INDUSTRY LEADERS

USC Gould’s influence stretches across entertainment and sports
With the arrival of each new class to USC Gould, one of the first things I tell our students is that our focus is not only on educating lawyers, but also preparing leaders. In this issue of USC Law Magazine, we recognize influential and impactful members of our law school community who are Industry Leaders redefining the fields of entertainment and sports.

Fittingly, we open this issue with a spotlight on an iconic Gould faculty member who exemplifies leadership — Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus Scott H. Bice, who retired from the law school following a remarkable career that spans five decades and shaped countless lives. I invite you to read more about his legacy of teaching, leading and giving back.

Among our features in entertainment, we highlight alumni who are top advisers in business, employment and legal affairs for some of the world’s biggest entities including CBS Studios, Netflix, Warner Bros. TV, Hulu and National Geographic. The magazine also covers Gould’s innovative Media, Entertainment and Technology (MET) program, which blends traditional doctrinal courses and practice-centered learning; our vibrant student organizations, the Entertainment Law Society, Music Law Society and Sports Law Society; and the 2022 Institute on Entertainment Law and Business, co-hosted with the Beverly Hills Bar Association, featuring entrepreneur and comedian Byron Allen.

USC Gould is also leaving its mark across the sports landscape. Our alumni are at the forefront of name, image and likeness (NIL) efforts in collegiate athletics, global marketing at Nike, NFT ventures, and professional leagues such as NASCAR.

In this issue, you will find stories about our record-breaking new JD class, which boasts the strongest academic credentials in school history as well as being one of our most diverse 1L classes ever, and the launch of Gould’s new Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies degree program, offering a unique multidisciplinary focus.

"In this issue, you will find stories about our record-breaking new JD class, which boasts the strongest academic credentials in school history as well as being one of our most diverse 1L classes ever."

In addition, our Faculty Focus section welcomes the newest additions to our scholarly community: Professors Lee Epstein, Mugambi Jouet, Ángel Díaz and Deepika Sharma, who is the founding director of Gould’s new Housing Law and Policy Clinic. The magazine also highlights Professor Abby Wood’s testimony before the U.S. Senate on Capitol Hill addressing the topic of transparency and accountability in the courts, and Professor Emily Ryo’s National Science Foundation grant to support her immigration law research.

In USC Law Family, we shine a well-earned light on the Southern California Law Review’s 2022 Law Student Program of the Year Award from the American Bar Association (ABA) Section of Environment, Energy, and Resources (SEER), for its symposium honoring the memory of influential environmental law scholar, the late USC Gould Professor Christopher Stone. We also look back at scenes from commencement day in May, and profile the educational journey of a Master of Studies in Law grad, who is an Army veteran and counterintelligence officer. And, we introduce our new Board of Councilors chair and its newest members.

In closing, I send my best wishes to you and your loved ones as you enjoy the holiday season.

Andrew T. Guzman
Dean and Carl Mason Franklin Chair in Law,
Professor of Law and Political Science
USC GOULD MASTER’S STUDENTS REPRESENT NEARLY 40 COUNTRIES WORLDWIDE

This fall’s Graduate and International Programs include new social work certificates

The USC Gould School of Law’s Graduate and International Programs (G&IP) welcomed its newest students to campus recently, kicking off the 2022-2023 academic year.

“Seeing the world and legal issues through an international lens is essential today,” USC Gould Dean Andrew Guzman said during the Aug. 16 orientation. “We live in a truly global, interconnected environment. Business, trade, public law, environment, human rights, economics, security — they all cross boundaries, and everyone’s success relies on everyone else.”

With 479 students from 39 countries, the group represented members of the 1- and 2-year Master of Laws (LLM); LLM in International Business and Economic Law (LLM in IBEL); LLM in Privacy Law and Cybersecurity (LLM in PLCS); LLM in Alternative Dispute Resolution (LLM in ADR), Master of Dispute Resolution (MDR) and Certificate in ADR; Master of Studies in Law (MSL); Master of International Trade Law and Economics (MITLE); Master of Comparative Law (MCL); and students in the Progressive Degree Program (PDP). An additional 230 students began courses in Gould’s online programs on Sept. 7.

MULTI-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIONS

This year’s class includes the second cohort for MITLE. Offered jointly with the USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, the MITLE program was established in 2021 to provide an interdisciplinary, global perspective on the laws, policies and business practices that shape international trade and economics.

This year, the Gould School is also offering two new graduate certificates jointly with the USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, focusing on the intersection of law and social work. The Law, Social Justice and Diversity certificate will be offered in person for students who want to learn more about law and social justice, while the Social Work Administration certificate will be offered as an online-only program for students interested in the laws and regulations that impact social work. 🔗

—Melissa Masatani
STUDY ABROAD OPTIONS NOW INCLUDE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE

Addition of South Australian law school boosts USC Gould exchange agreements to seven

The University of Adelaide Law School is the seventh international law school to sign on to an exchange agreement with the USC Gould School of Law, giving students one more prestigious university where they can study abroad. The South Australian law school joins law schools at the University of Hong Kong, Bocconi University (Italy), University Jean Moulin Lyon (France), Bond University (Australia), Fundação Getúlio Vargas University (Brazil), and O.P. Jindal Global University (India) as partners with USC Gould in the exchange program. According to Director of Graduate and International Programs and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Law Sarah Gruzas, the partnership began taking shape during a 2019 visit by Gruzas to Australia as part of Gould’s spring recruitment tour.

“This visit was prompted by an increase in Australian applicants to LLM programs, as measured by the Law School Admission Council,” as well as to check in with admitted students for our incoming LLM class,” Gruzas says. A robust exchange program is an added value giving students an opportunity to explore the differences between American law and law in another nation — and USC Gould students reap rewards from classroom contributions by international students on campus.

“There are so many personal and professional benefits of studying abroad, including being able to immerse oneself in a new culture and develop international connections, a wonderful option as the practice of law becomes increasingly global,” Gruzas says. “International law students enhance the classroom dialogue, and develop friendships — often lifelong — with our JD and LLM students. USC Gould continues to be a leader in recognizing the importance of global learning and exchange.”

—Yulia Nakagome

MEET USC GOULD’S JOHN PAUL STEVENS FOUNDATION FELLOWS

Two USC Gould School of Law 2Ls have been selected as 2022 John Paul Stevens Foundation Fellows, which will fund full-time summer internships in public interest law. Fellows are selected on the basis of a keen interest in public interest and social justice law, as well as academic achievement.

Rebekah Baird, a dual JD/MSW student who served an internship in the Los Angeles Public Defender’s Office and a 2020 Bergstrom Child Welfare Law Fellowship, is a 2022 Saks Student Scholar, clerking at the Children’s Law Center of California, and served a clinical internship at a Los Angeles-based shelter supporting unhoused youth. She has worked in nonprofit development while serving as the policy research lead for an anti-trafficking organization focused on legislative solutions and grassroots advocacy. At USC Gould, Baird has been active in the Barbara F. Bice Public Interest Law Foundation and the USC chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. Baird also served as a student representative for the Asian Pacific Islander Social Work Caucus, treasurer for the Unchained Scholars Social Work Caucus, and liaison to the USC Dworak-Peck School of Social Work for the USC chapter of the National Lawyers Guild. She plans to work as a public defender or as minor’s counsel for children in foster care.

James Robertson chose to go to law school while a political science major at Columbia University. Before law school, he worked as a paralegal at a plaintiff-side employment litigation firm in New York. At USC, Robertson is events co-chair of PILF, an LLM Legal Writing Fellow and a member of the Hale Moot Court Honors Program. He served internships at the Brooklyn Defenders Service, Center for Appellate Litigation, Lawyers Without Borders and the Children’s Law Center in The Bronx, New York City. He plans to pursue a career in public defense.

—USC Law Magazine staff
GOULD PREVIEW WELCOMES 31 INCOMING 1LS

New additions to program include welcome reception and scavenger hunt

An introduction to torts and legal writing, as well as a welcome reception, networking opportunities and a scavenger hunt were among the events at this academic year’s Gould Preview, a pre-orientation program for incoming 1Ls.

Last August 8-12, 31 incoming students participated in Gould Preview, which introduced them to academic law school classes and helped them develop critical skills, such as outlining and briefing cases, and allowed them to begin building a community.

Students engaged in classes with all three 1L Torts professors — Donald Scotten, Gregory Keating and Erik Hovenkamp — and in legal writing with Professor Lybby Carroll. The Academic Success team including Professor Sue Wright, director, and two student fellows, 3L Jessica Block and 2L Kat Ulrich, presented skills workshops, followed by a practice law school exam on the program’s final morning.

In its second year, Gould Preview included a welcome reception hosted by Reed Smith LLP where Managing Partner Amber Finch (JD 2002) passed along words of encouragement. It also featured a sharing exercise led by Dean of Students Dr. Nickey Woods and Director of Student Care and First Generation Professionals Program Dr. Malissa Barnwell-Scott, and a scavenger hunt competition to familiarize students with the campus while they got to know their classmates.

“The opening welcome reception on Monday evening was very successful because it allowed the students to start building relationships in a social setting before they started their ‘classes,’ so that when they sat down for the first workshop on Aug. 9, they’d already made some friends and felt more comfortable,” Wright says. Many students shared positive feedback with Wright following the event, and she was quick to credit the contributions of many across the Gould community for this year’s successful outcome.

“I really appreciated how many people from Gould stepped up to help out, both last year and this year,” she says. “It takes many people to put on an event like this — faculty members; upper-division students; and our wonderful Gould departments including Events, Communications, IT, Student Affairs and more. It’s a true Gould community event that is extraordinarily beneficial to those students who attended.”

—Yulia Nakagome

SYMPOSIUM HONORS RUTH LAVINE (LLB 1943)

In April, the inaugural Ruth J. Lavine Women in Law Symposium took place in honor of Ruth Lavine (LLB 1943), long at the forefront of positive changes for women in the legal profession. The event was hosted by the Women’s Law Association. Panelists with Lavine (center) included Rosezetta Upshaw (JD 2011, managing attorney, Law Office of Rosezetta Upshaw), Jaime Lee (JD 2009, CEO, Jamison Realty, Inc.; member, USC Board of Trustees), Karen Wong (JD 1986, Retired, Milbank LLP; former chair, USC Gould Board of Councilors) and Amy Trask (JD 1985, CBS Sports analyst and former CEO, Oakland Raiders).
SEAN KUNDU (JD 2007) GIVES BACK THROUGH GUIDANCE

Sean Kundu (JD 2007) vice president of corporate development for the San Francisco 49ers football team, did not see himself working in sports when he was a student at USC Gould School of Law. But his training in law, as well as strategic networking through the Trojan Family, turned up opportunities he never imagined. These days, he’s sharing his experience with USC student athletes to help guide them on their own career paths.

