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Erwin Chemerinsky

*UC Irvine School of Law
Dean*

Taking inventory of UC Irvine School of Law's U.S. News & World Report accolades - No. 30 best law school in the nation, No. 11 in clinical programs, No. 23 in intellectual property, and No. 3 in clerkship placement - it might come as a surprise that the newest top-tier law school was created just over five years ago.



The institution's meteoric rise can be credited in large part to the efforts of Chemerinsky, the dean who has said the university was dedicated to the creation of a great law school from the very start.

"The most important thing was the commitment from the university of the resources to make it a top law school. Resources are always necessary, but not sufficient," Chemerinsky said.

The school has already seen quite a bit of growth, with an incoming class of 120 students and 44 faculty members, after having started with 60 students and 10 faculty. Chemerinsky said the school sought top students by traditional metrics such as grades and exams, as well as faculty from top 20 schools, and that high standard is not likely to change.

"I hope we attract students who have a real commitment to using law to make society better. I also hope that we attract entrepreneurial students who want to be part of creating something here," Chemerinsky said.

As for what sets the relatively young institution apart, Chemerinsky pointed to the school's focus on practical training, an aspect that some firms say is not emphasized enough by modern law schools which focus primarily on theory. Roughly 96 percent of the students who graduated in May 2015 did nonrequired pro bono work on top of mandatory clinical work.

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"We have a very different curriculum. We have much more of an emphasis on experiential learning like required clinics, and I think those pay off," Chemerinsky said.

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The school intends to continue to capitalize on its success. It set a goal of an entering class of 180 and an additional 12 faculty members over the next few years, to bring its total population to 550 students and 56 professors.

"We want to be regarded as one of the top law schools by every measure. We want to be regarded as one of the very best in preparing students for the practice of law, and highly regarded for our commitment to public service in all that we do," he said.

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