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Foreword

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Foreword

Dean L. Song Richardson*

In 2008, the University of California, Irvine School of Law (“UCI Law”) was just an idea. Now, we mark our ten-year anniversary with this special issue of the *UC Irvine Law Review*. As I reflect on what accounts for our unparalleled success, I believe it can be summed up in one word: vision. The vision of our Founders, the individuals in our community who dreamt of a law school in Orange County and fought to make it happen; the vision of our founding faculty, who took a leap of faith and left their positions at top-twenty law schools in order to create a new, bold, and innovative program of legal education at UCI; the vision of our founding administrators and staff, who built our infrastructure from scratch; and the vision of our inaugural students, who played an integral part in building the unique culture and entrepreneurial spirit that continues to this day at UCI Law. Visionaries built this school, and visionaries will continue to shape and define its future.

I was well aware of the seismic shift that UCI Law was creating in Southern California and the legal academy before I joined the faculty in 2014. It was my dream to be a part of it. The innovative way of teaching that UCI Law pioneered, the commitment to public service, and the extraordinary community of world-renowned scholars, are what drew me here.

UCI Law started with just sixty J.D. students in 2009¹ and now has more than 800 alumni and two L.L.M. programs. Approximately forty-five percent of our alumni are non-white.² Our students choose UCI Law because they want to make a difference in the world. Through our clinics, externships, and pro bono programs, they have done just that. Since our inception, nearly ninety percent of all UCI Law students have completed more than a total of 90,000 hours of voluntary, pro bono legal services through more than 100 different projects.³ Our alumni are working all

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1. *Our History*, U.C. IRVINE SCH. L., <https://www.law.uci.edu/about/our-history/> [https://perma.cc/CYN6-VL4R] (last visited Sept. 27, 2019).

2. *Celebrating 10 Years*, U.C. IRVINE SCH. L., <https://www.law.uci.edu/10th/> [https://perma.cc/72S7-NZHK] (last visited Sept. 27, 2019).

3. U.C. IRVINE SCH. LAW, UCI LAW VIEWBOOK 1, 28 (2019), <https://www.law.uci.edu/admission/viewbook/UCILawViewbook.pdf> [https://perma.cc/LU62-4NMT].

over the world, in every type of legal career, making impacts great and small to better our communities.

Anniversaries offer a moment to reflect on the past and to chart a course for the future. In ten years, UCI Law lived up to its dream of creating a law school that is innovative, diverse, and public-service oriented. However, we will not become stale, dogmatic, or inflexible. We will never rest on our laurels. We will resist becoming satisfied with the status quo. Instead, we will always challenge ourselves, question our assumptions, and push each other to continuously rethink what legal education should be and how best to achieve it. That is what makes UCI Law special. The extraordinary essays that follow capture this essence of our community.

The first essay is comprised of a series of letters between three UCI Law alumni from the class of 2016, Jamila Benkato, Citlalli Ochoa, and Ariela Rutbeck-Goldman. Their epistolary outlines and dissects our commitment to public interest and challenges us to examine the role UCI Law can play in reshaping systems and economic incentives in order to create a legal marketplace where a public interest career is truly possible. In the best tradition of UCI Law, their conversation is thoughtful, insightful, and reflective of how deeply they care about maintaining our unique program of legal education. It also beautifully captures the camaraderie, passion, and affection shared by UCI Law alumni.

The second article by Professor Rachel Croskery-Roberts critically examines the history of our lawyering skills program, an essential component of our innovative curriculum. Her astute observations will not only help us to further refine this unique, experiential class but also influence the legal academy to continue to follow our lead.

Vice Dean Bryant Garth's illuminating article confronts the tension between innovation and elitism. He reflects on our successes and struggles in living up to our commitment to do things differently. Dean Garth highlights the challenges that we face and will continue to face as we attempt to walk the razor's edge between reform and tradition, complacency and risk-taking. By drawing attention to the difficult choices and trade-offs we will continue to confront, Dean Garth's article will help us to avoid becoming set in our ways and to continue challenging the status quo as we enter our next decade.

Professor Jonathan Glater also writes about the tension between convention and innovation, and how navigating this tension represents the very essence of UCI Law. He discusses the development of our innovative first year course, Statutory Analysis: Criminal Law, and explains how the balance between innovation and convention in the class mirrors our development as an institution. No matter what we do, whether it is developing a new curriculum, determining how best to teach our students, or finding ways to address the high cost of legal education, "the

prospect of constant change, along with the absence of complacency, and a readiness to continue to question what we do and how we do it”⁴ make us unique.

Our clinical program—required for all students—is a fundamental aspect of our innovative curriculum. Professor Annie Lai provides a general snapshot of the clinical program as it exists today and discusses the Immigrant Rights Clinic in particular. The specific projects detailed in her essay highlight how clinical experiences help our students develop and hone the critical thinking skills they will need to succeed in the modern law practice.

In his contribution to this issue, Professor Stephen Lee makes the case for why and how UCI Law should, as a public institution, play a role in ensuring that undocumented students are able to join the legal profession. He argues that at the very least, we should (1) join the fight challenging the use of the moral character requirement to restrict the ability of undocumented lawyers to practice law; (2) advise undocumented students about opportunities in the legal profession that are available to them such as working in small firms or as solo practitioners; and (3) expand our curriculum to provide students with the skills to run their own practice. By taking these steps, UCI Law will live up to its moral obligation, as a public university, to alleviate the suffering of its communities, including its undocumented community.

From the beginning, students have played (and continue to play) a vital role in building our UCI Law community. This special issue concludes with a student note co-authored by Rose Lyn and Christopher Williams. In it, they highlight the challenges law schools face in recruiting and retaining Black students. Those challenges include ensuring that admitted students have access to the resources that will help them to thrive. Rose and Chris describe the history of the Black Law Students Association (BLSA) at UCI Law and discuss how BLSA’s innovative and diverse programs help to address those challenges. Their discussion of the role that BLSA plays both in supporting current students and attracting potential students to UCI Law highlights the important efforts that UCI Law students play in creating supportive environments for one another in conjunction with UCI Law staff, faculty, and legal professionals in our broader community.

Today, our vision at UCI Law is more urgent and vital than ever. By every measure we consider important—student success, scholarly impact, diversity, public service—we have achieved unprecedented success. We are ready to continue making history in our next decade as a larger, stronger, and more dynamic institution than our founders could have ever imagined. This will not be easy, but we have never chosen the easy path. We will continue to ask the difficult questions, debate our choices, and constantly redefine, reimagine, and reinvent what a law school can be. And frankly, what it should be.

4. Jonathan D. Glater, *Statutory Analysis: Criminal Law and an Ever-Evolving Law School*, 10 U.C. IRVINE L. REV. 401, 405 (2019).

