

UCI Law Alumni Association

UCI Law Alumni News

v.5 Winter 2019

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LAA Presidential Notes

2018 President, Samrah Mahmoud '12



Samrah Mahmoud '12

Dear Alumni Association,

Thank you all for a fantastic year of growth and successful events and activities. In particular, thank you to the Governing Board and Council and to Mary Ann Soden for all your time and effort; the Alumni Association could not run without you.

As we celebrate our ten-year anniversary of the law school, it is incredible to note that our Alumni Association has grown from 59 members in 2012 to 678 members (with LLM graduates) as of May 2019. In typical UCI Law fashion, the Alumni Association has worked hard to continue to connect with each other, with students, and with the legal community as representatives of UCI Law. As just a few examples, this past year the Alumni Association co-hosted the SBA/Alumni/PILF mixer in March, hosted mixers throughout the summer in seven different cities, and provided pizza to students during finals week and bar exam studies. We were represented at orientation, graduation, swearing-in ceremonies in June and December, and at the ten-year anniversary kick-off in August. We also published an alumni newsletter and accepted a challenge to match students pro bono hours throughout the year as part of our ten-year anniversary.

I am grateful to have been involved with the Alumni Association Board since the beginning and to have had the opportunity to lead the Association this past year. I know we are in good hands with Stefanie Wilson as the incoming Alumni Association President, and I look forward to all of the great things we will do as a community in the coming years.

2019 President, Stefanie Wilson '14



Stefanie Wilson '14

Dear Alums,

Ten years ago, a group of 60 diverse students stepped into a brand new law school - - and a blank slate. They established a law review, several student organizations, and -- most importantly -- a unique culture that has come to define the community of UCI Law. Each successive class since has added to the variety of organizations, events, classes, and all the activities that the school has to offer. Together, we created a law school that is top-ranked. But amidst all of that change, growth, and recognition, the original culture endures. It means that we lift each other up, offer support and kindness to each other, and we are committed to service in the public interest no matter what our practice setting.

There is much for our growing alumni body to be proud of as we reflect on the last ten years, and much more to look forward to as we enter the next decade of UCI Law. All of us on the Alumni Association Board and Council are honored to represent you. And I am humbled to serve this Board and Council as its seventh president. I promise you we will be active, responsive, and committed to you as we navigate 2019.

[Class Notes and News](#)

CAREER MOVES

Adam Brauner ('12): joined Morrison & Foerster LLP as an attorney in December 2018 after three years at Littler as an associate.

Denny Chan ('12): Denny Chan won the third annual AARP Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Hero Award in the Staff Category, from a field of 10 finalists' video profiles around the country. He and his organization, Justice in Aging, will each receive \$1,000 to further their important work. Denny was [honored](#) at the AARP AAPI Heroes Award Ceremony in Pasadena in late January, 2019. Read about this award [here](#).

Andrea Feathers ('12) received the 2018 Bob Gerber Pro Bono Attorney of the Year Award, which honors and recognizes a Sheppard Mullin attorney who has demonstrated a significant commitment to pro bono work. Read about this award [here](#).

Samrah Mahmoud ('12) moved to Troutman Sanders in September 2018 after 6 years at Crowell & Moring.

Diana Palacios ('12) and **Samrah Mahmoud ('12)** published an article in the January 28, 2019 Recorder on top filing tips for federal court. The article mentions the short session class at UCI Law that they taught on California federal filings as a catalyst for the article. Read this article [here](#).

Harnik Shukla ('12) was elevated to partner at Knobbe Martens in January 2019. Harnik practices intellectual property law, with a focus on patent prosecution and inter partes review (IPR) in the Orange County office.

Jeffrey Wachs ('12) is joining the Original Films division of Netflix in February 2019. He will continue to work in both "business affairs and legal affairs" capacities (entertainment industry parlance for negotiating and drafting high level agreements) for the company's high-budget feature productions. Jeffrey reports "my division has just picked up its first Best Picture Oscar nomination for "Roma" and recently went viral with "Birdbox", it's an exciting time to join a company that is making great films while rewriting the rules of the entertainment industry."

