventor must be a natural person. *Thaler v. Vidal*, 43 F.4th 1207 (Fed. Cir. 2022). On April 24, 2023, the Supreme Court denied certiorari. It is important to note however, that the *Thaler* decision did not decide the question of whether inventions made by human be-

ings with the assistance of AI are eligible for patent protection. Resolving that issue may be tricky, since it may be difficult to separate human input from non-human input in an invention, and because refusing protection to some elements of the invention because they are not of human origin may undermine patentability of the invention as a whole. On the other hand, humans have used tools of all kinds to aid in the development of patentable inventions from time immemorial, and improvements to unpatentable inventions may themselves be patentable – so long as the improvements are of human origin. As with U.S. copyright law, future court decisions will provide further guidance in this area.

Pitfalls

Recently, an attorney relied on generative AI to assist in writing a brief that was submitted to a court, apparently without cite checking. The court quickly determined that the cases cited (by AI) in the brief did not exist, and issued an order to show cause to the attorney. This demonstrates one of many drawbacks that presently exist in the use of AI in the legal profession. With that in mind, ChatGPT was asked to provide a conclusion to this article to identify potential pitfalls in using AI in the legal profession. Here is what was produced:

“Indeed, generative AI brings innovation to legal practice, but pitfalls exist. The reliability of AI-produced content is questionable and requires meticulous review to prevent inadvertent legal issues. Ethical and accountability dilemmas arise - pinpointing liability when AI advice is faulty remains uncertain. Data privacy, a critical concern, demands lawyers ensure compliance with data protection laws and safeguard client information. Lastly, the irreplaceable human touch in law practice must not be overshadowed by AI. In essence, the future of law is a balanced synergy between human and machine, where AI enhances but doesn't supplant the lawyer's role.” Good to know.

Mark D. Miller is a patent attorney and a shareholder at Sierra IP Law, PC in Fresno. He has taught the Intellectual Property Law class at SJCL since 1993. He may be reached at: <https://sierraiplaw.com>

Soroptimists' Award SJCL Students



Karen Lopez (3L)



Cindy Arredondo (Law '23)

SJCL is thrilled to announce that students Cindy Arredondo (Law '23) and Karen Lopez (3L) have been selected to receive Soroptimist International's 2023 "Furthering the Dream" award. Sponsored by the Sierra Pacific Region, the mission of the award is to "advance the status of women through financial support while they pursue a baccalaureate, master's, doctoral, law, medicine, teaching, or technical degree/certificate."

The term soroptimist means "best for women". The "Furthering the Dream" award is just one of the award programs sponsored by the organization. Another award, "Dream It, Be It" provides women and girls with the tools they need to achieve their education and career goals. As a recipient of the "Dream It, Be It" scholarship this spring, Hannah Ravizza (4L), spoke at the recent Clovis Soroptimist's Cottage Tea and Luncheon. Soroptimist International is a global volunteer organization that provides women and girls with access to the education and training they need to achieve economic empowerment.



Hannah Ravizza (4L) speaks at the Clovis Soroptimist's Cottage Tea and Luncheon.

Graduation FROM PAGE 1

“I lost my father during my first week of law school,” she began. “I had to see it through to honor my father’s memory.” An awful twist of fate brought about another loss when Carragan’s young law professor, mentor, and friend, Jennifer Oleksa, passed away tragically, three years later. Jennifer left behind a written prediction she made in 2019 that Carragan would graduate as class valedictorian. Another high achiever and SJCL graduate, Jennifer’s family graciously attended the ceremony to celebrate Carragan’s success.

“But, my law school experience is not defined by loss,” Carragan continued. “It is defined by growth. When our dedication was tested (due to COVID), we grew stronger, and we grew together.”

As a true representation of the ethos and atmosphere among the students at SJCL, Carragan said, “Our class has a strong sense of community. Every single one of us wants the other to succeed. Instead of fostering competitiveness, we fostered unity.”

