



# SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

October 17, 2023

Dear Friends,

We talk often about how our Jesuit mission calls us to engage in *cura personalis*, or care for the whole person. We have tried to answer that call in countless ways, including by striving to become a trauma-informed law school community.



What would it mean if all of us were truly trauma-informed? It would begin with a shared understanding that so many members of our community are survivors of trauma. We know that 70% of adults have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lives, and 16% have survived at least four adverse childhood experiences.

Trauma is a physical, toxic stress response to a harmful experience of such severity and duration that it can impair learning and other life functions. Traumatic experiences include natural disasters such as hurricanes, acts of terror such as those that are occurring now in the Middle East, accidents and medical emergencies, sudden death of a loved one, sexual abuse, and physical abuse or neglect. The science of epigenetics teaches us that trauma is also transferred throughout generations, so that the trauma experienced by our ancestors is a part of our genetic makeup and can be activated by recurring traumatic events, including gun violence, racial terror, religious persecution, and pogroms.

Research also demonstrates that trauma survivors can heal, learn, grow, and thrive in learning environments which reject retraumatizing conduct and foster meaningful relationships with teachers and caregivers based on trust and empathy. In fact, we know that everyone thrives in those kind of learning environments. Thankfully, we are all committed to creating just such an environment here.

At our incredible reunion events this past weekend, for example, more than 200 alumni gathered to rekindle kinships they forged in our caring community, and together we unveiled beautiful portraits of Dean Emerita Lisa A. Kloppenberg and Dean Emerita Anna M. Han, who heroically led our law school through challenging times by building trusting and empathetic relationships.

Following their deaconal example, our faculty and staff educators care deeply about our students' success and well-being, and our dedicated student services professionals provide wrap-around support. So many of our faculty teach trauma-informed practices as an integral

part of their classes, including Professor Caitlin Robinett Jachimowicz who masterfully incorporates those best practices into her client counseling and interviewing class.

At the awe-inspiring NCIP gala, we likewise celebrated our talented and tenacious team of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive faculty, staff, practitioners, students and volunteers, who have successfully liberated so many wrongfully incarcerated clients. All of our extraordinary clinical professors practice, model, and teach trauma-informed practices in order to provide effective legal services and client counseling. And our annual Jerry A. Kasner Estate Planning Symposium again drew more than 500 practitioners, who learned from experts like Professors David Yosifon and Margalynne Armstrong about a lawyer's fundamental duty to understand the underlying thoughts, feelings, intentions, and pain experienced by their clients so that they can provide responsive advice and helpful legal services.

In these and so many other ways, our law school community lives out our shared mission of cura personalis, a mission which inspires all of us to embrace the infinite worth and dignity of every human being and to use our Santa Clara Law education to try to heal the suffering in our midst.

With warm regards and tremendous gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a trailing flourish.

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