

July 9, 2026

Ms. Darby Dickerson
President and Dean
Southwestern Law School
3050 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90010

Dear President Dickerson:

This letter serves as formal notification and official record of action taken concerning Southwestern Law School (SWLaw) by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) at its meeting June 26, 2026. This action was taken after consideration of the report of the review team that conducted the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 to Southwestern Law School February 25-27, 2026 using the 2023 Standards of Accreditation. The Commission also reviewed the institutional report and exhibits submitted by Southwestern Law School prior to the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 and the institution's April 23, 2026 response to the team report. The Commission appreciated the opportunity to discuss the visit with you and your colleagues Sammy Elzarka, Director of Institutional Research; Laura Ponder, Chief Financial Officer; Natalie Rodriguez, Vice Dean; Anahid Gharakhanian, Vice Dean; Tracy Turner, Associate Dean for Learning Outcomes; and Lauren Hughes-Leslie, Chief of Staff. Your comments were very helpful in informing the Commission's deliberations. The date of this action constitutes the effective date of the institution's new status with WSCUC.

Actions

1. Receive the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team report
2. Grant Initial Accreditation for a period of eight years
3. Schedule the next reaffirmation review with the Offsite Review in fall 2033 and the Accreditation Visit in spring 2034
4. Schedule an Interim Report to be submitted by March 1, 2029 to address all areas for development in this letter.

Commendations

The Commission commends the institution for:

1. A faculty and staff that demonstrate a spirit of commitment to its mission and values, effective collaboration across the institution, and a healthy and supportive culture that extends to one another and to students.
2. The Board of Trustees, which is dedicated to SWL's institutional values, its past legacy, and future success and is deeply engaged in shared governance.

3. Through a thoughtful process that involved all stakeholders, adopting a strategic planning framework that fits SWL's distinctive culture and values and drives forward key strategic initiatives.
4. Providing opportunities for professional development to all staff and faculty, which has been embraced by the community and contributes to a culture of improvement and growth.
5. Its emphasis on public service and career preparation for students, implemented through a wide array of externships, clinics and practice courses that are accessible for students in all modalities that lead to the JD.
6. Managing effectively through financial and operational challenges with integrity, preserving the school's sustainability and reputation. Making innovations to legal education that serve its mission, including creating multiple pathways to the JD that accommodate the varied needs of students who seek to study law, such as the online program and the program to support students who are caregivers.
7. Updating, adopting, and implementing several policies and practices in the last few years that address important areas and create a clearer and more formalized structure, including, for example, the exigency policy and updated academic freedom policy.

Areas for Development

The Commission requires the institution to respond to the following areas for development:

1. Enhance its processes for evidence-based decision making, planning, and improvement by proceeding with its plans to build its capacity for institutional research and institutional effectiveness work, with emphasis on data integrity, integration, analysis, and dissemination. (CFRs 3.10, 4.4)
2. Develop a campus-wide master plan to serve as a road map for the future, which addresses upgrade, renewal, and capital maintenance of the campus, aligning the physical plant with strategic goals and quantifying estimates of future cost. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6)
3. Strengthen its strategic planning by aligning and integrating unit plans with strategic and operational goals and developing appropriate metrics for measuring success on a multi-year basis. (CFR 4.8)
4. Engage in careful analysis and planning as it expands its program offerings and increases enrollment to ensure that the organizational structure is effective and that operational support systems scale to match growth. (CFR 3.4, 3.11, 4.8)
5. Effectively demonstrate how it utilizes the results of the assessment of student learning, addressing both curricular and co-curricular activities in all programs and modalities, to inform planning and improvement. (CFRs 2.14, 4.5, 4.8)
6. Broaden the expertise of the Board of Trustees by adding members with more varied professional and educational backgrounds, such as business, finance, real estate, and higher education, in keeping with the initiative that is already underway. (CFR 3.8)

In taking this action to grant Initial Accreditation, the Commission confirmed that Southwestern Law School completed the institutional review process for Initial Accreditation conducted under the 2023 Standards of Accreditation. In keeping with WSCUC values, Southwestern Law School should strive for ongoing improvement with adherence to all Standards of Accreditation and their associated CFRs to foster a learning environment that continuously strives for educational excellence and operational effectiveness.

Southwestern Law School must use the following statement if it wishes to describe its accreditation status publicly:

Southwestern Law School is accredited by the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 1080 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 500, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001.

Federal law requires that the WSCUC address and phone number appear in your catalog.

The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented. The accreditation granted by WSCUC refers to the quality of the institution as a whole. Because institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program at the institution, statements such as “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading. The phrase “fully accredited” is also to be avoided, since no partial accreditation is possible.

The Commission stipulated that this action encompassed the degrees offered by Southwestern Law School at the time of this action, as listed at the end of this letter as the Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees. Any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership require review and approval through the Substantive Change process. Degree programs reviewed and included under this action may be extended to other currently approved campuses of the institution without prior Substantive Change action. Offerings at new locations may need to go through Substantive Change approval, in accordance with the requirements stated in the Substantive Change manual.

Institutions granted Initial Accreditation are required to:

1. Submit an Annual Report in the format required by the Commission.
2. Keep the Commission informed of any significant changes or developments. Any proposed new degree programs, off-campus sites, online offerings, and/or changes in governance or ownership require review and approval through the Substantive Change process.
3. Pay Annual Membership Dues prorated from the date of this action. An Annual Dues statement will be sent under separate cover.

In accordance with Commission policy, a copy of this letter is being sent to the chair of Southwestern Law School governing board. The Commission expects that the team report

and this action letter will be posted in a readily accessible location on the Southwestern Law School's website and widely distributed throughout the institution to promote further engagement and improvement and to support the institution's response to the specific issues identified in these documents. The team report and the Commission's action letter will also be posted on the WSCUC website. If the institution wishes to respond to the Commission action on its own website, WSCUC will post a link to that response on the WSCUC website.

Finally, the Commission wishes to express its appreciation for the extensive work that Southwestern Law School undertook in preparing for and supporting this accreditation review. WSCUC is committed to an accreditation process that adds value to institutions while contributing to public accountability, and we thank you for your continued support of this process. Please contact me if you have any questions about this letter or the action of the Commission.

Sincerely,



A. Maria Toyoda
President

AMT/jkh

Cc: Mary Marcy, Commission Chair
Sammy Elzarka, ALO
Lauren B. Leichtman, Board Chair
Members of the Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 team
John Hausaman, Vice President

Attachment: Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees

Consolidated List of Currently Offered Degrees		
Program Name	Degree Level	Modality
Bachelor's Degree/Juris Doctor (with California State University, Northridge)	Professional Doctorate	On-Site
Certificate in Bioscience Industry Law & Practice (with Keck Graduate Institute)	Non-Degree	On-Site
Entertainment & Media Law LLM	Masters	On-site
General LLM	Masters	On-site
Juris Doctor	Professional Doctorate	Onsite
Juris Doctor	Professional Doctorate	Distance Education
Juris Doctor/Master of Business Administration (with Claremont Graduate Univ.)	Professional Doctorate	Distance Education
Juris Doctor/Master of Business Administration (with Claremont Graduate Univ.)	Professional Doctorate	On-Site

REPORT OF THE WSCUC VISITING TEAM

SEEKING ACCREDITATION VISIT 1

Seeking Initial Accreditation

Southwestern Law School

Date of visit: February 25-27, 2026

Team Roster

Teri Cannon, Chair, Founding President, Minerva University (retired)

Miguel Valenzuela, Assistant Chair, Director of Accreditation, Licensure, & State Authorization, The Chicago School

Taiwo Ande, Senior Associate Provost for Educational Effectiveness, California Lutheran University

David Seward, Chief Financial Officer, University of California College of the Law, San Francisco

Matthew Hubbs, Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Institutional Effectiveness, Westcliff University

Staff Liaison

John Hausaman, Vice President, WSCUC

The team evaluated the institution under the 2023 WSCUC Standards of Accreditation Revised and prepared this report containing its collective judgment for consideration and action by the institution and by the WASC Senior College and University Commission. The formal action concerning the institution's status is taken by the Commission and is described in a letter from the Commission to the institution. Once an institution achieves either candidacy or initial accreditation, the team report and Commission Action Letter associated with the review that resulted in the granting of either candidacy or initial accreditation and the team reports and Commission Action Letters of any subsequent reviews will be made available to the public by publication on the WSCUC website.

Table of Contents

Section I. Overview and Context 3

Section II. Evaluation Of Institutional Compliance with WSCUC Standards 7

 Standard 1. Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity 7

 Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success 9

 Standard 3: Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures 24

 Standard 4: Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement..... 30

 Other Changes or Issues the Institution is Facing..... 35

Section III. Commendations and Recommendations..... 35

 Commendations 35

 Recommendations 36

Appendices 37

 Credit Hour Review Form 38

 Marketing and Recruitment Review Form 42

 Student Complaints Review Form..... 44

 Transfer Credit Policy Review Form..... 46

 Report on Distance Education..... 48

Section I. Overview and Context

Description of the Institution and Visit

Southwestern Law School (SWL) is the second-oldest law school in Los Angeles, founded in 1911 with a mission to broaden access to legal education for students who historically had fewer pathways into the profession, including working students and others facing practical barriers to attendance. From its early years, SWL pursued rigorous academic goals, adopting the Harvard case method and launching a scholarly law review at a time when student-run journals were rare. The school has been continuously accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) since 1970, approved by the California Committee of Bar Examiners since 1969, and a member of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) since 1974. Its campus near downtown Los Angeles includes two academic buildings and on-campus student residences. SWL was granted WSCUC Eligibility to apply for accreditation in September 2024.

SWL has a strong record of innovation in legal education. It pioneered SCALE, the nation's first two-year JD program, and created PLEAS, the first ABA-approved part-time day program designed for students with caregiving responsibilities. It also launched the nation's first Entertainment and Media Law Institute. In 2023, the ABA authorized SWL to offer an asynchronous Online JD Program with both full-time and part-time tracks. The institution administers one of the country's largest externship programs and operates four in-house legal clinics.

In addition to the JD, SWL offers two small LLM programs: one in Entertainment and Media Law and a general program designed primarily for foreign-trained attorneys, which is currently offered only to Fulbright designated human rights lawyers from Argentina. SWL also maintains partnerships with the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University, enabling students to pair a JD with an MBA from Drucker, and with California State University, Northridge (CSUN), through which credits earned in the first year at SWL may count toward a CSUN undergraduate degree. All degree programs were reviewed during this accreditation visit.

Enrollment has grown steadily since 2022, now exceeding 1,100 students. Approximately half identify as persons of color, around 60% are women, and a significant proportion are first-generation college graduates. About 85% list California as their permanent residence.

As of November 1, 2025, the full-time, non-visiting faculty comprises 63 members: 31 tenured or tenure-track professors and 32 non-tenure-track faculty. The school also employs three visiting professors and approximately 134 adjunct professors, most of whom are practicing attorneys or judges. Around 140 staff members work across 25 departments, and vendors manage auxiliary services including the bookstore, print shop, mailroom, security, cleaning, and property management.

SWL is seeking WSCUC accreditation to (1) drive continuous improvement in academics, student success, and operations; (2) learn from peer institutions and external experts; (3) enhance legitimacy with prospective students, donors, and creditors; (4) preserve eligibility for Title IV federal financial aid if its current accreditor loses U.S. Department of Education (ED) recognition; and (5) add new accredited degree programs, allowing eligible students to receive federal aid. By pursuing WSCUC accreditation, Southwestern aims to elevate its educational offerings, strengthen student learning outcomes, enhance data-informed decision-making, and continually improve its overall quality.

Quality and Rigor of the Review and Report

The institution's Seeking Accreditation Visit 1 (SAV 1) Report was well organized, clearly presented, and accurately reflected the condition of the institution. It demonstrated meaningful self-reflection and offered candid commentary on both areas of strength and areas needing improvement. SWL provided substantial evidence in support of each Standard and CFR, which was generally appropriate and supportive of claimed compliance across all four Standards. The team requested additional documents prior to the visit on areas where evidence was insufficient are addressed in Section III of this report. The preparation of the institutional report reflected broad institutional engagement. More than 200 participants, including board members, administrative leaders, staff, faculty, and students, contributed to the process. Feedback sessions structured around WSCUC standards and self-study questions were held with faculty, board members, staff, student leaders, and alumni, and the input gathered was incorporated into the draft report. The President/Dean and working group leaders presented the completed SAV 1 report in detail to the Board, which approved it unanimously.

SWL has taken the accreditation process seriously, provided ample evidence to substantiate and illustrate its claims, and integrated its inquiry with broad involvement from all constituent groups organized around

WSCUC standards and requirements. The report was discussed and approved by the faculty and the Board (both through its Academic Affairs Committee and the full Board of Trustees). SWL took a deliberate and sustained approach to strengthening the rigor required in the WSCUC accreditation process. For around the past 10 years the institutional leadership made a strategic commitment to deeply understanding and embracing accreditation standards as a framework for continuous improvement.

Representatives from the institution, including administration, faculty, and program leaders regularly attended WSCUC accreditation conferences and professional development workshops to remain informed about accreditation expectations, best practices, and compliance requirements. Throughout this period, the institution systematically aligned its programs, governance structures, and assessment practices with WSCUC accreditation standards. Committees were established to review policies, evaluate student outcomes, and document processes that demonstrate institutional effectiveness. Faculty and staff were actively involved in strengthening curriculum alignment, improving assessment practices and cycles, and developing clearer documentation of decision making and resource allocation. The knowledge gained from the accreditation process helped the institution build more robust systems for data collection, program evaluation, and strategic planning.

During the site visit, the visiting team had the opportunity to learn more deeply about the many processes the school has undertaken to fulfill and sustain accreditation standards. Through meetings, documentation reviews, and open dialogue with faculty and leadership, the team observed how SWL's long-term commitment to accreditation has translated into structured planning, evidence-based decision making, and continuous program improvement. Over the course of the visit, the team met with well over 100 individuals representing faculty, staff, leadership, and other stakeholders, providing broad and detailed information about the institution's work. The visit provided valuable insight into how the school's system developed over the past decade working collectively to support student success, institutional integrity, and ongoing alignment with accrediting standards.

[Response to Issues Raised in the Eligibility Review Committee Letter](#)

WSCUC raised five issues in granting eligibility that SWL responded to in December 2024 (Criteria 8, 9, 10, 11 and 15). The following summary indicates that SWL has adequately responded to each concern.

Criterion 8 Financial Resources and Accountability. WSCUC recommended that SWL take a more

strategic approach in this area that integrates efforts across functional areas and reflects appropriate oversight and approval by the Board of Trustees. To address these issues, the institution has added finance department staff, hired a new vice-president for institutional advancement, revised Board Finance Committee responsibilities, instituted quarterly Board reports with additional oversight metrics, adopted new Board oversight policies, and upgraded financial reporting modules. Financial performance has improved since FY25 with regard to net asset growth, endowment growth and reduction in student debt.

Criterion 9 Institutional Planning. WSCUC recommended broad stakeholder engagement in planning, led by the Board, grounded in evidence, distinct from annual budgeting, that yields a written plan and that has a focus on institutional growth. To address these issues, the institution has established a new Board committee on planning and a new faculty, staff and student committees in 2025. SWL also upgraded its institutional research capacity to support planning. The institution reported data showing steady enrollment growth over the past four years. The team made a recommendation concerning planning, which is discussed in Section II, under Standard 4 below.