Equally poignant was the commencement address by the Honorable Pahoua C. Lor, the first Hmong woman to be appointed a Superior Court Judge in California, and a 2008 SJCL graduate. Judge Lor, who had been chosen by the class as their commencement speaker, told the graduates about her parents coming to the U.S. as Hmong refugees fleeing war in Laos in the 1970’s. She told them how, when she was 13, her uncle’s gang-related murder confirmed her desire to seek an education and become someone who helps people. “If I could go back in time and tell my younger self that one day, she would stand on this stage to address the law school’s graduating class (as a judge), she would be in utter disbelief!” she said.

Lor, 43 also told the graduates to accept the failures that are sure to come, and to learn from them, to grow and gain momentum. She shared how, as a single mother in a culturally conservative community, she was an anomaly. “What do we do with her?” friends and family would say as her achievements began to mount. “Are we ashamed of her? Do we celebrate her?”

Even after passing the bar exam there was doubt. “Who will hire you?” they asked. “You don’t look like an attorney.” Lor said her determination throughout lead her to join La Raza, a lawyers association geared toward promoting civic and social advancement of the Latino legal community, as there was next to no other Asian Americans in law school, and very few practicing law.

“Be wise enough to determine what success means to you. Don’t be blinded or guided by what it means to others,” Lor added. “Be true to you and don’t change who you are because of this profession. Change and contribute to this profession, because of who you are.”

Congratulations to SJCL’s Class of 2023. We wish them well as they embark on their next adventure – Dun, Dun, Duuuuuuuunnn!...the bar exam.









SJCL Traynor Moot Court Team Brings Home Awards

Helen Diaz (Law '23), Lisa Talley (4L), and Ann-Marie Padilla (4L) represented San Joaquin College of Law (SJCL) on April 1, 2023 at the statewide 54th Annual Roger J. Traynor California Appellate Moot Court Competition.

BY **LOGAN TENNERELLI**, DEAN OF STUDENTS

Thirty students from a dozen law schools including UC Berkeley, UC Davis, UCLA, and McGeorge entered the competition, which was held virtually before 3-judge panels. Across the board, the judges praised the SJCL team's performance, emphasizing their preparedness, cadence, tone, and thoughtful responses to challenging questions. Talley and Padilla earned Individual Merit Awards for Oral Argument, marking the second year in a row SJCL's Traynor team received recognition for excellent advocacy skills.

The team spent over 150 hours writing the brief and crafting their oral arguments, delivered from the school's courtroom. While some teams designate one brief writer and two oral presenters, all three women presented oral arguments and participated in researching and drafting the brief, with Talley as primary brief-writer. They collaborated throughout every step of the journey, exchanging thoughts and cases, building mutual trust, and offering each other encouragement and empathy. Padilla says she "couldn't have made it through without Lisa and Helen's brilliance and constant support."

In addition to camaraderie, dedication, and professionalism, the team showed integrity and sensitivity in addressing a difficult subject matter - intimate partner violence (IPV), which includes physical and sexual violence. SJCL's team was assigned to write an opening appellant's brief challenging the procedural fairness of a private university's investigation and expulsion of "Prescott," a student and star football player, for IPV. Antiquated gender stereotypes and victim blaming contribute to under-reporting - and make IPV tricky to litigate. While challenging, public discourse is crucial in raising awareness and reducing the shame and stigma around deciding to come forward. Padilla noted shining light on this issue is "incredibly important to remind victims they are not



Moot Court Team (L-R) **Helen Diaz** (Law '23), **Ann-Marie Padilla** (4L), and **Lisa Talley** (4L)

alone. They don't have to suffer in silence - there are resources and rules to protect them."

Procedural safeguards are necessary not only to protect IPV victims' safety and privacy, but also to ensure accused students facing serious sanctions are afforded a fair hearing before an impartial adjudicator. Because IPV often occurs behind closed doors, witness credibility is key. California recognizes due process rights at school administrative hearings involving IPV; however, the extent and nature of such rights is unsettled and contextual. Courts are divided, for example, on whether accused must be afforded a right to cross-examine witnesses at a live, in-person hearing - an issue central to the Traynor case.

