

## A Message from Dean Richardson and Vice Dean Whytock

Dear Students,

For those of you who just finished exams: Congratulations! This accomplishment is a testament to your grit and resilience, and we continue to be so proud of you. For those of you who are new UCI Law students: We are so excited to welcome you! We know you will thrive at UCI Law and that you will enrich our special community.

You are entering a profession that is 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 inspires you to thrive as 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.

Many of you have questions about the fall semester. Although we are all facing uncertainty, here is what we know at this time:

- **Law school orientation and fall classes remain on schedule.** All current and new UCI Law students will be able to enroll in the courses they need to complete their legal education on time.
- Although many of you remain on campus, we know some of you left and may not feel ready or able to return to campus in August. We understand. **Any current or new UCI Law student who wants to take their fall classes online will be able to do so.**
- **Even if you plan to participate online in the fall, it is important to act *now* to meet UCI Student Housing's summer deadlines if you are interested in on-campus housing.** UCI Student Housing has indicated that students must commit to housing this fall to be guaranteed housing for spring and for subsequent years. We encourage you to keep these long-term considerations in mind as you make your plans. If you have questions about housing, please contact Dr. Jennah Jones, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and Inclusive Excellence ([jjones@law.uci.edu](mailto:jjones@law.uci.edu)) if you are a current student, or Cristina Gapasin Tortal, Assistant Dean for Admissions & Student Financial Services ([cgapasin@law.uci.edu](mailto:cgapasin@law.uci.edu)) if you are a new UCI Law student.

**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.**

**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.

**Given the public health situation, it is highly unlikely that law schools—including UCI Law—will be “back to normal” in the fall. To help ensure both the health of our community and the highest quality**

**legal education, we are planning for a combination of online and in-person activities. Here are some highlights.**

UCI Law's strong commitment to teaching distinguishes us from other top law schools—and this commitment extends to the online aspects of the fall semester. Our professors are training and working all summer to improve and refine their already excellent courses for an online environment, in line with research-based best practices. There will be extensive opportunities for online office hours in the fall. Our academic skills office will provide dedicated support to our students for effective online learning. And our student affairs team and Student Bar Association will be connecting current students, new students and alumni this summer, in the fall, and beyond to continue fostering the special sense of community that is a signature of the UCI Law experience. We are dedicated to making sure that online activities at UCI Law meet the same standards of excellence that motivate us when we are in person.

We also want our students to have the option of attending in-person activities if they are comfortable doing so. Although nobody can predict exactly what the public health situation will allow, we are preparing for scenarios that would permit small-group in-person activities, such as professor-led discussion sections, office hours, study groups, community building activities, as well as small or medium-sized class sessions, with a focus on opportunities for first-year students—all of which would be conducted consistently with government and campus public health protocols. The public health situation means large in-person lectures in the fall are unlikely. The good news is that smaller scale educational activities tend to be more interactive and effective.

Our strongest desire is to be back in person with the students we are devoted to. But in the meantime, we will not—and we have not—let the challenges of the day keep UCI Law from doing all that it does so well. Our [commitment to teaching](#) is stronger than ever. Our students continue to offer [extensive pro bono legal services](#) to those in need, and our [legal clinics](#) are as busy as ever helping their clients and giving our students the unparalleled practical training that UCI Law is known for. We continue to have social events, like a student-organized online talent show, with performances by students, faculty and staff—and even Dean Richardson! We are providing some of the nation's leading programming on the legal aspects of the pandemic, including a [COVID and the Law lecture series](#). And we just had one of the most amazing [commencements](#) in the law school's history. We can't wait to be back together in person—but as a community, we are engaging with each other in new and exciting ways that have enabled us to strengthen our already strong, diverse, supportive community.

We look forward to giving you additional updates, and we can't wait to see you over the summer and in the fall!

L. Song Richardson, Dean

Christopher A. Whytock, Vice Dean