“These athletes’ effort, energy, drive and discipline are exceptional,” says Kundu, who in June spoke at a luncheon for USC student athletes as part of a professional development effort led by USC Athletics in partnership with USC Gould, USC Marshall School of Business and USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. “They may not all become professional athletes, but if they have demonstrated those efforts by becoming exceptional in their sports, they can do it in anything. Each of us has innate abilities and we should leverage those skills in thinking about what comes after [college].”

Kundu was asked to speak at the luncheon by Dr. Nickey Woods, associate dean for student affairs, diversity, equity and inclusion, whose DEI work led to USC Gould partnering on USC Athletics’ efforts to broaden educational and career opportunities for student athletes, especially those of color.

In 10 years with the 49ers, Kundu’s roles include legal and strategic management and overseeing corporate development for the team’s affiliated businesses. He also manages legal affairs for 49ers Enterprises and is involved with the 49ers high school sports highlight shows Cal-Hi Sports and 49ers Sac-Hi Sports.

He credits the Trojan Network within the Gould community for supporting him as he weighed different career choices — an experience that inspires him to give back as well.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to practice when I graduated, so I reached out to every partner at the major law firms in L.A. that went to Gould, just for information, not looking for job,” he says. “All of them responded the same day and carved out the time for me. Now I want to give back to the school and USC community, to help others who feel the same way I did.”

—Leslie Ridgeway

GOULD QUOTABLES

“While the number of business cases the court hears is relatively low compared to history, the win rate for business in the Roberts Court, 63.4 percent, is 15 percentage points higher than the next-highest rate of business wins over the past century.”

LEE EPSTEIN co-wrote an op-ed titled“How pro-business is the Roberts Court?” in the Financial Times, Aug. 9, 2022

“If you talk to founders who are being candid, many of them will tell you that while venture capitalists are very helpful at moving a company to the next level, they take a huge portion of the company.”

MICHAEL CHASALOW on start-ups that don’t rely on venture capital for funding, Los Angeles Business Journal, Sept. 25, 2022

“In such criminal cases, we often say that the court is patient. And that there is no statute of limitations for such crimes.”

HANNAH GARRY in the BBC on whether the Hague court will be able to judge Putin for war crimes in Ukraine, June 11, 2022
A MESSAGE OF HOPE
Judge Robert L. Wilkins tells story of family journey in 2022 Roth Lecture

The Honorable Robert L. Wilkins of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit presented the USC Gould School of Law’s 2022 Justice Lester W. Roth Lecture, titled “My Family’s Journey from Slave to Citizen.”

The Sept. 22 visit was part of USC Gould’s Jurist-in-Residence program, where Judge Wilkins met with students and faculty throughout his time on campus. He praised the “vibrant” USC Gould community.

Judge Wilkins’ lecture covered his interest in genealogy, inspired during law school when he discovered a family Bible inscribed with a long list of names. His research turned up a free Black settlement in Kentucky founded after a lawsuit filed by his great-grandmother and won in the middle of the Civil War. He also found records showing she and her husband were first counted as citizens in the 1870 census.

“What this story shows is that, legally, the country started in a very bad place of injustice for people of African descent,” Judge Wilkins said. “My family’s journey is a demonstration of how the Reconstruction amendments, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments, helped to transform America and my personal story as a federal judge in Washington, D.C., appointed by President Barack Obama, a person of African descent — none of that would be possible under the original Constitution.”

“I’d like to bring a message of hope to the students, let them know that we just don’t give up, you don’t let these external factors cause you to leave the field,” he said. “We have God-given talents and we should use those talents to push forward and to continue to make this a more perfect union.”

After earning his JD from Harvard Law School in 1989, Judge Wilkins spent 20 years as a public defender and in private practice before he was appointed U.S. District Judge for the District of Columbia in 2010 and then appointed to his current role in 2014. He advised students interested in the judiciary to work hard and distinguish themselves as ethical lawyers who are a service to the profession.

—Melissa Masatani

JOHN IINO (JD 1987) NAMED TO USC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

John Iino (JD 1987), USC Gould School of Law Board of Councilors member and past president of the USC Alumni Association, has been named to the USC Board of Trustees.

Iino, chief diversity officer at Reed Smith LLP, said he appreciates USC President Carol L. Folt’s priority on topics including diversity, equity and inclusion. “The focus on culture, transparency, accountability, sustainability — it’s a clear vision, and it’s exactly the direction that we need right now,” he said. “I look forward to being part of that next evolution of USC.”
CHAMPIONING ACCESS TO LAW SCHOOL

Associate Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid David Kirschner has been named to the Law School Admission Council’s new Legal Education Program Advisory Committee. The new program was created to help students develop skills to prepare for and succeed in law school through academic courses which count toward their major and graduation requirements. The initiative also offers internships, experiences and activities to help students explore career pathways, culminating with a portfolio of work and a certificate that students can include in their law school applications. “I am thrilled with the opportunity to serve on the advisory committee alongside prominent university presidents, law school deans and members of the private legal sector,” Kirschner says. “This is a wonderful opportunity to engage in an innovative and outside-of-the-box program that will hopefully help to increase access to law school.”

CENTER FOR TRANSNATIONAL LAW AND BUSINESS ADDRESSES TRADE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MEASURES AT WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION FORUM

CTLB panel sparks lively discussion on inclusive measures and mechanisms

The USC Gould School of Law’s Center for Transnational Law and Business (CTLB) was invited to present at the World Trade Organization Public Forum in Geneva, Switzerland. The panel marks the second time in three years that members of CTLB shared their expertise at the WTO.

After a break owing to the pandemic, the WTO, which governs multi-lateral trade between nations, resumed its annual forum in late September under the theme “Towards Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery: Ambition to Action.” CTLB presented a panel discussion titled “Ensuring Inclusive Trade and Environmental Measures,” focused on developing nations’ concerns about potentially discriminatory environment-related trade measures. Executive Director Brian Peck moderated the panel, which also featured Fangfei Dong, CTLB’s associate director for policy, research and programs; Julia Miranda Londoño, renowned environmentalist and congresswoman, Republic of Colombia; and Karine Siegwart, senior policy advisor, International Policy Centre, International Union for Conservation of Nature.

“Several countries have implemented various trade measures to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation, such as a carbon border tax that imposes higher tariffs on goods like steel and cement that are produced with higher greenhouse gas emissions,” says Peck. “But these are often discriminatory for developing countries that depend on heavy manufacturing industries that emit higher levels of greenhouse gases for economic growth. Our panel looked at trade measures and mechanisms that are inclusive in hopes of engaging developing countries in creating and implementing these trade measures.”

Peck says he was pleased to see Maria Pagan, deputy U.S. trade representative and U.S. ambassador to the WTO, in the audience for the CTLB panel. “She had other high-level presentations she could have gone to,” he says. “There were 140 presentations including ours, and during ours, there was another session with ambassadors from different countries speaking on aspects of climate change.”

He was also happy with the level of engagement of audience members, who asked about the trade-offs developing countries have to make between focusing on economic development to expand the middle class among their impoverished populations versus participating in trade measures to help the environment.

“It was a lively and vibrant discussion,” Peck says. “It’s an honor for our center to be invited by the WTO to give a presentation and contribute to the international dialogue on ensuring more inclusive trade measures to protect the environment.”

—Leslie Ridgeway
Scott Bice (JD 1968) looks back on successful career as a professor, dean and philanthropist

By Leslie Ridgeway

Shortly after Scott Bice (JD 1968) and his wife Barbara were married and headed to Palm Springs for their honeymoon, Bice had news that added some excitement to the long drive.

“I said, ‘Oh, by the way, I think I will be a law teacher,’” Bice says, sitting in the spacious backyard of his sunny Pasadena home, chuckling at the memory. As a clerk for Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren, Bice had already accepted a position with Gibson, Dunn and Crutcher, LLP. But a phone call from then-Dean Dorothy Nelson, now senior U.S. Circuit Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, asking Bice to join the faculty changed his plans.

His decision was the beginning of an unparalleled 52-year career of scholarship, teaching, leadership and philanthropy at the USC Gould School of Law, where Bice nurtured his love for teaching the law, and served as dean of the law school for 20 years.

Like many 1Ls, Scott Bice was first in his family to enroll in law school and didn’t know much about law. He certainly had no inclination that teaching law would be in his future. In his younger days, he had whetted his appetite for teaching at a Boy Scout camp on Catalina Island, where he taught youngsters how to swim. At Gould, his law classes, taught in the Socratic method, were exciting if stressful. His law professors noticed his enthusiasm and as a 3L, he was asked to teach a class.

“I enjoyed it, and the students reacted well,” he says. “By the time I left law school and became a law clerk, I was pretty convinced if I could find a law school teaching job, I would do that.”

Fresh from law school, Bice embarked on the clerkship with Chief Justice Warren, who typically hired his clerks from three sectors of the nation (Bice was the West Coast hire). On arriving in D.C. one week after graduation, he learned he had a large office with an enormous judge’s chair and an assigned parking space.
“Pretty heady stuff,” he says. Then the cases — all of varying quality — started coming in.

“You had to read the petition, succinctly summarize it, give the justice a sense of the law on the case and recommend whether or not the court should take it,” Bice says. “My first day, I got five cases and went to work on them. At the end of the day I was asked ‘How are you doing?’ I was halfway through the first one.” He was told, “You’re going to have to do 10 to 15 a day to get through them all.” He found a rhythm, and the experience turned out to be good practice for grading papers.

Bice’s teaching style drew on the examples of numerous mentors and colleagues and reflected the changes in legal scholarship. He found great rewards from his classroom experiences.

“The joy comes when you put a challenging question to students, and they are trying but failing; then somebody gets it right, and there’s this ‘ah-ha’ moment. The student levitates off the chair, and everyone else applauds. It is great fun.”

A crucial influence on his teaching was the change that law schools underwent in the mid-1960s as multidisciplinary education began replacing teaching traditional “black letter” law. With older, more traditional faculty retiring, the stage was set for younger faculty from Yale Law School — including Martin Levine, Christopher Stone and George Lefcoe — to spur the momentum. Bice was free to pick and choose from both methods.

“Seeing the approaches of black letter teaching and interdisciplinary teaching side by side ... one could see utility of both,” Bice says. “My teaching was an attempt to meld the two so that students learned what lawyers who practice in Superior Court need to know and also what lawyers who argue before the Supreme Court need to know about arguing whether something is constitutional or not.”