This legal uncertainty was further complicated by the ambiguous non-retroactivity clause of SB-493, a California senate bill mandating certain protections to students facing sanctions for IPV. The team was asked to brief what effect, if any, this 2020 bill has on Prescott's predating expul-

sion. Unpacking this question - which the California Supreme Court is expected to clarify this year - required a deep dive into the bill's language and legislative history. "It was incredibly challenging to craft an argument addressing the impact of legislation that California courts have yet to examine in depth," Padilla said, noting the Court's ultimate decision could "have drastic effects for students who report or are accused of misconduct."

Of course, the teams were prohibited until after the competition from reading any pleadings, motions, or judicial opinions from the actual case underlying the Traynor record, *Boermeester v. USC*, filed in the United States Central District of California, Western Division. The facts detail the university's steps in investigating reports that late one evening, Prescott grabbed his former girlfriend "J.R." by the neck and pushed her against a wall. After issuing an interim suspension and no-contact order, the school interviewed Prescott, who denied intending to hurt

\$5 Attorney Fee Hike Creates Grants

When Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill 2958 last September, a \$5 increase was added to annual attorney license fees to support Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (IOLTA) funded organizations. The bill is an amendment of the Business and Professions Code earmarking the additional \$5 fee to fund summer fellowship grants for law students "for the purpose of supporting law students interested in pursuing a career in legal services for indigent persons." A noble cause to be sure. Additionally, it was stipulated that the grants be awarded to student programs via a competitive process, so the money could be put to the best possible use.

SJCL's request for two summer fellows and \$20,000 was approved in full. The fellowship awardees, Alejandra Tenorio-Zurita (4L) and Rosa Nava Garcia (2L), focus specifically on complex naturalizations for clients who have prior encounters with law enforcement, or complicated immigration history. They also work on cases of unaccompanied minors, clients seeking humanitarian forms of relief such as U Visa's, T Visa's, or VAWA applications,



Grant Fellowship awardees **Alejandra Tenorio-Zurita** (4L) and **Rosa Nava Garcia** (4L)

and conduct trauma informed intakes and interviews.

For fellowship winner Tenorio-Zurita, the work experience is personal. "As a first-generation daughter of immigrant farm workers, I have developed a passion for helping the immigrant community. The fellowship has allowed me to work

on complex immigration cases with the guidance of the NALC staff.

Rosa Nava Garcia says she wants to "serve as a student advocate to provide guidance to under-resourced individuals." She hopes to contribute to the public service work NALC provides while strengthening the skills she will need for a career in immigration law.

J.R. and contended the couple regularly wrestled "playfully" in this manner.

After she was summoned to the school's Title IX Office, J.R. provided a detailed account of the incident and alleged previous incidents of IPV and abuse by Prescott. The next day, she recanted and asked to withdraw the statement, but the Title IX Coordinator refused, citing the possibility that she feared retaliation or felt pressured to recant. Eventually, J.R. took to twitter, denying any mistreatment had occurred and claiming her initial account had been misinterpreted and taken out of context. Because Prescott and J.R. perceived the investigation as unfair, neither attended evidentiary hearings nor exercised their right to submit written questions to each other. The university's findings and decision to expel Prescott were based largely on J.R.'s initial statement, murky surveillance

video footage of the incident, and the statement of a third-party who hadn't directly witnessed the event.

The school's athletic department publicly announced that Prescott, two classes shy of graduating, had been expelled for student conduct code violations. He petitioned for mandamus. The district court denied the writ, and Prescott appealed. The team's opening brief argued, *inter alia*, that the disciplinary proceedings deprived Prescott of due process, including the right to cross-examine critical witnesses at a live evidentiary hearing and the right to a neutral adjudicator, given the school investigator's dual role as factfinder. It also addressed whether Prescott had forfeited his rights by failing to take advantage of all procedural protections afforded by the university.

While the competition required tremendous time and work on complex and controversial questions, the awards – both tangible and intangible – made it worthwhile. Reading Boermeester for the first time after the competition was gratifying, Talley noted, as the actual appellate briefs and opinions tracked the team's arguments and caselaw. All three women agree that team work was their greatest strength and reward. "I'm so glad I was able to work directly with these amazing women," Padilla said. "We've become much closer friends as a result."

