



Academic Dean **Justin Atkinson** teaches one of the first synchronous hybrid classes in SJCL's online law program.

SJCL Adds On-Line Law Program

BY **DIANE SKOUTI BAIZA**, ALUMNI LIAISON

Beginning with the Fall semester of 2023, a new option for attending law school is available at SJCL. To meet the latest educational needs of students seeking a career in law, a remote option now enables students to complete a Juris Doctor degree completely online. Every bit as thorough and comprehensive as the traditional in-person law program, the remote option was designed to accommodate working professionals, non-local students, parents, and any student who needs more flexibility to attend. The hybrid courses are taught via Zoom in a synchronous (live) learning environment with classroom instruction and student engagement among in-person and remote students, alike.

Up to the minute equipment has brought SJCL into the realm of high-tech education, providing a highly interactive, collaborative learning environment regardless of one's physical location.

"We set out to make our online program as good as the in-person experience," says Derron Wilkinson, SJCL's Chief Information Officer. "We've installed microphones that can hear a whisper to capture engaging, spur-of-the-moment student dialog, and screens and cameras that show all students – remote and in-person." Wilkinson says the remote experience will continue to improve as new technology is developed.

Mandisha Crawford, a 1L remote student originally from Chicago, but living now in Orlando, Florida, says she was



Geovanna Waters (3L) lives in Burbank, CA and attends SJCL completely online.



A Message From the Dean

Big changes are coming to legal education.

Beginning August of 2024, the logic games portion of the LSAT, also known as Analytical Reasoning, has been eliminated. You remember those – There are five houses on a street. Susie lives in the green house. John’s house is not next to Fred’s house, etc. How are the houses situated on the street? Because they put visually impaired individuals at a disadvantage, the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC), drafters of the LSAT, are removing them. Many LSAT takers detest these questions and won’t miss them. Now there will be two scored Logical Reasoning sections and one scored Reading Comprehension section, plus one unscored (experimental) section of either Logical Reasoning or Reading Comprehension.

The writing section of the test will also change. According to LSAC, “These changes will help schools better understand the writing capabilities of applicants for the purposes of their admission decisions.” The writing section will be 50 minutes – 15 minutes for prewriting analysis with more text to absorb, and 35 minutes to write the essay. Rather than asking the writer to decide between two given options, the exercise will present a debatable issue allowing the prospective student to choose an original thesis and defend it. LSAC states that law schools and the legal profession tell it consistently “about the importance of strong analytical and argumentative writing skills.” The section will remain unscored for now but, given the importance of analytical and argumentative writing in law practice, it may become a scored section eventually.

At the other end of the law school journey, discussions continue about potential changes in the bar exam. There are proposals to reduce the number of substantive subjects tested, permit open-book examinations, and develop testing mechanisms that test skills rather than legal knowledge. It is likely to include more exercises like the current Performance Exam.

Both trends in testing put emphasis on thinking and writing skills. Chat-GPT will not eliminate the need for these skills soon, if ever. Fortunately, SJCL’s curriculum includes a writing course on three occasions throughout the student’s law school journey - Legal Methods in the first year, Appellate Advocacy in the second year, and Advanced Research & Writing in the third or fourth year.

Any changes in the bar exam will not happen quickly. The Committee of Bar Examiners generally gives two years’ notice of structural or substantive changes. However, it is frustrating for students, especially students just entering law school, not to know with certainty the final challenge they will face to enter their chosen profession.

Sincerely,

Janice Pearson
Dean

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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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Advantage: Carpoolers!

It didn't matter that three first-year law students hailed from the same charming, tree-lined town some 50 miles south of Fresno. Or, with their wildly contrasting backgrounds, they each had plans to become an attorney. Or that they had taken the plunge and enrolled in the same law school the very same year.

Even with all they had in common, the three had never met. Not once had their paths crossed as they grew up and went about their business in Visalia.

What did matter, however, was the dreaded commute to SJCL. That hour-long slog to and from campus that would plague them on sleepy mornings, lull them during the afternoon rush, and dare them to stay awake and alert, knowing all too well they were wasting those precious two hours per day, driving. Two hours they could have spent studying.

Bradley Rutledge says the wasted time and inconvenience of the commute had caused him to consider moving to Fresno, to be closer to campus. Then something changed his mind. Director of Recruitment Diane Steel took the initiative to identify and connect students who were commuting from the same locals, so they could maybe work out a carpool. "We connected over the phone," Bradley says, "and were able to set up a rotating schedule of driving and studying that works really well!"

Bradley's fellow carpoolers: Maribel Flores and Brayden Inchcliff, agree. "It's been great to bounce ideas off one another like study methods, understanding certain topics, or any overall concerns," says Maribel. "This group keeps me in check, especially on days when the last thing I want to do is study or review!"

Now, Bradley says, the time he and his fellow carpoolers spend commuting is the most effective study tool he has. "When I study alone, I'm mostly reading to pre-



Visalia carpoolers (L-R): **Bradley Rutledge**, **Brayden Inchcliff**, and **Maribel Flores** have found their carpool study sessions to be invaluable.

pare for class or updating my outlines. Our carpool time is when I really test my memorization and understanding of the material," he adds.

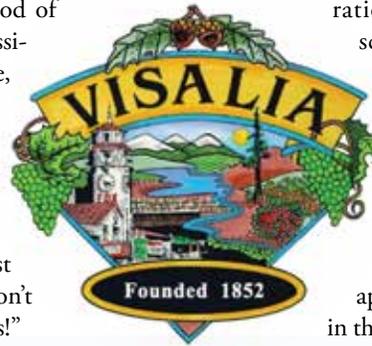
For some, this method of study would seem impossible. Brayden, for example, gets car sick if he reads in the car. "I don't get sick at all when I drive," Brayden says. "When someone else drives, we discuss what we just learned in class, so I don't have to look at my notes!"