Criterion 10 Degree Programs. WSCUC recommended a review of all academic degree programs to ensure appropriate content, length, quality, and rigor, and to establish that a comparable degree of graduate education culture and substantive engagement exists between faculty and students in online and face-to-face modalities. To address these issues, the institution has established policy, guidelines, training, and a Distance Ed Compliance File in Canvas to ensure sufficient Instructor-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction (IRSI). SWL has relied on ABA program review for its JD degrees and has now adopted a policy on program review for the non-JD programs and conducted its first two reviews. This matter is covered in Section II of the Team Report under Standard 2.

Criterion 11 Educational Objectives and Assessment of Student Learning. WSCUC recommended that SWL bring together bar pass rates with current assessment results to evaluate student learning and program effectiveness. The institution is participating in AccessLex Bar Exam Success Analysis to do deeper analysis of pre-admission factors and bar pass rates. SWL has an assessment leader and faculty committee on assessment. Six JD learning outcomes and course learning outcomes have been adopted, and learning is assessed in courses using

authentic student work. Performance criteria have been adopted and rubrics and grading guides are used. The team addressed this in Section III of the team report under Standard 2 and made a recommendation about better documenting improvements made from assessments.

Criterion 15. Admissions. WSCUC recommended that SWL clarify if admission policies and standards are comparable for face-to-face and online JD programs. If there are differences, SWL was asked to articulate them. The institution provided evidence that policies and standards continue to be comparable and presented evidence to substantiate that claim.

No major changes have occurred that have affected SWL's eligibility or WSCUC's evaluation of the institution.

Section II. Evaluation Of Institutional Compliance with WSCUC Standards

Standard 1. Defining Institutional Mission and Acting with Integrity

Institutional Purposes

SWL provided a number of valuable documents to demonstrate alignment with this standard. Evidence includes public-facing web pages, promotional materials, newsletters, internal plans, processes, policies, and summary documents that provide examples of actions taken by various stakeholders. This evidence was further supplemented by information provided in interviews with the SWL board, administration, faculty, staff, and students, who provided additional examples as to how the institution's mission and values are demonstrated on a regular basis. (CFR 1.1)

SWL's mission is as follows:

For more than a century, SWL has educated lawyers ready to serve clients, the profession, and our society with excellence. We empower students to reach their potential. We cultivate inclusion and belonging. We promote equity and justice. We champion trailblazers, develop dealmakers, and inspire intellectual curiosity. We innovate. We shape the law and public policy through teaching, scholarship, and service. We are the difference.

SWL's mission is clear, appropriate for the type of institution it is, and reflects a commitment to academic quality,

student success, innovation, access, and the public good. The school is public about its mission and demonstrates its commitment to it in multiple ways including designing offerings to meet the needs of its students, identifying mission-specific learning outcomes, and allocating resources in alignment with the mission. (CFR 1.1, 1.2)

SWL reviews its mission periodically to ensure that it remains aligned with its intentions. It clearly defines the core values that drive its operations and provided ample evidence to show how these values are embraced and demonstrated, including curriculum alignment with profession-readiness, student and faculty volunteerism in community service, departments dedicated to accessibility and wellness for the entire community, and their strategic planning, professional development, and regulatory initiatives that lead their continuous reflection, dialogue, and growth. (CFR 1.1) SWL engaged in effective use of data and resources to implement a program to support caregiver students as a means of reducing barriers to success, resulting in improved performance among this key demographic for the school. (CFR 1.2)

Integrity and Transparency

As an ABA-accredited law school, SWL has an extensive history of taking the necessary actions to align with standards in higher education, including policy development, governance structure, outcomes measurement, and disclosure publications. SWL has a budget process with guidelines and timelines in place that enable effective management of the college's resources. Many key policies, including faculty grievance, student grievance, assessment, program review, and academic freedom, have been adopted or updated in the last few years, demonstrating in part a commitment to actively align itself with WSCUC Standards and expectations. Staff reported being very involved in the development of policies, viewing policies as a valuable tool for clarification to allow them to operate effectively within specific guidelines. Faculty governance is exercised through several committees, described under Standard 2 below, and faculty input on policy appears robust and integral to policy development and implementation. (CFR 1.4)

SWL recently experienced some issues with accuracy of grades across a number of courses, which came to light through the administration and faculty's diligent oversight of grading patterns. Triggered by an excessive number of grade changes submitted by faculty, SWL leadership assembled a task force that conducted an audit and identified several related but distinct causes of the grade changes. A formal grading process map was

developed and led to the formulation of nine different priorities that would ensure the situation does not recur in the future. Further, a plan was created and implemented to address these matters as priorities. Throughout this serious matter, the staff and faculty demonstrated integrity in their operations by collaborating to correct mistakes and ensure fairness and accuracy of grades in their practices. (CFR 1.3)

SWL introduced a new academic freedom policy in March 2025 following ratification through the governance process. The policy replaced language that had previously existed as part of the faculty handbook, and it reinforced the rights of all faculty to exhibit academic freedom “within the framework of the law school’s mission and goals, the academic environment, and with a commitment to integrity, professionalism, and mutual respect.” The policy established an Academic Freedom Committee, and a formal set of procedures was adopted in December 2025, outlining with greater specificity the process by which concerns over academic freedom can be addressed. Faculty response to the introduction of this new policy was positive, as it was deemed an “essential” component of what they do, effectively “putting into words what was in practice” and preserving their right to “teach[ing] lawyers to think critically.” Consistent with its mission and values, the school exhibited a rigorous approach toward its commitment to academic freedom. (CFR 1.6)

SWL is proactive in its communication to various stakeholders regarding key aspects of the institution. Regular updates include policy implementation and updates, opportunities for professional development and learning, changes in law and their impact on the profession, SWL community member achievements, resources, events, and activities available to students, staff, faculty, and alumni. The institution’s strategic planning framework, including its mission, core values, and “Wicked Questions” that are the basis for plans, were well known by staff and faculty. Throughout multiple interviews during the visit, faculty and staff uniformly reported that they are well informed about important matters, including budgetary matters and many reported contributing to or providing feedback on key issues. The team found that SWL leadership engaged effectively with the staff, students, and faculty about its intent and process for pursuing WSCUC accreditation. (CFR 1.7)

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives and Student Success

Degree Programs

Programs, Admissions and Graduation Requirements

SWL offers the Juris Doctor (JD) degree, a first-professional degree that prepares students to become lawyers and qualifies them to sit for the bar examination. The program is offered in multiple ways to meet the needs of the wide range of people who wish to study law. The JD program can be taken in person in an accelerated model called SCALE (two years), full-time (three years), and two versions of the part-time option, one specifically for caregivers (four years). More recently it began to offer the JD program in an online asynchronous format, which can be taken either full-time or part-time. All six JD options have the same requirement for the equivalent of 87 semester credits including required courses and electives. Required courses include major doctrinal subjects typical of the traditional law curriculum; courses in writing, research, and bar preparation; practical and experiential courses; and electives. Each program has a carefully planned sequence of courses that students follow. The experiential requirement is for six credits of approved clinics, externships or simulation courses. (CFR 2.1, 2.2)

The team reviewed material on the clinics and externships. Students do hands-on legal work under faculty supervision in one of SWL's four clinics on site (Children's Rights, Immigration Law, Community Lawyering, and Entertainment and the Arts, the latter two of which are also available online); four that are conducted with non-profit partners under adjunct faculty supervision (Asylum Law, Eviction Defense, Family Law, Street Law) and one in partnership with an adjunct faculty member (Appellate Litigation). Students may earn one to three semester credits. In 2024-25, 143 students participated in clinics and in the current academic year, 142 students were enrolled in the clinics. Externships enable students to develop their lawyering skills under the supervision of practicing lawyers. More than 460 placements have been made in 2025-26 with governmental agencies, public interest firms, judges, corporate legal departments and private law firms. Two full-time faculty members and two staff members oversee the externship programs. Areas of focus include criminal, civil, entertainment, public interest/sector, judicial, and general practice.

In the 2024-25 academic year, students contributed more than 21,000 hours to clinical work, handling 394 intakes interviews and working on more than 500 cases. The in-person clinics serve low-income persons who

would not otherwise have access to counsel. Students with whom the team met indicated how transformative externships and clinics are and how much they contribute to SWL's mission of preparing students for practice and contributing to the public good. Strong systems are in place to ensure that students in external placements have meaningful experiences and are appropriately supervised. These measures include meeting in person or via Zoom with supervisors, site visits, training for supervisors, and summative evaluations by students and supervisors. Externships also involve a credit-bearing classroom component in which the student adopts a learning plan and attends meetings with the professor and other students. The team learned that opportunities are made accessible for students studying in all modalities, e.g., online students are placed locally where they live or do an externship online and some funding is provided to enable students with financial need to participate. (CFR 2.2)

SWL has been continuously accredited by the American Bar Association since 1970, is also approved by the California Committee of Bar Examiners (1969) and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools (1974). The ABA has approved all six pathways to the JD. SWL was visited most recently in 2022, after which its ABA approval was continued and its next comprehensive review scheduled for 2031-32. ABA and State Bar accreditation cover the JD program, but not the other SWL programs described below.

Applicants to the JD must have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and submit LSAT scores, a writing sample, a resume, one to three letters of recommendation, and a character and fitness disclosure. Students placed on a waitlist also have an interview, as do students who seek admission to the accelerated SCALE program. To graduate, students must complete the 87-credit curriculum and achieve a 2.33 grade point average. The team found that admissions data are studied carefully and changes are made based on data, e.g. adding an interview component to applicants for the SCALE program has been found to promote retention. (CFR 2.1)

The team found that the SWL JD program was designed and planned carefully to develop the professional knowledge and skills to prepare students to pass the bar and become lawyers in keeping with the norms for legal education that are reflected in the ABA requirements. (CFR 2.1, 2.2) As noted, SWL also offers post-professional programs that do not lead to the JD degree and are not approved by the ABA as it only approves the JD or equivalent degree. The ABA acquiesces to SWL's offering these degrees. These include two LLM degree programs:

1. LLM in collaboration with Fulbright Commission Argentina (Fulbright-Siderman Human Rights Fellowship)
2. LLM in Entertainment and Media Law

Both programs are designed for students who already hold a law degree. Admission to the Entertainment and Media Law program requires an ABA-accredited JD for domestic applicants, or an equivalent degree for international applicants. (CFR 2.1)

The LLM is offered through the Siderman Fellowship with the Fulbright Commission Argentina. Candidates are nominated by Fulbright and must have a law degree, experience in human rights/civil liberties, and two years of professional or teaching experience. These students are fully funded. English proficiency is required. The program is 24 to 30 semester credits, 12 of which must be taken at SWL in an individualized course of study developed with a faculty member and consisting of existing JD courses. These programs enroll small numbers of students. Since 2020, six students have been enrolled, five have graduated and one is currently enrolled. (CFR 2.1, 2.2)

Admission to the LLM in Entertainment and Media Law requires a JD from an ABA-accredited law school, or its equivalent for international applicants, who must also demonstrate English proficiency. The program consists of 24 semester credits, with a minimum of 18 drawn from SWL's entertainment and media law electives offered within the JD curriculum. Students work closely with a faculty advisor to build a course plan aligned with their individual learning and career goals. Over the past five years, two students have enrolled in and completed the program. (CFR 2.1, 2.2)

SWL also has agreements with other accredited entities for some credit-bearing offerings:

- An agreement with the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University to offer students the opportunity to earn the JD and MBA concurrently. This program allows 12 credits from the JD to be counted toward the 48-credit Drucker MBA and 12 credits from the MBA counted toward the SWL JD. Drucker students must have a 3.0 GPA and SWL students must have a 2.33 (good standing) GPA. This program is considered a dual degree program under the WASC Dual Degree Policy as students earn a separate degree from each institution. Eight students have participated in this program since 2018.

In the last five years, eight students were enrolled, five completed, one completed the JD only, one is currently enrolled and one withdrew.

- An agreement with California State University Northridge under which the first-year law courses at SWL count toward the last year of studies for a CSUN Bachelor's degree, commonly called a 3+3 program. The program accelerates the students' completion of both degrees. This program is also considered a dual degree under the WASC Dual Degree Policy. In the last five years, seven students enrolled, five completed, one is still enrolled, and one withdrew.

The team reviewed the agreements with these partners.

Additional collaborations with other institutions include:

- SWL is a member of the North American Consortium on Legal Education (NACLE), which enables students to study abroad at member schools. No SWL students have participated to date but two students from other member schools have studied for a semester at SWL.
- SWL has joined with three other law schools to enable cross registration in online upper-division electives in order to offer more variety of subject matter for students. This arrangement is starting in spring 2026.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

In 2015 SWL adopted six JD program learning outcomes:

1. Reflection and Self-Fulfillment
2. Leadership and Service
3. Ethics, Values and Professionalism
4. Legal Knowledge
5. Application of Knowledge
6. Legal Skills

Each of the six program outcomes is supported by three to six Performance Criteria, which are used to map outcomes to courses and assess student performance. The outcomes were developed through extensive faculty-wide analysis and collaboration. Beyond the outcomes typically found in law school curricula, those

oriented toward bar passage and legal practice, the faculty identified two outcomes that distinctly reflect SWL's mission and values. The six program outcomes have been reviewed and revised twice, in 2021 and 2023, with another review planned for 2026–27. Faculty have also mapped all six outcomes to every course in the curriculum. Course-level learning outcomes are developed by the faculty teaching each course, in collaboration with the Assessment Committee, and are subject to approval by the Curriculum Committee. Both the program-level and course-level outcomes appear on course syllabi, and many syllabi also include the relevant Performance Criteria. (CFR 2.3)

In addition, outcomes have been adopted for seven areas of concentration in the JD. Four of the six major learning outcomes were adopted for the LLM in Entertainment and Media Law and three for the General LLM. (CFR 2.3) The team reviewed more than 20 course syllabi from required, elective, online and clinical/externship courses. Syllabi are standardized and show six major outcomes, course learning outcomes or objectives, and details about assignments and tests. Some included the institution-established performance criteria. In reviewing examples of course-embedded assessments, the team found that some included rubrics or a grading guide.

The outcomes are closely tied to the mission and are connected to advising, services, co-curriculars, technology, and library. Examples include the extensive resources to ensure every student has practice experience and co-curricular and extracurricular activities that provide opportunities for leadership development. (CFR 2.3) The six JD outcomes are reviewed in groups of three on a three-year cyclical basis, based on seven steps: review of performance criteria, mapping to courses, identifying where learning data can be collected, collecting the data, analyzing the data, reporting, and improving. A plan to assess learning was also developed for the other programs, with the first data collection in 2025-26, followed by annual assessments. (CFR 2.3)

The team had three meetings with faculty, including full-time and adjunct faculty and met with several committees that are involved in learning outcomes assessment, including the Assessment Committee, which oversees this work, and the Curriculum Committee, which reviews new and revised courses and among other things, ensures that learning outcomes are established. The team found that the data collected from assessment is used to make improvements in courses and assignments. (CFR 2.3)

Program Review

The ABA accreditation process serves as the program review for the JD. The process is conducted every ten years and involves a self-study, followed by a multi-day peer review and visit, and results in a report that is acted on by the ABA Council of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. The review covers admissions, enrollment, attrition, finances, financial aid, curriculum, faculty, staff, library, technology, facilities, student services, bar pass and licensing, and post-graduation outcomes. The Law School's last comprehensive ABA review was completed in August 2023, and the next comprehensive review will be during the 2031-32 academic year.

