Erwin Chemerinsky
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UCI School of Law
Irvine
Law Dean, constitutional expert

It looks like Chemerinsky really is pulling off the creation of a top-20 law school where no law school stood before — the University of California, Irvine.

The year-old law school’s students, 60 from last year and 84 who started last month, boast stellar GPAs, test scores and backgrounds. Despite budget caps and mandatory furlough days, Chemerinsky added seven professors, six classrooms and a moot courtroom, with more to come.

“It’s beginning to really feel like a law school,” he says. The faculty, by the way, ranks ninth nationally in scholarly impact, based on citations to writings. Much of that impact, of course, lies with Chemerinsky himself, who continues to turn out scholarly articles and newspaper opinion pieces faster than most people can read them. This month, he also publishes his first popular-press book, “The Conservative Assault on the Constitution,” from Simon & Schuster.

Most lawyers are pretty comfortable dealing with legal issues involving humans. But what about when disputes arise among avatars, orcs or trolls? Enter Christ, who is viewed among lawyers in the video game industry as a preeminent source on virtual law and video game transactions.

Christ represented the Walt Disney Co. in its $563 million acquisition of social gaming company Playdom in July. Although she is not solely a video game lawyer — she advises multinational companies in a variety of industries on a range of transactions — Christ led the charge into the uncharted legal territory surrounding virtual games like “Second Life” and “World of Warcraft.” These games have proven worlds unto themselves, often giving rise to disagreements over virtual currencies and properties that are bought and sold for real-world cash in disputes that require a creative application of existing theory into an entirely new field of law.

Morgan Chu
59
Irell & Manella
Los Angeles
Litigation

Chu, one of California’s most prominent patent litigators, will defend one of last year’s big wins for client TiVo Inc., before an en banc hearing of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in November. A Texas federal judge imposed more than $300 million in additional damages for contempt of his injunction against Dish Network Corp., while also ordering it to disable the digital video recorder functions of its infringing devices.

The closely-watched case will determine whether a Dish “work-around effort” to redesign the DVR to avoid infringing Alviso-based TiVo’s patents was done in good faith. Chu already won a $104 million infringement verdict in the case.

In February, Chu persuaded a jury to clear Novellus Systems, Inc. of fraud, unfair competition, breach of contract and other claims that added up to $200 million in damages in a lawsuit filed by Linear Technology Corp.

Richard E. Climan
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Dewey & LeBoeuf
East Palo Alto
Mergers & acquisitions

After making the move from Palo Alto-based Cooley to the Silicon Valley office of New York-based Dewey & LeBoeuf last summer, Climan got off to a strong start by aiding client eBay Inc. in its sale of online telecommunications service Skype Inc. to a group of private investment funds in deal valued at about $2.7 billion. In just a year’s time, Climan says his team has achieved its goal of jump-starting a cross-border mergers and acquisitions practice in Dewey’s East Palo Alto office. Several old Cooley clients followed Climan’s team to Dewey, including eBay, Applied Materials Inc. and Synopsys Inc., but his team has also garnered new clients, such as Hewlett-Packard Co., Zynga Inc., Dell Inc., SANYO Semiconductor Co., Chinese search engine Alibaba.com and Oclaro Inc. Climan has also made a name for himself nationally as an M&A lecturer, which this year will include his serving as chair of the 38th Annual Securities Regulation Institute in Coronado, Calif.

Joseph W. Cotchett
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Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy
Burlingame
Trial lawyer, securities, antitrust, fraud

Cotchett has become the people’s swordsman in the fight against corrupt financial institutions. He represents several California counties, cities and public entities in 30 antitrust lawsuits in federal court in New York, accusing banks of bid-rigging municipal bonds.

Just another day’s work for this legendary trial lawyer. Cotchett had the dubious honor, along with partner Nancy Fineman, of being the first and only lawyers to interview Ponzi scheme king Bernie Madoff in federal prison in North Carolina. Cotchett, who sat down with Madoff for four hours and describes him as a “true sociopath,” had filed several lawsuits in New York Supreme Court accusing banks and financial institutions of helping Madoff carry out his scheme.

Bruce K. Dallas
53
Davis Polk & Wardwell
Menlo Park
Capital markets

A founding partner of Davis Polk’s Menlo Park office, Dallas advised clients this year on a slew of initial public offerings, note and stock offerings and debt restructuring transactions.

Dallas advised Adobe Systems Inc. on its SEC-registered debt offering of $1.5 billion that closed in January, which marked the first time Adobe has tapped the capital markets since its initial public offering in 1986.

Dallas helped dust the cobwebs off Silicon Valley technology IPOs in March during MaxLinear Inc.’s initial public offering; he represented Morgan Stanley & Co. and Deutsche Bank Securities Inc., the book-running managers for the offering.

The next month, he assisted Comcast Corp., which will soon control NBC Universal Inc., as a subsidiary, as NBC offered $4 billion in senior notes in a private placement. The notes are part of the $9.1 billion in financing that NBC is raising as part of a joint venture between Comcast and General Electric Co.