Christina Zabat-Fran ('12) shared her recent interview with Profile Magazine, a national publication on business executives, talking about leadership style. The photoshoot was a fun one, and they humored me playing "model for a day" at our Beverly Hills flagship boutique. Read the interview [here](#).

Alexandra Alvarez ('13) became an Associate Product Counsel for Google in January 2019.

Betsy Bentler ('13) earned an Associate of Science Degree, with Honors, in Accounting from Santa Monica College in December 2018. In August 2018, she also earned her California Real Estate Broker's License. She looks forward to applying this knowledge in her position as Real Estate Counsel with the State of California, particularly in audit and transactional matters. Betsy is also now qualified to take the CPA exam.

Darren Kerstien ('13) joined the corporate group at Gibson Dunn in Orange County in MONTH 2018. Darren writes, "I'll definitely be on the lookout for ways to continue building strong Gibson – UCI connections in the months to come."

Jeffrey Klein ('13) joined Lawyers for Justice, PC, as an Associate Attorney. Located in Glendale, California, the law firm represents clients in class actions lawsuits involving all types of employment and labor law issues, unfair business practices, mass torts and other related litigation.

Jigar Vakil ('13) has a joined Amazon in Seattle, Washington as their newest Corporate Counsel in August 2018.

Bennett Kaspar ('14) has been named to Littler Mendelson's Diversity & Inclusion Council. The council is comprised of 19 lawyers and professional staff who reflect the diversity of Littler and work to ensure that everyone feels welcome and knows that they can succeed at the firm by bringing their whole selves to work. The council is responsible for developing, implementing and reviewing firm wide diversity and inclusion strategies and initiatives

Kristin Garcia ('14) went in-house to Honda North America, advising primarily on federal and state environmental and safety laws, including the Clean Air Act, Energy Policy and Conservation Act, and the Motor Vehicle Safety Act. Kristin wrote, "On any given day, I advise on rulemakings and regulatory compliance for a broad range of products, from automobiles, ATVs, and motorcycles to generators, lawnmowers, and marine engines."

Melissa Kelly ('14) is the new staff director and attorney of UCI Law's Center for Land, Environment and Natural Resources (CLEANR). In this role, she develops the Center's research and public engagement programming in consultation with Faculty Director Alex Camacho and CLEANR's faculty advisors. Melissa writes, "I'm thrilled to return to UCI Law and reconnect with the community here."

Robert Liu ('14) is this year's Chair of the Business and Corporate Law Section of the Orange County Bar Association, one of the largest sections in the bar.

Monica Poremba ('14) started as an Associate for Eric K. Gillespie Professional Corporation in Toronto, Canada in January of 2019.

Sasha Nichols ('14) left his position associate position at Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP to be Corporate Counsel at Farmer's Business Network, Inc. in December 2018.

Stefanie Wilson ('14) Stefanie Wilson ('14) left her job as Legal Advocacy Manager at Mercy For Animals in December 2018. She joined the law firm of Altshuler Berzon in San Francisco as an associate in March 2019. In between, she road tripped with her girlfriend and their two dogs to State and National Parks in California and Nevada to hike, rock climb, and camp. See photos in All in the Family.

Sarah (Vehian) Mase ('14) has joined O'Melveny & Myers LLP as their new Corporate Social Responsibility and Alumni Relations Manager as of January 2019.

Peter Waneis ('14) is now an associate at Jackson Lewis P.C.

Brooke Weitzman ('14) was involved in filing a federal lawsuit along with attorney Carol Sobel against Orange County over the eviction of hundreds of homeless people from the Santa Ana riverbed with most not having any other place to go. The full story can be read in the Voice of OC [here](#) and the OC Register [here](#).

Kat (f/k/a/Tim) Allen ('15) has joined Wykowski Law in San Francisco as a Cannabis Taxation Attorney.