Brayden, 23, is fresh out of undergrad studies in Texas. He says returning home to Visalia has been good. "I've always had a love for agriculture and the Central

Valley," he says. He plans to assist farmers with his legal career.

Maribel has worked as a paralegal for five years, which was her inspiration for enrolling in law school. Bradley has sold residential real estate for ten years and wants to explore the opportunities in real estate law.

Each of the students say the recitation of rules, repetition, quizzing, and application of hypotheticals in the car is serving them quite well. For now, they say they are fine with their commute, and they plan to continue the arrangement as long as they can.



Big Start for Joint Mentoring Program

Some 45 law students, recent graduates, and experienced attorneys attended a mixer in January to learn about a new mentoring program offered jointly by the San Joaquin College of Law Alumni Association and the Fresno County Bar Association. With the goal of providing guidance, professional development, and practical knowledge to law students and recent law school graduates, it is hoped that the mentoring program will enhance the law school and new attorney experience.

Offered first to the graduating classes of 2023 and 2024, mentorships can assist law students as they complete their last term in law school, anticipate the bar exam, and ultimately begin their professional careers. Several recent SJCL graduates also hope to benefit from the program as new attorneys learning to navigate the legal profession.

With food and drink generously provided by the FCBA and a conference room provided by McCormick Barstow, the kick-off event was truly a joint effort.

If you are an experienced attorney and would like to serve as a mentor, please contact dskouti@sjcl.edu



Alumni Association

BY **SABRINA PRINDIVILLE**, ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD PRESIDENT 2024



President

Sabrina Prindiville
Class of 2014
Yruegui & Roberts

Hello fellow alumni! I am your newly elected Alumni Association Board President. The alumni association is dedicated to serving the alumni and current students alike. We are incredibly excited at the recent launch of the new mentor program! It is encouraging to see so many fellow alumni volunteering to guide new and future attorneys as they venture towards successful legal careers.

We have many exciting events coming up this year. Please keep an eye out for announcements and join in on the fun. The alumni association thanks you for your continued support. Should you have any questions or want to get involved in any of our events, please contact us at sjclalumniassociation@gmail.com. You can also find us on Facebook. We look forward to hearing from you.

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The SJCL Alumni Association is growing!

Join us as we continue to grow the SJCL alumni network, support current law students, and honor our alma mater. Become an event volunteer, a supporter, or an attendee at one of the upcoming events.

Watch your email for dates and details!

- **Alumni/Student Mixers**
- **Trivia Night**
- **Senior Citizen's Law Day**
- **MCLE Lite**

Join the Alumni Association

At sjcl.edu or mail a check to:

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Clovis, CA 93612

\$40 Annual dues entitle you to FREE Got MCLE? (regular price \$125)

\$90 Three-year discount

A Reflection on the Gift of Joy

BY **DEBORAH BOYETT** (LAW '01) ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBER



The Alumni Association board and friends packed laundry baskets for delivery to the Marjaree Mason Center Children's Christmas party.



Deborah Boyette, of Wanger Jones Helsley PC, delivers baskets to the Marjaree Mason Center.

This past December, I spent several hours on a Saturday helping prepare for the SJCL Alumni Association's annual Marjorie Mason Center Christmas celebration. It was my first time participating in the event, so I relied on fellow alumni to explain the process of filling laundry baskets with gifts. Soon, I was loading up baskets with everyone else, making sure each one had plenty of arts and crafts, books, games, Santa hats, and candy for the MMC kids. We were busy little elves!

Next, I was shown how to "stretch" pretied flannel blankets. It was a good upper arm workout as I worked my way around all four sides of a blanket, hands pulling the flannel between the ties. While some of us "stretched," others folded the blankets into pillow-shapes, with the ends of the blankets tucked so they stayed folded. Genius!

At the end of the day, we filled our cars with baskets and blankets and drove downtown to the MMC. A beautifully decorated Christmas tree was waiting for us as we delivered the baskets. Christmas was on the way!

The next day, Sunday, was the Christmas party. Our alum team gathered in an MMC backyard with the MMC staff. As the families arrived, they were greeted by Santa Clause and a vocal chorale singing

Christmas carols. (Special thanks to past Alumni Board president Stefanie Krause for connecting us with this group that includes her talented son and daughter.)

After a pizza lunch, Santa presented each family with a Christmas basket custom packed for that family. Then the MMC families and SJCL alum spent the afternoon playing Cornhole, Connect Four, and Jenga. The kids were fun to play with and hard to keep up with!

When I arrived home late in the afternoon, I couldn't help but think about the weekend's activities. My thoughts turned to the tiny toddler, with cookie smeared over most her face, who let me play Jenga and Connect Four with her. I pictured the three siblings who arrived dressed-up for Christmas, with the two boys in shirts and sweaters and little sister in her shiny red Christmas dress. I smiled thinking about the little miss who took charge of the games and began telling us where to stand and whose turn it was to throw. Definitely a future attorney.

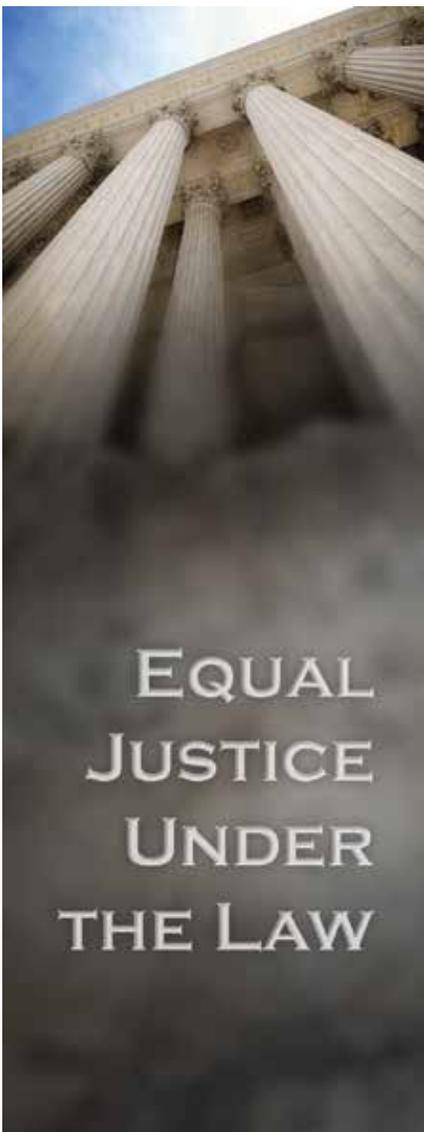
I thought of the ladies. Some with shy smiles, who accepted baskets, blankets, fuzzy socks, and candy for their children. Other ladies came solo, but so appreciative for the afternoon. And so was I... appreciative for the opportunity to have a new experience of sharing Christmas joy.

