



## SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

November 8, 2022

Dear Friends,

I want to congratulate our first-year students for completing LARAW weekend—a period of intense learning that requires them to apply their newly-acquired legal research and analysis skills to a pressing problem with care, perseverance, and professionalism. It’s a very challenging few days. But, I am so impressed that our students enthusiastically embraced this experience as an opportunity to test out their legal education in new and meaningful ways. I’m also very grateful to our wonderful faculty and staff-educators for designing this vital learning experience, including our incredible assessment and technology teams led by Janelle Atangan, Kerrie Bindi, Andrew Corrales, Brandon Cross, Jen Machado, Ed Mananquil, Nicole Maxwell, and Mike Morales.



In this regard, LARAW weekend is quintessentially Santa Clara Law! It is because our faculty and staff-educators care for our students so deeply that they can challenge them to dig deeper to reach their maximum potential. Our students have an exceptional ability to see this kind of challenge as an opportunity for growth, and to understand setbacks as chances for more learning. They also have the uncommon capacity to rally behind each other, especially during difficult times.

These life-long habits of mind and heart make our students extraordinary lawyers and leaders. I often meet with employers who have hired our graduates and they uniformly tell me that our students have a “special sauce.” They are not only ethical and excellent attorneys, but they also approach their work with a sense of gratitude for the opportunity to roll up their sleeves, to get to work, and to use their talents and their rigorous education in the service of, and with, others.

Our First Generation Student gathering today was also quintessentially Santa Clara Law! One of our law school’s greatest distinctive strengths is our diverse student body in which 57% of our incoming students identify as students of color and 22% identify as first-generation students. Together with our terrific University partners from the LEAD Scholars program, we celebrated National First-Gen Day at Charney Hall by sharing stories, building community, and trying to overcome the imposter syndrome that we all feel at times.

As we join together to confront the imposter syndrome, we may find guidance in the wisdom offered by Dr. Arin Reeves, President and Managing Director of Nextions LLC, who has partnered with the law school to help us become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community. Dr. Reeves reminds us that the imposter syndrome was a term originally used to describe students from privileged backgrounds who were admitted to schools because of their family connections and arrived with the overwhelming feeling that they were not as qualified as they were presumed to be.

<https://mailchi.mp/nextions/trespasser-syndrome>

As Dr. Reeves observes, our first-generation students are completely different. They “know their achievements were secured through grit, resilience, and necessary overachievement in order to compensate for the lack of luck and connections. People from underrepresented groups are not afraid that they are imposters; they are afraid that the majority groups won’t see them for who they are and won’t welcome them if they do see them. These fears are not the fears of imposters; they are the fears of trespassers. “

None of our students is an imposter; they are in fact exceedingly well-qualified to do the work. But tragically, many of them have been made to feel like trespassers, who have had to overcome barriers to belonging and opportunity. I am so grateful to be a member of this law school community, in which our “special sauce” is also our common calling to work together to try to dismantle those barriers to belonging and opportunity—both structural and insidious.

With warm regards and immense gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael J. Kaufman (He/Him/His)  
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