The ABA approved the offering of the online JD, one of only a small number approved by the ABA to date. This program is in its second year and does not yet have graduates. After the initiation of the online JD, SWL tracked students carefully to understand how they were engaging and performing and held multiple meetings with them. Several changes were made as a result, including modifying grading policies and improving the design of asynchronous discussions. The time that students spend on task and the reasons for attrition were also studied. A new tool, IntelliBoard Learning Analytic Platform, was adopted to facilitate the analysis of learning and performance data in the online program. The Online JD Committee meets frequently to review and analyze data and to discuss ways to improve the program and promote student success. (CFR 2.4)

In 2025 SWL adopted a program review policy that applies to the other degree programs, including one version of the policy and procedures for the LLM programs and a similar one for the joint MBA/JD and other partnership programs. It establishes a seven-year cycle of reviews for LLMs and an eight-year cycle for the other programs. The policy designates a committee to oversee the reviews and a team to conduct the self-study and sets forth a detailed timeline showing evidence to be collected and analyzed. The process is overseen by the faculty Graduate, Joint and Partnership Programs Review Committee and culminates in an action plan followed by annual reporting. The LLM review involves at least one external reviewer but whether an external reviewer is required for the other program reviews varies. (CFR 2.4)

By the time of this visit, SWL had completed preliminary draft program reviews for the Fulbright-Siderman LLM and the CSUN/SWL dual degree program. The team met with the Program Review Committee

and reviewed the two program review reports, which included an overview, demographic, admissions and performance data, student surveys results, faculty qualifications, financial viability, and a summary of strengths and recommendations for improvement. An external reviewer has been assigned to the Fulbright-Siderman MML program review to finalize the process. Both reviews were evidence-based, comprehensive, and made sound recommendations for going forward. The other two programs covered by the program review policy are in process. (CFR 2.4)

The team found that the committee had conducted these first two programs reviews effectively. The team emphasized the importance of these reviews for improvement and to build the infrastructure for future non-JD programs that SWL is considering. (CFR 2.4, also see CFRs 4.1-4.4)

Faculty

SWL has 63 full-time, non-visiting faculty members including 31 tenured or tenure-track professors and 32 non-tenure-track faculty members. The school also employs three visiting professors and approximately 134 adjunct professors, most of whom are practicing attorneys or judges. The student-faculty ratio is 10:1 (using FTE of faculty and students). Faculty workloads are based on the professor's role in clinics, LAWS, ASBP, and status as tenure-track/tenured and on teaching, mentoring, and committee service. Tenure-track faculty are expected to engage in scholarly work. (CFR 2.5)

Detailed data on full-time faculty members was provided to the team. Among the key data points are that 55 to 58 percent of courses in all JD modalities are taught by full-time faculty as opposed to adjunct/part-time faculty. A contact hour summary showed that 80 to 88 percent of contact hours in the JD programs were by full-time faculty members. As a result of recent change in policy, some academic positions have recently been granted faculty status. (CFR 2.5)

The team reviewed detailed information on the credentials and experience of the full-time faculty and 18 of the adjunct faculty. All but one faculty member hold the JD or equivalent and many have other degrees, including LLM, PhD, and master's degrees. The majority of the full-time faculty had prior teaching experience before joining SWL and nearly all have practice experience, ranging from two to more than 20 years, in private firms, governments, the courts, and public interest. Thirty-one full-time faculty members are tenured or tenure-

track and 32 are non-tenure track, some with renewable five-year appointments. Some are recent hires and a few have been teaching with SWL for more than 20 years. All had practice experience, in private firms, government, or public interest, and one is a judge. (CFR 2.5)

Data on full-time faculty retention and turnover show that in the last five years, between three and nine full-time faculty members left a year, for a total of 24. More than half of these retired and most of the others left for equivalent or higher positions at other law schools. Twenty-one faculty members were hired in this same five-year period. Southwestern hired four faculty members in 2025-26 and at the time of the visit expected to make two additional hires this year. (CFR 2.5)

Expectations for faculty teaching, service, and research, scholarship and creative activity are set forth in the Faculty Manual as part of the criteria for retention, promotion and tenure. Tenure-track faculty members are expected to produce a substantial record of “high quality” scholarship, which is defined by six criteria. Tenured faculty are expected to continue their scholarly work, with the guideline of one project or work every two years. While most scholarship takes the form of articles in scholarly journals, books and other professional practice contributions are considered. An inventory of recent scholarly work of the faculty from 2018-25 was provided, demonstrating the breadth and depth of the faculty’s scholarly interests. Some faculty members who are not obligated to produce scholarly work nonetheless do publish, mostly articles. Many faculty members, including the Dean, also engage in creative and professional leadership work with legal education organizations and speaking engagements in a wide range of venues. Two faculty members are designated to support the research enterprise. Course release, advising, assistance with grants, events with other scholars and other supports encourage scholarship, which is currently a strategic priority. (CFR 2.8)

The Faculty Bylaws and Faculty Manual create the structure for extensive faculty involvement in and oversight of the academic enterprise, vested especially in the full-time faculty. The faculty has 19 standing committees and eight ad hoc committees, task forces and working groups. The standing committees are: Academic Freedom; Academic Standards; Assessment; Admissions; Mission & Values; Curriculum; Externship; Faculty Development; Faculty Recruiting; Graduate, Joint, and Partnership Program Review; Hearing re Dismissal of Full-Time, Non-Adjunct Faculty; Honor Code; Lateral Appointments with Tenure; Library; Non-

Tenure-Track Faculty Renewal and Promotion; Online J.D. Committee; Public Interest Law; Sabbatical (Faculty Research) Leaves; SCALE. The Curriculum Committee is especially active in overseeing the JD program and developing new programs and innovations. (CFR 2.6)

The team met with the members of six of these committees (Academic Standards; Assessment; Admissions; Mission and Values; Curriculum; Graduate, Joint, and Partnership/Program Review) and found that the faculty members are very engaged in the process of studying, evaluating and improving the curriculum, support for students and student success, and all aspects of the academic enterprise. The committees collaborate with each other and refine proposals before they are presented to the full faculty for approval, followed by approval by the Dean and, as necessary, by the Board. New programs are approved through this process up to the Board. (CFR 2.6)

The faculty developed and has evaluated and revised the learning outcomes described above, including the six overarching program learning outcomes, the concentration learning outcomes, and course learning outcomes. The academic administration, including the Associate Dean for Learning Outcomes and the Assessment Committee, are actively involved in evaluating and refining the learning outcomes, reviewing annual assessment reports, supporting faculty members who are new to assessment, and identifying areas for change and improvement. (See more below under the next subsection.) The Academic Standards Committee oversees grading policies and standards. The Curriculum Committee reviews new courses and major changes to the curriculum and existing courses. (CFR 2.7)

In addition to meeting with faculty members to discuss their work in committees, the team held three meetings with the faculty, including full-time and adjunct faculty members. More than 50 faculty members attended each of the three meetings. Among the matters discussed were student learning outcomes, research and scholarship, professional development, faculty role in shared governance. The team found that the faculty is very loyal and committed to SWL, very engaged with the academic enterprise, and leads innovation and improvement, working closely with the Dean. (CFR 2.6)

Student Learning and Performance

As described above, SWL has established learning outcomes and standard of performance at the degree,

concentration and course level for the JD program and a cyclical process for the assessment of the six major learning outcomes. Course-embedded assessments of learning are conducted. The six program learning outcomes are mapped to courses. The team reviewed course-embedded assessments and syllabi and discussed the assessment process with many faculty members. (CFR 2.9)

Clear course sequencing, term-by-term plans, and several policies encourage JD students to stay on track toward completion of the degree, e.g., limits on employment, attendance requirements, and policies to identify students who are falling short of good-standing grades. Data were provided on attrition for the last five entering classes. The data show that between 15 to 20% of entering students withdrew by or at the end of the first year of study and that few students leave after that point. First-year retention has improved over the last three years, with attrition for the Fall 2024 class at 15.4%. Some attrition is for academic reasons and some because students transfer to another law school. The overall completion rate in 150% of normative time to degree over the last four years is 75%. (CFR 2.10)

Performance of JD students on multiple-choice exams in doctrinal courses show that 70 percent of students met or exceeded benchmarks. Students are evaluated by supervisors in externships and clinics and also submit self-assessments. (CFR 2.9, 2.11)

The SCALE version of the JD program has been offered by SWL for over 50 years, operating on a quarter system that enables students to complete the degree in two years attending year round. The faculty found SCALE students to be driven and proficient, noting that they are thoroughly evaluated on admission to ensure they align with the demands of the program. Attrition in the SCALE program has been consistently similar to or lower than attrition in the other programs. In 2024, attrition in SCALE rose to 15.52%, and SWL responded by implementing interventions specific to the needs of this modality, lowering attrition to 8% the following year. Graduates of the SCALE program have routinely led all other modalities at SWL in first-time bar pass rates, most recently in 2025 when 76% of SCALE graduate bar-takers passed on their first time compared to rates of 67 to 74% among the other modalities.

The online version of the JD program commenced with its first cohort in the Fall of 2024. The first year saw a higher rate of academic disqualifications among online students compared to those in residential programs.

SWL conducted an analysis and determined that extraordinary life circumstances and lack of understanding as to the workload expectations were the primary factors. SWL has implemented multiple measures to clarify workload expectations, front-load academic-success sessions, and expand faculty outreach, allowing these students to start with clearer guidance and robust support. The instructional designers also received feedback as to how they could more effectively structure courses and online engagement, and they underwent extensive redesign between the first and second year of the program. Current 1L students in the online program commented that while they were aware of challenges faced by the class ahead of them, they did not experience any difficulties and felt well prepared for their program.

As the JD program is intended to prepare students to pass the bar examination so that they can enter law practice, the bar examination results are a critically important indicator of the efficacy of the program. In the last five years (2021-25), the first-time bar pass rate has been between 61.5 and 72.2% (on the 2025 exams). The two-year bar pass rates for the latest five-year period (2019-23) range from 87.8 to 95.2%. While these rates meet ABA requirements, SWL would like to improve them, especially the first-time pass rate, which is discussed in the Student Success subsection below. SWL analyzes pass rates various ways, including correlations by program, academic performance, academic probation or prior disqualification, and participation in activities such as Moot Court and Law Review. (CFR 2.11)

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement collects data on JD students' self-perceptions of their learning, growth and mental activities and provides some comparative data for other law schools, including comparable California ABA law schools and independent law schools in metropolitan areas. For example, SWL students ranked higher than the comparator schools for "learning to think like a lawyer." Selected data on students' perception of faculty interactions also ranked higher than the comparators. (CFR 2.9)

SWL collects JD graduate employment data in accordance with the standards of the ABA and the National Association for Law Placement (NALP). The data are posted on the ABA website, which currently shows annual data for 2017 through 2024. For 2024, the report shows 290 graduates, with 81% in positions, 77% in law-related positions. Forty-six were unemployed and four were status unknown. About two-thirds were in private law firms and nearly the rest in public interest, government, business or judicial clerkships. Most were

employed in California. Bar passers had a 95% employment rate. Similar results were found for the previous years, going back to 2017; the employment in paid positions each year ranged from ~80% to 87%. The Career Services Office collects and submits the data, which follow strict ABA definitions for categories of employment, and the data are audited by the ABA and appear on the ABA website under SWL's listing. (CFR 2.11)

SWL conducted an in-depth analysis of the 2024 JD graduating class and produced a detailed report with useful and actionable information. Comparative data for four ABA comparable law schools in California show that SWL was fourth of the five, which had placement rates from ~86 to 88%. Digging deeper into the data, it was learned that only 10.6% of this SWL class was unemployed and seeking work. The findings of the report resulted in plans to improve several aspects of the law school's career-related work, including deepening engagement with employers, starting career-related support sooner in students' studies, developing greater data analysis capacity, and tracking graduates for a longer period after they graduate. Other recent improvements include a fellowship for graduates seeking public-interest positions, a class advisor who supports students for the first year after graduation, and on-demand workshops on careers, job search and networking. (CFR 2.11)

The team reviewed a report on the non-JD programs and found that nearly all students who started one of these four programs completed their studies in the normative time. (See more attrition data in CFR 2.1 above). Post-graduation data were collected for this report and show that one of the two Entertainment/Media LLM graduates works in entertainment law and that all five of the Sideman/Fulbright LLM graduates have continued their work in human rights. The team noted that JD graduates of the CSUN and Drucker programs also passed the bar at rates that equal or exceed the pass rates for all JD graduates. (CFR 2.10, 2.11)

The recent program reviews for two of the four non-JD programs used data to make recommendations for improvement going forward. The team heard from the Program Review Committee for these programs that it would be formalizing and systemizing the processes to collect learning data and post-graduation outcomes. The team acknowledges that the programs of study are designed to suit the needs of each individual student, and encourages the faculty overseeing these programs to consider how best to systematize the assessment of student learning and capture post-graduation outcomes. This will become more important as more non-JD programs are offered and enrollment in these programs grows. (CFR 2.4, 2.9, 2.11)

Student Support

SWL publishes extensive detailed materials on its website about requirements of academic programs, including graduation requirements, registration, the sequenced curriculum for each JD option, and academic standards. The SAVI institutional report included a list of all the materials and the events and communications to students throughout the academic year to support students in understanding and meeting requirements. Material for the LLM and other non-JD programs are less detailed as those programs allow students to work with faculty to design their curriculum based on their individual goals. (CFR 2.12)

SWL provides extensive services to JD students, for those studying on site and online. Academic support starts with a voluntary free non-credit pre-enrollment boot camp that covers time management, case reading, and exam preparation and two foundational courses in the first year that reinforce these skills. The faculty-run Academic Success and Bar Preparation program (ASBP) includes workshops, coaching, and personalized bar preparation consisting of practice exams with feedback. Alumni continue to receive bar support and have access to the UWorld bank of MBE questions. Funding is provided for some bar takers who need financial support while studying for the bar. (CFR 2.13)

Students may access mental health counseling through teletherapy, a crisis support hotline, and several wellness videos. Psychological support is available onsite and also online through a system called UWill, which is branded as BisonCares. SWL demonstrates a strong commitment to student wellness, and students acknowledge and express appreciation for that commitment. (CFR 2.13) SWL has a Student Bar Association, which serves as the official organization for all students. It also has more than 30 student organizations that appeal to a wide range of legal practice interests (e.g., Consumer Law and Environmental Law) and reflect shared interests, experiences and professional communities. (CFR 2.13)

In addition to academic coursework on ethics and professionalism and a first-year program leading to a badge on professionalism and civility, SWL has the Deans Leadership Academy and the Parris Academic for Excellence in Law and Leadership, which offers lectures, workshops, and mentoring over the course of three years. A fund provides financial support for students participating in professional development, such as pro bono work, service on a student organization board, or presenting a paper to an organization outside the law school.

