

Promoting Diversity



More than 100 years ago, Southwestern was established to offer a comprehensive legal education to qualified aspiring lawyers from all walks of life, and was one of the first law schools in the country to encourage the enrollment of women and minorities. Today, Southwestern maintains a **commitment to its rich legacy of multiculturalism and access**, and is one of the most diverse law schools in the U.S.



Woods



Bradley



Lew



Dixon



Wright



Fong



Muñoz



Ducheny

Trailblazers

From the beginning, Southwestern alumni quickly became trailblazers in the profession and the greater community. The law school's first graduate in 1915 was Betty Trier Berry, the first woman in the U.S. to serve as a public defender.

Other Southwestern alumni include:

- First Latina trial court judge
- First Native American judge in California
- First female African-American judge in California
- First female African-American appellate justice in the nation
- First Chinese-American in the continental U.S. to serve as a federal judge

Among Southwestern's many prominent minority alumni:

- Hon. Arleigh Woods, Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal (ret.)
- Hon. Ronald S.W. Lew, Senior Judge of the U.S. District Court
- Hon. Otis D. Wright II, Judge of the U.S. District Court
- Hon. Frances Muñoz, Judge of the Superior Court of California (ret.)
- The late Hon. Tom Bradley, Mayor of Los Angeles for 20 years
- The late Hon. Julian C. Dixon, Member, U.S. Congress
- The late Hon. Matthew Fong, former Treasurer of California
- Richard Orosco, former Director of the IRS, Los Angeles District
- Hon. Denise Moreno Ducheny, former California State Senator
- Hon. Ricardo Torres, former Presiding Judge, Los Angeles Superior Court

"Over a century ago, Southwestern Law School opened its doors to all qualified applicants at a time when women and minorities were essentially locked out of the legal profession. The wisdom of the Institution's early commitment to fairness and diversity can be found in its extraordinary list of alumni and in the ideals of the talented men and women it graduates each year. The Judiciary especially has been a beneficiary of Southwestern's policies."

- Hon. Tani Cantil-Sakauye, Chief Justice of California

www.swlaw.edu/about/diversity



“The study of law elicits various emotions and opinions based on our independent experiences. At Southwestern, we were taught to see and argue both sides of an argument. And learning alongside such a diverse group of students makes seeing various sides of an argument truly possible. The professors encouraged us to state our opinions respectfully and to listen to one another. Attending classes filled with students who come from so many different backgrounds made my law school experience a more positive one.”

– Vivian Rivera '14
Full-Time Day Program,
Attorney at Law, Early, Maslach
& Sepe

A Diverse Community

To meet the diverse needs of the law school's 1000+ students, Southwestern is the only law school to offer four J.D. programs of study that differ in scheduling and instructional approach. There is also a strong sense of community among the students, who:

- come from virtually every state and a dozen foreign countries
- represent over 250 undergraduate institutions
- have an average age of 26 (ranges from 21 to over 60)
- have prior work experience or have already completed advanced degrees (approximately two-thirds of the student body)
- women make up more than 57 percent
- minorities represent more than 46 percent
- report fluency in more than 35 foreign languages
- In recent years, Southwestern has had the highest enrollment of minorities of any California law school.

Faculty also reflect Southwestern's commitment to diversity; more than 47 percent are women, over 20 percent are minorities, and several members identify as LGBT.

Diversity Awards

Southwestern has received recognition for its emphasis on diversity with awards from a variety of organizations, including:

- State Bar of California Organizational Diversity Award—the first law school to receive this honor in the award's 12-year history
- INSIGHT Into Diversity's Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award—the only law school honored all four years for “demonstrating an outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion”
- National Jurist's “Honor Roll” of the most diverse law schools in the country—listed 11th based on percentage of faculty and students in minority categories
- LEXIS-NEXIS Law School Racial and Ethnic Diversity Award by the California Minority Counsel—citing Southwestern's “long history of encouraging diversity, its comprehensive efforts in admissions, financial aid, academic support and placement, support of its diverse student organizations, and its community outreach programs”
- Myra Bradwell Award by the Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles—the first law school to be so honored for “promoting and advancing women lawyers and issues important to women”
- Recognized as one of the “top law schools for Hispanic students” by Hispanic Business magazine several years running
- Honored by the Mexican-American Bar Foundation for “continuing commitment to diversity”
- Diverse Issues in Higher Education's Top Graduate Degree Producer in 2015

Peer Mentors at Orientation



Scholarship Programs

Southwestern offers scholarships and financial aid programs to assist students from all backgrounds and financial need. The Wildman/Schumacher Scholarship Program provides up to full-tuition renewable awards for entering students with exceptional leadership qualities and academic potential.

