



May 26, 2020

## Graduate Tax Program: Fall Semester Plans

Dear Admitted Students,

We are so excited to welcome you to the Graduate Tax Program! We know you will thrive at UCI Law and that you will enrich our community.

You are entering the tax profession at a time that will be more important than ever, as people face rapidly growing legal needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rebuilding of our economy. We hope this will inspire you to thrive as tax law students—and, given UCI Law's nationally recognized commitment to public service and access to justice, we know you will thrive *especially* as UCI Law students.

We understand that you all have questions about the fall semester. Over the past few weeks, we have spent countless hours preparing for teaching in these times of uncertainty, and we are now finally ready to share with you the Graduate Tax Program's plans for the fall.

Even though circumstances may change, we felt that a decision must be made so that our faculty, administration, and students can plan ahead in order to have the most successful academic year possible. Our decisions are outlined below. We will review our plans on an ongoing basis, taking into account CDC, university, and local government guidelines, and most importantly, your safety and the safety of your loved ones. We will keep you apprised of any changes, but for the time being, you should make your plans based on the information in this letter.

### 1. Mode of instruction and class schedule

Fall classes (including orientation) will start on an online basis. It is highly likely that the entire fall semester instruction will be online. Classes will involve synchronous as well as asynchronous elements.

That said, **orientation and fall classes remain on schedule.** Meaning, most (if not all) classes will involve live, scheduled sessions, that students must attend in person, using a personal computer. You should expect your daily class schedule to be very similar to what it would have been on campus, except that it will take place online.

All classes will be recorded and available for your review at any time. We understand that some of you may experience difficulty with online attendance given time zone differences. We will relax attendance requirements as much as possible under our law school's guidelines.

**UCI Law's strong commitment to teaching distinguishes it from other top law schools—and this commitment extends to all online aspects of the fall semester.** We assure you that your learning experience in the fall semester will be meaningful, rigorous and interactive. As you know, our program is a leader in teaching students how to use technology effectively in the practice of tax law. We also strive to be a leader in using a full range of technology in our classrooms. Our faculty will be training and working all summer to improve and refine their already excellent courses for an online environment, in line with research-based best practices. We are dedicated to making sure that online activities at UCI Law meet the same standards of excellence that motivate us when we teach in person.

For a successful online experience, you should have equipment meeting the following [minimal requirements](#). If you have any kind of difficulty meeting these requirements, please reach out to us, and we will help you to find a solution.

We will send a separate letter outlining enrollment procedures and the course schedule to all students who have accepted our offer of admittance.

## **2. Networking and recruiting events**

A core principle of our program, which differentiates it from all other programs, is the extensive infrastructure we have in place to support your career prospects. **This does not change.**

We are now working to put together a number of meaningful online recruiting and networking events. All of you will have chance to meet prospective employers personally (online) before you ever set foot on campus. We will send information about upcoming networking events separately, as soon as plans for such events are finalized.

We will still have our mandatory tax career workshop. And we will still host the Tax Career Day in October, except that it will be hosted online. We actually expect **more** employers to participate in this recruiting event this year, given that an online format saves employers significant travel time. Tax employers who have already tentatively confirmed their participation in our October online tax career day include, among others, PwC, EY, Paul Hastings, Mayer Brown, Space X, The Internal Revenue Service Office of Chief Counsel, Activision Blizzard, Mattel Inc., and Arbonne International.

In addition, we are planning a number of programs and events to help you prepare to seek employment *specifically during the global pandemic*. For example, our *Careers in Tax Workshop*, which will take place during the fall semester, will now include sessions on how to interview successfully using technology, such as Zoom, and how to present yourself to potential employers through your online profile. As difficult as the current circumstances are, the faculty and administration of the Graduate Tax Program are excited to incorporate these new topics into our already robust career planning curriculum.

### 3. Return to on-campus activity

Given the public health situation, it is highly unlikely that law schools—including UCI Law—will be “back to normal” in the fall. However, **we also want our students to have the option of attending in-person activities if they are comfortable doing so.**

For this reason, the Graduate Tax Program is planning for a variety of in-person educational and social experiences in accordance with prevailing public health guidance. We anticipate a gradual, phase-in of on campus activities, with each phase being introduced as the public health situation allows. Early phases may include small-group in-class instructions, networking, and recruiting events. Next phases may include opportunities for certain medium-size in-person class sessions. Future phases may include on-campus conferences and other academic events.

We hope to return to full on-campus activity for the spring term. However, nobody can predict exactly what the status of the global pandemic and public health directives will be in the weeks and months ahead. Therefore, UCI Law continues to engage in extensive contingency planning so we can be prepared for whatever scenario may face us.

**We will not require you to attend on campus activity during the fall term.** Even if we make the decision to resume on-campus activity, we understand that some of you may feel unsafe to attend events, or instruction, in person. You may be high-risk yourselves, or worry about high-risk people who are dear to you. For that reason, at least for the duration of the fall term, we will not require you to attend any event in person. All classes will still be recorded, even if moved to in-class mode.

### 4. Residence requirements and housing

Given the unique situation, all residence requirements are suspended until further notice. So don't worry about it!

That said, **it is important that you act *now* to meet UCI Student Housing's summer deadlines if you are interested in securing on-campus housing for when on-campus housing opens again.** UCI Student Housing has indicated that students must commit to housing this fall to be guaranteed housing for spring. We encourage you to keep these long-term considerations in mind as you make your plans.

If you feel it is safe to do so, we suggest you relocate to Irvine as soon as on-campus activity starts. We will give you ample advance notice for this purpose. We will not start on-campus activity unless it is meaningful and beneficial to you (for example, we will not expect you to move to Irvine if we only start teaching one class on-campus, or only hosting one event).

## 5. International students

One of the benefits of our decision to start classes online, is that it will not require international students to obtain visas immediately. International students may attend classes and events from home, in their home-country.

However, we urge all international students who have not yet obtained a visa, to continue their efforts in doing so. We will resume on-campus activity as soon as possible, and would want to make sure you can come to California as soon as it is safe to do so.

Please reach out to us directly for specific questions regarding your visa process. Please let us know of any difficulties you encounter, so we can promptly assist you.

## 6. Closing words

Our planning is guided by two main principles:

- **First and foremost is the health and safety of the UCI Law community.** This includes you, our students, as well as our staff, faculty, and the members of our community whom we serve through our pro bono work and clinics.
- Another fundamental principle is the **quality of your legal education and your law school experience.** We are committed to that principle regardless of the scenario that presents itself.

Everything we are doing is aimed at meeting these principles. We are available to assist you in any way we can. If you have any question or concern please do not hesitate to reach out. We look forward to giving you additional updates, and we can't wait to see you in the fall!

Be safe,

Omri Marian, Joshua Blank, Victor Fleischer, Natascha Fastabend, and D'lorah Hughes