Bice also made it a point to obscure his personal politics from his teaching, especially about Constitutional Law and the Supreme Court. He saw it as his job to teach students to weigh the best arguments and think critically, not to choose sides — an easy trap to fall into considering how decisions from SCOTUS are often written as if the majority decision is overwhelmingly correct, he says. “A lot of law teachers may think it’s their job to show that ‘Justice A’ is a wonderful justice in 99 percent of cases, and ‘Justice B’ is a terrible judge and wrong in 99 percent of cases. Teach that way if you want — that’s not me. I focus on asking how would you argue for your client before ‘Justice A’ or ‘Justice B’?”

He also found a sympathetic partner in Barbara, who was teaching AP English at San Marino High School when they married. They gained mutual appreciation of each other’s teaching loads and the pressure students were under to maintain their grades. When Bice assumed the law school deanship in 1980, it was, in his view, one of the best times at USC to be a dean. “Deans
Scott Bice reaped great rewards from his classroom experiences.

were like the presidents of small colleges with both responsibility for and authority to control admissions, the library, student affairs, academic affairs and fundraising,” he says.

“People say, ‘How could you stay 20 years as dean?’” Bice says. “We had that structure and support, and I had a terrific cadre of associate deans who I could tell, ‘Try to handle it, and if you can’t, come see me with a proposed solution,’ which they always did.”

One of his constant reminders was to express appreciation. Barbara and I truly found it a pleasure to work with philanthropically-inclined people.”

The Bices also found satisfaction in their own philanthropy, with enthusiastic support of the Public Interest Law Foundation. One of their claims to Gould fame was their involvement in the annual PILF auction — which paid for summer internships for 1Ls — offering highly coveted trips to Catalina Island via their boat Deference over multiple years. Many students who enjoyed these trips remain friends.

Thanks to one of those boat trips, Bice became a bishop in the Universal Life Church after Matt Matzkin (JD 2000) and Erin Gielow Matzkin (JD 2002), who met on one of the Catalina jaunts, asked Bice to marry them. He has presided over about five weddings since.

“I hope to be remembered as a good teacher, and as a dean who helped continue the traditions of the school: educational excellence, commitment to public service and mutual respect among faculty, staff, students and alumni.”

As dean, Bice and his wife continued the legacy of the influential Judge Nelson, deepening relationships with alumni who brought substantial growth in philanthropic support: an increase in scholarships, a 65,000-square-foot addition to the law school building, and an impressive expansion of endowed chairs at USC Gould, from one to 25 — including the Virginia S. and Fred H. Bice Professor of Law, named for Bice’s parents, both USC alumni.

“Past USC Vice President and Chief Legal Officer Carl Franklin was a terrific partner to us as we took on the dean’s responsibility to raise philanthropic support,” Bice recalled. “I never forgot what he told me about the importance of making people feel valued.

As he transitions into retirement, Bice plans to continue his service on charitable boards and to spend more time in the Pacific Northwest and Canada, where Deference is moored. He also plans to support Barbara in her role as president-elect of the San Marino Rotary Club.

He leaves a legacy of learning, achievement and a flourishing, collegial law school community.

“I hope to be remembered as a good teacher, and as a dean who helped continue the traditions of the school: educational excellence, commitment to public service and mutual respect among faculty, staff, students and alumni,” he says.
Colleagues, alumni and friends celebrated Professor and Dean Emeritus Scott Bice’s legacy and leadership in late October at the California Club.

1. Barbara and Scott Bice
2. Scott Bice and Dean Andrew Guzman
3. Dean Emeritus Dorothy Nelson and Barbara Bice
4. Joseph Porter III (JD 1971) and Scott Bice
6. Professor Scott Altman
7. Erin Gielow Matzkin (JD 2002) and Matt Matzkin (JD 2000).
8. Karen Wong (JD 1986) and Ruth Lavine (LLB 1943)
9. From left: Steven Atlee (JD 1999) and Tamerlin Godley (JD 1996)
10. From left: USC Gould Board of Councilors Chair Tom Larkins (JD 1986) and USC Gould Board of Councilors Clerkship Committee Chair Dave Walsh (JD 1985)
DEAN’S SUITE NAMED IN HONOR of SCOTT and BARBARA BICE

In recognition of Professor and Dean Emeritus Scott Bice’s lifetime of leadership, mentorship and service, and with deep gratitude for his and Barbara’s generosity to the Law School, the Dean’s Suite was renamed in their honor. “Scott and Barbara stand as examples to all alumni of what it means to be involved in the life of the law school, to give back and shape it for the better,” said Dean Andrew Guzman.
This fall, the USC Gould School of Law welcomed its newest class of JD students. The distinguished and diverse cohort continued a four-year trend of record-breaking academic achievement.

Across numerous areas, the Class of 2025 set new standards. The 1Ls’ median GPA of 3.87 and median LSAT of 168 represent the most academically accomplished group to enter the law school to date. It was also the lowest acceptance rate on record, at 12.7%, among almost 6,000 applicants from across the globe. In addition, women comprise 66% of the entering class — a record mark at Gould.

“This is an important time to be studying law, as there is no profession that is more essential to the success of democracy,” USC Gould Dean Andrew Guzman said at his orientation welcome address. “Even the smallest legal changes can affect the lives of so many.”

**EDUCATORS, ENTREPRENEURS AND LEADERS**

The Class of 2025 comes from impressive backgrounds, including Fulbright Scholars and Peace Corps volunteers. Many are involved in issues at the forefront of public interest and social justice, with nonprofit work ranging from programs that provide social-emotional training and support services to incarcerated individuals to efforts that drive clothing donations helping individuals in need throughout Los Angeles.

The newest class includes educators, entrepreneurs and leaders, as several students worked as teachers, started their own companies or worked in the political arena. One was on the advance staff for former President and First Lady Barack and Michelle Obama. Several students took on roles as investors and founders in the business world, and many held leadership roles at their undergraduate organizations.

Creativity also abounds among the 1Ls, as the class includes a host of student-athletes, musicians, a sprint car driver, professional ballerinas and the youngest model to walk the runway at a Prada fashion show in Milan.

**BRINGING A WEALTH OF LIVED EXPERIENCES**

Carrying on the momentum of recent years, the Class of 2025 is among the Gould School’s most diverse, with nearly 50% coming from a historically underrepresented minority group. Notably, 27% of 1L students are the first in their family to earn a college degree or pursue graduate school. And 18% are members of the LGBTQ community.

In support of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, Gould launched a need-based grant program starting this fall.

More than 40% of students are from outside California, representing 30 states. There is also a variety of educational backgrounds, with students coming to Gould from 96 different undergraduate institutions and nearly 50 different areas of study.

In his remarks to the new cohort, Associate Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid David Kirschner shared helpful advice on perseverance.

“If doubt creeps into your mind, go back to your personal statement… it contains the reasons for why you chose to dedicate yourselves to the law school journey,” he said. “While your emotions may change throughout the year, what you conveyed in your personal statement will not and you should rely on that to overcome any obstacles you may encounter.”

By Melissa Masatani
IN THE BUSINESS OF shaping entertainment

Five USC Gould alumni lead the way as top advisors in employment and business and legal affairs
Profiles by Julie Riggott

ALLISON BRIGHTMAN (JD 1992)
Executive Vice President and Co-Head of Business Affairs
CBS Studios

As the television industry undergoes tremendous change, Allison Brightman (JD 1992), part of the business affairs team at CBS Studios since 2006, has seen her job responsibilities shift considerably. But that’s all right with her — as she says, “I love strategizing.”

“The entire industry — really every industry — is going through especially trying times,” says Brightman, VP of business affairs for 14 years before being named executive VP and co-head of business affairs in 2020. “It’s more challenging to bring entertainment to audiences who have so many more choices than they ever had and to figure out where to allocate our resources. Being more creative with our deal-making and figuring out new templates and paradigms is deeply gratifying.”

Brightman, whose resume includes serving as senior counsel for five years at HBO, oversees everything from development to term deals on the studio side, while Co-Head Jeeun Kim handles the network side. She relies heavily on her communication and negotiation skills, developed through the USC Gould School of Law writing program and the Hale Moot Court Honors Program.

“We had to present one side and then flip and take the other side and, boy, was that a great exercise to train a negotiator,” she says. “It was the perfect preparation for what I do now, negotiating with agents or lawyers to get a deal over the finish line.”

As a 1L, Brightman had a son, Michael, who is now a lawyer. She and her husband also have two daughters, Erica and Mia, who have profound disabilities and, as adults, continue to live at home. They inspired her to become a special education advocate and to volunteer for more than eight years with Disability Rights California, where she also served as president of the board.

The way Brightman embraces business negotiations and champions civil rights, it’s perhaps no surprise that her favorite CBS show is the legal drama The Good Fight. “It’s about lawyers, right? And it’s incredibly smart and witty… and challenging.”
**JEFF SCHNEIDER (JD 1991)**

*EVP Production Operations and Business Affairs*

*National Geographic Partners*

Development and production of content are why Jeff Schneider (JD 1991), EVP Production Operations and Business Affairs at National Geographic Partners, got into entertainment more than 30 years ago.

“I get energized by working with creators and creative executives,” says Schneider, who has been with National Geographic since 2015 when he was hired as EVP of Business and Legal Affairs. “I also love working with so many people with whom I have long-standing relationships, such as the agents and opposing counsel that we see repeatedly.”

Today Schneider oversees the negotiation of numerous deals, from writers to production companies, for all the television shows and movies National Geographic develops and produces. He’s also responsible for all business operations, systems and processes.

“A typical day is answering about 200 emails,” he says. “Seriously, though, my job is sort of being an ‘organizational fireman,’ which can include managing challenges that impact our company.” That includes the adjustments necessary when the television distribution model changed to streaming, and The Walt Disney Company acquired National Geographic.

**ADAM GLICK (JD 1994)**

*Executive Vice President and Head of Business Affairs*

*Warner Bros. Television*

When Adam Glick (JD 1994) joined Warner Bros. Television in 1999, NBC began airing *The West Wing,* one of his favorite WB shows. Over his past seven years as executive vice president and head of business affairs, streaming’s impact on the TV industry surpasses the juiciest TV script for drama and intrigue.

“Being on the cutting edge of these changes is both intellectually fascinating and daunting at the same time,” Glick says. “We are literally having to figure out new models to advance the studio’s business in real time — adapt or perish. The stakes and challenges are enormous, but when new templates are worked out, it’s very rewarding.”

Glick oversees a team of 11 executives, all lawyers by training, who facilitate the business of the largest TV studio in the world. “My team negotiates all talent deals for actors, writers, producers and directors as well as license agreements with our broadcast and streaming buyers.”