Diaz, Talley, and Padilla's communication and leadership skills will undoubtedly continue to serve them as attorneys – potentially at the appellate level! SJCL applauds Diaz, Talley, and Padilla for their outstanding work and congratulates them.

Thank You!



Michael Dias, founder of Dias Law in Hanford, and his wife, office manager, Germaine, are among SJCL's generous donors. When asked about the motivation behind his gracious support, Michael says the education he received at SJCL has contributed to his family's well-being, beyond what he ever imagined. "Going to law school was an amazing transformation in my life. It has allowed me to provide for my wife and children at levels I never anticipated."

Now in his 27th year of practice, Michael says his support of the law school is a kind of payback for all he has accomplished due to his legal education. "The school has done wonderful things for (us), including the terrific staff of attorneys on our team."

We wish to thank Michael and Germaine Dias, and each of our alumni and friends, who provide the vital support that has propelled SJCL into its 54th year of excellence in legal education.



SJCL Alumni Association Board members **Marla Gracia** (right), and **Hon. Jim Petrucelli** (R) - center right) present the surplus donations from the 2023 Marjaree Mason Children's Christmas Party to Executive Director **Nicole Linder** (center left). Thank you to all who donated.

We need
YOU!

*The SJCL Alumni Association
has a lot of fun*

(and members receive Got MCLE? for free!)

Upcoming...

- Student Appreciation Day, Fall... September 14
- Senior Citizen's Law Day..... September 23
- Hall of Fame TBA
- Marjaree Mason Children's December 2023 Christmas Party
- Trivia Night (Fundraiser)..... TBA
- Alumni T-Shirt Sales (Fundraiser)
- Alumni/Student Mixer..... TBA
- Got MCLE?..... January 13

Join your Alumni Association at:

www.sjcl.edu/alumni

\$40 Annually OR \$90 For Three Years
(first year after graduation is free)

Alumni Survey 2023

*Thank you to all who participated
in the 2023 Alumni Survey. Your
reflections and comments are greatly
valued and will be studied carefully.*

Cheers to Our Newest Attorneys!

Fourteen bar passers from the February 2023 test administration enjoyed magical weekends after receiving the news that they had beaten the most loath of loathsome exams.

“I’m still in disbelief,” said Sean Quint, who was at a loss for words during a congratulatory phone call the following Monday. “It really hasn’t sunken in yet!”

Stephanie Landeros said she felt tremendous relief and excitement upon learning she had passed and was anxious to switch her title at work to “Associate Attorney”.

If there was a theme among those who were awaiting results this go ‘round, one might say it was unconventional. Laura Higareda-Chapa was unable to attend the swear-in and reception because she had prepared a contingency plan to soothe any disappointing news. “I booked a trip to Mexico just in case!” she said with a smile that was audible through the phone. Rather than drowning her sorrows on a Mexican beach, she would now be celebrating her triumph!

Kelsey Schulteis arranged to be in Mexico on results day, for much the same reason. “It was awesome!” she said. “Such a feeling of accomplishment! I was already there, and ready to celebrate!”

Rather than agonizing at her computer over the results announcement, Cecilia Barnes was readying herself and her dog for a trip to L.A. and then Alaska - a sort of assuage to the trauma of bar results. Cecilia had just accepted an unexpected job offer that would enable her to spend the summer in Alaska, one of her favorite places. “I was so involved in my plans I nearly forgot about the results!” she admitted.

Jacobo Montejano may hold the record for the fastest swear-in after the results were announced. His mom and “favorite person in the world” is a notary public and was able to administer his attorney’s oath right there on the spot – the minute he learned he had passed! “It may be a little unconventional,” Jacobo said, “but I couldn’t think of a better person I’d want to swear me in!”



RECENT BAR-PASSERS (L-R): Sean Quint, Kelsey Schulteis, Nathan Avery, Stephanie Landeros, Eliseo Coronado, and Diana Aguilera.
Not pictured: Cecilia Barnes, Elizabeth Gentile, Laura Higareda-Chapa, Aman Mann, Mario Mella, Jacobo Montejano, Allison Rodriguez, and Jose Rosas.