Sheila Chen ('15) moved from Crowell & Moring LLP to Troutman Sanders in February 2019.

Greg Gomez ('15) started a new job in early September 2018 at Rutan & Tucker joining their corporate department where he'll work alongside law school pal, Kelly Galligan '15, in M&A and corporate finance.

Michael Iseri ('15) was appointed to be on the State Bar Committee of Bar Examiners by the Supreme Court of California to provide perspective for attorneys practicing three years and younger. Michael will also be providing perspective on Bar Exam test takers with disabilities for a four-year term beginning on September 14th.

Rebecca Maloney ('15) joined the Seattle Community Law Center as staff attorney in January 2019

Ashley Tellier ('15) received the U.S. Army's Achievement Medal for Civilian Service in recognition of commendable service between 2015 and 2018 to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In September 2018, Ms. Tellier has joined the Office of the General Counsel of the National Nuclear Security Administration in Washington, D.C.

Andrea Ringer ('15) started as a trial attorney in the office of general counsel, of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (Los Angeles) in September 2018. Andrea writes, "That was my goal pre law school and I didn't really think I would land a position here. So very exciting news for me at least! I also believe I'm the first UCI law alum to join the commission."

Ryan Beall ('16) joined Weiland Golden Goodrich LLP as an Associate in September 2018.

Matt Bradbury ('16) published an article on criminal justice and the juvenile justice system in the ABA's Criminal Justice Newsletter. [Click here to read](#) "They Are Wise Beyond Their Years: Prosecutors Should Take Cues From Their Juvie Counterparts" found on page 6.

Jessica Brostek ('16) finished her clerkship with Judge Coughenour (U.S. District Court, Seattle) in August 2017, and started working as a litigation associate at O'Melveny & Myers in the Newport Beach office in November, 2018.

Ron Park ('16) published "When Racism Affects Legal Representation" last December in the Washington State Association of Justice's Trial News newsletter. A link to this article is [here](#).

Josh Ji* ('16) Ji's student note SARLs & Diversity Jurisdiction: Safeguarding 28 U.S.C. § 1332, 5 UC Irvine Law Review 1463 (2016), has been has been cited by American Jurisprudence (2d) - Federal Courts and in TCD Royalty Sub LLC v. Galderma Labs. L.P., No. 16-CV-9777 (VSB), 2018 WL 5629902, at *3 (S.D.N.Y. Oct. 31, 2018).

Kevin Lerman ('16) moved to New York City last year and is now working as a staff attorney in The Legal Aid Society's Parole Revocation Defense Unit.

Lauren Mendelsohn ('16) is now a Senior Associate in the Law Offices of Omar Figueroa. She is active teaching CLE courses related to cannabis law. Recently Lauren spoke about the state laws and regulations governing cannabis events and consumption lounges at the Third Annual California NORML Legal Seminar in Oakland, CA, and gave a seminar on Cannabis Licensing & Regulatory Compliance hosted by the Sonoma County Bar Association in Santa Rosa, CA. She is serving on the Board of Directors for the Sonoma County Growers Alliance (a nonprofit that advocates and supports for local cannabis businesses).

Ariela Rutbeck-Goldman ('16) finished a one-year clerkship on the Eastern District of New York and began a two-year clerkship with the New York Court of Appeals in Albany, New York.

Eric Vera ('16) has joined the Immigrant Defenders Law Center in Los Angeles as a staff attorney.

Sam Hyams ('17): became an associate attorney at Troutman Sanders LLP in September of 2018.

Christine Fan ('17) started a new position at Pepper Hamilton LLP (Los Angeles office) as an associate attorney in January 2019.

Andrew Farestveit ('17) started a new position as a Staff Attorney with Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers, Inc.

Loni Kaye ('18) was promoted from a Law Clerk to Deputy Public Defender at the San Diego County Public Defender's Office.

Shunya D. Wade ('18) joined Klinedinst Los Angeles as Associate focusing her practice on representing attorneys in professional liability matters. She was a 2015 Klinedinst PC Diversity Scholar through The California Bar Foundation (CBF).