The studio produces more than 40 shows including *Ted Lasso* on Apple TV, *Abbott Elementary* on ABC TV, *Sandman* on Netflix and *The Flight Attendant* on HBO Max.

On a daily basis, Glick says he draws on the writing skills he honed in classes at USC Gould and the communication skills he developed as president of the Student Bar Association. “Building consensus is a crucial skill in business, particularly in a leadership role within an organization.”

Glick’s career includes working as a legal intern in the U.S. Attorney’s Office, associate at a boutique, full-service law firm and director of legal and music business affairs at the Carsey Werner Company.

When he moved to Warner Bros. TV, where he started as director of business affairs, he opted not to hop around the industry. “I chose the ‘tortoise’ path, which was slow and steady ascension within the organization,” Glick says. “I was enjoying my career, surrounded by smart, talented executives, and the company had unparalleled success for 20 years. I felt like I was at the best company, and I wanted to see where the path took me.”
Jennifer Zayas (JD 2013) hit the ground running at USC Gould School of Law when she met her first mentor, a Columbia Pictures executive, at a 1L networking lunch. From there, she has steadily networked her way up to the job she landed nine months ago — VP of Business Affairs, Originals at Hulu.

“E would not be where I am had it not been for the people I met while a law student,” says Zayas, who was president of the Entertainment Law Society at USC Gould and part of a group that partnered with graduate film students to host networking parties at the Sundance Film Festival. “I've benefited so much from their time and advice.” That's why Zayas returns to Gould for the 1L Networking Lunch, as well as the entertainment law symposium and mock interviews.

Right out of law school, Zayas worked for Reed Smith LLP's Corporate and Securities Group and then Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, focusing on entertainment clients. One of her clients was independent media company Annapurna Pictures. After working on Where'd You Go, Bernadette, they brought her on board as vice president of business and legal affairs. And in her four-and-a-half years there developing film and TV projects and negotiating deals with networks, she got to know the Hulu team.

“I get to work on some really wonderful projects with the creative teams, both our internal teams at Hulu and the wider Disney Studios,” says Zayas, who also handles development for various Hulu originals. “I don’t write, I don’t direct, and I don’t act, but I feel a little bit a part of our teams that make the shows come to life that everyone loves so much.”

Zayas’ job comes down to problem solving for the creative and production teams. “Sometimes those problems are actors’ schedules or contractual or guild-related, and we always try to navigate those in the best possible way so they can make the shows they want to make.”

It’s not always easy, she admits. “I have to rely on my diplomatic skills a lot more than just my pure legal negotiation skills. I think having a thick skin is one of the most important skills to have when you’re in business affairs.”

Jon Hicks (JD 2004) — Senior Counsel, Employment Law — Netflix

“I went to law school hoping to make things right,” says Jon Hicks (JD 2004), senior counsel, UCAN Employment at Netflix, Inc. “I think most folks go to law school because they see this as a noble profession that gives us an opportunity to make change, through advocacy and civil rights.”

So, while Hicks is advising Netflix leaders in the United States and Canada on every aspect of employment and personnel-related risks, he also has a leadership role in diversity, equity and inclusion at the global subscription streaming service and award-winning production company behind Squid Game, Stranger Things and Ozark — his personal favorite right now.

During his two-and-a-half years as counsel starting in 2015, Hicks helped lead the company’s Black Employee Network. As senior counsel for the past four years, he has championed innovative DEI efforts within the company and, as co-chair of the Legal Diversity Committee, promoted diversity in the legal profession by engaging and building relationships with law firms.

“I believe Netflix is kind of ahead of the trend around how we think about diversity and inclusion in a way that impacts business,” Hicks says. “Giving folks an opportunity to see what an inclusive leader looks like and then working tactically to figure out a way of becoming an inclusive leader that works specifically for them — that’s the next generation work of inclusion and diversity.”

As senior counsel, Hicks responds to the company’s immediate business and HR needs — including unprecedented issues such as pandemic response, vaccine mandate exemptions and future of work — while managing long-term projects like employment litigation.

Hicks, whose first in-house role was as litigation and employment counsel for a Silicon Valley software company, says USC Gould prepared him well for his career. Through the law school Hicks built a network of long-time friends he says he continually relies on, and the mentor he found through the Black Law Students Association remains a trusted advisor. “I think that relationship has made me not only a better lawyer at Netflix, but a better person,” he says.
A timely symposium organized by the Southern California Law Review, Vol. 95 around the work of the late environmental scholar and USC Gould School of Law Professor Christopher D. Stone was honored as Law Student Program of the Year by the American Bar Association Section of Environment, Energy and Resources.

“It takes hard work to pull together a series of speakers and organize their talks so that they flow seamlessly, while still dealing with the pandemic’s demands for personal safety and accommodation of two speakers online,” says Professor Robin Craig, who presented at the event and helped bring in environmental law panelists from other institutions. “The students did a masterful job of making it all work to produce a day of talks and series of papers that are both of great and enduring value. That’s why they so richly deserved the ABA SEER award.”

Discussions for the April 1 event, featuring five panelists from law schools including Georgetown, Harvard and Arizona State University, began in June 2021. Because the two previous SCLR executive boards hadn’t hosted a symposium due to the pandemic, the 2022 team didn’t have precedents to rely on, but their chemistry as a team helped make up for that.

“We lacked some institutional knowledge about how to organize and plan the event, but we worked very well as a team to overcome the challenge and we received wonderful guidance,” says Samuel Clark-Clough (JD 2022), managing editor.

“LIKE LISTENING TO A LIVE CONVERSATION”

Editor-in-chief Mindy Vo (JD 2022), Executive Articles Editor Brooke Kopel (JD 2022) and Clark-Clough were advised by Craig, as well as Professor Bob Rasmussen and Dean Andrew Guzman, who suggested hosting the symposium in honor of Stone, an influential environmental scholar whose seminal article, “Should Trees Have Standing? — Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects” was published in SCLR in 1972. Faculty advisors Professor Rebecca Brown and Professor Scott Altman also offered their counsel. The panel presentations will be published in Vol. 95.

Watching the symposium was an enlightening experience for the student organizers. “It was like listening to a live conversation, which doesn’t occur organically by just reading articles,” says Vo. “It was a great learning experience to see professors and colleagues raise questions that may not have clear answers.”

With Stone’s family in attendance, as well as environmental scholars inspired by Stone’s work, the symposium’s significance surpassed its intellectual value, says Kopel. “It was a sweet feeling for me to know that Professor Stone would have been happy to see these academics come together to honor his life’s work. It was sentimental, but at the same time, we were presenting prevalent, pressing issues facing environmental law.”
THE STARS BEHIND THE STARS

Every year, industry publications recognize USC Gould School of Law alumni who are leaders in entertainment, music and sports law, trusted by some of the hottest entertainers and most powerful players in Hollywood to negotiate mergers, finalize deals, and navigate streaming, NFTs and new technology.

HOLLYWOOD POWER LAWYERS 2022 — HOLLYWOOD’S TOP 100 ATTORNEYS

*The Hollywood Reporter*

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TOP MUSIC LAWYERS 2022

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<td>STANTON “LARRY” STEIN (JD 1969)</td>
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<td>Chair, media and entertainment practice group, Russ August &amp; Kabat</td>
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<td>RON SWEENEY (JD 1978)</td>
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Q&A with Richard Kendall (JD 1979) and Fred Toczek (JD 1989)

RICHARD KENDALL (JD 1979)
Kendall, Brill & Kelly LLP

How did your Gould education/experiences shape you and your career?
Law school was the first academic pursuit in which I really applied myself, because I found it both fascinating and challenging. I became a far more confident student once I learned the benefits of intense research and preparation. That lesson guided the rest of my career.

What professional accomplishment from the past year would you consider to be the most interesting, or that you’re proudest of?
It has been a year of interesting trials and arbitrations, and some notable victories, but most recently I took on the defense of a law firm in a highly charged professional liability case that was spinning out of control. Our team developed new arguments that substantially strengthened our clients’ position, and we brought the case quickly to a satisfactory resolution.

What advice would you give current Gould students as they prepare for their careers?
Don’t be afraid to take a path outside BigLaw. After clerking I spent five years as a criminal prosecutor before entering private practice. The salary wasn’t great, but it was the best possible way for an aspiring litigator to get started in the profession.

FRED TOCZEK (JD 1989)
Felker Toczek Suddleson Abramson McGinnis Ryan LLP

How did your Gould education/experiences shape you and your career?
My educational experience at Gould was exceptional and gave me the foundation to pursue my dream of becoming an entertainment lawyer. The alumni connections and Gould family have and continue to be an incredible asset to me in my career; Gould alumni really look out for each other.

What professional accomplishment from the past year would you consider to be the most interesting, or that you’re proudest of?
I’ve been blessed to represent a number of extremely talented actors, directors, producers and writers over the years. But, I particularly enjoy watching a client’s ascent to stardom while advocating on their behalf. For example, meeting a relatively unknown young boy who was cast as Harry Potter remains one of the biggest highlights of my career. A more recent example is witnessing Anya Taylor-Joy’s trajectory from *Queen’s Gambit* to starring roles in a number of features (including George Miller’s upcoming *Furiosa*). Being a part of their teams gives me tremendous pride.

What advice would you give current Gould students as they prepare for their careers?
Whatever your career goals may be, approach them with focus, grit and creativity and never be afraid to blaze your own trail. A wise mentor advised me to spend time ensuring I had my own bag of business so my career would not be dependent on anyone. While I certainly had to pay my dues in the early days, I was always mindful to work with an eye towards maximum autonomy.
By Matthew Kredell

For Amanda Oliver (JD 2005), Casey Schwab (JD 2013) and John Slusher (JD 1994), ambition and focus — plus an education at USC Gould — landed them influential positions in sports fields of name, image and likeness (NIL), international sports and automobile racing.

Schwab’s law background provided the foundation to launch Altius Sports Partners, which helps universities navigate the new frontier of college athletes profiting from their name, image and likeness.

“The skills I learned being in-house counsel for almost a decade continue to be helpful in the subject matter of NIL and helping schools navigate laws, but also in starting a company,” says Schwab, who is Altius’ CEO. “It doesn’t matter if you’re selling NIL assistance to schools or selling hot dogs, it helps to have a law degree from USC.”

A four-sport athlete in high school, USC Gould’s reputation in sports law attracted Schwab. He was

“SECOND-BEST JOB IN SPORTS”

It’s no wonder John Slusher developed an interest in the business side of sports after watching his father negotiate sports deals as an agent for professional athletes like San Diego Chargers quarterback Dan Fouts and Boston Celtics guard Paul Westphal.