Mario Mella was unable to attend the swear-in ceremony because he was on his way to Yuma, Arizona. He was headed there for his job as an asylum officer for the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service in San Francisco. “This job is a bullseye on the target that I held as a goal for myself when I entered law school,” he said. “(It’s) a public policy job that deals with human rights that pays an almost living wage!”

Those who attended the swearing-in ceremony and reception reunited at the Clovis Senior Center where the Honorable Erica P. Grosjean lead them in the attorney’s oath. The traditional champagne reception and group photo followed, to the delight of assembled family and friends.

Congratulations

February Bar Passers

**Diana Aguilera
Nathan Avery
Cecilia Barnes
Eliseo Coronado
Elizabeth Gentile
Laura Higareda-Chapa
Stephanie Landeros
Aman Mann
Mario Mella
Jacobo Montejano
Sean Quint
Allison Rodriguez
Jose Rosas
Kelsey Schulteis**

Diversifying the Law - One Graduate at a Time

With trends toward diversification and equity fronting the news in extremes both good and bad (good being the progress made, and bad - the snail's pace of said progress), successful efforts by SJCL to diversify its student body and in turn, the local legal field, were highlighted at a conference on Higher Education and Student Affairs at CSU, Fresno, in March.

SJCL administrative staff members Francisco Rosas (Assistant Director, Admissions & Student Engagement) and Diane Skouti Baiza (Alumni Coordinator) showcased advancements made in the diversity of both ethnicity and gender of law students on campus, and ultimately, the attorneys and judges they become as practitioners of law. The conference was an inaugural convening of more than 200 Higher Education Student Affairs Administrators from local colleges as well as UC Merced, USC, University of the Pacific, CSU Bakersfield, and Winona State University, MN.

As one of the few law schools in the state whose campus population mirrors the population make-up of the community it serves, SJCL is far ahead of the curve in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion among its constituents. The 2020 California Census on race and ethnicity found that the population of Fresno County at that time - was 54% Hispanic/Latino, and 27% White/ Non-Latino.

For a profession that has historically been dominated by white males, SJCL's incoming class in 2022 reflected the local population with a division of students who were 43% Hispanic/ Latino, and 25% White.

Conversely, and reflective of the traditional composition of legal professionals, out of 1,700 attorneys on record in Fresno County, some 70% are White, and only 12%, Hispanic/Latino. Other underrepresented racial groups barely even ranked with a percentile.

Research confirms the significance of diversity within the justice system. As noted by Gasman, (2023), true racial representa-



Francisco Rosas (right) and Diane Skouti Baiza present on Diversifying the Law at a Fresno State conference in March.

tion ensures that diverse communities have a sense of inclusion and agency with regard to equity under the law. The quality of legal analyses, solutions, processes, and judicial decisions are improved with diversity, making the legal profession more productive and equitable. The presence of racial and ethnic diversity in the legal profession can more thoroughly demonstrate that the law is for the benefit of all persons. (American Bar Association, 2016).

As the new and more diverse classes of law students graduate and begin legal careers, these disparate numbers will begin to shift, providing for more equitable and inclusive legal service for the public.

Regarding gender, major strides have been made toward greater diversity among our students as well. A sampling of the graduating classes between 1974 and 2022

shows marginal increases in female graduates, through 1982. That year saw an even split of 10 male and 10 female graduates. Then in 1988 the trend reached a tipping point, with female students outnumbering male students 13 to 11. More recently, the graduating class of 2022 had a composition of 9 males and 27 females. While the male to female student ratio has adjusted similarly in colleges nation-wide, the imbalance of female to male attorneys in the legal field has yet to catch up.

Efforts to correct the imbalance of ethnic and gender diversity among law students must begin with legal practitioners who are willing to encourage and mentor individuals from underrepresented groups who have a desire to study and practice law. In this way, higher education will help to diversify the law, one student at a time.