The Alumni Association and the Marjaree Mason Center give heartfelt thanks to all who helped sponsor the Children's Christmas Party:

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Kimberly Sweidy
Modern Legal PC, Craig and Kayla Waters
James P. Witherow



A number of SJCL bar passers took the attorney's oath at a swear-in ceremony at the California Court of Appeal, 5th District, in December. Several judges, who are also SJCL alumni and faculty members, were on hand to share well wishes and words of wisdom with the newly official attorneys.



Always Remember This Day...

Above the towering double doors to the George A. Brown courtroom at the 5th District Court of Appeal, large resolute letters declare: "Equal Justice Under the Law". As employees of the court escorted the most recent bar exam passers through those doors and to their seats before the bench, a kind of metamorphosis began. These new attorneys, still fresh off their triumph over the exam, still seemed somewhat stunned and bemused. One could detect also, however, the addition of the slightest swagger. That hard-earned confidence that comes with the official title, finally, as licensed legal professionals.

At this rare, happy convening of the court the assembled panel of judges, one by one, shared tidbits of advice and encouragement. Associate Justice Jennifer R.S. Detjen stressed the importance of work ethic and reputation. The Hon. Stanly Boone, Magistrate Judge of the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of California, asserted: "Today is your reset. You are all equal in our eyes and under the law. Once you are sworn in your emergence will begin."

The pronouncement above the doors to the courtroom, it seems, applies all to who enter: defendants, plaintiffs, and attorneys alike. Judge Boone advised also that the

adversarial nature of the legal field will be challenging. "Law school was easy compared to what lies ahead!" he said.

Ninth Circuit Court Judge Ana de Alba said that some days, being an attorney is great fun, and some days, it's exhausting. "The bar exam does not measure how good an attorney you are," she added.

Presiding Superior Court Judge Houry Sanderson, (Law '87) told the group they would look back upon this day and their careers in law years from now, and know they were lucky to work in such a worthy and rewarding field. "You have worked very hard to get here," she said. "But your lifelong accomplishments are yet to come."

William McComas (Law '08) and President of the Fresno County Bar Association, noted that there is a great need for attorneys and judges in all areas of the law. He also encouraged the group to "never forget the value and need of pro bono work. Access to justice should not depend on how much money one has," he said.

Representatives of the Fresno County and Federal Bar Associations, the Unity Bar and the Fresno Young Lawyers were all present to welcome the new attorneys to their fold and offer their support. The ceremony provided the perfect launch for the exciting and beneficent careers to come. Congratulations one and all!

Judge Sanderson Chosen as Presiding Judge



On January 1, 2024, the Honorable Houry Sanderson (Law '87) became the new presiding judge of the Fresno County Superior Court. Elevated to the new position by her peers, Judge Sanderson succeeded Judge David Kalemkarian, and has chosen Judge Jeffrey Hamilton, a previous SJCL adjunct professor, as assistant presiding judge.

Judge Sanderson graduated from SJCL in 1987 and was appointed to the Fresno Superior Court in 2005 by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Prior to becoming a judge, she worked for the law firm of Tom Campagne (Law '75), the Fresno County Counsel's Office, and practiced dependency law. She moved to the District Attorneys Office after that, where she remained until her appointment to the bench.

In her new role, Judge Sanderson is responsible for leading the court, establishing policies, and allocating resources.

From Agriculture to Law to Politics

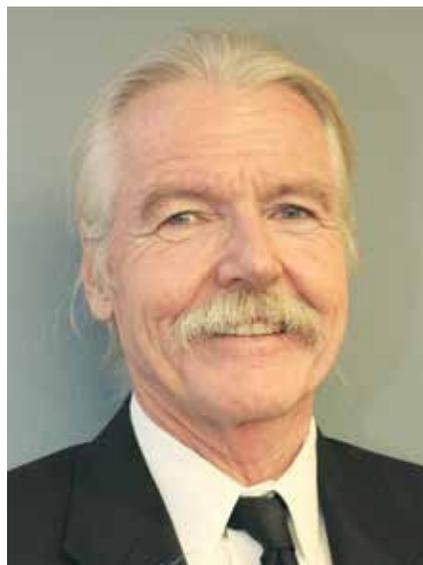


Alexandra Macedo (Law '21) of Tulare has launched a bid for the 33rd Assembly District, with the departure of Assemblyman Devon Mathis at the end of 2024.

Macedo comes from an agriculture family in Tulare dating back to 1939. She graduated from Tulare Union High School, then California State University at Northridge with a business law degree, and SJCL for her J.D. Macedo is the president of Macedo Environmental Consulting, which works with various administrative agencies and government programs to provide environmental compliance assistance to the agriculture industry. Mathis has announced his support for Macedo as his successor in the California Assembly. The election for the Assembly seat will take place in March of 2025.

