

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

TODAY

Questions and Comments

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIBRARY

TOP 100

Previous

Next

Bookmark Reprints

Erwin Chemerinsky

Erwin Chemerinsky's memory is so well trained, he can lecture to a class about U.S. constitutional law without any notes.

Chemerinsky, founding dean of University of California, Irvine School of Law, started as a law professor when he was just 27, his exceptional memorization skills quickly becoming useful as his preferred style for teaching, speaking and arguing in court.

"I wanted to make it look like I knew what I was talking about, even when I didn't," said Chemerinsky, now in his 33rd year of teaching. "And one way to do that was to teach without notes."



This past May, Chemerinsky celebrated the commencement of UCI School of Law's first graduating class, a total of 58 students. Of the recent graduates, 80 percent are leaving the law school with full-time employment.

In college, Chemerinsky dreamed of becoming a high school teacher, but his plans changed quickly, and before he was 30 he was teaching at DePaul College of Law in Chicago. From there he went to USC Gould School of Law, then to Duke University School of Law. In 2007, he was approved by the Regents of the University of California as the founding dean for UCI's first public law program. The law school welcomed its inaugural class in the fall of 2009.

"I didn't expect it to happen so fast," he said. "I love teaching. I do hope I'm a much better teacher now than when I started."

Though UCI Law is just 3 years old, a Minnesota-based study by the University of St. Thomas School of Law ranked it No. 7 in scholarly impact. The study, which was calculated by the work of the law faculty's tenured members, as well as the mean and median of total law journal citations over the past five years, ranked UCI just behind Columbia University and New York University's law programs. Yale Law School made No. 1 on the list.

Chemerinsky, who oversees the law school's admissions policy and criteria, said he wants the school to be ranked in the Top 20 law schools in the nation - the sooner the better.

"Our entering class is comparable to that of a top 20 law school," he said. "The school is to be a top-20 school by every measure from the beginning."

Every student from the school's first graduating class was awarded a full scholarship, donated primarily by lawyers in Orange County. Students in what will be the second graduating class - expected to be 83 students - received 50 percent of their tuition in scholarships, and the third graduating class will have one-third of their tuition covered. After that, scholarships will be awarded based on merit.

"We are off to a great start," Chemerinsky said. "There are already wonderful law schools in Orange County, but having a public university law school and hopefully a top-20 law school will really make a difference."

- ALEXANDRA SCHWAPPACH

September 12, 2012

September 21, 2011

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FRIDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

TODAY

Questions and Comments

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIBRARY

TOP 100

[Previous](#)[Next](#)[Bookmark](#) [Reprints](#)

Katherine Porter

In March, state Attorney General Kamala D. Harris announced the appointment of Porter, a professor at UC Irvine School of Law, as the state's independent monitor responsible for overseeing the nation's five largest banks in a nationwide \$25 billion mortgage settlement. The banks are seeking to provide as much as \$18 billion in homeowner and borrower benefits in California.



The commitment is part of the federal-state mortgage settlement penalizing the banks' servicing and foreclosure misconduct.

"We've been laying the groundwork to make sure the banks are putting in place procedures and systems they are going to need," Porter said. "It's also important to get the word out to legal aid lawyers, advocate counselors and homeowners to make the settlement come to life."

She's been handling the duty along with her day job at the university, which Porter said taps into the same skills she needs as a monitor.

"The principle is the same," she said. "How to take a complex beast, a tangle of law, and translate it in a way that gives an audience the information they need."

The other part of the settlement she is working on is helping to change bank practices related to foreclosure procedures.

"There are a lot of moving pieces, and it's very complex," Porter said. "We're still in the growing-pain stages, but we're seeing progress."

Meanwhile, Porter has launched a consumer protection clinic at the school that incorporates what she is doing as a monitor.

"The clinic gives students the opportunity to build expertise around this," said Porter, who takes her students to events and lets them assist her.

In December, Porter's book, "Broke: How Debt Bankrupts the Middle Class," was released. It covers a variety of topics related to people's financial well-being, she said.

"I hope to see much progress for families to get out of these tough situations," Porter said. "I see a lot of families in pain and struggling about what to do."

Porter said she'll try to find the tools to help.

"It's a lot of work," she said, "but I'm not one to shy away from that."

- PAT BRODERICK

[Previous](#)[Next](#)[September 12, 2012](#)[September 22, 2010](#)[September 17, 2008](#)[September 21, 2011](#)[September 23, 2009](#)[September 20, 2007](#)

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Erwin Chemerinsky

Erwin Chemerinsky's memory is so well trained, he can lecture to a class about U.S. constitutional law without any notes. Chemerinsky, founding dean of University of California, Irvine School of Law, started as a law professor when he was

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