(CFR 2.13)

Specialized offerings include a public service program for students who want to pursue public service careers or engage in pro bono work and an Entertainment, Media and Sports Law Institute that promotes network, and Inns of Court, both virtual and in person. (CFR 2.13)

The Career Services Office (CSO) offers a wide array of services and events to support students as they consider and then search for positions in law, including individualized advising, on-campus interviews with more than 270 employers and access to 6000 job listings. Students in the JD program are required to meet with CSO during their first year. SWL has found that student engagement with CSO workshops has been linked to better career outcomes, using this information to encourage students to utilize these resources. (CFR 2.13)

The results of the 2022-23 and 2024 LSSSE survey show that the majority of students are satisfied with the support they get for academic advising, career counseling, personal counseling, and job search (ranging from 49 to 80% depending on what year the student is in). These ratings are roughly comparable to those for other California ABA and independent metropolitan law schools, some slightly higher and some slightly lower. A report over the two years 2022-23 shows that SWL students are engaged at about the same level as other law schools, slightly lower for SWL's first-year students. The 2022-23 report shows that more than 90% of students used academic, career, and financial aid advising and that 78-84% used job search assistance. The team met with more than 20 students in an open meeting. They were generally very satisfied with their experience at SWL and the support they received, citing responsiveness to their needs, engagement with one another and faculty, and clinical and externship work. Several were in the SCALE program and some of these lived in the campus residence halls, enabling them to fully engage in the many academic and co- and extra-curricular activities available to them. (CFR 2.14)

A table provided with the report showed data collection about the services and other activities outside of the academic program, including who is responsible for collecting and analyzing the data and what, if any, changes have been made to address findings. In 2025 the Dean charged department heads with establishing goals, reporting regularly on progress toward those goals, and created a timeline for this new process, intended to regularize planning and reporting in 2026. The goals center on making evidence-based improvements. The team

found that the faculty and staff involved in providing support for students were very diligent in identifying and adjusting services to meet their needs. While data is used to determine the effectiveness of co-curricular programming, staff acknowledged an opportunity to conduct a more thorough school-wide co-curricular assessment in order to gain a deeper understanding as to the impact the programs have and how they can be improved. (CFR 2.14)

Systematic, regular evaluation is conducted on the key outcome of bar pass rates, including barriers to bar success, and attrition and employment. As examples, recent improvements include changes in bar preparation courses, funding for students studying for the bar, more support for students who are caregivers, additions to the ASBP offerings and resources, changes in the timing of merit scholarship awards, and a new public interest fellowship program. The faculty committee on Innovating and Developing Education Advancement (IDEA) has responded to needs, both internal and external, by offering training to faculty on teaching and learning and creating new courses to address AI. A recent evaluation of the lecture series in the SCALE program led to a new course Lawyering Practicum. (CFR 2.14)

Standard 3: Assuring Resources and Organizational Structures

Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

SWL has 197 total faculty members that are comprised of 31 tenured or tenure-track professors and 32 non-tenure-track faculty and approximately 134 adjunct professors, most of whom are practicing attorneys or judges. Their roles, workload, etc. are described in Standard 2 above under CFRs 2.5-2.7. The student-to-faculty ratio is 10:1. The Faculty Recruitment Committee is responsible for conducting searches for new faculty members once positions are approved. The faculty votes on appointments and tenured appointments are also approved by the Board of Trustees. New faculty are provided with orientation, mentoring and support when they are hired and ongoing for their research and scholarship. Faculty are evaluated annually using a self-assessment tool. (CFR 3.1)

SWL employs about 140 staff members working across 25 departments that perform noninstructional support functions. The student-to-staff ratio is approximately 1:6. As an independent law school, SWL must

provide an array of services and institutional functions, such as security, facilities management, general counsel, and staff support for student housing. Managing headcount in these non-instructional administrative functions that do not provide direct student services necessitates careful balancing. SWL may want to assess staffing levels at comparable institutions to ascertain whether FTE allocations in non-academic and non-instructional areas are optimal and, if not, quantify the cost to incorporate in future budget modeling. SWL's strong and well-managed information technology support system can mitigate staffing pressures, as can thoughtfully planned contracting out. Striking the appropriate balance is important to assure an effective administrative infrastructure. (CFR 3.1)

Staff recruitment is conducted by the hiring department and the Human Resources team, starting with needs assessment and job descriptions and using platforms that will yield good candidates. Compensation studies are conducted periodically. Staff are provided with onboarding and orientation and extensive professional development. Most laudable is the requirement that staff devote an hour every week to their professional development. An array of courses are offered internally and staff are supported to attend external courses and conferences and to join organizations that support their areas of responsibility.

In the open meeting with staff, several indicated that they felt valued and supported by the leadership and faculty, had good work-life balance, and experienced a positive work culture where they could contribute to the betterment of the Law School and support one another. They praised the leadership for starting practices like regular all-staff meetings and staff committees. Staff are evaluated annually. (CFR 3.2, 3.3)

Faculty are also provided with professional development, including sabbaticals, conference participation, membership in professional organizations, participation in AALS workshops for new teachers, and mentoring. As noted above in CFR 2.5, additional support is provided for faculty who are expected to engage in research and scholarship. (CFR 3.3)

The 2025 Survey on the Engagement of Law Faculty and Staff (SELS), a pilot, showed that faculty and staff who support students showed strengths in terms of their feeling valued and having a positive experience in the law school compared to peers. The survey identified areas for follow-up, including climate, mutual respect, and the value placed on scholarship. SWL is following up on the results of this survey and determining whether to continue participation in this survey. (CFR 3.2)

Fiscal, Physical, Technology, and Information Resources

Financial and operational complexity is increasing throughout higher education. Independent, standalone law schools are particularly vulnerable as they lack economies of scale and the benefits of being embedded in larger, more financially robust university settings with deeper capital reserves, larger endowments, and broader revenue diversification. The challenges associated with the business model of standalone law schools are evidenced by the dramatic decline in such institutions: 15 standalone law schools exist nationwide in 2025, down 35% from the 23 schools that existed in 2010. While SWL has successfully overcome potentially existential challenges, its financial statements and related fiscal summaries demonstrate that continued prudent financial management, forward-looking planning, and creativity in expanding its revenue base through programs such as online education is needed. (CFR 3.4)

Resource allocation as demonstrated by staffing highlights the strategic importance SWL is placing with its major investment in an online education enterprise, with 12.5 FTE's dedicated to this effort. As this program graduates its first class, SWL contemplates conducting a thorough financial and academic analysis of its success and contribution to the Law School. (CFR 3.4, 3.6)

Further exacerbating baseline operational challenges are uncertainties brought about by the enactment of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), which makes changes to financial aid that affect all law schools and their students. Among other things, OBBBA sets federal borrowing limits under the Federal Direct Loan Program for graduate students to \$20,500 annually and \$100,000 over a lifetime and for professional students to \$50,000 annually and \$200,000 over a lifetime, while eliminating the previously unlimited GradPLUS loans. SWL is a professional graduate degree program subject to the \$50,000/\$200,000 limits; and its other graduate degree program, the LLM is subject to the lower caps of \$20,500/\$100,000. SWL has assessed these impacts and intends to give greater emphasis to counseling student borrowers on student loan options and to seek more funds from philanthropy. SWL should continue to closely monitor conditions and, to the extent possible, develop contingency plans and undertake other measures to mitigate negative impacts. (CFR 3.4)

SWL has devoted considerable effort to operational planning. Planning documents are uniformly cogent, concise, and well formulated, covering budget, fees, information technology, facilities deferred maintenance,

among other subjects. The level of effort dedicated to planning, with annual follow-up reporting, is impressive and indicative of a strong managerial ethos. That said, there appears to be some fragmentation, gaps, and a lack of integration among the plans that do exist. Reliance on the “Wicked Questions” planning approach, described in Standard 4, can lead to selective planning, meaning that a potential exists for major gaps in the planning process as important functions may not relate to one of the “Wicked Questions.” It is recommended that SWL strengthen its strategic planning by aligning and integrating unit plans with strategic and operational goals and developing appropriate metrics for measuring success on a multi-year basis. (CFRs 3.4, 4.8)

As noted in its deferred maintenance plan, SWL lacks a campus-wide master plan and a true capital plan. The deferred maintenance plan centers on small-scale projects such as elevator door assemblies, moisture in information technology locations, carpet replacement, and the like. The deferred maintenance log is structured on a piecemeal basis and does not present a holistic summary of need or cost. Both the Bullocks Wilshire and Westmoreland buildings are older structures that require substantial modernization, systems upgrades and long-term capital renewal. Developing a plan or, at a minimum, documenting an awareness of the scope and cost of building upgrade or replacement, synchronized with the institution’s strategic plan is fundamental in planning for sustainability on a go-forward basis. It is recommended that SWL develop a campus-wide master plan to serve as a road map for the future, which addresses upgrade, renewal, and capital maintenance of the campus, aligning the physical plant with strategic goals and quantifying estimates of future cost. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6)

Budget performance over the past decade, from 2016 to 2025, has been largely favorable with operating surpluses seven of the last ten years, and positive change to net assets eight of the last ten years. Negative operating results in 2023 and 2024 are largely related to the settlement of a lawsuit in early 2024. Information provided by SWL, both audited financial statements, and budget performance summaries, reflect the settlement’s financial significance with cost growth in institutional related to legal defense, hazard mitigation, and settlement expenses on an aggregate basis.

SWL has fully absorbed the financial impact of the settlement agreement and information provided by SWL indicates there are no future obligations to the plaintiffs. Further, there are no debt covenants that materially impact or otherwise restrict financial operations. SWL has undertaken a substantial renovation of units and

common areas at off-campus sites. Lines of credit have been established to provide liquidity for this project.

Woven together, the settlement's fiscal impact and the resulting repair and mitigation program, while financially burdensome, is proceeding and SWL has successfully navigated these challenges. The team found evidence that SWL is financially stable and sustainable.

The information provided suggests that the 2025 budget indicates that SWL is experiencing some financial stress not dissimilar to many, if not most, institutions of higher education. Indicators include a modest faculty and staff merit compensation pool, somewhat aggressive increases in student rent and tuition, and continued suppression of operating expenses in a time of inflationary pressure. While such measures show management's emphasis on aligning costs to budget, the 2026 budget also taps reserves to fund earthquake insurance and the cost of early faculty retirements. The use of reserves to fund ongoing operating expenses is not sustainable but could be considered appropriate if the reserve draw is one time and an element of a bridging strategy. SWL may wish to prioritize growing the reserves above the current funding level, which may be adequate for contingencies associated with day-to-day operations but inadequate as a funding source for capital renewal and replacement.

The existence of policies governing a broad range of subjects, including a Financial Exigency Policy adopted in 2025 is evidence of the governing board's commitment to oversight and contingency planning under CFR 3.7. Similarly, the regular reporting of high-quality budget and fiscal performance information further demonstrates compliance with this standard. SWL will need to plan carefully, including with a campus master plan, to undertake major renovation and upgrades of its physical plant that address seismic, code compliance, and building modernization needs.

SWL has an independent governing board, the Board of Trustees, which has 28 trustees. Their work is conducted under Bylaws that require four regular meetings a year and establish eight standing committees: Academic Affairs, Audit and Compliance, Finance, Governance, Compensation, Executive, Facilities/Real Estate, and Advancement. Examples of recent actions include approval of the planning framework, regular approval and monitoring of the budget, approval of new programs (e.g., the Online JD), and several new policies. A faculty member, selected from the dean's advisory committee, attends meetings. (CFR 3.7, 3.8)

The board has a conflict of interest policy and members provide regular disclosures. Only five members have interests that would be considered potential or real conflicts under the policy. The board also recently adopted several new policies including one calling for self-assessment and professional development and one for orientation of new members. As noted below, it is seeking to add new members in part because of the self-assessment process. (CFR 3.7) All but one or two members of the Board are lawyers and nearly all are graduates of SWL's JD program. They serve professionally in a wide variety of roles; however, the team believes that SWL would benefit from more varied backgrounds on the board including nonlawyers like financial, real estate, planning and higher education professionals and more graduates from other law schools. A recent self-assessment by the board also cited this as an area for development. (CFR 3.8)

The board appoints the president, sets her compensation, and has the authority to terminate the president's contract. The Compensation Committee conducts an annual evaluation and an extensive evaluation when the dean's contract is up for renewal. (CFR 3.7)

The leadership consists of the CEO/Dean and five senior-level executives, including the CFO, General Counsel/Secretary, COO, CIO and VP for Advancement. Several associate and assistant deans implement academic policies and programs including those that support students outside of class. The administrative team is well qualified and dedicated to the success of their students and to SWL as an organization. The organizational structure is, by design, quite flat with 12 people reporting directly to the Dean. All units provide regular written reports to the Dean – some weekly and some monthly. The Dean meets with her direct reports one-on-one or in small groups. This organizational structure seems to be working well; however, it may need to be adjusted as SWL becomes more complex as it expands programs and increases enrollment. (CFR 3.9, 3.11)

Along with the faculty, with its many committees, the leadership and staff implement the law school's policies and programs and develop new policies and undertakings for the improvement of the organization, some of which require approval by the board. From conversations with the faculty and leadership, the team found that the processes are effective and well understood and also ensure that good ideas and innovations are pursued and vetted properly. (CFR 3.11)

SWL has extensive data of all kinds (e.g., student learning and outcomes; student, faculty and staff

perceptions; financial and facilities). Data are collected, analyzed and used in decision making and planning. SWL aspires to have a culture of evidence-based decision making, and the team heard many individuals and groups discuss the data that they used in making improvements and identifying strengths. SWL has a small but growing Office of Institutional Research that works with all areas to conduct and disseminate institutional research and other data that are used for decision making. The team encourages SWL to follow through expeditiously to build the capacity for institutional research. (CFRs 3.10, 4.4)

Standard 4: Creating an Institution Committed to Quality Assurance and Improvement

Quality Assurance Processes

SWL has established processes and policies that support ongoing assessment and quality assurance activities across academic and administrative units. The school maintains quality in its degree offering by hiring 63 qualified full-time faculty: 31 tenured or tenure-track professors and 32 non-tenure-track faculty, 134 adjunct faculty, and 140 non-faculty staff who support the delivery of rigorous academic curriculum and maintain accreditation for its programs. There are well-established processes for assessing the performance of tenure-track, non-tenure track and adjunct faculty, while administrative staff are evaluated through annual performance reviews that align professional development with departmental goals. Both the self-study report and feedback gathered during the site visit showed that there are clearly defined professional development policies in place, and faculty and staff have overwhelmingly benefitted from these initiatives, resulting in enhanced academic quality across the institution. (CFRs 2.5, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1)

SWL has effectively engaged faculty in student learning assessment, and faculty appear to take ownership of their critical role in fostering student learning and student success. For example, all academic programs have clearly defined and published learning outcomes that are aligned with the institutional learning outcomes. There is a clearly defined assessment plan for each academic program, and faculty are committed to strengthening program-level assessment activities. Academic program curriculum maps are in place to show learning progression from introductory to graduation-ready competency, and clear academic standards are established to ensure students achieve the learning outcomes. Program faculty engage in the assessment process through the

Assessment Committee, which reviews assessment data and recommends curriculum changes. Academic programs are required to report annually the measure to which students are exceeding, meeting or failing to meet established benchmarks in the programs. In addition, the team observed that SWL has several student support services and co-curricular programs that are assessed minimally and may benefit from enhanced assessment for institutional improvements. (CFRs 2.2, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 2.13, 4.1)

SWL employs a wide range of externships, clinics and practice courses, which ensures that the institution's standards of performance are being achieved. Retention, attrition, bar passage rates and employment data are tracked and analyzed annually, and findings are systematically utilized to inform decision making and quality assurance across the institution. In summary, the team observed that the institution has established processes and explicit framework for assessment of both curricular and co-curricular activities. However, there are indications that learning outcomes assessment results are not yet fully integrated into the operations, planning and continuous improvement activities; as a result, there are opportunities to enhance the assessment and decision-making process. (CFRs 2.10, 4.2, 4.5, 4.6)

SWL has recently developed a policy that guides all periodic academic program reviews for meaning, quality, and integrity. All academic programs are required to go through a program review process. The JD programs at SWL are accredited through the American Bar Association (ABA), as such, they have benefitted from a similar periodic 10-year systematic review process prescribed in the new policy. At the time of this review, the two LLMs, JD/MBA, and CSUN 3+3 programs are in the process of undergoing their first periodic program review process. The team was provided with the preliminary program review reports for two of the four affected programs, and the others are still being drafted. The first reviews demonstrate SWL's capacity to conduct program review and each resulted in recommendations for improvement that are being addressed by the Program Review Committee. (CFRs 2.4, 4.1)

Quality assurance across all SWL departments is initiated through an annual submission of mandatory reports that summarizes goals, use of data, and "closing-the-loop" activities to support continuous improvement and ensures integrity and transparency in operations. SWL maintains comprehensive written operating policies and business procedures to track, manage and document improvements in both academic and non-academic areas.