Governor Appoints Arthur Baggett to Water Quality Control Board

We are thrilled to congratulate Arthur Baggett (Law '93) on his appointment by Governor Newsom to the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Arthur, a resident of El Portal, has been a Partner and Counsel at AG Baggett and PJ Weber Inc. since 2011, and an Adjunct Faculty member at SJCL since 1997. He is also a member of the elite class of alumni in the SJCL Hall of Fame. Arthur's career includes having served on the State Water Resources Control Board and as its Chair from 2000 to 2005. He also served as District 1 Supervisor of Mariposa County from 1986 to 1994. After earning a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Cincinnati, Arthur followed with a master's in Ecosystem Management and Forest Ecology from Antioch College, before enrolling in law school to earn his J.D. degree at SJCL. Arthur will join the board upon Senate confirmation.





Referrals Matter

Your referrals are the number one source of new law students and attorneys in the Central Valley. By inspiring those around you to pursue their dreams of legal advocacy, you help to steward the next generation of legal professionals.

Please invite your referrals to contact SJCL Director of Admissions (559)326-1455.

Tackling the Beast

With over a dozen paralegals among the ranks of SJCL's student body, one can't help but wonder if something is afoot within the legal profession.

A quick glance at the job board under "Careers" on the school's website confirms the growing shortage of attorneys and the number of open positions that have gone unfilled locally. It seems the same is true for paralegals. Many a law firm has lamented over their inability to find paralegals to fill out their staff, and it looks like that trend will continue. When a shining star is identified among the ranks of paralegals, they are often encouraged to go on to law school, and hopefully return to their firm as an associate attorney. Such is the case for Maribel Flores, a 1L who was originally hired at a small law firm as a receptionist.

After a promotion and five years of experience as a paralegal, she says she never really considered law school, until - that is - last year. "The attorneys I work for were insistent that I consider law school," she said. Her employer has been extremely supportive of her endeavors and has served as a wonderful mentor.

"Thanks to their support I now look forward to one day going to court - with them - or against them!" Maribel says she hopes to practice criminal justice. "This journey has been very empowering" she says.

Maribel says she is enjoying the challenges of law school and that her experience as a paralegal has helped her to connect the dots with certain topics, like civ pro. "A paralegal's role is to assist attorneys with everything but, going to court," she said. "I'd be a liar if I denied thinking I'd

have an edge in law school due to my legal training. But after the first week that feeling dissipated! Law school is a different beast."

Karen Lopez-Pena, a 3L, says she has wanted to be a lawyer ever since she can remember. Growing up as an undocumented immigrant, she was aware of the need for legal representation in her community, but especially for low-income, Spanish speaking legal professionals. Obtaining legal residence enabled her to complete her bachelor's degree at Fresno State, and she had planned then to enroll in law school.

"But God sent me my first born, and my priorities shifted," she said. "Law school was put on hold." Her next best option was to become a paralegal, so that's what she did.

Throughout that career, the attorneys she worked with often suggested she consider law school, but she knew it would have to wait until her children were old enough, and self-sufficient enough to allow her to do so. Now that she is finally here, Karen says her paralegal training and experience is helping a great deal with the coursework.

"Being exposed to deadlines and tasks that require critical thinking and analysis have been great tools for my studies," she says. "I prioritize assignments and dedicate quality time, but I'm also working full time and caring for my family, which is a challenge.

If, as a result of an attorney shortage, many of the paralegals enroll in law school to become attorneys, who will be left to fill the paralegal void? It's just further proof that the legal profession is ever growing and will be in demand for many years to come.



Maribel Flores (1L), began her legal career as a receptionist.



Karen Lopez (3L) is one of a dozen paralegals enrolled at SJCL.

One Immigrant's Story

BY MARISOL CRUZ RODRIGUEZ (4L)

Where I come from, attending law school is an out of reach dream for many people, especially when you live without legal status. I lived in the United States, undocumented for nearly 30 years. I was born in Mexico, but I was raised in the United States for almost my entire life. My life took a positive turn in 2013 when I was approved for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (“DACA”), granting me employment authorization and a social security card. DACA changed my life. It allowed me to work in the legal field alongside great attorneys and gain invaluable experience, further empowering my dream of becoming an attorney. However, it did not cure all difficulties and hurdles that come with being undocumented because DACA did not provide me with legal status in the United States.

Attending SJCL gave me access to NALC for both educational and legal purposes. I first met Professor and Director of NALC, Linda Barreto, in 2014 when we briefly worked at the same immigration law firm. I later went on to be Professor Barreto’s student, taking her immigration class and worked under her supervision in NALC. I remember speaking with my first client and feeling overjoyed that I was helping someone become a U.S. Citizen. My time at NALC will always be memorable because I had the opportunity of helping people achieve their dream of becoming Citizens and I experienced firsthand the amazing work NALC provides.

After speaking with Professor Barreto of my own immigration journey, she advised me of Advanced Parole, which is the process of requesting permission to re-enter the United States after traveling abroad. As a DACA recipient, I qualified for Advanced Parole, and it would later allow me to adjust status directly within the United States after I got married.

NALC prepared my Advance Parole application and Professor Barreto attended



Marisol Cruz Rodriguez and her husband Enrique.

the immigration interview with me. I was nervous and scared but she guided me the entire way and assured me everything would be okay. In December 2021, my Advance Parole application was granted, and I had the privilege of traveling to my country of birth for the first time. It was the most beautiful experience of my life to have been able to visit my family, to meet my great grandmother, to see my roots, see where I come from, and to see why my parents made the decision to immigrate to the United States. It was a true blessing and an experience I hold on to dearly.

I married my husband in May of 2022 and NALC took up my adjustment of status case, in which my husband, a U.S. Citizen, was petitioning for me to become a Lawful Permanent Resident. One of our very own, now alumni student, Jaime Gomez, prepared my application and met with my husband and I on several occasions to go over evidence to be submitted to USCIS. A year after our application was submitted, I received my immigra-

tion interview notice and alumni student, Joseph Lascano, attended the interview with my husband and I. Once again, my husband and I were scared and nervous about the interview, but Professor Barreto and Joseph Lascano made sure we were well prepared. The interview was a success, and the officer advised us that my application was approved!