LEGAL LEADERS

Shirley Diaz ('18) was elected At-Large Board member of the Hispanic Bar Association of the District of Columbia on January 10, 2019.

Josh Ji ('16) was installed as the President-Elect of OC Korean American Bar Association (OCKABA) at their 13th Annual Installation Dinner on October 25, 2018. UCI Law attendees included **Jiaxiao Zhang ('17)**, Professor Summer Kim, Cecilia Choy ('19) and Sabrina Van Der Linden-Gonzalez ('19).



Denisha McKenzie ('12) passed the president's gavel to **Desirae Hutchinson ('14)** at the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association's Annual Awards and Installation Dinner. UCI Law leaders fill the officer ranks with **Hollie Washington ('16)** (Vice President), **Akhil Sheth ('13)** (Treasurer), **Christyn Richardson ('16)** (Secretary), **Brooke Weitzman ('14)** (Parliamentarian), UCI Law Lecturer Daniel J. Alexander II (Member at Large).



ALL IN THE FAMILY



Nick Schuchert ('15) and his wife Kelsey welcomed Emma Somers Schuchert on Nov. 4. Emma weighed in at 7 lbs. 6 oz. Mother and baby are doing well.



Brian McCall ('18) and his wife, Kate, welcomed John "Jack" Francis McCall on Saturday, December 15th, coming in at 8 lb. 3 oz. and 20.5 in. Mom and baby are doing great!



Theresa Bichsel ('12) and Brian Hardingham ('12): welcomed the newest member of our UCI Law family, Esme Kim Hardingham, born on October 6, 2018.



Greg Wagner ('14) and his wife, Stacy, welcomed Walker Samuel Wagner in December 2018. Walker was 20 inches and 7 lbs., 13



Baby RBG Jr, a holdover tenant, finally vacated her premises on International Women's Day, March 8, 2019. She and proud mama **Ariela Rutbeck-Goldman (Rutkin-Becker) ('16)** are already involved in contract negotiations about sleep, feeding, and other lifestyle matters. Baby already working on her Zot Zot.



Natalie Diaz ('16) was married on July 8, 2019 in Los Angeles. In attendance: (L-R) **Hayley Penan ('16)**, **Ariela Rutkin-Becker ('16)**, **Dr. Jennah Jones**, **Jessica Brostek-Maciel ('16)**, **Natalie Diaz**, **Nahal Hamidi ('16)**, **Noorean Gill ('17)**, **Nancy Sotomayor ('16)**, **Francis Yao ('16)**, **Zoe McKinney ('16)**



Jessica Brostek ('16): was married on August 11th 2018 to Christopher Maciel and took the name Jessica Brostek-Maciel.



Stefanie Wilson ('14) traveled between jobs with her girlfriend and their two dogs to State and National Parks in California and Nevada to hike, rock climb, and camp.



ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

Women Leading the Way Event

In November 2018, the Troutman Sanders' Women's Group hosted a Women Leading the Way event with Dean L. Song Richardson as the keynote. The event was a fireside chat style moderated by **Samrah Mahmoud '12**, who reported the Dean "was fantastic and everyone loved her!"



(L-R) Beth Maoui (UCI Law), Xuan Li ('18), Isra Shah ('12), Dean Richardson, **Samrah Mahmoud ('12)**, Hollie Washington ('16) and Sheila Chen ('15)



Dean Richardson and **Samrah Mahmoud '12**

Katie Porter's Community Oath at UCI – January 22, 2019



Samrah Mahmoud ('12), **Isra Shah ('12)** and **Tracey Steele ('12)** with U.S. Representative Katie Porter

Law Alumni Association (LAA) in Action

LAA on Campus

10-year anniversary Kick Off – August 20, 2018



10-year anniversary UCI Law Service Day – August 21, 2018



Fall Swearing In Ceremony – December 2, 2018



Eric Fanchiang ('17) and Samrah Mahmoud ('12), 2018 President of the Law Alumni Association, welcome Luis Rodriguez ('18) as a new member of the State Bar.