As Nike’s executive vice president of global sports marketing since 2007, Slusher oversees Nike’s partnerships with athletes and teams around the world (about 8,000 athletes and 2,000 teams including USC Athletics). He has worked with sports stars including Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, LeBron James and Serena Williams.

“If I can’t be quarterback in the NFL, I think this is probably the second-best job in sports,” Slusher says. “I’ve been pretty fortunate to work with some of the greatest athletes, teams and leagues in the world, and at the same time help drive the incredible brand and business of a company like Nike.”

Slusher started practicing law at O’Melveny & Myers LLP and sought roles where he could use his legal training in sports business. In 1998, that opportunity arose at Nike,
where his father Howard (JD 1972) worked for four decades for founder Phil Knight. Howard Slusher passed away in 2022.

“I would not have been hired at Nike without my USC law degree and experience practicing corporate law,” Slusher says. “Three years of law school at USC prepares you incredibly well for a career in law, but it also prepares you for so much more.”

SETTING SIGHTS ON PLAN A
Amanda Oliver (JD 2005) craved a career in sports law when she came to USC Gould. When a counselor warned her that the field was too competitive and suggested she prepare a plan B, Oliver ignored the advice and went after plan A. She hunkered down in the Asa V. Call Law Library searching for attorneys working in sports law at companies that appealed to her and cold-emailed them from her USC account.

It paid off. One of many responses was from Tommy Warlick, then assistant general counsel at NASCAR, got her a summer internship that led to 17 years with the association. Last year Oliver was promoted to senior vice president and general counsel, overseeing NASCAR’s legal department.

“I worked 20 hours a week for NASCAR through my third year of law school, took the summer off to take the bar, then moved to Daytona Beach [NASCAR’s headquarters],” says Oliver. “I can’t believe it has led me to be general counsel for a major sports organization.”

Oliver handles all areas of NASCAR’s business including racetracks, media and licensing. A career highlight came in 2019 when she helped NASCAR partner with sports data company Genius Sports to deliver its first live betting platform to legal sportsbooks.

“There are more and more opportunities in the space because of gaming, social media and content production,” Oliver says. “The ‘general’ part of general counsel means you never know what will need your attention and no day is ever the same.”
The online video game “League of Legends,” one of the biggest titles in Riot Games’ arsenal, features 161 different characters. Players have lots of choices to make and there’s a depth of mastery involved in moving on to higher levels.

That’s not unlike taking classes in USC Gould School of Law’s Media, Entertainment and Technology (MET) Law program, says Dan Nabel (JD 2009), senior director and associate general counsel at Riot Games and a lecturer in the MET program.

“MET gives students an opportunity to explore very deeply different subjects like sports and music and traditional entertainment and video games,” says Nabel, who teaches Video Game Law in Practice with Bill Chang, vice president of compliance at Riot Games. The two wrote the book “Video Game Law in a Nutshell,” published in 2018, and are working on a second edition.

Video Game Law in Practice is one of several courses that make the MET program a unique experience for students, who in addition to traditional doctrinal courses such as intellectual property and business organizations, have the opportunity to take practice-oriented classes taught by working professionals like Nabel and Chang.

Professor Jonathan Barnett, director of MET since 2011, says his program’s courses in entertainment and media law place special emphasis on transactional lawyering skills and concepts — negotiation, deal structuring and contract drafting — that play a key role in representing clients in the media and entertainment industries.

“We’ve developed specific methods to teach transactional lawyering in the entertainment and media context, and we offer an unusually rich set of courses in that area,” Barnett says.
TRAINING “PRACTICE READY” STUDENTS

Nabel hopes Video Game Law in Practice, covering topics such as content creation and acquisition, distribution, publishing and marketing, brand management, and cybersecurity, will give his students the same practical experience he obtained while he was at USC Gould.

“Practice ready’ is the buzzword we like to use,” he says. “I owe quite a bit to my career in being practice ready during my first year at a law firm. Thanks to USC Gould, I was very prepared to have a great career.”

One of Nabel’s former students, Ethan Aronson, joined Sony Interactive Entertainment’s legal team in New York earlier this year. He found Video Game Law in Practice especially inspiring.

Aronson notes, “the video game law course showed the interplay between different areas of law and how they pertain to a specific industry.”

“PRAGMATIC, REAL-LIFE EXPOSURE”

The MET program’s transactional and deal lawyering courses are taught by deeply experienced practitioners from prominent law firms and production companies in the content industry, including Miramax, Endeavor, Paramount Global and Sony Pictures.

Caroline “C.J.” Vranca, executive vice president, legal and business affairs at the comedy video website and independent film/television production company Funny or Die, has for several years co-taught Entertainment Law with Larry Sheffield, vice president, business and legal affairs at Paramount Global. The course concentrates on legal, analytical, client management and other practical skills required to represent clients in all areas of the entertainment industry.

“I really try to focus on pragmatic, real-life exposure,” says Vranca, whose duties at Funny or Die include digital, television and film development, production, advertising, branded content, as well as content distribution. She drafts, negotiates and closes joint venture agreements, partnership agreements, content acquisition deals, production deals, talent agreements and branded entertainment deals.

“I teach my students what we do as entertainment lawyers, whether it’s dealmaking or what an actual contract looks like, and all the different roles we play. I try to keep my course very fresh and on point.”

MET offers additional courses in specialized areas of media and entertainment law, much of which focus on the fast-changing issues involved in the ongoing digital transformation of every aspect of the content industry.

Courses such as Digital Media Transactions, Dealmaking in the Entertainment Industry, Entertainment Law in Practice, and Television and Digital Media Law use real-world client scenarios to address the complex mix of business and legal issues relating to the creation, financing and distribution of various types of content, ranging from conventional media such as motion pictures and broadcast television to new media such as streaming, mobile and virtual reality market segments.

UPDATED COURSE OFFERINGS REFLECT TRENDS

The MET program’s transactional courses in media and entertainment law are regularly updated to reflect ongoing trends in the media and entertainment industries.

“We’re not just about entertainment,” Barnett says. “We’re about where entertainment and media meet technology. It’s not like you have tech on one side and content on the other. They’ve converged.”

Barnett notes that the MET program will launch a new course next year, Law and Web 3.0, that will cover topics such as the decentralization of the Internet and blockchain technology.
There’s a lot to learn about entertainment law at USC Gould School of Law, and three student-led organizations — Entertainment Law Society, Music Law Society and Sports Law Society — help students forge their unique career paths through networking events, information sessions with practitioners in the field, and valuable mentorship opportunities.

“A lot of students come into law school not knowing what entertainment law is,” says 2L Yaz Kaveh, current president of the Entertainment Law Society. “They think it’s being a talent rep or around glitz and glam, but it’s so much more. The Entertainment Law Society helps broaden everyone’s understanding of entertainment law.”

Each organization hosts various events providing insight into practice areas and the latest trends, like streaming and digital media. Gould’s Career Services Office helps students identify the most appropriate alumni for speaker events, who are glad to share their knowledge in panel discussions, such as one organized this year on film financing and distribution.

Ben Rubinfeld (JD 2010), a partner in Ziffren Brittenham LLP’s film and television group and a former president of the Entertainment Law Society, recently discussed his experiences at an ELS event introducing students to entertainment law.

“The Entertainment Law Society was one of my favorite USC Law extracurricular groups,” Rubinfeld says.

“I met some dear friends, many of whom I still work with regularly and I had a priceless opportunity to learn the business directly from industry experts. It’s a pleasure to be able to pay it forward and share my experience with tomorrow’s leaders. That’s part of what makes Gould such a special institution.”

First-year law students looking for summer internships can turn to these organizations for assistance. When she was a 1L, second-year student Cameron Keel, now president of the Music Law Society, used an email template and suggestions from MLS leadership and wound up with an internship with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers.

“I cold-messaged some alumni over email and LinkedIn, and that’s how I got my internship,” Keel says. “Everyone in the society was willing to help, and alumni are always really responsive.”

Music Law Society recently hosted a panel on pathways in music law, giving students an overview of the different career paths in the field, as well as a panel with creatives discussing law-adjacent careers in music.

2L Hannah Barcus, co-president of the Sports Law Society with fellow 2L Caleb Clifford, credited mentoring relationships developed through the Sports Law Society with helping her land an influential summer internship in the USC Office of Athletic Compliance.

“Coming into law school, I was interested in sports law but didn’t know anything about the legal field,” Barcus says.
The Entertainment Law Society hosted a panel on film financing and distribution featuring (from left) Defne Gunay, vice president, business and legal affairs, Black Bear Pictures; Adam Raichilson (JD 2015), head of business affairs, Black Bear Pictures and Patrick Trey Brady (JD 2018), counsel, WME Independent.

“After working in the compliance office, I see myself finding my way back to college athletic administration because I really enjoyed my internship there.”

Barcus introduced other students to the USC Office of Athletic Compliance this year with a discussion on how the new name-image-likeness landscape has affected college athletics. Another event focused on the two sports betting propositions on the California ballot.

Faculty advisors provide guidance on new initiatives and speaker suggestions, but students take the lead in designing programming. Professor Jonathan Barnett, faculty advisor for the Entertainment Law Society and Music Law Society, sees the groups as a critical networking avenue.

“Given our location and the emphasis USC Gould places on entertainment media and law, there are abundant opportunities for students to develop relationships with alumni and other practitioners through Society events,” he says.

Many members of the Entertainment Law Society go on to write for Spotlight, an entertainment-centric, student-run law review that began publishing in 2017. Published once each academic year in the spring, Spotlight went completely digital with its last edition.

The upcoming issue will include articles on how the Britney Spears case will impact conservatorship law and what issues are likely to come up in the upcoming Writers Guild of America collective bargaining. Spotlight also features explainers or informational pieces from working attorneys. Editor-in-chief Daniel Donohue, a third-year student, says writing for the review is an important networking opportunity.

“Staff members have the opportunity to make a lifelong connection writing or editing these articles,” Donohue says. “Every job I’ve ever gotten in the entertainment industry was because I connected with somebody. It’s a very connections-based industry. The focus of all these organizations is meeting living, breathing attorneys who are doing what we want to do.”

Faculty Advisor Preston K. Ascherin is impressed with students’ enthusiasm for the topics they cover.

“The students’ passion on these topics is apparent,” says Ascherin. “Their timely articles, written in Spotlight’s accessible style, are informative to lawyers and interesting even to the layperson. It’s a pleasure to assist on and be associated with the publication.”