Although a significant number of these policies and procedures are relatively new, there is a campus-wide understanding of these policies and processes that facilitate improvement in structures and institutional planning processes. To enhance operational decisions, a SWL Managing Risks Together (SMaRT) system is in place for identifying, ranking, addressing, and monitoring institutional risks. (CFRs 1.4, 1.5, 2.4, 3.6, 4.1, 4.6)

SWL has a centralized institutional research function and an Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) that provides oversight on all data collection, analysis, and institutional performance and effectiveness. Specifically, OIE supports multiple functions including admissions, student success, assessment, institutional research, strategic planning, and accreditation. At the time of the visit, OIE staff included an Associate Director who is responsible for submission of compliance reports such as IPEDS, ABA and BPPE, and an Assistant Dean for Accreditation Compliance and Institutional Effectiveness who oversees institutional research (IR), strategic planning, and regulatory reporting. While the technology and expertise needed for OIE functions are limited, there seems to be a campus-wide satisfaction with the activities of the office. SWL has in place a new four-year Institutional Research plan to build a robust, modern IR function that empowers data-informed decisions and foster continuous improvement. Generally, there seems to be a campus wide commitment to evidence-based decision making, planning and improvement supported through the OIE. However, based on the self-study report and discussions during the site visit, the current structure and operational capacity of the IR and OIE is not yet staffed to match the current and future extensive data analysis and decision-making needs of the institution, so the team encourages SWL to prioritize building capacity in the OIE functions with emphasis on data integrity, integration, analyses and dissemination as highlighted in the plan. (CFRs 2.4, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4)

The commitment of SWL to understanding the climate that supports student success is demonstrated by the periodic administration of surveys, such as Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE), Survey on the Engagement of Law Faculty and Staff (SELF), and Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE), and the use of resulting data for operational reforms that enhance student success. A notable reform is the result of the CECE survey, which prompted the offering of workshops and interventions to improve classroom climate and student engagement. Other surveys of student support services, such as the survey of library services, provided insights into student satisfaction that informed improvements with student experience initiatives. Student course

evaluations are administered regularly while student learning and engagement outcomes are benchmarked against comparative institutions to highlight areas of improvement. The institution demonstrates commitment to improvements based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation as shown in the use of AccessLex Barriers and Interventions Grant to help identify obstacles affecting bar outcomes, which resulted in additional programming on doctrine review, mental endurance and family support for first generation. In addition, a rise in attrition in the SCALE Program necessitated the implementation of tutoring, academic success program, and curriculum realignment, which resulted in a reduction of student attrition. Other examples of using data for improvement were the introduction of interviews for waitlisted applicants, which provided actionable insights on applicants' readiness beyond LSAT scores. (CFRs 2.9, 2.14, 4.3, 4.5)

Institutional Learning and Improvement

SWL faculty effectively engages in curriculum design, program assessments, innovative teaching activities and extensive committee commitments. For example, there are regular opportunities for faculty development through workshops hosted by IDEA Committee, a group consisting of faculty, IT and instructional design staff set up to explore emerging teaching topics, tools and resources for teaching and learning, and through the Faculty Development Committee that provides periodic curriculum-related training opportunities that cut across all teaching modalities. The creation of multimodal pathways to the JD program, e.g. the accelerated JD -- a faculty-initiated, assessment-based program improvement -- demonstrates SWL's faculty are engaged in inquiry and continuous improvement process. In summary, the visiting team observed that SWL faculty embraced new and emerging learning technologies and were clearly passionate about student learning, academic rigor, and advancing assessment approaches in both curricular and co-curricular. (CFRs 2.2-2.6, 3.3, 3.5, 4.3, 4.6)

SWL maintains strong board members with qualifications and professional diversities that align with the mission and values of the institution. The Board demonstrates strong commitment to strengthening its governance structure and responsibilities by a recent adoption of the Amended and Restated Bylaws that resulted in membership reconfiguration, creation of new charters, and developing and approval of new board policies. The Board embraces a faculty liaison to the board role and maintains open communication with stakeholders, which shows commitment to shared governance practices. SWL Board conducts regular meetings and often engage in

conversations on educational and strategic topics that strengthens institutional mission and operations. The board self-assessment process was recently established and the first and only board self-assessment with 83% participation took place in 2025. The self-assessment was conducted at a retreat, using a consultant, and identified important areas for improvement that the board has set a priority, including adding new members who bring different backgrounds and expertise to the board, developing a longer-term plan, monitoring more measurable KPIs, and expanding donor participation. (CFRs 1.7, 3.7, 3.8, 4.7)

SWL's strategic planning foundation is based on the school's mission, 12 core values, and the Strategic Planning Framework developed through broad consultation conducted during the last ABA accreditation self-study. In moving key strategic initiatives forward, SWL adopted a unique and thoughtful strategic framework called "Wicked Questions" developed around important strategic issues that Southwestern is facing. There is a shared participation in the assessment and reflection on the "Wicked Questions" by all stakeholders including the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff and administrators, students and alumni resulting in shared strategic planning. (CFR 1.3) These dialogues resulted in emerging themes that inform the goals outlined in both academic and administrative units' plans, which are subsequently reviewed by the Mission and Value Committee. The establishment of the SMaRT Risk Registrar enables the monitoring of risk to enhance strategic decisions. The strategic framework conversation and the inclusion of all stakeholders and regular sharing of updates with the community showed SWL's commitment to accessibility and transparency of the institution's strategic priorities. (CFRs 3.4, 4.8)

The SWL community understands and actively engages in the strategic planning process as shown by the department-level strategic plans that are aligned with the themes emerging from the "Wicked Questions" conversation. However, the team observed that there is an opportunity for improvement in the process for consolidating the department-level strategic plan priorities into a unified institutional strategic plan. In addition, the current planning process does not clearly articulate how mission critical initiatives external to SWL are incorporated, nor does it include clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of the plan. (CFR 4.8)

Other Changes or Issues the Institution is Facing

Throughout the report and during the visit, the team found that SWL was very aware, thoughtful, and forthcoming about its challenges and its path going forward. SWL will be considering new non-JD program offerings once it is granted accreditation by the Commission. It is notable that the Board has created an Ad Hoc Committee on the Future to assess strategic opportunities in this changing landscape that could enhance the school's mission and competitiveness. Additionally, with the evolving higher education landscape, SWL will have to focus on regulatory requirements, technological advancements, and increased competition among institutions, that will require careful planning to ensure new programs are sustainable and maintain academic quality.

Section III. Commendations and Recommendations

The team found through the visit that the leadership, faculty, staff and other stakeholders had fully committed to the WSCUC Standards and processes, seeing them as a way to enhance their effectiveness and become a better organization. A member of the faculty first attended a WASC Academic Resource Conference ten years ago at about the same time that the SWL started work on learning outcomes. Exemplifying this commitment, a faculty member has completed the WASC Academic Leadership Academy. As noted above in this report, all constituents were well informed and most had been involved in some aspect of preparing for accreditation.

Commendations

Southwestern Law School is commended for:

1. A faculty and staff that demonstrate a spirit of commitment to its mission and values, effective collaboration across the institution, and a healthy and supportive culture that extends to one another and to students.
2. The Board of Trustees, which is dedicated to SWL's institutional values, its past legacy, and future success and is deeply engaged in shared governance.

3. Through a thoughtful process that involved all stakeholders, adopting a strategic planning framework that fits SWL's distinctive culture and values and drives forward key strategic initiatives.
4. Providing opportunities for professional development to all staff and faculty, which has been embraced by the community and contributes to a culture of improvement and growth.
5. Its emphasis on public service and career preparation for students, implemented through a wide array of externships, clinics and practice courses that are accessible for students in all modalities that lead to the JD.
6. Managing effectively through financial and operational challenges with integrity, preserving the school's sustainability and reputation.
7. Making innovations to legal education that serve its mission, including creating multiple pathways to the JD that accommodate the varied needs of students who seek to study law, such as the online program and the program to support students who are caregivers.
8. Updating, adopting, and implementing several policies and practices in the last few years that address important areas and create a clearer and more formalized structure, including, for example, the exigency policy and updated academic freedom policy.

Recommendations

The team recommends Southwestern Law School:

1. Enhance its processes for evidence-based decision making, planning, and improvement by proceeding with its plans to build its capacity for institutional research and institutional effectiveness work, with emphasis on data integrity, integration, analysis, and dissemination. (CFRs 3.10, 4.4)
2. Develop a campus-wide master plan to serve as a road map for the future, which addresses upgrade, renewal, and capital maintenance of the campus, aligning the physical plant with strategic goals and quantifying estimates of future cost. (CFRs 3.4, 3.6)
3. Strengthen its strategic planning by aligning and integrating unit plans with strategic and operational goals and developing appropriate metrics for measuring success on a multi-year basis. (CFR 4.8)

4. Engage in careful analysis and planning as it expands its program offerings and increases enrollment to ensure that the organizational structure is effective and that operational support systems scale to match growth. (CFR 3.4, 3.11, 4.8)
5. Effectively demonstrate how it utilizes the results of the assessment of student learning, addressing both curricular and co-curricular activities in all programs and modalities, to inform planning and improvement. (CFRs 2.14, 4.5, 4.8)
6. Broaden the expertise of the Board of Trustees by adding members with more varied professional and educational backgrounds, such as business, finance, real estate, and higher education, in keeping with the initiative that is already underway. (CFR 3.8)

Appendices

Four Federal Compliance Forms

Report on Distance Education

Credit Hour Review Form

Under federal regulations, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's credit hour policy and processes as well as the lengths of its programs.

Credit Hour - §600.2

The accrediting agency, as part of its review of an institution for renewal of accreditation, must conduct an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of the institution's assignment of credit hours.

- 1) The accrediting agency meets this requirement if-
 - i) It reviews the institution's-
 - a) Policies and procedures for determining the credit hours, as defined in 34 CFR 600.2, that the institution awards for courses and programs; and
 - b) The application of the institution's policies and procedures to its programs and coursework; and
- 2) Makes a reasonable determination of whether the institution's assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education.

Credit hour is defined by the Department of Education as follows:

Except as provided in [34 CFR 668.8\(k\)](#) and [\(l\)](#), a credit hour is an amount of student work defined by an institution, as approved by the institution's accrediting agency or State approval agency, that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education and that -

- 1) Reasonably approximates not less than:
 - i. One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or
 - ii. At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph 1.i. of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours; and
- 2) Permits an institution, in determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, to take into account a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines and degree levels.

See also WSCUC [Credit Hour Policy](#).

Material Reviewed	Institution provides links to materials to be reviewed (materials should be exhibits in appendices)	Review team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
Policy on credit hour	Link to institutional policy on credit hour:	Is this policy easily accessible? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: The Credit Hour policy is detailed. Southwestern operates both Quarter and semester semesters. The hours are consistent with the length of each system

	• Exhibit 2.01(b) Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework Policy • Exhibit 2.10(d) Maximum and Minimum JD Units Policy Available on our website at Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework (Dec 2025) and Maximum and Minimum J.D. Units Policy	
Process(es) for periodic review of credit hour	Link to description of process for periodic review of credit hour: • Exhibit 2.01(b) Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework Policy • Exhibit 2.03(d) Sample Course Proposal Requiring Learning Outcomes • Exhibit FF01 Curriculum Committee Charge and Faculty Meeting Minutes Excerpts Showing Course Approvals • Exhibit FF02 Online J.D. Guide to Credit Hour Breakdown • Exhibit FF03 Email to Faculty re Syllabus Review (see ABA Standard 310: Out-of-Class Work) • Exhibit DE23 Credit Hour Tracker Template - 2 Unit Course	Does the institution have a procedure for periodic review of credit hour assignments to ensure that they are accurate and reliable (for example, through program review, new course approval process, periodic audits)? ☒ YES _NO Does the institution adhere to this procedure? ☒ YES _ NO Comments: Southwestern provides enough evidence to substantiate that the institutions adhere to this procedure. Examples of how the policies were utilized were provided during the site visit
Schedule of on-ground courses showing when they meet	Link to recent schedule of on-ground courses: • Exhibit FF04 Residential J.D. Course Schedule - Spring 2026 • Exhibit FF05 String-of-Dates for Syllabi - Spring 2026	Does this schedule show that on-ground courses meet for the prescribed number of hours? ☒ YES NO Comments: Syllabi reviewed showed that onground courses are designed to meet the prescribed number of hours
Sample syllabi or equivalent for on-ground and distance education courses	Link to at least 1-2 syllabi from each degree level and mode of delivery. • Exhibit FF06 Sample Syllabi - General	How many syllabi were reviewed for each degree level and mode of delivery? SCALE (2), JD Residential (2), for JD Online (2) What discipline(s) were the courses from? SCALE (2), JD Online FT/PT, JD Residential Did the material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? ☒ YES NO
		Comments:

Sample syllabi or equivalent for other kinds of courses that do not meet for the prescribed hours (e.g., internships, labs, clinical, independent study, accelerated).	Link to at least 1-2 syllabi from each degree level. • Exhibit FF07 Sample Syllabi for Non-prescribed Hours Courses	How many syllabi were reviewed for each degree level? Externship (20) and Clinics (2) What kinds of courses were reviewed? Externships and Clinics What discipline(s) were the courses from? JD programs Did the material show that students are doing the equivalent amount of work to the prescribed hours to warrant the credit awarded? X_YES _ NO Comments:
--	--	--

Review Completed By:

[Taiwo Ande](#)

Date: [February 26,2026](#)

Marketing and Recruitment Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's recruiting and admissions practices. Under WSCUC policy***, an accredited institution bears final responsibility for ensuring the quality and integrity of all activities conducted in its name, including advertising, marketing, and/or recruiting communications outsourced to unaccredited entities.

Material Reviewed	Institution provides locations of materials to be reviewed	Review team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
**Federal regulations	Link to policy or description of student recruitment practices: Exhibit 2.01(c) Admission Policy Exhibit FF08 Excerpt from Employee Handbook re HEA Section 487(a)(20)	Does the institution follow federal regulations on recruiting students? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: SWL's employee handbook explicitly prohibits incentive-based compensation in line with federal regulations.
Degree completion and cost	Link to marketing materials about degree programs and costs: Exhibit FF09 Marketing Materials re Degree Programs and Costs https://www.swlaw.edu/jd-llm-programs/entertainment-media-law-llm/curriculum https://www.swlaw.edu/admissions-financial-aid/tuition-fees https://www.swlaw.edu/admissions-financial-aid/financial-aid/scholarships-grants-fellowships/fulbright-jose-siderman https://www.swlaw.edu/admissions-financial-aid/catalogs-brochures	Does the institution provide information about the typical length of time to degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO Does the institution provide information about the overall cost of the degree? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: Typical length and cost are explicitly stated in both SWL's marketing materials and website, a single click from the main page of the latter.
***Outsourcing advertising, marketing, and/or recruiting	Link to advertising, marketing, and/or recruiting communications produced in conjunction with an unaccredited entity: N/A	Does the institution outsource any advertising, marketing, and/or recruiting of programs with an unaccredited entity? ☐ YES ☒ NO Are the communications from the unaccredited entity consistent with institutional materials? ☐ YES ☐ NO Comments: N/A

Careers and employment	Link to marketing materials about careers and employment available to graduates: • FF10 Marketing Materials re Careers and Employment https://www.swlaw.edu/consumer-information-aba-required-disclosures/consumer-information-aba-required-disclosures#Employment https://www.swlaw.edu/admissions-financial-aid/catalogs-brochures	Does the institution provide information about the kinds of jobs for which its graduates are qualified, as applicable? ☒ YES _ NO Does the institution provide information about the employment of its graduates, as applicable? ☒ YES _ NO Comments: Career alignment and graduate employment for the last 8 years is available on SWL's website and in marketing materials.
------------------------	--	--

*§602.16

**Section 487 (a)(20) of the Higher Education Act (HEA) prohibits Title IV eligible institutions from providing incentive compensation to employees or third-party entities for their success in securing student enrollments. Incentive compensation includes commissions, bonus payments, merit salary adjustments, and promotion decisions based solely on success in enrolling students. These regulations do not apply to the recruitment of international students residing in foreign countries who are not eligible to receive Federal financial aid.