Gasman, M. (2023, March 16). Why we Need More African American Lawyers. Forbes. Retrieved from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/marybethgasman/2023/03/16/why-we-need-more-african-american-lawyers/?sh=32c48f7114cd>

Diversity in Law: Who Cares? (2016, April 30). American Bar Association. Diversity in Law: Who Cares? (americanbar.org)

Where Are They Now?

As a semi-annual event on campus, the Alumni Career Forum is designed to give current and prospective students a look into the vast variety of career opportunities that a degree in law provides. As a chat with alumni from a wide range of class years, the career forum provides a window on the career pathways of four graduates, and the opportunity to learn: “Where are they now?”



Hon. Bryce Yonehiro Hatakeyama (Law '09)

The Honorable Bryce Yonehiro Hatakeyama (Law '09) had grandmothers who were forced to live in a Japanese Internment camp during World War II, while their husbands fought for the U.S. in the military. His determination to change the family legacy eventually steered him to an appointment as an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) at the age of 39, for the State Workers' Compensation Appeals Board.

Bryce graduated from Cal Poly at San Luis Obispo with his undergrad degree, but felt he wasn't yet ready to enter the work force. He took the LSAT and applied to SJCL, hoping to stay local so he could take care of his grandmother. “Fortunately I got in,” he said. “I was able to care for my grandmother here in town throughout law school.”

Bryce says when he started, he was not good at public speaking. “I was very shy, very introverted,” he said. He saw law school as a personal challenge that ended up being a great experience.

After graduating and passing the bar, he worked in any area of law he could get, but mainly family law. Then he switched to workers' compensation and, after several years of experience, was appointed an ALJ. “I have not found anything I like doing more,” he said. “I'm looking forward to where my career takes me next. I've been thinking about

becoming an adjunct professor someday!” he said.

Jessica Jaramillo Perez says she always knew she wanted to go into law, but was never really sure why. “I just had the feeling that this was what I was meant to do with my life,” she said. Jessica majored in Political Science at UC Merced and after graduating she took a break to have a baby. She worried that she may have to give up her dream of being an attorney. Later, she got a job at a law firm, and with now two babies at home, she realized she had to find a way to attend law school. Her children were five and six when she graduated from SJCL.

“It makes no difference where you go to school,” Jessica said. “Just like those elite law school students - I passed the bar too!” She worked at the same law firm for another year while continuing to volunteer at SJCL's New American Legal Clinic (NALC). In a full-circle type of move, Jessica was recently hired as an Immigration Law Attorney at NALC, and she says it is very rewarding. “My first case was a young boy from Honduras who had no mother and his father had died. He was living with his grandma, but she sent him to the U.S. alone when she could no longer care for him. He ended up at the border. We helped him through NALC and now he is working hard and using the opportunity he has been given to better himself.

Brittany Hines (Law '16) attended Stanislaus State prior to law school. She said she has wanted to be an attorney since childhood because she liked the strong image of the attorneys she saw in the movies. In grade school she wrote a poem about how she wanted to be an attorney and her mom encouraged her. Initially a criminal defense attorney, Brittany has moved into family law now, mostly because the trials are shorter. Having had a baby in 2021, Brittany says the criminal law schedule was a lot. “The hours and trials are longer,” she said. Now a family law attorney at Borton Petrini with several other SJCL



Jessica Jaramillo Perez (Law '21)

alumni, Brittany says her schedule works much better.

Rene Turner Sample (Law '88) says she decided on law at the age of 13. “My dad introduced me to a female judge that year and that (inspired me enough to) seal the deal! I was all in.” Rene attended Fresno state first, and then SJCL. She got married during her first year of college and had her first child in her last year.

“All but one of my classmates passed the bar on the first try,” Rene said. “I did insurance law first, and was the only attorney out of 70 lawyers, who didn't have a wife at home!” Female lawyers at the time, were few and far between, she added.

Later, Rene was hired as in-house counsel for a big corporation. Now in her 35th year in the legal profession, Rene's most recent accomplishment was taking over the Freedman Law Firm with the untimely passing of fellow SJCL alum, Darryl Freedman.