“This focus of all these organizations is meeting living, breathing attorneys who are doing what we want to do.” —3L Daniel Donohue
By Diane Krieger

By his own account, entertainment lawyer PJ Shapiro (JD/MBA 1999) had the dream job. For the last eight years, he was managing partner in the boutique firm of Ziffren Brittenham LLP. But as the pandemic threw Hollywood into chaos and the George Floyd protests ignited a racial reckoning, Shapiro woke up to a new reality.

“Like every other business in Los Angeles,” he says, “we were taking a look in the mirror and seeing if we could do better.”

In January, Shapiro and three like-minded colleagues launched Johnson, Shapiro, Slewett and Kole, a new entertainment law firm emphasizing “values-driven excellence and social impact.” All four founding partners are perennial honorees on The Hollywood Reporter’s Power Lawyers list. In an April 6 article, THR called JSSK “a next-gen boutique with inclusion, philanthropy and civic engagement in its DNA.”

The mission, Shapiro says, was to “create a firm that better reflected the demographics of our client base, our community and our personal vision for the future.” Of the 14 lawyers at JSSK, more than half are women and six are people of color.

It was difficult to leave. “We felt a tremendous amount of loyalty, love and affection for Ziffren Brittenham,” Shapiro says. “But at the end of the day, Matt (Johnson) and I wanted to build a new house instead of remodeling our beautiful house of 20 years.”

In less than a year, JSSK has already made maverick moves. Its members played a meaningful part in crafting the diversity and inclusivity rider now considered a critical component of production agreements industrywide. Organizationally, it recruited a chief engagement officer who promotes advocacy work among firm employees and helps clients navigate social and political action opportunities. JSSK collaborates with a long list of activist groups, and the partners regularly host political fundraisers.

“The energy is electric,” says Shapiro.

FROM DENTISTRY INTO ENTERTAINMENT LAW

Growing up in Chatsworth, Calif., Shapiro attended UCLA as a pre-med major. Just days into his dentistry program, also at UCLA, Shapiro realized he would “be a horrible dentist — I hated science, felt sick at the sight of blood and had very poor manual dexterity,” he explains.

He entered USC’s joint JD/MBA program and considered pursuing a career in investment banking. However, friends urged him toward entertainment law.

In an industry known for playing hardball, Shapiro strives to be a mensch.

“If this was a financially motivated decision,” he says, of the creation of JSSK. While the firm represents A-list talent like Bryan Cranston, Selena Gomez and Emma Stone, it also prioritizes veterans and people with disabilities in the entertainment space.

“I come from a pretty humble beginning and have reached a level of success that I never imagined,” he says. “This is about creating a new chapter of giving back.”

“PJ Shapiro (JD/MBA 1999) and colleagues launch new entertainment law firm with civic engagement in its DNA.”

“This is about creating a new chapter of giving back,” says PJ Shapiro of launching the new entertainment law firm Johnson, Shapiro, Slewett and Kole.
By Leslie Ridgeway

April Yuan (JD 2013) didn’t even know what an agent was when she was in law school, but today she represents producers and directors for unscripted television and is leading the way to greater diversity and equity in the entertainment industry.

With clients like Asabi Lee (executive producer, HBO Max’s Project Greenlight with Issa Rae’s HooRae Media), Cherelle Hinds (executive producer, OWN’s The Belle Collective) Carolina Saavedra (executive producer/showrunner on NBC News Studios’ John Leguizamo Project [working title]) and Teresa Hsu (executive producer/showrunner on Paramount’s My Dream Quinceañera), Yuan is positioned as a champion of storytellers who are people of color and women.

“When I started as an agent seven years ago, I focused on women, because it was obvious women were being underpaid and under-credited to a disturbing degree,” says Yuan, who launched Vital Artists Agency in December 2020 with colleagues from Rebel Entertainment Partners who are as committed to diversity and equity as she is.

“After [the killing of] George Floyd, diversity became very important in the industry. It gave people of color more opportunities than before and it’s not just a trend.”

VAA started during the pandemic as productions temporarily shut down, and Yuan’s boss, Richard Lawrence, chief of Rebel Entertainment, announced his early retirement. Suddenly preliminary conversations Yuan and her partners Cal Boyington and Phil Irven were having about forming their own agency came into focus.

“Richard said ‘You should do your own thing,’ and we said, ‘Such a great idea!’” Yuan says. “We took all our clients, contacts, systems and it was seamless. We had the financial launching pad to do what we needed to do, so about the time production resumed, we were ready.” Today VAA also includes agents Bill Thompson and Nicole Zien.

Yuan became an agent after her resume landed on Irven’s desk, he noticed her law school experience and assumed she understood contracts. Yuan earned an entertainment law certificate as part of her JD but didn’t see herself practicing law as a career. Her legal knowledge comes in handy during negotiations.

As television struggles for relevance with the advent of streaming and short-form storytelling like TikTok, Yuan says broadening the perspective at top levels in entertainment will make the difference. “Buyers now realize diversity behind the camera makes better shows and targets a bigger audience,” she says.

Another challenge is preparing people of color and women to thrive in leadership positions, where they lack experience due to exclusion. Networks and production companies need to take risks if they’re serious about diversity, Yuan says. “You can’t just say you want 10 years of experience after 10 years of pushing [women and people of color] down.”

The best part of Yuan’s job is witnessing the success of clients she went to the mat for.

“I’ve had clients with me since beginning of my career who started as a supervising producer and now they’re an executive producer, making twice as much money and producing content they want to produce,” Yuan says. “Seeing the results of their hard work on TV is exhilarating.”

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April Yuan formed Vital Artists Agency in 2020 with two colleagues to continue a commitment to diversity and equity.
Two USC Gould School of Law classmates have joined forces on a sports NFT platform that elevates fan engagement for sports stars like champion quarterback Tom Brady, Olympic standout Simone Biles and hockey legend Wayne Gretzky to a new level.

Innovative tech entrepreneur Richard Rosenblatt (JD 1994), co-founder of Autograph, a groundbreaking NFT platform launched in 2021, recruited Ted Russell (JD 1994), former executive vice president for business affairs at Twentieth Century Fox, as the platform’s chief operating officer and chief business officer.

Rosenblatt says the idea for Autograph germinated while he was with his family in Cabo San Lucas in the early days of the pandemic. He and his son Dillon, a graduate of USC’s Iovine and Young Academy and an entrepreneur, got to talking about Web3 and NFTs — non-fungible tokens that fans trade and sell — in the sports and entertainment spheres. Rosenblatt enlisted long-time friend Brady as co-founder and co-chairman.

“We wanted to create something unique in the space,” Rosenblatt says. “The analogy is baseball cards. They were the most treasured thing I owned as a kid. And now, in digital form you can collect NFTs and have them signed. Other platforms were focused on leagues, but we started by focusing on individual players and building their personality online. We keep expanding and just announced that we are the exclusive NFT partner of the PGA.”

Autograph enriches the fan experience by offering access to special NFT drops and engagement opportunities like meetups and online Q&A sessions. The platform holds exclusive agreements with a substantial roster of entertainment brands and individual athletes, distinguishing it within the NFT space. The platform is guided by an advisory board of people Rosenblatt has known for years, including golf superstar Tiger Woods, award-winning actress and producer Eva Longoria Baston and skateboarding icon Tony Hawk. Dillon leads the company as CEO and co-founder.
A phone call from Rosenblatt was a life changer for Russell. He was running his own business advising practice, working for several large private equity and venture firms, when he heard what Rosenblatt, serial entrepreneur and founder of multiple tech media companies, was proposing. “We talked about what the company could be and do, I met the other founders and it seemed like an interesting opportunity to work in a growing technology space,” Russell says. “I had done a lot of tech, media and entertainment work, and it all seemed to fit together.”

Russell oversees deal-making, finance, strategy, business development, innovation and people management for a company that has expanded from four to 120 people in just 15 months. “[We have] a lot of moving parts that all need to work together seamlessly to deliver against the promise we make to brands, companies and talent,” Russell says.

Rosenblatt founded his first public company iMALL, a groundbreaking e-commerce platform for small businesses to sell products online, when he was a 2L at USC Gould, and went on to run Intermix/Myspace, the original social

network; soon after selling Intermix/Myspace to News Corp, he founded Demand Media (now Leaf Group), an innovative content creation platform that operated multiple online brands. More recently he founded and is CEO of Whip Media, which he calls “the Nielsen of the streaming world,” a content licensing and research platform for entertainment organizations that allows users to share TV and movie moments.

Though not practicing law today, Rosenblatt credits his Gould law degree with giving him the credibility and organized thinking he needed to run three public companies.

“It always helped me think in a very linear way,” he says. “Law helped me think ‘bullet one, section A’ and to look at both sides. As a good businessperson you learn to

listen to both sides whether you agree or not. The law is a big part of everything I do.”

Both Rosenblatt and Russell applaud then-Dean Scott Bice’s torts class for training them to prepare and organize, and for Rosenblatt, Professor David Slawson’s contract law course proved instructive.

“We wanted to create something unique in the space. The analogy is baseball cards. They were the most treasured thing I owned as a kid. And now, in digital form you can collect NFTs and have them signed.” —Richard Rosenblatt (JD 1994)

Russell also praised Professor Rob Saltzman for teaching him how to analyze issues, and legal writing classes that gave him a good foundation for his clerkship with the Hon. John Davies in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California in Los Angeles. Russell has also been a lecturer in law at USC Gould teaching ethics and negotiation.

As Autograph continues to grow, Rosenblatt continues to innovate, co-founding Adim, a new storytelling incubator that he hopes will be “the next Marvel” with Rob McElhenney, creator and actor on FX’s It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia and actor Ryan Reynolds. Another son, Chase, a USC Marshall School of Business alum, is co-founder and CEO of Adim.
The only constant: CHANGE

2022 Institute on Entertainment Law and Business addresses disruption in entertainment industry

By Kaitlyn McQuown

“No Joke: Current Realities in the Entertainment World,” the 2022 Institute on Entertainment Law and Business, explored the latest industry trends and highlighted changes in the industry in the wake of rapidly evolving technology and adjustments due to COVID-19.

The Oct. 22 institute, co-hosted by USC Gould School of Law and the Beverly Hills Bar Association, featured a keynote speech by comedian and entrepreneur Byron Allen, and brought together entertainment lawyers, executives, accountants and other professionals to USC’s campus for the first time since the onset of the pandemic.

Jeffrey Cole, CEO of the Center for the Digital Future and a research professor at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, opened the conference by illustrating the challenges and opportunities caused by the pandemic — theater closures, the shifting prominence of streaming services and how the entertainment industry and audiences alike have adapted to them.