***[Agreements with Unaccredited Entities Policy](#). See also [Agreements with Unaccredited Entities Guide](#).

Review Completed By: [2/22/26](#)

Date: [Matthew Hubbs](#)

Student Complaints Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's student complaints policies, procedures, and records. WSCUC [Complaints and Third-Party Comments Policy](#) requires that an institution have a process for receiving and handling complaints and grievances by institutional personnel or students. Records of complaints and grievances are to be retained by the institution until the next scheduled comprehensive review to allow the review team an opportunity to review the records, as appropriate. WSCUC 2023 Standards of Accreditation, Standard 1, CFR 1.4, requires institutions to maintain appropriate operating policies and business procedures, including timely and fair responses to complaints and grievances.

Material Reviewed	Institution provides locations of materials to be reviewed	Review team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
Policy on student complaints	Link to policy for handling student complaints: • Exhibit 1.04(e) Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures • Exhibit 1.04(f) Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Available on our website at Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures and Policy to Prevent Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for student complaints? ☒ YES _ NO If so, is the policy or procedure easily accessible? ☒ YES _ NO If so, where? Comments: SWL posts its policy on its website and provides detailed instructions and response timelines.
Process(es) / procedure	Link to procedure for addressing student complaints and evidence of adherence to procedure: • Exhibit 1.04(e) Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures • Exhibit FF11 Example of Adherence to Complaint Procedures • Exhibit FF12 Student Concerns Policy Memo and Faculty Meeting Materials (see Agenda Item 13)	Does the institution have a procedure for addressing student complaints? ☒ YES _ NO If so, does the institution provide evidence that it adheres to this procedure? ☒ YES _ NO Comments: Student service support staff and a designated Title IX officer assure that complaints are addressed conforming to policies and procedures readily available to students.
Records maintenance and tracking	Link to description of how and where student complaints are maintained and tracked/monitored over time:	Does the institution maintain records of student complaints? ☒ YES _ NO If so, where?

	• Exhibit 1.04(e) Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures • Exhibit FF12 Student Concerns Policy Memo and Faculty Meeting Materials (See Agenda Item 13) • Exhibit FF13 Record Retention and Disposal Policy • Exhibit FF14 Complaint Tracking Chart - Student Services Office	Does the institution have an effective way of tracking and monitoring student complaints over time? X YES _ NO Comments: Evidence indicates that policies and procedures are in place.
Records retention	Link to description or policy regarding retention of records of complaints and grievances: • Exhibit 1.04(e) Student Complaint and Grievance Policy and Procedures • Exhibit FF13 Record Retention and Disposal Policy • Exhibit FF15 Sample Record Retention Schedule – Student Services Office	Does the institution retain records of complaints and grievances at least until the next scheduled WSCUC comprehensive review? X YES _NO Comments: SWL has adopted policies governing the retention of student records, including grievances, that conform to this requirement.

*§602.16

Review Completed By:

[David Seward](#)

Date: [March 3, 2026](#)

Transfer Credit Policy Review Form

Under federal regulation*, WSCUC is required to demonstrate that it monitors the institution's transfer credit policy and practices. Under WSCUC policy**, institutions must publicly disclose transfer of credit policies and criteria regarding acceptance of credit earned at another institution.

Material Reviewed	Institution provides locations of materials to be reviewed	Review team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
Transfer Credit Policy(ies)	Link to policy for receiving transfer credit: Exhibit Sec.07(o) Transfer and Visiting Students Policy Available on our website at Transfer and Visiting Students Policy	Does the institution have a policy or formal procedure for receiving transfer credit? ☒ YES ☐ NO If so, is the policy or procedure publicly available? ☒ YES ☐ NO Where? https://www.swlaw.edu/admissions-financial-aid/admissions-jd/transfer-visiting-students Does the policy(s) include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: SWL's website is clear as to what students can expect when attempting to transfer in credit. Does the institution have written criteria explaining their evaluation process for awarding credit based on prior learning experiences, such as military service, paid or unpaid employment, and other demonstrated competency or learning? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments: SWL's policy is that it does not accept any credit for prior learning experience.
Transfer credit policy implementation	Link to evidence of implementation of transfer credit in accordance with published criteria (at least three credit records with student identifying information removed): Exhibit FF16 Sample Transfer Credit Evaluations	How many transfer credit records were examined? Three (3) samples were provided and reviewed. What discipline(s) were the credit records from? JD programs from other ABA law schools, consistent with SWL policy. Did the evidence demonstrate that transfer credit was awarded in accordance with published criteria? ☒ YES ☐ NO Comments:

*§602.24(e): Transfer of credit policies. The accrediting agency must confirm, as part of its review for renewal of accreditation, that the institution has transfer of credit policies that - -

(1) Are publicly disclosed in accordance with 668.43(a)(11); and

(2) Include a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.

**WSCUC [Transfer of Credit Policy](#)

Review Completed By:

[Taiwo Ande](#)

Date: [February 26, 2026](#)

Report on Distance Education

1. Programs and courses to be reviewed (please list)

Programs:

Southwestern's Online JD Program (fully ABA-approved part-time and full-time JD pathways in which students can complete 100% of coursework via distance education).

Courses:

The review team will be provided access to the following two courses, both offered fully asynchronously with optional synchronous sessions:

- Torts (ONL 170 O1), a first-year required course
- Civil Procedure II (ONL 110B O1), a second-year required course

2. Background Information (number of programs offered by distance education; degree levels; FTE enrollment in distance education courses/programs; history of offering distance education; percentage growth in distance education offerings and enrollment; platform, formats, and/or delivery method)

Southwestern currently offers one degree program that may be completed primarily through distance education: the Online JD Program. Other JD pathways include individual online or hybrid courses; however, no other program is structured so that 50% or more of the degree can be completed through distance education.

As of Fall 2025, the Online JD Program enrolls approximately 180 students across two cohorts, representing roughly 16% of total JD enrollment with the first expected graduating cohort to occur Spring 2027. In addition, residential JD students can enroll in individual online courses (up to 50% of the degree) that count toward their otherwise residential degree. Southwestern's overall JD enrollment and Online JD headcount data are summarized in Criterion 10 (Degree Programs) of the ERC, and the associated enrollment exhibits in the SAV1 Institutional Report.

All distance education coursework is delivered through Canvas, Southwestern's enterprise LMS, with secure single sign-on authentication. The Online JD Program is designed as fully online, without required in-person residencies, and is available in both full-time (3-year) and part-time (4-year) pathways. Courses are primarily asynchronous, with planned synchronous touchpoints (e.g., live "deep dive" sessions, Q&A sessions, exam reviews, simulations) delivered via institutionally supported web-conferencing tools (primarily Zoom, but Teams is available). Each course consists of weekly modules with clearly articulated learning outcomes, reading assignments, recorded lectures or multimedia content, interactive assignments (including quizzes, discussions, written work, and group projects), and structured opportunities for faculty-initiated regular and substantive interaction (IRSI) and academic engagement. The curriculum, credit-hour calculations, and assessment expectations are aligned with the residential JD pathways and documented in the Online JD Curriculum Map, course maps, syllabus templates, and credit-hour trackers.

3. Nature of the review (material to be examined and persons/committees to be interviewed) The Seeking

Accreditation Visit 1 review of distance education will include:

- SAV1 Institutional Report and appendices, including Criterion 10 (Degree Programs) of the ERC and related exhibits.

- Courses and elective offerings in the Online JD Program.
- Sample Online JD Canvas course sites (at least one 1L required course and one upper-division course), including: syllabi; weekly modules; assignments; discussion forums; graded work; instructor announcements; IRSI activities; and evidence of academic engagement and feedback.
- IRSI and Academic Engagement documentation, including the Instructor-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction guide and course maps used in Online JD courses.
- Policies and procedures relevant to distance education (e.g., credit-hour policy; attendance and participation expectations; exam and proctoring policies; academic honesty; student identification and privacy; accessibility).

Persons/committees to be interviewed:

- Zachary Bruning, Assistant Dean for Student Services
- John De Sousa, Instructional Designer and Technology Team Leader
- Cindy Goldberg, Assistant Dean for Online Education Administration
- Kate Hance, Senior Instructional Designer
- Professor Natalie Rodriguez, Vice Dean and oversees the Online JD Program
- Chanté Spann, Assistant Dean for Online Education

Lines of Inquiry	Institution responds to questions and provides links to evidence (materials should be exhibits in appendices)	Review Team members enter findings and recommendations as appropriate
<i>Fit with Mission.</i> How does the institution conceive of distance learning relative to its mission, operations, and administrative structure? How are distance education offerings planned, funded, and operationalized?	Southwestern's mission emphasizes broadening access to quality legal education for students who are place-bound, are unable to navigate a physical campus, are working, or are balancing significant responsibilities in addition to law school. The Online JD Program helps the school to fulfill this mission by providing a fully ABA-approved, instructor-led pathway for qualified students who are place-bound, have work or caregiving obligations, or need additional flexibility, while holding them to the same learning outcomes, graduation standards, and professional expectations as all other Southwestern JD pathways. The Online JD is one of six ABA-approved Southwestern JD pathways and adheres to the same JD Learning Outcomes, curriculum maps, and credit-hour policies as the residential program. The program's required and elective courses closely mirror the residential curricula and are mapped to the JD Learning Outcomes and ABA Standard 302 competencies. Online courses meet federal regulations and ABA distance-education expectations for instructional contact, regular and substantive interaction, and instructional time. Planning for and oversight of the Online JD Program are integrated into Southwestern's governance and operations: • The board of trustees formally approved the Online JD Program and monitors enrollment, resources, bar-passage outcomes, and other developments through regular reports to the Board's Academic Affairs Committee and the full board. • The faculty formally approved the Online JD Committee and continue to work with the administration to set the direction of and policies for the program (primarily through standing committees like the Online JD Committee, Academic Standards Committee, Assessment	SWL is one of the only schools in the US to have earned approval from the ABA to deliver a fully online JD program. This reflects a thoughtful decision-making process. The college invested over \$1,000,000 in the development of the program, though a budget for updating curriculum (ex. video lessons that were included in the initial investment costs) was not provided (or clearly delineated from ongoing operational costs).

	Committee, and Curriculum Committee); key administrators share updates about program developments during faculty meetings and via email and other communications. • The Online JD Program is staffed and administered by law school employees. Although the school has established an Online Education department, other offices, such as Financial Aid, Student Services, Career Services, the Library, and the Registrar’s Office serve all students. • A cross-departmental team meets at least once per month during the academic year to discuss program developments and consider enhancements. Funding for the Online JD Program is incorporated into Southwestern’s regular operational and multi-year budgeting and resource-allocation processes. The Online JD Program was launched and expanded through strategic investments using operational funds and Board-designated reserves in instructional design, media production, technology, student support services, and scholarships. These investments are documented in the Board-approved annual and multi-year budgets, as well as the “Use of Reserves to Support Strategic Priorities,” which identifies the Online JD and technology. Southwestern uses a consistent process to plan and deliver distance-education courses: • The vice deans identify the courses, including electives, to be offered in distance-education format. They consider both the courses offered in a residential format and the needs and interests of students in the Online JD Program. As just one example, more students in the online program are likely to sit for a bar examination outside of California. Accordingly, the school is developing an online course focusing on the NextGen UBE bar exam, which a majority of jurisdictions outside of California have adopted. This course will be in addition to online offerings focused on the California bar examination. • The Curriculum Committee and full faculty approve courses being offered as distance courses. • The vice deans assign faculty (full-time or adjunct) to teach online courses. At this early point in the program, we take only volunteers who have expressed an interest in teaching in the program. When hiring new faculty, we emphasize that teaching in the Online JD Program will be expected at some point. • Faculty design Online JD courses in partnership with online instructional designers, using course maps, syllabus shells, and credit-hour trackers to ensure compliance with ABA and federal instructional-time expectations. • Regular and substantive interaction (IRSI) expectations, developed with the faculty Online JD Committee, are defined in a dedicated institutional guide and built into course design and weekly modules from the outset. • Online JD courses are subject to the same learning-outcomes mapping, assessment, and program-review cycles as other JD pathways, including curriculum mapping, assessment cycles, and using learning-outcomes data for continuous improvement. Evidence	
--	--	--

	• Exhibit Sec.03(d) Instructor-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction Guide • Exhibit 1.01(a) Examples of Living the Core Values • Exhibit 1.03(b) Online JD Program Newsletter • Exhibit 2.02(d) Online JD Curriculum Map • Exhibit 2.02(f) Online JD Required Courses • Exhibit 2.02(g) 2025–26 Online JD Elective Offerings • Exhibit 3.04(a) Use of Reserves to Support Strategic Priorities • Exhibit 3.04(b) Fiscal Year 2026 Budget • Exhibit 3.04(c) Multi-year Fiscal Years 2027–2029 Budget • Exhibit 3.07(f) Excerpt of Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes – Online JD Program Approval • Exhibit 4.07(p) Excerpt of Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes 05.22.25 – Online JD Program Presentation • Exhibit 3.11(a) 2025–2026 Organizational Chart • Exhibit 3.11(b) Guide to Administrative Offices • Exhibit DE01 2025-2026 Online Education Organizational Chart • Exhibit DE02 Excerpt of Faculty Meeting Minutes 03.03.23 - Online J.D. Program Approval • Exhibit DE03 Online J.D. Group Meeting Agenda 2025.12.09 • ABA Standard 302 – Learning Outcomes • NextGen UBE Bar Exam	
<i>Connection to the Institution.</i> How are distance education students integrated into the life and culture of the institution?	Online JD students are integrated into Southwestern’s academic, co-curricular, and community life. The goal is that Online JD students consider themselves as full members of the Southwestern community and have a reasonably comparable experience as residential students. Key mechanisms include: • Access to campus-wide events and programming: Online JD students are invited to all campus events and receive the same Today@Southwestern announcements and institutional communications as residential students. • Modality-inclusive programming and Zoom options: The community as a whole is encouraged to hold events on Zoom or with hybrid options so Online JD students can attend synchronously. This expectation is reinforced through inclusive-programming guidance and presentations shared with event organizers. The school also records major presentations and makes them available via Canvas. • Dedicated Online JD communications: Online JD students receive a dedicated Online JD Program Newsletter that curates program updates, resources, events, and opportunities relevant to their cohort and interests. • Cross-enrollment: Online JD students have access to residential electives, and residential students may enroll in eligible online electives. This cross-enrollment supports a shared academic experience and promotes interaction across modalities. • Student government and organizations: Online JD students are eligible to hold Student Bar Association (SBA) positions (the SBA has a vice president position for the Online JD Program and cohort	SWL takes careful and thorough measures to integrate online students into the SWL community. These efforts could be validated by collecting and reporting student feedback and satisfaction as to their experience, comparing across the different modalities.