On November 2023, I officially became a Lawful Permanent Resident! The day I received my green card in the mail is a day I will never forget and a feeling I will never forget. I now feel free; free to enjoy my life without the worry and fear of the possibility of losing DACA or of having to leave the United States, the country I call home and the country I grew up in. My life is forever changed with this blessing that would not have been possible without the advice and guidance of Professor Barreto and the NALC team. For nearly 30 years I was undocumented, and now I get to live my American Dream.

A Family Affair

BY DIANE SKOUTI BAIZA, ALUMNI LIAISON

Throughout its 55-year history, SJCL has been the law school of choice for numerous would-be attorneys who were related in one way or another to fellow students. These determined and ambitious souls had either a parent, grandparent, wife, husband, aunt, uncle, cousin, or sibling who preceded, or followed, or enrolled concurrently with them in law school.

Far from being a novel occurrence, these familial endeavors are more common than one might think. This semester, for example, we have on campus a pair of brothers, a set of sisters, the sister of a graduated brother, a nephew, and four sons of previous graduates, all pursuing careers in law and justice.

In past years there have been concurrent mother and daughter students and countless married couples who met in these hallowed halls. After sharing the misery of law school together, many of these couples became two-attorney households, sometimes even sharing a legal practice.

What is it that causes such a following of footsteps into law? Is it the desire to honor a parent, for example, by taking up their profession as a tribute to their efforts? Or is it the aspiration to make something of oneself that grows from a shared, highly driven DNA?

Ryan and Mason Dupras are a case in point. Their father, Jeff Dupras, is Assistant District Attorney at the Madera District Attorney's Office. The brothers both enrolled at SJCL in the fall of 2020, and will both graduate this May. As youngsters they shared a love for soccer and baseball, but their interests diverged when Mason joined the marching band and began to mountain bike, and Ryan took to robotics and mock trial. While they are each intent on careers as prosecutors and families of their own, their approaches to law school couldn't be more different.

"Mason begins reviewing for finals after the first day of class," says Ryan. "I read and prep outlines to brief cases, but I don't start reviewing in earnest until the final few weeks!"

Besides that, the brothers see each other daily as they drive to work and school, go fishing on Fridays, and attend family dinners. As a testament to their ability to be flexible and adjust the status quo, the brothers learned as 1Ls that their differences in learning style and study made it necessary



The Delgado sisters, **Rebeca** and **Blanca**, pre-law school

to depart from one another, and a shared study group. But their mutual support has remained constant throughout.

The Delgado sisters, Blanca and Rebeca, are now 3Ls who have found that having two heads (and one shared brain cell as they like to joke) has helped them immensely throughout their education. Although they pursued differing undergrad majors, Blanca criminology and Rebeca political science, they both took a double-major in Chicano Studies prior to enrolling in law school.

"We are often referred to as a single person," Rebeca said. "We have always been inseparable. We convinced each other that we could handle law school and knew going together would be a dream," she adds. The "girls" as they are called by friends and family, say they have always linked their activities and plans together by choice, but differ from one another in many ways. "Rebecca is the social one, the one that gets us into trouble, and the one that takes care of us," says Blanca. "I have always been a shy, serious, homebody." It's a nice balance that benefits them both. In addition to their shared hobbies of reading and travel, they enjoy studying together, along with the close-knit study group they have formed on campus. "We would love to someday open a law practice together!" Rebeca added.

Robert DeMelo says he grew up exposed to lawyers like his father, Jerry DeMelo Jr. (Law '95) and was inspired by their passion and excitement, in addition



Robert DeMelo (3L)
and his father
Jerry DeMelo (Law '95)

Tips & Tidbits

As proof that the “other side” – a career as an attorney post-bar exam – can be reached with the right mindset, four SJCL alumni stopped by Professor Hamm’s Remedies class to share their personal bar exam stories, an assortment of Hungry Bear cookies, and their steadfast support. A tradition organized by the Alumni Association, alumni attorneys visit the impending graduates each spring to offer tips and tidbits on the exam, and remind them that their alma mater’s support network is ready and willing to assist.

Laura Higareda-Chapa (Law ’22), one of the more recent bar passers, told the students the key for her was to focus on her areas of weakness. She recommended taking a bar prep program, and modifying it to address individual shortcomings. Laura says she also incorporated a lot of memorization because “You can’t write what you don’t know.”

Jason Crockford (Law ’18) reminded the group to attend to their physical health along with their academic and mental health during bar prep. Eating and sleeping



(L-R) **Josh Hernandez** (Law ’18), **Jason Crockford** (Law ’18), **Laura Higareda-Chapa** (Law ’22), and **Jas Gill** (Law ’17)

well and getting some exercise are equal essentials if you want to perform at your best, he said.

Jas Gill (Law ’17) agreed. He told the students that devoting themselves 100% to preparing for the exam is necessary, but that they should focus on their health and well-being as well.

The alumni each agreed that self-care is an important, but often neglected component during bar study. Josh Hernandez (Law ’18) said his own self-care included taking a vacation after graduation, as he felt a need to reset. Once he began to study full-time, it was with his undivided attention.

Cute Gardeners? Spies? da Heck?

The mysterious appearance of several garden gnomes at SJCL caused some excitement in mid-March. First spotted loitering near the eastern exterior doorways disguised as innocent gardeners, the gnomes looked to be assessing how to gain entry to the building. As historic protectors of the earth and its treasures, gnomes have been known for centuries as symbols of good luck, wisdom, and whimsy, and benefactors of crops and gardens.

After the initial few gnomes arrived on campus, more appeared, all shapes, sizes, and mis-matched outfits. They popped up in places like the student lounge, the library, hallways, and even the restrooms, with the aid of someone who penned “Anonymous 1L” on the backs of their colorful tunics. Who are they? Where did they come from? WHY ARE THEY HERE? Students and faculty whispered amongst themselves with mild curiosity.