Holiday Bowl – December 2, 2019



Greg Wagner ('14) and Brooke Weitzman ('14)
with Professors Christopher Leslie and Tony Reese



Samrah Mahmoud ('12) with Irina Trasovan ('12)

2019 Governing Council

	Officers	Year
President:	Stefanie Wilson	2014
First VP:	Denny Chan	2012
Second VP:	Crystal Adams	2015
Secretary:	Brooke Weitzman	2014
New Alumni Officer:	Sarah Choi	2018

Council Members	
Amelia Alvarez	2015
Ariela Rutbeck-Goldman	2016
Danila Toscano	2013
Desirae Hutchinson	2014
Emily Cross	2016
Eric Fanchiang	2017
Irina Trasovan	2012
Jamila G. Benkato	2016
Josh Ji	2016
Kristin (Garcia) Gomez	2014
Nancy Sotomayor	2016
Sarah (Vehian) Mase	2014
Sheila Chen	2015
Tommy Du	2015
Tommy McClain	2013

Alumni Relations Report

Dear Alumni,

It is great to be able to showcase all the great ways you are impacting the profession and the community. We are looking for a few volunteers to serve as **Class Reporters** for their graduation year. Reporters will assist in gathering class notes on professional and personal highlights, and developing 3 – 6 new profiles (question template provided) from their classmates each year. It's a fun way to volunteer and a great reason to stay connected and reach out to your class. If you are interested in being a class reporter for your class year, please let us know at alumni@law.uci.edu.

4 ways to becoming a young Alumni Superstar

1. **Stay Connected** with UCI Law

Complete your Alumni Profile (alumni.law.uci.edu)

Volunteer on campus as a speaker, moot court judge, an Alumni Association host

Attend our events: MKL Day, Supreme Court Review, BLSA gala, Center, conferences

2. Be a **Career Resource** for students and alumni

List open positions at your organization's on By UCI For UCI

Check YES in your profile to being a Mentor and join the Career Resource List

Volunteer for Mock Interviews and the 1L Mentor event

3. **Give annually** to support meaningful student programs and innovation

Class gift pledges are important

Support our public interest mission by donating to PILF

Encourage the Dean with a gift to the Annual Fund

4. **Represent** UCI Law – Be Proud and a little loud

Tell colleagues, judges, and the media that you are a UCI Law graduate

Display our logo in your office, at your gym, etc.

Refer promising students to our Admissions team

Coming up soon at UCI Law:

11 May, Commencement

19/21 May, New Alumni Welcome at Gina's Pizza from 5:00 – 7:00?

3 June, Spring Swearing in Ceremony

June/July – Summer Social mixers for alumni, current students and incoming 1Ls

Remembering Caroline Beeson by Dean L. Song Richardson

Caroline Beeson, our former colleague and friend, passed away on July 24, 2018.

While I never had the pleasure of knowing Caroline, I know that many of you did. I want to thank Mary Germain for sharing with me information about Caroline's many contributions to our law school community and for sharing the photograph attached below.



Picture taken at the Swinden's beach house (Caroline in the center)

Caroline spent five years at UC Irvine School of Law and greatly contributed to its success during those years. She was an outstanding philanthropic professional and successful fundraiser.

Caroline received her undergraduate degree from Cornell University in AB, Asian Studies (South Asia) Hindu and Urdu. She then earned her Master degree at the University of Minnesota in South Asian Languages: Hindu, Urdu, Persian and Arabic. Caroline went on to earn her doctorate from Princeton University in Near East Studies in Persian, Arabic Urdu and Hindu.

She loved the people and culture of the Middle East, spoke many languages, and was an advocate and friend to that community in Orange County and beyond.

Caroline was vivacious and charismatic, a brilliant conversationalist and a gracious, compassionate and loyal friend. She was extremely hard-working and cared deeply about UCI Law. All those who knew her greatly miss her wonderful personality, and will never forget the bright light that was Caroline.