“SJCL is a great school,” Rene said. My professors were the judges and other attorneys I worked with after passing the bar.

Judge Hatakeyama agreed, stating “I had four people in my study group, but they didn't make it through the first year of law school. I was the only one who did. Then some other students invited me to join their study group and it all worked out!”

Rene says her study group was very serious. “No small talk, no fun. We took it very seriously and were very good students. We worked very hard,” she said.

“Self-motivation is important,” said Judge Hatakeyama. “There is a lot of help here (at SJCL). The school promotes a level of camaraderie that is uncommon. You (and your fellow classmates) figure things out together.”



Rene Turner Sample (Law '88)



Brittany Hines (Law '16)

On the Move...

We are changing the way we keep up with all your endeavors and accomplishments. Please keep us in your loop by completing the form at www.sjcl.edu/onthemove. Emails and phone calls are welcome too. Contact Diane Skouti at dskouti@sjcl.edu or (559) 326-1463 to share your news!

Andrew Antaramian (Law '14) is starting his own law practice in Glendale, Antaramian Law, where he practices PI, Labor and Employment, and Estate Planning.

Jordan Bennett (Law '20) has opened The Law Office of Jordan A. Bennett.

Jared Bertoni (Law '20) is now an Associate Attorney at Yruegui & Roberts.

Jason Crockford (Law '18) is now at the Fresno County Public Defender's Office.

Yvette Estrada (Law '18) is now an Associate Attorney at Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud, & Romo.

Joseph Good (Law '19) has been promoted to Interim Managing Attorney of the Homelessness Prevention Project at Central California Legal Services.

Matthew Hamilton (Law '22) is now a Deputy District Attorney with the Fresno County District Attorney's Office.

Brittany Hines (Law '16) is now at Laughlin Falbo Levy & Moresi with a focus on workers compensation defense.

Lisa (Ellis) McNair (Law '05) passed the Arizona bar exam in February of 2022 and has been a Deputy County Attorney in Cochise County, Bisbee, Arizona, since October of 2022.

Ramon Nava (Law '14) is now Chief Executive Officer at Ramon Nava Law APC.

Jordan Ott (Law '19) is an Associate Attorney at Albert and Mackenzie in San Francisco.

Richard Placido (Law '17) is now an Intellectual Property Attorney at Peterson Watt Law Group in Roseville, California.

Angad Puniani (Law '20) is now at the Law Office of Matthew H. Springmeyer in Chula Vista, CA, where he is practicing immigration law.

Tomas Ross (Law '13) has been promoted to State Managing Attorney and now oversees the California staff counsel operation of Loya Casualty Insurance Company. The company is expanding and opening a legal office in northwest Fresno in 2023.

John Soares is serving as a paralegal at Crystal Dynamics, Inc. in San Mateo, California.

Elizabeth A. Thomasian (Law '14) is now Senior Counsel at Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani.

Abigail Unruh (Law '22) is now a Deputy District Attorney with Tulare County.

In Memoriam



Earlynnda Souza Beckers (Law '98)

Earned a master's degree from the University of Kansas before moving to Visalia becoming a journalist and professor of journalism at College of the Sequoias. After earning her law degree from SJCL she served as a deputy district attorney in Tulare County, worked for McCormick, Kabot, Jenner & Lew, and opened in her own law practice before becoming an attorney in dependency court. She also served as an elected member of the Visalia Unified School District Board of Trustees.



Nancy J. LeVan (Law '00)

earned her Juris Doctor degree later in life, at the age of 49. She operated her own law firm for 20 years, specializing in estate planning and probate law. A highly respected attorney, Nancy had a passion for helping those in need. She was the recipient of numerous awards in recognition of her pro bono service.

We strive to honor and recognize those SJCL alumni who have departed. If you know of anyone who should be acknowledged, please contact us at: dskouti@sjcl.edu

Thank you FOR YOUR SUPPORT

San Joaquin College of Law thanks the following individuals and organizations for their gifts. Their generosity helps SJCL deliver an outstanding academic program to students.

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