As the gnome’s prevalence on campus increased, puzzlement increased as well. Finally, with the building overrun by tiny, pointed hats, two of the original gnomes went missing! It happened on the eighth of March, as near as an investigation could tell. Missing posters were hung, and a likewise anonymous challenge issued forth. Find the missing gnomes and be rewarded with a treasure. Take a selfie with the gnome and tag SJCL as proof of your triumph.

The challenge carried on as St. Patrick’s Day drew near. Then as suddenly as it all began, the gnomes returned to their original stations, apparently satisfied they had given as they had intended: a wee bit of fun and good fortune.

Had it been a pre-St. Patty’s Day prank? Did the gnomes appear before mid-terms to spread a sprinkling of good luck and cheer? Will we ever know the answers?



We invite Anonymous 1L to step forward so we can properly say: Thanks for sharing the imaginative gesture, and for making everyone’s day! To the Anonymous of the poems and treasures: Faith & Begorrah that was fun – even with mid-terms getting underway!

NALC

2023 *by the* **NUMBERS**
All Services were Completed **100%** Free of Charge

88 Individuals Served at Outreach Events

39 Clients represented in Removal Proceedings

139 Legal Consultations

314 Naturalizations Submitted

320 Clients who Took Their Oath of Citizenship

Other Immigration Remedies Submitted **81** (adjustment of status, U visa, T visa, SIJS, work permits, DACA, etc)

562 Prescreens

Law Clinics Serve Hundreds in 2023

As is often required at the end of the year, an accounting of progress, success, or lack thereof is conducted through assessment. Assessment, the truth-telling mechanism by which all efforts are measured, provides the cold, hard facts that give reason to celebrate, expand, or put an end to works that have not fulfilled their intended purpose. It is in assessment that the two law clinics at SJCL, the NALC and the BREN, have consistently proven their prowess among programs, and their ability to assist notable numbers of those in need.

For NALC (New American's Legal Clinic), Director Linda Barreto, the staff,

and ten student workers: conducted 562 prescreens, submitted 314 naturalizations, represented 39 clients in removal proceedings, submitted 81 other immigration remedies, served 88 individuals at outreach events, and had 320 clients who took the oath of citizenship in 2023.

BREN (Bolster, Reform, Empower, Network for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities to obtain education services and resources), headed up by Jodie Howard and assisted by law students, 1,739 families attended free classes or trainings, 4,493 hours of weekly ongoing services were provided at school, 2,417 hours of compensatory remediation services were provided, 40 IEP meetings

were attended, 9 clients were found eligible for special education services, 8 clients received 1:1 aides in their school programs, and 201 clients were served.

These highly successful law clinics are serving those in the community who desperately need the services they provide, as well as providing the law students who assist with invaluable real-world experience. These truths are another example of the value a community receives from having an institution of higher learning in its midst. As a premier educator of local attorneys and judges, we fulfill our responsibility to produce future generations of legal professionals, while at the same time, providing unequalled services to those in need.

BREN

2023 *by the* **NUMBERS**

All Services were Completed **100%** Free of Charge
Thanks in Large Part to the Generosity of Grand

201 Total Clients

25 Independent Educational Evaluations Obtained for Clients

40 IEP Meetings

9 Clients Moved to a Less Restrictive Environment

8 Clients Received 1:1 Aides in their IEPs

2,417 Hours of Compensatory Remediation Services

Hours of Weekly, Ongoing Services at School **4,493**

1,739 Families Attended BREN Clinic Classes or Trainings



Online FROM PAGE 1

looking for the flexibility that an online program could offer. “I think the team and faculty do a solid job at making sure technology is running properly, and they put great effort into making sure the remote students get the same assistance and support as in-person.” Mandisha hopes to practice law some day in Southern California.

Students enrolled in both the in-person and online tracks will have the same classes, requirements, and high-caliber legal education. The only difference is how they attend.

“I feel as if I am sitting in class as I can see all my classmates and the professor at the same time,” says Maria Vidal who lives and works in the Los Angeles area. Maria says the biggest challenge has been trying to connect with classmates as a study group or outside of class. “I have overcome this by directly messaging them. They have been very receptive and welcoming to interaction, which has been a nice surprise,” Maria said.

The remote option reflects the philosophy that a high-quality legal education requires interaction with classmates and professors. It’s well-known that engagement with the campus community and participation in robust classroom discussions and exercises are essential for success in law school. The hybrid classes help students to think critically and deepen their understanding of legal concepts, just as traditional classes do. Upon completion, graduates from the remote option receive the same Juris Doctor degree as students who attend in-person and are qualified to sit for the California bar exam.

While data on the success of remote learning is still inconclusive, the COVID

years revealed that student performance is highly dependent on the remote student’s self-discipline and ability to stay focused. And, because of the barriers it can dispatch for so many students, remote learning appears to be here to stay.

In some educator circles, a nation-wide drop in bar pass rates during and after COVID was blamed on remote learning (Ward, 2022. ABA Journal), but the conclusions are highly speculative. As with all new endeavors, adjustments and fine tuning can help to overcome the format’s innate deficiencies. On the plus side, remote learning has opened doors that were previously shut for many would-be law students.

A case in point is SJCL’s efforts to accommodate students who were attending a law school in Glendale that closed down suddenly.

“We received an email dropping the bombshell that the school was closing its doors just after the holidays in 2022,” said Govanna Waters, who is now a 3L in the SJCL online law program. When the students (10 in all transferred to SJCL online) saw they were on their own to find a solution, they banded together to research and contact potential law schools. Since it was during COVID, Geo says there were more online options available than there would have normally been, but “SJCL was the only one ready to handle an online version that would allow for interaction and engagement (similar to an in-person format).

For all the positives online learning offers: greater accessibility and diversity due to geographical freedom, greater flexibility of work-life-school balance, technology and learning platforms that allow for inter-

active and engaging experiences, there are an equal number of challenges. It seems that no matter how interactive educational technology becomes, students attending classes via Zoom are highly susceptible to distractions and the tendency to “tune out”. Feelings of isolation, lack of motivation, equipment issues, and time management can become issues as well, but only if students allow them to.