Students from traditionally underrepresented groups are also encouraged to apply for other scholarships with specific criteria established by the donors, including:

- minority law students (e.g., Bernard Burch Memorial Scholarship Fund, Hon. Nate Holden Scholarship Fund)
- women law students (e.g., Nancy H. Newman Memorial Scholarship Fund, Esther Harris Scholarship Endowment Fund, Molly Dilman Zimring Memorial Scholarship Endowment Fund)
- students of particular ethnicities (e.g., Sarah Kim Scholarship Fund for Korean-American students; Eileen Camillo Cochran/The California Women Lawyers Association Memorial Scholarship Endowment Fund for women law students of Italian-American descent; Dino Hirsch Memorial Scholarship Endowment Fund for Hispanic law students; Justice Arleigh M. Woods Scholarship Endowment Fund for African-American students; and Robert and Gloria Devitch Scholarship Fund for Mexican-American students)
- gay, lesbian and bisexual law students (e.g., the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Law Students Association Scholarship Fund)

Students may also be eligible for outside scholarships, such as:

- Beverly Hills Bar Association Foundation Scholarship Fund for minority law students
- Japanese American Bar Association Education Foundation
- Los Angeles County Bar Association Minority Scholarship Fund
- Mexican American Bar Foundation Scholarships
- Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) Scholarship Program
- Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association Scholarship

Law Student Organizations

Among the 50+ student groups on campus are:

- Armenian Law Students Association
- Asian-Pacific-American Law Students Association
- Black Law Students Association
- Christian Legal Society
- International Students Association
- Jewish Law Students Association
- Latino Law Students Association
- Middle Eastern Law Students Association
- Native American Law Students Association
- OUTLaw
- Parents Attending Law School
- Women's Law Association

These groups provide a supportive academic and social atmosphere to foster personal development and to facilitate transition into the legal profession. They sponsor workshops, tutorials, mentoring programs, study groups, volunteer opportunities, community outreach, cultural and social events, alumni networking receptions, and hundreds of speaker presentations to meet diverse student interests.



Southwestern teams have earned numerous First Place awards in the National Black Law Students Mock Trial and Negotiation competitions.



“Southwestern’s diversity really defines the law school, and I wouldn’t have it any other way. When you’re living and working in a place as eclectic as L.A., you have to be capable of relating to and understanding the worldviews of the people around you. Everyone at Southwestern offers something different, and it makes for a balanced and transformative legal education.”

– Benjamin Tragish '13
Full-Time Day Program
Attorney at Law, Taylor Bless LLP

Office of the Dean of Students and Diversity Affairs

The Dean of Students and Diversity Affairs coordinates the development and implementation of initiatives to increase the admission, retention and graduation of students of color, and students from other underrepresented groups, and works with a variety of departments to foster a campus environment that recognizes, celebrates and values diversity. The office offers one-on-one counseling and support for students, and conducts diversity student-orientation workshops, among other programs.

Admissions Initiatives

As part of the admissions recruiting calendar of events, Southwestern sends representatives to graduate school fairs and other activities around the country geared toward traditionally underrepresented students. Special attention is given to Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities-member institutions. The Admissions Office also encourages diverse groups of prospective students to visit Southwestern through a series of Open House programs, and works with the Dean of Students and Diversity Affairs, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and officers of minority student organizations in coordinating myriad outreach programs and on-campus events.

In the review of applications, the Admissions Committee critically considers each candidates' significant work experience, upward trends in UGPA, the strength of the personal statement, letters of recommendation, overcoming a disadvantaged background and other life-experience factors which would demonstrate the ability and motivation to succeed in law school.

Participation in Pipeline Programs

Southwestern sponsors "Pipeline" outreach efforts to local community colleges and high schools. Southwestern is also involved in "Pipeline" programs in California and beyond to encourage youth from underrepresented communities to pursue careers in the law, including:

- Legal Education Action Program (LEAP) with the Hispanic National Bar Association's Legal Education Fund
- Southern California Legal Diversity Pipeline Coalition
- Los Angeles County Bar Association Diversity Summit
- California State Bar diversity-outreach efforts

The law school has developed new "Pipeline" programs in partnership with the Los Angeles Public Defender's Office, Los Angeles Unified School District and the Constitutional Rights Foundation, among other entities.



"Southwestern has been a catalyst for diversity in the legal community for over one hundred years. We have a long-standing tradition of educating students from all backgrounds who go on to be trailblazers in the legal field."

– Nydia Duenez
Dean of Students and
Diversity Affairs

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