Like most of the presenters and panelists, Allen, founder, chairman and CEO of Allen Media Group, aimed to shed light on the business behind popular art and creators. “It’s not show business — it’s business show,” he said. He fleshed out that idea with his own career as a standup comic, starting as a teenager and eventually becoming the youngest comedian to appear on The Tonight Show. Race affected his trajectory and he credited supportive friends and business partners for helping him to overcome obstacles.

With hopes of a unified America, he outlined the “5 E’s” that he strives to live by — education, equal justice, economic inclusion, environmental protection and empathy. “That’s my north star and that’s what I’m pursuing,” he said.

Morning panels covered the nuances of comedy through the lens of intellectual property law; the basics of the metaverse, blockchain and predictions on how businesses can use them; and a conversation between experts on shifts in music in response to the pandemic and the rise of platforms like TikTok.

“The only thing constant in the music business is change,” said Jeff Harleston, general counsel and executive vice president of business and legal affairs at Universal Music Group, during the music business panel.

Travis Cloyd, CEO and futurist at WorldwideXR and Thunderbird School of Global Management, shared a similar sentiment in the panel on the Metaverse. “Metaverse is disruption. Within the next decade, this could be a trillion-dollar industry,” he said.

Afternoon breakout panels focused on talent compensation; merger and acquisition activity in the production company space; privacy challenges and pitfalls; production incentives and entertainment malpractice; and state bar issues. Panelists analyzed recent developments in their respective fields and discussed each topic in-depth.

USC Gould School of Law offers continuing legal education opportunities for professionals who want to learn and network with leading experts in their industries. For more information, visit or subscribe at gould.usc.edu/cle.
By Leslie Ridgeway

With law becoming a more and more integral part of society, the USC Gould School of Law has introduced a new undergraduate degree. This innovative course of study prepares students to both understand how law shapes modern culture and explore emerging employment opportunities, while benefitting from a unique multidisciplinary education.

The Bachelor of Science in Legal Studies is USC Gould's first four-year bachelor's degree giving undergraduate students a strong foundation in legal infrastructure and the law. It provides the skills and knowledge to understand the way law operates in modern America and to excel in a wide variety of roles that intersect with the law, yet don't require being a practicing attorney.

“This new undergraduate degree underscores USC Gould’s strategic vision and furthers the tradition of innovation, equity and excellence that is part of our history,” says Dean Andrew Guzman. “Students who choose the B.S. in Legal Studies will be well-positioned for success in both the public and private sectors. An understanding of our legal system and the rule of law will be a powerful asset throughout their careers. The new program exemplifies the mission of USC Gould, dedicated to training students through interdisciplinary and clinical education in order to make impactful contributions to the world around them.”

“We want students graduating from USC to understand the way law affects people’s lives. That way, they can help shape the law and the policies to keep leading our country forward,” explains Professor Bob Rasmussen, who oversees undergraduate education at USC Gould.

According to Rasmussen, while law is central to society, lawyers shouldn’t be the sole gatekeepers of the legal system, and the legal profession should be a collaborative effort between attorneys and citizens educated on how law affects society.

“Law can’t be left to lawyers alone,” he says. “Part of the job of a great undergraduate education is to help people understand the society that they’re going to be part of, that they’re going to shape and that they’re going to lead.”

Gould faculty were instrumental — along with Maddy Zamany, director of undergraduate programs at USC Gould — in developing the new major, which deepens the law school's popular undergraduate offerings. Currently, USC Gould offers more than 25 undergraduate law courses, in addition to its Legal Studies minor, Law and Social Justice minor, Law and Migration Studies minor and a new Law and Technology minor. Students in Gould’s minor programs come from more than two dozen different majors at USC.

Courses in the B.S. in Legal Studies program span multiple disciplines including technology, sociology and economics, with future plans to collaborate further with various schools and departments at USC on pressing global, national, and local issues. Students also will be required to engage in an internship to bolster their practical experiences.

“Law is as coextensive as our society and the great thing about this major is that students can take a deep dive into that part of law that interests them,” says Rasmussen.

“It is international law? Is it public law or how we run our government? Is it private law or how we regulate our businesses? Whatever interests our students have, we’ll have a major that they can tailor to fulfill those interests.”

For more information on the B.S. in Legal Studies, visit gould.law/bs-legal-studies or contact undergraduate@law.usc.edu.
When John and Alaine Weiss think about what made them who they are, they both agree it was their education.

Reflecting on their lives in the process of retirement and estate planning, the couple is seeing things from a different perspective and thinking about how to make it possible for others to pursue satisfying careers.

“Each of us looks at our undergraduate and graduate school backgrounds, and they played such an important part in terms of who we are, how we view the world, our career success, our personal success,” says John (JD 1979), who earned undergraduate and law degrees at USC.

Alaine, who received her undergraduate degree from Michigan State University, an MBA from Indiana University and an MS in counseling from California State University, Long Beach adds, “Looking back, you realize that, but for that education and the factors that made it possible for you to have that education, you probably wouldn’t have had the career success, life satisfaction and wherewithal to help others.”

John spent 35 years as in-house counsel for Beckman Coulter, Inc., a Brea, Calif.-based corporation that develops and manufactures biomedical testing products. He met Alaine in 1989 when she was recruited by Beckman Coulter to head international human resources. Already annual donors to their schools, the couple wanted to include USC Gould and Alaine’s undergraduate institution, Michigan State, in their estate plan.

“We asked ourselves: Who will benefit the most from having that additional help? That was a big driver for us,” Alaine says.

First and foremost, they want their gift to help students afford tuition at their alma maters.

“One of the things that made it possible for me to stay at USC as an undergrad was that I had a scholarship,” John says. “That set the foundation for me to be able to go on to law school because I wasn’t already debt overburdened by the time I got through school.”

They also want to focus on students with special circumstances — those coming out of foster care or first-generation students, for example — students for whom it’s not a given that they can attend an elite school and earn a degree.

“Some young people come from backgrounds where they didn’t have a family support structure in place, they don’t have a lot of money behind them, their friends and social group don’t understand why anybody would want to go to all that work and trouble,” John says. “Their margin for error is zero. Those are the individuals for whom those degrees may make the most difference in their lives, helping to elevate their opportunities and giving them choices they might not have had.”

Avid world travelers who have always appreciated different cultures and perspectives, the couple also believe that such students, “young people from all socio-economic strata and from all kinds of life...
experiences, who truly represent our society,” have much to contribute.

“We think it’s important for law firms, for government, for the corporate world, for charitable organizations to have people who come from very different places,” John says. “A USC Gould law degree or a USC or MSU undergraduate degree can really take these people places where their contribution is going to be unique.”

Born in Long Beach, Calif., John studied political science with an interest in economics and philosophy as an undergraduate. When considering graduate school USC law school was a perfect fit. “It was a very intimate school, with a smaller, closer-knit community that really suited me well.”

Living in Law House, a retired fraternity off Greek Row used primarily to house law students, John got to know many of his classmates well. He and his housemates hosted the faculty for an annual dinner. “Those were the things that really made for strong personal relationships,” he says. “I felt like I knew Dean Dorothy Nelson pretty well, as well as some of the faculty. And beyond my legal education, I ended up learning more about myself and about other people, which influenced the interests I pursued.”

Being open to new experiences and opportunities has served John well, and he hopes that future generations of students at USC Gould will take a lesson from his journey.

“You can try to plan your life, and you may think you know what your career is going to be, but it’s actually all the unplanned stuff that happens along the way that makes it so interesting.”

“We think it’s important for law firms, for government, for the corporate world, for charitable organizations to have people who come from very different places. A USC Gould degree can really take these people places where their contribution is going to be unique.”

— John Weiss (JD 1979)
“A culture of well-being”

Dr. Nickey Woods, associate dean for student affairs, diversity, equity and inclusion, and dean of students for the JD program, and staff emphasize resources in guiding students

As part of that strategy, Student Affairs is getting a makeover to better represent the department and its services. An upgrade is underway with plans for a new student lounge area, accent walls and artwork expressing the office as a place where students can rejuvenate and revive.

“This is where students come to put themselves back together if they’re falling apart and this space needs to reflect that,” Woods says. “Students may be in a professional environment, but they don’t need to lose the essence of who they are. We want them to know they can come here to put a smile on their face.”

NEW ROLE INSPIRES RENEWED ENTHUSIASM

In reconfiguring Student Affairs, Woods brainstormed ideas with the staff and their plans have infused renewed enthusiasm into the office. Woods recently hired Akita Mungaray as assistant dean of DEI and director for Student Affairs. Student Care will become Student Life and remain under the direction of Dr. Malissa Barnwell-Scott, and Woods will hire a new director for curriculum to join Preston Ascherin, director of externships, Deise Benitez, director of registration services, and Carla Golle, associate director of registration and records. Woods also plans to work collaboratively with Career Services to schedule workshops or a seminar on professional identity formation, helping students to align their ethics and values with their education.

By Leslie Ridgeway

One of the first things you see when entering USC Gould School of Law’s Student Affairs office is a large map of the university in the waiting area. It’s a sign that guidance is the priority of Dr. Nickey Woods, associate dean for student affairs, diversity, equity and inclusion and dean of students for the JD program, and the Student Affairs staff.

“We are intentional about not knowing all the answers but [being] well versed in the resources,” says Woods, who assumed her new role in late July after joining USC Gould in 2021 as its inaugural assistant dean of DEI. “If students don’t know where to go or what support or resources they need, we’ll point them in the right direction.”

In a high-intensity law school environment, Woods intends to create what she calls “a culture of well-being” that softens the stigma surrounding emotional and mental health struggles and empowers all members of the law school community to recognize a student in distress and encourage them to reach out.

“Law students are smart, high achievers and accomplished, and [success] may have come naturally or easily prior to law school,” Woods says. “Law school is a different academic environment, and they may not feel as confident, or feel like an imposter, especially our underrepresented students. We want to normalize help-seeking behavior.”
To Woods, DEI and Student Affairs are a natural fit, and she appealed for continued involvement in DEI during discussions about her new position. In the year since she was hired to lead DEI efforts, Woods has led numerous workshops and trainings, collaborated with student organizations, launched the Diversity Fellows and DEI Ambassadors programs, and used her talent for networking to forge new connections throughout campus, including involving USC Gould in professional development programming for student athletes developed by USC Athletics, which also partners in this effort with USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism and USC Marshall School of Business. Woods was instrumental in bringing in Sean Kundu (JD 2007), vice president of corporate development for the San Francisco 49ers, as keynote speaker at a networking luncheon for USC football players. Woods also was the connection to other alumni including Casey Schwab (JD 2013), founder and CEO of Altius Sports Partners, which works with university athletic departments on NIL programs and athlete education, and Linda Hoos (JD 2001), associate vice president for USC’s Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX, who Woods also brought in as a speaker.