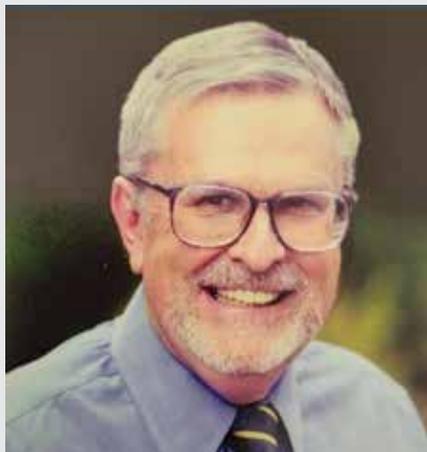
Geo says the secret for her is engagement. Engaging with instructors and classmates and connecting to the positive and supportive SJCL campus culture have made her online learning experience a good one. She and fellow Glendale student Maria Vidal even drove from Glendale to Fresno to attend the recent Mentor Program Mixer so they could meet some of the voices from class, and find placement with an experienced attorney mentor.

Geo says she finds comfort in the accessibility of professors and clarity of communication she receives at SJCL. “It’s reassuring to feel like I’m truly part of the class with professors actively engaging us and classmates being just a click away,” she added.

Do you know of anyone who might benefit from an online law program? Do you have an exceptional para legal, secretary, assistant, researcher, or relative who would make a great attorney? Put them in touch with Diane Steel: dsteel@sjcl.edu, or Darius Ibarra: dibarra@sjcl.edu to learn more.

Ward . November 17, 2022. Pass rates for first-time bar-takers decrease; are online classes the cause? ABA Journal. Retrieved at: <https://www.abajournal.com/web/article/pass-rates-for-first-time-bar-takers-decrease-are-online-classes-the-cause/>

James Herbert, Jr.



SJCL announces with sadness the passing of James K. Herbert, Jr., one of the law school's early, major financial and academic supporters. James was a graduate of Stanford University and Boalt Hall, Berkeley. He practiced law at a firm in Los Angeles and spearheaded the legal work for the fight to "Save Our Coastline" by the city of Palos Verdes.

Jim was a master lecturer on the subject of law, and taught classes at Loyola Law School and McGeorge Law School at the University of the Pacific, in addition to San Joaquin College of Law. He and his wife Carol, who served as Dean of SJCL prior to Jan Pearson, developed Intensive Courses for the Multistate and Performance portions of the Bar Exam, in addition to his creation of the Herbert Writing Course.

Their bar prep program BAR eventually merged with BRI to become BAR BRI. They also created the Bar Passers program with Jim traveling throughout the country to lecture and help students by the thousands prepare for the Bar Exam. Jim also worked to establish the Santa Barbara College of Law.

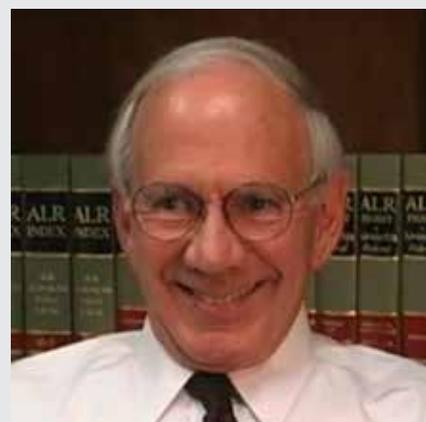
Carol Herbert became the first full-time Dean at SJCL in 1982. She was chosen after a year-long search as the successor to Oliver Wanger, who had served as both the Dean and President of SJCL during its first 11 years in operation. Carol has served on the National Board of the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, founded the Committee on Women and the Law in the Beverly Hills Bar Association, and is a board member of the Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners.

During Carol's time as Dean, Jim taught classes and served on the SJCL Board of Directors. He established a scholarship fund at SJCL and made major financial contributions that provided multiple new resources and improvements.

In addition to their academic pursuits, Jim and Carol established the Herbert Wetland Prairie Preserve in Tulare County. It is now part of the Sequoia Riverlands Trust.

Anyone wishing to honor James Herbert, Jr. is urged to contribute in his memory to their favorite charity, or to plant a tree.

James Hallowell

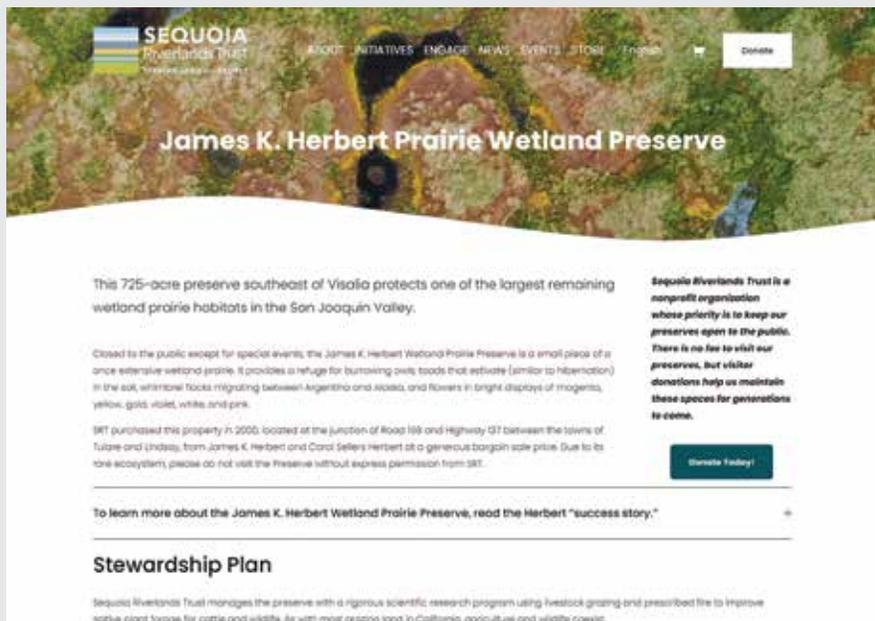


SJCL notes with sadness the passing of James Hallowell, former owner of Hallowell Chevrolet and generous SJCL donor, on January 31st. Founded in 1944 by James' father Dennis, the dealership remained in the family until James' retirement in 2000. Mr. Hallowell and his wife Coke were generous philanthropists and active members of numerous organizations that were devoted to the betterment of their community and future generations. Mr. Hallowell was 90.

