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LAW BLOG

Constitutional Law Scholar Chemerinsky to Lead UC Berkeley Law



Erwin Chemerinsky PHOTO: UC IRVINE SCHOOL OF LAW

By **SARA RANDAZZO**

May 17, 2017 6:09 pm ET

Erwin Chemerinsky, one of the most well-known legal minds in the country and the founding dean of University of California Irvine School of Law, is on the move.

Mr. Chemerinsky is packing up his work at UCI Law, which he helped launched in 2009, to lead UC Berkeley School of Law.

At the elite Northern California law school, he replaces interim Dean Melissa Murray, who took over the role in March after the prior dean, Sujit Choudhry, stepped down amid sexual harassment allegations. The University of California agreed in April to pay \$1.7 million to settle the claims, brought by a former

executive assistant.

Mr. Chemerinsky, 64, said Wednesday by phone from his office at UCI that while “it’s very difficult to leave here and the people here,” he always planned to leave the school after a decade on the job, which would have been next year. He said he hopes to stay at Berkeley for the next decade. His first five-year term starts July 1, the school said Wednesday.

UC Berkeley Interim Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost Carol Christ said in announcing his hire that he’s a leader who “will ensure that Berkeley Law remains not only a powerhouse of legal scholarship and training, but also a community built on mutual respect and inclusion.”

The constitutional law scholar built UC Irvine into a well-regarded, public-interest minded school almost from the outset, in the face of some critics who doubted he’d be able to start a reputable program from scratch. UCI Law attracted top applicants by offering full scholarships to its inaugural class and partial scholarships for the next few classes. Mr. Chemerinsky said Wednesday that the volume of applications continues to rise each year.

At Berkeley, he said his primary challenge will be boosting the school’s revenue, through both fundraising and the possible creation of new money-generating degree programs. As the National Law Journal noted, the University of California has been under a tuition freeze that lifts in 2020, which has exacerbated budget concerns.

Mr. Chemerinsky said he plans to keep up his scholarship and commentary in his new role. His legal commentary is prolific; he’s penned 10 books, nearly 200 law review articles and frequent op-ed pieces, often in the areas of constitutional law, federal practice, civil rights and civil liberties.

UCI Law said Wednesday that one of its faculty members, L. Song Richardson, will serve as interim dean and thanked Mr. Chemerinsky for helping make the law school a success.

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