	representatives, such as the 1L online representative; in addition, the current ABA/YLD representative, a position open to all students, is an online student) and participate as members and officers in recognized student organizations. • Many student organizations provide virtual attendance options via Zoom and ensure Online JD representation on their boards. Meetings are publicized via Today@Southwestern and other communications. The school's honors programs, such as Law Review and Moot Court, offer remote participation options • Access to all institutional departments plus dedicated Online JD staff: Online JD students have access to the full range of academic, student services, library (the school has hired a remote reference librarian whose primary duties include working with and teaching Online JD students), and career services offered by Southwestern, with virtual delivery options for advising, counseling, bar preparation, and student life programming. Most services are modality-neutral, with only a few campus-specific resources (e.g., food pantry) limited to in-person users. (If the school learns about an online student with food insecurity who did not live near campus, school administrators would provide them with information about resources in their locality.) In addition, Online JD students are supported by dedicated Online JD staff who coordinate services, refer students to appropriate offices, and design Online JD-specific programming. • Online JD "Hub" in Canvas: Online JD students access a dedicated Canvas "Hub" page that aggregates key information about academic policies, advising, technology support, student organizations, wellness resources, and career/externship opportunities. The Hub functions as the central gateway to campus offices and student-support services. • Career development integration: Online JD students receive individualized virtual career counseling and are assigned a career counselor who helps them design and implement an individualized career plan. The assistant dean for online education has extensive career services experience at another ABA-accredited law school and at a national law firm. The school matches some online students with alumni in their states or other individuals who have practiced in their states. The Career Services and Externship Offices include a dedicated section ("Online JD Corner") in the weekly CSO/Externship Newsletter that highlights remote opportunities and programming aligned with the interests of online students. • Academic and peer-support integration: Online JD students have access to the school's Bison Boot Camp, academic success workshops, the Writing Center, bar readiness programs, Dean's Fellows, teaching assistants, and peer mentors, all offered virtually to ensure inclusiveness. • The school has a core value of accessibility. To operationalize that value for all students, the school has a Digital Accessibility Committee and a Website & Digital Accessibility Policy. In addition to the accessibility office within the Student Services Office, the school has recently hired a program manager for digital accessibility and content to help ensure the accessibility of all digital assets. Evidence • Exhibit 1.03(a) Today@Southwestern email	
--	---	--

	• Exhibit 1.03(b) Online JD Program Newsletter • Exhibit 2.02(d) Online JD Curriculum Map • Exhibit 2.13(a) Online JD Support Services Description • Exhibit DE04 Inclusive Programming Presentation • Exhibit DE05 Framework for Inclusive Programming Handout • Exhibit DE06 Online JD Hub Canvas Course • Exhibit DE07 Career Services Office/Externship Office November Newsletter • Exhibit DE08 Website and Digital Accessibility Policy • 2025-2026 SBA Executive Board • Professor Louis Rosen, Remote Reference Librarian • Chanté Spann, Assistant Dean for Online Education	
<i>Quality of the DE Infrastructure.</i> Are the learning platform and academic infrastructure of the institution conducive to learning and interaction between faculty and students and among students? Is the technology adequately supported? Are there back-ups?	Southwestern's distance-education infrastructure is designed to support high-quality, interactive online learning for the Online JD Program, ensuring reliability, security, and continuity. Learning platform and tools • The Online JD Program uses Canvas as its enterprise learning management system (LMS). Canvas provides structured modules, discussion tools, an integrated gradebook, rubrics, and analytics that support active learning, timely feedback, and meaningful interaction between faculty and students and among students. • Canvas is integrated with institutionally supported learning tools and LTIs (e.g., video-hosting, quizzing, proctoring, and collaboration tools) to support quizzes, reflection journals, peer review, and group projects tailored to legal education. • Southwestern uses YuJa Panorama as its digital accessibility solution. YuJa integrates seamlessly into Canvas to improve the accessibility of digital media and course content. • Courses are designed using common course shells and weekly templates to ensure consistency in navigation, expectations, and communication patterns across the Online JD Program. • Online exams are administered using the following ExamSoft products: Exemplify, ExamID, and ExamMonitor. Exemplify is a secure software that completely locks down the exam-taker's device and blocks access to WiFi. ExamID digitally verifies the identity of each exam-taker. ExamMonitor is a technology-driven (AI) remote proctoring feature that digitally observes exam-takers with video and audio monitoring throughout the entire exam. After completing the digital verification process, students complete a 360 room scan to ensure they do not have any prohibited items. After exams, proctors review any recordings flagged by the AI technology. • All technologies used are cloud-based or backed by external redundancy, ensuring continuity of instruction in case of hardware failures. Academic and technical support • Canvas LMS administration, instructional design support, and related instructional technologies are centrally managed by the Information Technology department to ensure consistent, reliable teaching and learning experiences. • All Canvas support requests are handled through the IT ticket system	SWL has substantial infrastructure for program delivery, including measures in place to ensure integrity is maintained in the administration of the program online. A report from 2024 indicates that SWL is reasonably protected from cybersecurity attacks and that the college's IT team earned a near 100% satisfaction rate on addressing IT issues. Additional (and recent) data on any bandwidth issues or system outages would provide an even clearer picture as to how suitable this infrastructure is for online delivery, though it appears strong from the information presented.

	Support is provided during regular IT business hours, Monday through Thursday from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM and Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM (Pacific Time). Requests submitted outside these hours are triaged based on priority and addressed promptly upon return. • In addition, Southwestern provides Canvas Tier 1 support through Instructure, offering 24/7 direct assistance for all students, faculty, and staff. This support includes email, phone, and chat access around the clock, with target response times of five minutes for chat and phone inquiries and one hour for email. Each Online JD Canvas course prominently displays a “Need Help?” area on the course home page that lists all Canvas support options available. This support system ensures that faculty and students know how to obtain assistance with technology, accessibility, and academic resources. • Southwestern has invested in campus-wide technology infrastructure, including modern HyFlex classrooms, upgraded AV systems, high-bandwidth network capacity, and secure systems that support synchronous online sessions and recordings. • The Law Library’s extensive electronic collections, online research guides, and virtual reference services (synchronous and asynchronous) support Online JD students’ research and coursework. • Media production workflow and course-development infrastructure • Online JD courses are supported by an organized media-production pipeline staffed by a dedicated media team and instructional designers. The workflow defines roles, milestones, version control, accessibility checks (e.g., captioning and transcripts), and final quality assurance before publication. • Faculty work with online instructional designers and the senior instructional designer in a structured course-development process (outlined in a course development agreement that the faculty member signs) that includes kickoff meetings, storyboard reviews, and alignment checks for IRSI, credit hours, and academic engagement. Reliability, security, and back-ups • Canvas and related instructional technologies are cloud-hosted with vendor-provided redundancy and disaster-recovery protections; Southwestern’s internal IT infrastructure includes backup systems. • Collectively, this infrastructure—Canvas with integrated LTIs, a robust media-production workflow, clearly signposted support resources, and institution-wide investments in technology—provides a stable, interactive, and well-supported environment for Online JD teaching and learning. Evidence • Exhibit 3.04(b) Fiscal Year 2026 Budget • Exhibit 3.04(c) Multi-year Fiscal Years 2027–2029 Budget (investments in technology and Online JD) • Exhibit 3.06(c) eBooks in Collection • Exhibit 3.06(h) Law Library Evergreen Strategic Plan • Exhibit 4.07(k) Excerpt of Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes 12.12.24 – Cybersecurity Report • Exhibit 3.11(c) SMaRT Risk Registry (technology and cyber risks) • Exhibit DE09 Examination Administration Policy	
--	--	--

	• Exhibit DE10 Learning Platform and Academic Infrastructure • Exhibit DE11 Need Help Resources • Exhibit DE12 Faculty Video Production	
<i>Student Support Services:</i> What is the institution's capacity for providing advising, counseling, library, computing services, academic support and other services appropriate to distance modality? What do data show about the effectiveness of the services?	Online JD students have access to the full suite of Southwestern student services, delivered in modality-neutral formats: • Career Services/Externships (CSO): All Online JD students have access to CSO programming, resources, individual advising, and degree/career planning. Each Online JD student is assigned a career counselor who works with them remotely and provides them with information specific to their needs (e.g. remote externships). • Academic readiness and success: Academic readiness programs, courses, and workshops (Bison Boot Camp, Academic Success & Bar Preparation (ASBP) services, Writing Center, Dean's Fellows, Peer Mentors) are available to Online JD students synchronously and asynchronously. Online students are also welcome to use campus resources if it is convenient for them to access these resources in person. • Online JD-specific programming: The Online JD team offers or works with others to offer programming tailored to Online JD students' interests and needs (e.g., time-management, online exam strategies, networking at a distance). • Specialized staff: The Online JD department includes an assistant dean for online JD administration who works closely with students and serves on a concierge model to ensure students are connected quickly and efficiently to the resources they need. The assistant dean works closely with SSET (Student Support & Emergency Team) and the Student Services Office to assist online students who may be experiencing personal or school-related challenges. Another assistant dean in the department possesses significant career services experience; as part of her duties, she helps align programming with Online JD student needs and interests. • Online JD students have a dedicated online JD reference librarian who provides remote research consultations, guides, and support. • Technology and computing support: Students can access IT helpdesk services, Canvas support, and library e-resources from any location. • Initial data from a student survey administered to the first cohort in January 2025 showed that students who responded reported strong awareness of the communications and core academic support available. But awareness dropped sharply for the support systems that often require proactive steps, such as filing forms for ADA accommodations. This data, along with anecdotal evidence, led the school to create The Hub to centralize information about support services for online students. Evidence • Exhibit 2.13(a) Online JD Support Services Description • Exhibit DE06 Online JD Hub Canvas Course • Exhibit DE07 Career Services Office/Externship Office November Newsletter • Cindy Goldberg, Assistant Dean for Online Education Administration	SWL appears familiar with the support needs of its online students and adaptable to areas of opportunity based on their feedback. Sharing this data in this report would provide a clearer picture as to what changes were needed and how well those changes were able to satisfy the concerns they were designed to address.

<i>Faculty.</i> Who teaches the courses, e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct? Do they teach only online courses? In what ways does the institution ensure that distance learning faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution? How are faculty involved in curriculum development and assessment of student learning? How are faculty trained and supported to teach in this modality?	Online JD courses are taught primarily by Southwestern’s full-time faculty, supplemented by carefully selected adjunct faculty with relevant practice expertise and prior teaching experience. Faculty who teach in the Online JD Program teach across Southwestern’s various JD pathways. Online JD Program courses are identical in content and assessment to residential courses. The faculty is responsible for approving and developing curriculum for the Online JD Program. Individual faculty members propose new courses and course revisions using a standard proposal form that requires course-level learning outcomes, alignment to JD Learning Outcomes, and mapping within the JD curriculum. These proposals are reviewed by the Curriculum Committee and vice deans, who apply the same criteria to Online JD and residential courses. Faculty assigned to teach an online course design course content, assessments, and weekly activities in collaboration with online instructional designers and the media team, using course maps, syllabus shells, and credit-hour trackers. This process ensures that online courses are coherent, scaffolded, and aligned with institutional learning outcomes and ABA, WSCUC, and federal regulations expectations for distance education courses. Faculty also play a central role in assessing student learning. They develop and refine course-level assessments (exams, written assignments, skills exercises, discussions) and associated rubrics, and they contribute course-based evidence to the law school’s program-level assessment cycles. Through the Assessment Committee, interdepartmental data meetings, and “closing the loop” reports, faculty review learning-outcomes data from both residential and Online JD courses, identify strengths and gaps, and implement improvements to curriculum, pedagogy, and support (e.g., adjustments to bar-readiness curriculum, writing requirements, and first-year supports). These processes ensure that Online JD faculty are actively involved in designing the curriculum and using evidence of student learning to drive improvement. In addition to the general training all new faculty and adjuncts receive, faculty and adjuncts who teach in the Online JD Program receive online-specific orientation and preparation for teaching online courses. Topics include Canvas, IRSI expectations, accessibility, online assessment strategies, and best practices for online engagement. Faculty work one-on-one with an online instructional designer to develop or revise their courses, ensuring alignment with JD Learning Outcomes, ABA/WSCUC expectations, and Southwestern’s IRSI and academic-engagement requirements. Ongoing faculty development is provided through new full-time and adjunct faculty orientations, trainings, and brown-bag sessions. Faculty also have access to a faculty forum/portal with resources and exemplars for online teaching. Evidence • Exhibit 2.03(a) Development of JD Learning Outcomes • Exhibit 2.03(b) Spring 2025 Syllabus Shell • Exhibit 2.03(c) Description of JD Curriculum Mapping Process	SWL has invested in the faculty to be able to effectively deliver the online programs, and faculty play a central role in the curriculum development for online learning. The impact of these actions was unclear, as was the means of determining which faculty perform well online and which may need more support (or may not be the right fit for this modality).
--	--	--

	• Exhibit 2.03(d) Sample Course Proposal Requiring Learning Outcomes • Exhibit 2.05(a) Committee Assignments 2025–2026 (shows faculty roles on Curriculum, Assessment, and other committees) • Exhibit 2.05(b) Excerpts from ABA Self Study re Online Learning • Exhibit DE13 Excel Guided Course Map • Exhibit DE14 Word Course Alignment Map • Exhibit DE15 Word Course Map Read Watch Do • Exhibit DE16 Fall Online Syllabus Template and Synchronous Sessions • Exhibit DE17 Online Course Development, Timeline, Components, Credit Hour Training • Exhibit DE18 Online Faculty Training Materials • Exhibit DE19 Faculty FORUM (screenshot showing online-teaching resources) • Exhibit DE20 Kickoff Meeting Checklist • Exhibit DE21 Online JD Webinar Schedule • Exhibit DE22 Instructional Designer Roster	
<i>Curriculum and Delivery.</i> Who designs the distance education programs and courses? How are they approved and evaluated? Are the programs and courses comparable in content, outcomes and quality to on-ground offerings? (Submit credit hour report.)	The curriculum for the Online JD Program mirrors the residential JD curriculum in required courses, electives, and total credits (87 total), and is mapped to the same JD Learning Outcomes. Online JD courses are designed by faculty in collaboration with online instructional designers using course maps, syllabus shells, and credit-hour trackers to ensure rigor, scaffolding, and compliance with ABA/WSCUC standards. Course proposals and modifications go through faculty governance processes (Curriculum Committee, vice deans). Proposals must identify course-level outcomes and show how they align with JD Learning Outcomes and the relevant curriculum map. Online-specific checks (IRSI, instructional minutes, workload alignment, and accessibility) are incorporated into the course development and review process. Courses are evaluated using evaluation metrics similar to those used for the residential courses (e.g., Course Feedback and Reflection Forms). Delivery is primarily asynchronous with planned synchronous touchpoints (e.g., live deep-dive sessions, simulations, pre-exam reviews). Online courses include reading assignments, recorded lectures, interactive assignments, discussions, and assessments designed to support practice-ready skills. Evidence • Exhibit Sec.03(d) Instructor-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction Guide • Exhibit 2.01(b) Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework Policy • Exhibit 2.02(d) Online JD Curriculum Map • Exhibit 2.02(f) Online JD Required Courses • Exhibit 2.02(g) 2025–26 Online JD Elective Offerings • Exhibit 2.02(h) Curriculum Review Report • Exhibit 2.03(a) Development of JD Learning Outcomes	SWL has designed an online JD program that mirrors the onsite program in content. Course content unique to online delivery is designed by faculty and instructional designers. It was unclear if there was an approval process beyond the faculty member (with the exception of IRSI compliance, which is reviewed by a consultant). There was no evidence presented that demonstrated how well students do in the program (on its own or compared to other modalities) as a measure of quality.