Patricia Sharon Harter



We are sad to note the passing of Patricia Sharon Harter (Law '95) on February 22, 2024. After passing the bar the same year she graduated from law school, Patricia was employed with Quinlan, Kershaw and Fanucchi as a probate and family law attorney. In 2003 she went to work for the Social Security Administration as a Decision Writer until her retirement in 2019.



Lonzetta Hightower



It is with great sadness that we note the passing of our own Lonzetta Hightower, a long-time member of the SJCL team. Lonzetta was with SJCL for 32 years, beginning in 1990 when she served as receptionist/secretary and the law school was located in a strip mall on Shields Ave. She continued in the same capacity when the school moved to Clovis until she was promoted to Student Services Assistant in 2003. Zed then helped

to process admissions applications and provided support to development. She was a stellar student in the SJCL Paralegal Program, which she completed just to see what it was all about. Zed loved SJCL and the law students and will be profoundly missed.

The piece below was written several years ago about Zed's enjoyment of feeding the squirrels in Veteran's Park. She preferred to remain anonymous, so it was never published. We share it here in her honor.

Squirrel! (2018)

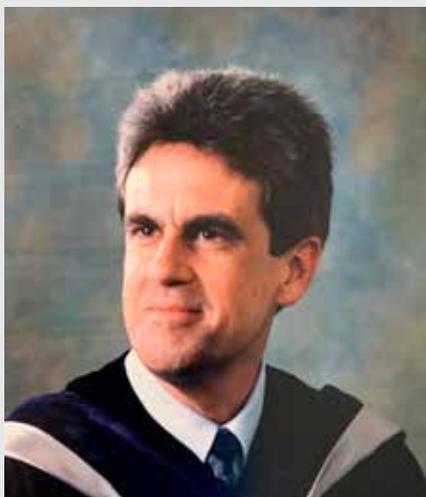
The annual Popcorn and Cold Brew Coffee Day generated a bit of extra excitement this year when one of our new 1Ls stepped outside to enjoy a fresh bag before class. He had barely grabbed a piece when he was ambushed by a fast approaching, highly confident looking squirrel! The student made a hasty retreat back into the building and exclaimed, somewhat out of breath: "A squirrel just rushed me! He was coming up fast, like he was going to jump. It creeped me out!"

Once word got around campus that a squirrel had waylaid a student in the park, it was revealed that an anonymous, long-time staff member (Lonzetta), had been feeding said squirrel, and many more of its associates, for some years. "I knew it was her!" (a squirrel Lonzetta called Mama), said the staffer (Lonzetta). "That particular squirrel has a very specific appearance! She comes running whenever I step outside with food. She really likes popcorn, but also crackers and grapes!"



The squirrel in Veteran's Park Lonzetta named "Mama."

Donn Furman



Donn Furman (Law '93) passed away October 2023, age 73, following cancer diagnosis 2020. His passion for fly fishing, the outdoors and all things water were the driving force behind his environmental activism. After successful river preservation efforts: the Upper Kings River and launching the San Joaquin River Parkway he decided to obtain his JD. He moved to the Bay Area 1996, when hired as a Deputy City Attorney for the City and County of San Francisco. As a water rights attorney, he advised and represented the SF Public Utilities Commission before state and federal agencies. He renegotiated long-term contracts affecting water, power and environmental issues for the greater Bay Area regional water system.

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



Kelly Liu (Law '20) and her husband Jayson with their happy addition, Valen.

Mark Busick (Law '87) has opened the Personal Injury mediation firm, Busick Mediation.

Andrea Chapman (Law '17) has opened Chapman Law in Clovis.

Rena Harrison (Law '19) is now an Associate Attorney at Berliner Cohen in Merced.

Joslyn Hillberg (Law '21) is now a Judicial Staff Attorney with the Fresno County Superior Court.

Natalie Packer (Law '08) is now a Partner at Borton Petrini.

Jacob Rivas (Law '99) of Rivas Injury Law has joined the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA).

Honorable Houry Sanderson (Law '87) has become the new Presiding Judge of the Fresno County Superior Court. Judge Sanderson succeeds Judge David Kalemkarian as of January 2024, and has chosen Judge Jeffrey Hamilton, a previous SJCL adjunct professor, as assistant presiding judge.

Honorable Rosemary T. McGuire (Law '94) has joined Judicate West, a provider of private dispute resolution services. Judge McGuire is affiliated with the Santa Ana office, serving as a mediator, arbitrator, and private judge.

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!

A Family Affair FROM PAGE 12

to their financial freedom. While watching how hard his father - who was the class of '95 valedictorian - worked in law school nearly scared him away, Robert says that his desire to help people and make a living doing something he felt good about, won out. "My dad set the bar so high I could never be expected to reach (his accomplishments)," Robert said. I am proud of what he has done, but I feel God has me in my own lane."

Is there an "edge" to having a close relative who is an attorney? Maybe, Robert says. "I have seen first-hand that it (completing law school and passing the bar exam) can be done. I see lawyers as just regular folks." Robert said that law is a favorite topic of conversation between he and his father. Having both taken Contracts class with Professor Larry Artenian, Robert says he is amazed that after 25 years, his father still remembers details from the class and even still quotes some of the lectures!



(L-R) **Ryan Dupras** (4L), father and Assistant District Attorney at the Madera District Attorney's Office **Jeff Dupras**, and **Mason Dupras** (4L)

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