	• Exhibit 2.03(b) Spring 2025 Syllabus Shell • Exhibit 2.03(c) Description of JD Curriculum Mapping Process • Exhibit 2.03(d) Sample Course Proposal Requiring Learning Outcomes • Exhibit 2.05(b) Excerpts from ABA Self Study re Online Learning • Exhibit 2.10(a) Course Sequence Policy • Exhibit 2.10(b) Length of Study for the JD Degree Policy • Exhibit FF02 Online J.D. Guide to Credit Hour Breakdown and Time Estimates for Assignments • Exhibit DE13 Excel Guided Course Map • Exhibit DE14 Word Course Alignment Map • Exhibit DE15 Word Course Map Read Watch Do • Exhibit DE16 Fall Online Syllabus Template and Synchronous Sessions • Exhibit DE23 Credit Hour Tracker Template - 2 Unit Course • Exhibit DE24 Time Estimates Evidence • Exhibit DE25 Online Course Feedback and Reflection Form • Exhibit DE26 Traditional In-Person Course Feedback and Reflection Form	
<i>Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “faculty-initiated, regular and substantive interaction”? How is compliance monitored? What activities count as student/instructor substantive interaction”?	IRSI is codified and operationalized across Online JD courses. Since its WSCUC eligibility, Southwestern has: • Adopted an Instructor-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction Guide that translates federal and accreditor definitions into concrete examples for law-school courses. • Built IRSI into the course-development process: faculty and instructional designers plan weekly instructor-initiated activities (e.g., substantive announcements that are responsive to student performance or questions, guided discussions, video lectures with commentary, live Q&A or exam reviews, personalized feedback, small-group conferences). • Required that for each online course, the faculty and instructional designer maintain a Distance Ed Compliance File (an unpublished Canvas module) that includes a course map, credit-hour tracker (with IRSI flagged), and a list of synchronous sessions. Each course is reviewed for compliance, including IRSI. Courses are reviewed at four levels: • The first review is by the instructional designer who, after working closely with the faculty member to support the faculty member’s design of the course using course maps and IRSI and credit hour/time estimate guides, certifies that the course is in compliance or flags any issues for further review. • The next two reviews occur simultaneously; one is by the senior instructional designer and the other is by Professor Emerita Catherine Carpenter, a recently retired Southwestern tenured professor with experience teaching distance education courses, who serves as a consultant. The senior instructional designer focuses on IRSI compliance, and the consultant focuses on credit hour compliance. • The vice dean who oversees the Online JD program completes the final review and works with the faculty member to address any issues	SWL has outlined Faculty Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction well in its policies and processes. This component of courses is reviewed prior to the course being published for compliance. Course terms (ex. week start and end dates, expectations of students within a week, etc.) are well outlined in the sample courses provided. Activities include pre-recorded lectures, discussions, graded quizzes, and assignments.

	still remaining. These artifacts and procedures provide evidence that IRSI is planned, regular, and substantive, and that instructor presence is consistent across the Online JD Program. Evidence • Exhibit Sec.03(d) Instructor-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction Guide • Section 3, Criterion 10 narrative discussion of IRSI and Distance Ed Compliance Files • Exhibit 2.02(d) Online JD Curriculum Map (showing design of Online JD curriculum) • Exhibit FF02 Online J.D. Guide to Credit Hour Breakdown and Time Estimates for Assignments • Exhibit DE13 Excel Guided Course Map • Exhibit DE14 Word Course Alignment Map • Exhibit DE15 Word Course Map Read Watch Do • Exhibit DE16 Fall Online Syllabus Template and Synchronous Sessions • Exhibit DE27 Course Review Process 2026-27 • Exhibit DE28 IRSI Without Discussion Boards: A One-Page Faculty Menu • Exhibit DE29 OLC QSS Course Review Scorecard • Professor Emerita Catherine Carpenter, Consultant	
<i>Academic Engagement.</i> How does the institution ensure compliance with the federal expectation for “Academic Engagement”? How is compliance monitored? What activities contribute to academic engagement?	Southwestern ensures academic engagement through weekly, activity-rich course design and monitoring: • Each Online JD course is designed so that each week includes at least two engagement activities, such as graded discussions, quizzes, practice problems, reflective journals, group projects, or written assignments. • Courses include both asynchronous and synchronous opportunities for students to interact with faculty, teaching assistants or Dean’s Fellows, and peers around course content. • Faculty and instructional designers use credit-hour trackers and time-estimate guides to align total learning activities (instructor-led and out-of-class work) with ABA, institutional, and federal credit-hour expectations. Each assignment or learning activity includes an estimated time to complete, which is communicated to students to support realistic pacing and workload management. • Monitoring occurs at both the course level (using LMS analytics, participation tracking, and early-alert indicators) and program level (via surveys, assessments, and attrition/retention analyses) and it enables proactive outreach by faculty, online student-support staff, and academic success faculty. • To support monitoring efforts for faculty and online student-support staff, Southwestern recently purchased a subscription for the IntelliBoard Learning Analytics Platform, which transforms student learning data into easy-to-interpret and actionable information. • Implementation is already underway, with a rollout date scheduled for	Similar to interaction, SWL has a course design process that ensures faculty are creating courses in which students are frequently engaged with the material, the faculty member, and each other. The course design process is set up to verify this before a course is published. In the sample courses provided, students are watching required content each week, completing a discussion response and/or quiz each week, and submitting assignments across multiple weeks.

	spring 2026, which will include training for faculty and online student-support staff. Evidence • Section 3, Criterion 10 narrative (discussion of academic engagement, time estimates, and workload alignment) • Exhibit 2.10(i) Attrition Data Entering Class 2020–24 (used to refine onboarding and workload expectations for Online JD) • Exhibit DE27 Course Review Process 2026-27 • Exhibit DE29 OLC QSS Course Review Scorecard • Exhibit DE30 New Faculty Meeting - Sample Module • Exhibit DE31 IntelliBoard Instructor Overview IntelliBoard Learning Analytics Platform	
<i>Student Identification Verification and Privacy.</i> What is the institution’s process for student verification, e.g., a secure login and pass code; proctored examinations; other technologies or practices that are effective in verifying student identification? What precautions are taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions on its or outsourced systems? Are additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity disclosed at the time of registration or enrollment?	Southwestern has an Online Student Identity Verification Policy that governs identity verification and privacy for all online and hybrid courses, including the Online JD Program. The policy is expressly tied to the Higher Education Opportunity Act provisions on identity verification in distance education and affirms that no additional fees are charged to students for identity verification. The policy sets minimum thresholds for identity-verified work: in mostly asynchronous doctrinal courses, at least 50% of the course grade must be based on work completed under verified-identity conditions (e.g., proctored exams, live video presentations, video-based assignments), and in mostly asynchronous skills and other courses, at least 20% of the grade must meet this standard. Identity is verified through multiple layers and systems. During admissions and matriculation, student identity is verified using standard documentation, including government-issued identification. Online JD students must acknowledge the Identity Verification Policy and related policies before commencing the program. Students then receive secure institutional credentials and access systems (Canvas, email, Portal, Colleague Self-Service) through single sign-on with strong password requirements and multi-factor authentication. Within Canvas, only officially enrolled students (and designated TAs/Dean’s Fellows) can access a course; all actions are tracked by user, time, and location within the course, and assignments submitted via Canvas are tied to those authenticated credentials. Before any third-party technology platform, such as a learning management system, is adopted for use in online programs, Southwestern conducts a formal cybersecurity, privacy, and accessibility review led by the chief information officer in coordination with the General Counsel’s Office and relevant compliance stakeholders. This review evaluates data protection practices, access controls, accessibility standards, and contractual obligations before approval. For approved systems, Southwestern enforces centralized identity and access management through Single Sign-On, ensuring that only authorized users can access the platform and that administrative privileges are limited based on role. Access is provisioned and removed centrally, and system use is monitored in accordance with institutional cybersecurity policies and standards. These measures protect Southwestern and student data while ensuring secure access to instructional technology.	SWL maintains a policy that demonstrates rigorous requirements for students to verify their identifies as they setup and login to their accounts. SWL also vets third party technology providers thoroughly. The school's policy on student identity verification states that no fees are charged for this service.

	Evidence • Exhibit DE34 Online Student Identity Verification Policy • Exhibit DE35 IT Cybersecurity Questionnaire	
<i>Retention and Graduation.</i> What data on retention and graduation are collected on students taking online courses and programs? What do these data show? What disparities are evident? Are rates comparable to on-ground programs and to other institutions' online offerings? If any concerns exist, how are these being addressed?	As an ABA-accredited law school, Southwestern tracks attrition, retention, and graduation by program. For the Online JD Program: • The institution monitors first-year attrition and term-to-term persistence for Online JD cohorts and disaggregates them by program. Online JD students are held to the same rigorous standards as residential students, and first-year attrition data prompted enhancements to the Online JD onboarding and support process for Fall 2025. • Online JD data are included in attrition tables and CFR 2.10 responses. • As Online JD cohorts advance, Southwestern will track time-to-degree and bar-passage rates and compare them with residential cohorts to ensure comparable outcomes. Only in its second year, data trends and resulting actions (e.g., clarifying workload expectations, front-loading academic success sessions, and expanding faculty outreach) already demonstrate that data inform improvements in Online JD student success. Evidence • Exhibit 2.10(i) Attrition Data Entering Class 2020–24 (includes Online JD attrition) CFR 2.10 narrative discussing Online JD attrition and resulting interventions • Exhibit 4.01(a) 2025 First-Time Bar Admission and Two-Year Ultimate Bar Admission (framework to be applied to Online JD as cohorts graduate) • Exhibit 2.14(a) Interdepartmental Data Meeting • Exhibit 2.14(b) Examples of Assessment and Resulting Improvement • Exhibit DE36 Analysis of the ABA Summary Report on JD Distance Education Programs Memo (showing entering credentials of Southwestern's Online JD Program students compared to other ABA-approved online programs)	Students attending the first year (2024) of online JD (both full-time and part-time) present comparable first year attrition rates to other cohorts. Online full-time first year attrition was 18.2% (6/33) compared to onsite full-time first year attrition at 16.5% (45/273). Online part-time first year attrition was 12.2% (6/49), significantly better than onsite part-time first year attrition at 27.3% (3/11). Total first year attrition for that year was 15.4% (64/416). As this was the first cohort, no additional annual attrition data (ex. second year attrition) is available at this time.
<i>Student Learning.</i> How does the institution assess student learning for online programs and courses? Is this process comparable to that used in on-ground courses? What are the results of student learning assessment? How do these compare with learning results of on-ground students, if applicable, or with	Student learning in the Online JD Program is assessed within the same outcomes and assessment framework as the residential JD programs: • The JD program has six JD Learning Outcomes, developed through a broad-based faculty process and used as the framework for all JD pathways, including the Online JD Program. • The Online JD Curriculum Map links the Online JD Program required and elective courses to these outcomes, ensuring developmental progression and coverage. • Faculty use course-level outcomes, exams, written assignments, skills measures to assess learning; these are aligned with JD Learning Outcomes and documented in syllabi and course maps. • Assessment findings (including those related to Online JD students) feed into program-level assessment cycles, which have led to changes such as an enhanced bar-readiness curriculum and other improvements. • As data accumulate (course performance, bar passage, employment	

other online offerings?	outcomes), Online JD results are compared with residential cohorts to confirm comparable rigor and effectiveness. Evidence • Exhibit 2.03(a) Development of JD Learning Outcomes • Exhibit 2.03(b) Spring 2025 Syllabus Shell (shows CLO–PLO linkage) • Exhibit 2.03(c) Description of JD Curriculum Mapping Process • Exhibits 2.02(d) Online JD Curriculum Map, (f) Required Courses, and (g) Elective Offerings • Exhibit 2.03(d) Sample Course Proposal Requiring Learning Outcomes • Exhibit 2.09(a) Description of Outcomes Assessment Data Sharing • Exhibit 2.09(f) Examples of Closing the Loop on Learning Outcomes Assessment • Exhibit 2.11(c) CSO Report Southwestern Class of 2024 Employment Outcomes (framework for post-graduation outcomes; Online JD will be incorporated as cohorts graduate) • JD Learning Outcomes	
<i>Contracts with Vendors.</i> Are there any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the infrastructure, delivery, development, or instruction of courses? If so, do these comport with the policy on <i>Agreements with Unaccredited Entities</i>?	Southwestern does not have any arrangements with outside vendors concerning the development or instruction of courses. Southwestern maintains vendor relationships that support the infrastructure and delivery of distance education courses (e.g., Canvas LMS, cloud services, accessibility and media tools, ticketing platforms), while retaining full academic control over admissions, curriculum, instruction, course development, grading, and assessment. Vendor agreements are reviewed through institutional contracting processes involving IT, legal, and administrative leadership to ensure compliance with privacy, data security, and WSCUC’s policy on Agreements with Unaccredited Entities. Vendors provide platforms and services; they do not develop or deliver instruction or represent Southwestern’s programs as their own. Evidence • Exhibit 3.11(a) 2025–2026 Organizational Chart • Exhibit 3.11(b) Guide to Administrative Offices	Not applicable.
<i>Quality Assurance Processes:</i> How are the institution’s quality assurance processes designed or modified to cover distance education? What evidence is provided that distance education programs and courses are educationally effective?	Distance education is integrated into Southwestern’s quality-assurance and continuous-improvement system, with additional online-specific processes: • Online JD courses are measured against ABA instructional-minute and credit-hour guidelines using course maps and credit-hour trackers; IRSI and academic-engagement activities are flagged and reviewed. • In 2024–25, Online JD courses underwent a course-quality review using the SUNY/OLC OSCQR rubric. Based on that experience, Southwestern is transitioning to the OLC Course Review Scorecard for ongoing quality reviews, with a plan to review courses on a regular cycle. • The Distance Ed Compliance File (course map, credit-hour tracker, synchronous-session list) provides a standardized package of evidence for each online course. • The JD assessment plan and committee structures ensure periodic review of learning outcomes and results; Online JD courses and	There does not yet appear to be evidence that student performance in online programs is comparable to onsite programs.

	student-support efforts are included in these reviews. • Institution-wide, Southwestern emphasizes evidence-based management and regular data reviews informing change. Existing evidence (course-review findings, student surveys, attrition data, early academic-performance indicators) shows that Online JD courses meet institutional standards and support effective student learning. The move to the OLC Course Review Scorecard will further formalize online course-quality assurance. Evidence • Exhibit Sec.03(d) Instructor-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction Guide • Section 3, Criterion 10 narrative (discussion of IRSI, Distance Ed Compliance Files, and course-review processes) • Exhibit 2.01(b) Determination of Credit Hours for Coursework Policy • Exhibit 2.09(a) Description of Outcomes Assessment Data Sharing • Exhibit 2.14(b) Examples of Assessment and Resulting Improvement • Exhibit DE27 Course Review Process 2026-27 • Exhibit DE29 OLC QSS Course Review Scorecard	
--	--	--

Name of reviewer/s: Matt Hubbs

Date of review: February 26, 2026