OPPORTUNITIES TO COLLABORATE
A born networker, Woods is constantly on the lookout for opportunities that might benefit the law school and students. She recently chatted up USC Annenberg Dean Willow Bay and Gordon Stables, director of Annenberg’s School of Journalism, about collaborating on projects. She also worked with a 1L who was president of her undergraduate improv group to set up an improv night for 1Ls in early October.

The word is getting out about the changes in Student Affairs, Woods says.

“I see a new energy among the team, and others in the law school tell me they notice it, too,” she says. “It feels really good. We’re going to do great work.”
SHINING A LIGHT ON “DARK MONEY”

Professor Abby Wood invited to testify before Senate committee about transparency and accountability in the courts

By Leslie Ridgeway

Abby Wood, professor of law, political science and public policy at the USC Gould School of Law, was asked to provide expert testimony on transparency and accountability in the courts before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary — Subcommittee on Federal Courts, Oversight, Agency Action and Federal Rights. The hearing took place May 3 in Washington, D.C.

Wood was invited to testify about the effects of “dark money” — political spending from groups that do not disclose the identity of donors — in the federal judiciary, and whether this practice erodes trust in the courts. She joined a panel of four other law and political science scholars and experts on campaign finance laws.

Wood, well known for her research on campaign financing and administrative law, emphasized three points in her testimony: how disclosures affect decision-making and why sources of amicus briefs should be disclosed; that claims that disclosure discourages free speech are disproportionate to any “chilling” of speech that actually occurs; and that dark money chips away at political trust.

“Well-designed disclosures can help us decide how to vote, what to buy, where to eat, which doctors and financial advisors to trust, and yes, which judges and justices and amici to trust as well,” Wood said.

Asked by committee Chairman Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse to explain why amicus disclosure is important, Wood noted that anonymous amici allow parties to get around page limits for briefs and slip in supplementary arguments, defeating the adversarial aspect of the legal system. Circling back to a previous argument that decision-making depends on knowledge about sources, Wood said disclosures can make the difference between justices reading or setting aside an amicus brief.

“We already know from something that Justice Ginsburg said a while back, that they put them in three piles — ‘don’t read, maybe read, definitely read,’” she said. The financial “source of the actual argument that comes before the court via an amicus might affect which pile it goes in. I think [disclosure is] really crucial.”

In written testimony, Wood referred to her 2015 survey of 2,000 adults of voting age about campaign features including disclosures of funding sources and support from outside groups, among other things. Campaign finance disclosure emerged as a top concern among these voters, she said.

“It’s important to understand the phases of how dark money is involved in our judicial process, even if not all of it can be regulated successfully,” said Wood, reflecting later on her testimony. She noted how dark money groups are a significant part of the vetting process, and explained that these groups also “spend a lot of money in support of, or opposing, the nominees during the confirmation process.”

“It’s important to understand the phases of how dark money is involved in our judicial process, even if not all of it can be regulated successfully.”

—Abby Wood
By Leslie Ridgeway

For University Professor of Law and Political Science Lee Epstein, a political theory class discussion about a march of American neo-Nazis on Skokie, Ill. in 1977 was the breakthrough moment that led to a career as a political scientist.

The march, proposed in a suburb of Chicago where dozens of Holocaust survivors lived, divided the ACLU and went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. While the march never took place, the case resonates in political and legal circles.

“The professor asked, ‘Would (social and political theorist) John Stuart Mill support that expression?’” says Epstein, who earned three degrees, including her PhD, in political science at Emory University in Atlanta, GA.

“I realized how you could take interesting theories and think about how to apply them to real world situations.”

Epstein, who returns to USC Gould School of Law after serving as the Shepley Distinguished University Professor at Washington University in St. Louis, is teaching Law and Society in the fall semester, followed by Constitutional Law and a seminar on the Supreme Court (co-taught with Adam Liptak of the New York Times) in the spring.

This is the first time she has taught Law and Society, and it has presented some welcome opportunities. “The course approaches law and society through landmark SCOTUS decisions,” says Epstein, whose research and scholarship focuses on judicial behavior. “I’m so enjoying the class. There are 140 students, all eager to learn about law, society, and the Constitution. Plus, I’m working with three teaching assistants who are Gould students, and they’re just amazing. They meet with the students once a week, I meet with the TAs once a week. It’s been a great experience.”

STUDENTS INFLUENCE TEACHING, RESEARCH

For Epstein, teaching and research are crucial elements of her identity, with each one informing the other. “My students push me to look at my research and the implications differently,” she says. “I have never viewed research and teaching as separate and distinct enterprises.”

A recipient of 12 grants from the National Science Foundation, Epstein has authored or co-authored more than 100 articles and essays and 18 books, including The Behavior of Federal Judges, with William M. Landes & Richard A. Posner (Harvard University Press) and An Introduction to Empirical Legal Research, with Andrew D. Martin (Oxford University Press). She is currently co-editing The Oxford Handbook on Judicial Behaviour (with Gunnar Grendstad, Urska Sadl, & Keren Weinshall).

Recent papers she has co-authored point to a favorable tilt toward business and religion in the Roberts Supreme Court. She has been cited or quoted in news outlets including The New York Times, The Washington Post, The New Yorker and The Wall Street Journal.

Epstein says she’s grateful to be back in Los Angeles at USC Gould.

“My colleagues are intellectually engaged and collegial, and the students, both undergrads and law students, are wonderful,” she says. “It’s hard to imagine a better set of circumstances. I’m thrilled to be back.”
INSPIRED TO SERVE

Professor Deepika Sharma launches the Housing Law and Policy Clinic with her expertise and passion for community lawyering and housing justice

By Leslie Ridgeway

With a nationally recognized track record of legal advocacy for housing security and empowering tenants, Professor Deepika Sharma shares her skills and expertise with budding lawyers as the founding director of USC Gould’s Housing Law and Policy Clinic (HLPC). Sharma’s professional and academic background includes a wide range of experiences and leadership roles as a lawmaker and litigator.

In her new role as a clinical assistant professor of law at USC Gould, Sharma brings considerable depth of experience representing tenants. Notably, she won a groundbreaking federal case that settled for $2.5 million on behalf of 13 Koreatown tenants and two community-based organizations against a real estate investment company group that illegally targeted monolingual Spanish-speaking tenants, families with children, as well as tenants with disabilities who were formerly unhoused and recipients of Section 8 vouchers.

The case made national headlines and is known for its novel settlement terms — but for Sharma, the key result is the ability of the law and organizing to come together as a tool for impact and an opportunity for lawyers to be of service to their community.

Sharma’s passion for housing justice is shaped by her personal experiences as a child, her own law school housing clinical experience and most importantly from the inspiration she draws from her clients’ resilience.

While at Public Counsel, the largest pro bono firm in the country, she also represented a low-income elderly couple whose landlord tried to evict them from their rent-controlled unit of over 20 years on the grounds that their young granddaughter — orphaned after her mother was killed in a car crash — was considered an illegal occupant since she was not on the original lease. Only after Sharma tracked down crucial paperwork and sent a demand letter did the landlord drop the case. “The landlord was betting that they wouldn’t get a lawyer,” Sharma told The New York Times to emphasize the importance of legal services for indigent tenants experiencing harassment.

ANSWERING THE CALL TO TRAIN FUTURE HOUSING LAWYERS

Gould’s HLPC students will similarly provide these much-needed services to tenants who would otherwise lose their homes.

“In 2021, [U.S. Attorney General] Merrick Garland called on law schools and law firms in California to help fight an ever-worsening housing crisis and USC Gould School of Law has answered that call with a dedicated Housing Law and Policy Clinic to not only serve the community but train much needed future housing lawyers,” says Sharma. She previously served as the director of housing security initiatives for Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and previously, as a director of housing policy for L.A. City Councilmember Nithya Raman, drafted amendments to strengthen the city’s Tenant Anti-Harassment Ordinance stemming from her years of direct service experiences.

“There have been many calls to our profession to use our legal skills when emergencies arise because lawyers can serve not only as specialists, we can also harness our legal training to respond to emerging needs as they arise,” Sharma says. “We can stand alongside communities on the front lines — promoting comprehensive policy reform and getting legal services out to them.”

Working with students in the clinic’s first year has been an energizing experience, Sharma says, and she hopes HLPC will expand to meet an enthusiastic demand.

“It’s empowering for students to witness injustice and realize that they have the agency and tools to do something about it,” she says.

The HLPC will teach law students to think broadly as future attorneys in how they can be part of a movement toward justice and equity for all.
By Leslie Ridgeway

Professor Mugambi Jouet sees opportunity to study American exceptionalism in criminal justice and beyond at USC Gould

For Professor Mugambi Jouet, joining the USC Gould School of Law is a kind of homecoming after traveling, working and studying the history and application of criminal justice around the world.

Jouet, associate professor of law, vacationed frequently in Los Angeles as a child to visit his father and is returning at an auspicious moment for criminal justice research and reform, at a time when the Supreme Court of the United States seems less favorable to the rights of the incarcerated, leaving state and local governments with opportunities to create change.

“California and the other 49 states are big laboratories for criminal justice,” he says. “Many debates are taking place in California about subjects such as penal reform and the abolition of capital punishment. Some experts believe that, in the coming years and decades, much of the change will have to come at the state and local levels. It’s exciting to be in California at present.”

Jouet’s research and teaching focus on the historical evolution of mass incarceration, the death penalty and juvenile justice, as well as the changing face of American exceptionalism in an age of polarization between conservatives and liberals. In 2017, Jouet published the book *Exceptional America: What Divides Americans from the World and from Each Other* (University of California Press).

“My research explores how peculiar American justice is comparatively, why America has the highest incarceration rate worldwide, and why it is the only Western democracy to retain capital punishment, even though it once was a trailblazer in introducing humanistic and rehabilitative sentencing principles,” Jouet explained. “There are numerous areas in which American society is distinctive — historically, culturally, racially, politically and legally. Today criminal justice is a microcosm of American exceptionalism in the original sense that America is an exception.”

His global background includes a PhD in law *summa cum laude* from Université Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne, JD *cum laude* from the Northwestern University, MPA in policy analysis from New York University and a bachelor’s degree in history from Rice University. His academic and professional experience include an assistant professorship at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, a Grey Fellowship at Stanford Law School, teaching a clinical course at Sciences Po in Paris, clerking at a U.N. war crimes tribunal in the Hague, and working as a public defender in Manhattan and the Bronx. He especially draws upon his experience in indigent defense when teaching criminal justice.

“I enjoy having students contribute their insights to the classroom, and I learn a lot from them,” he noted. His students not only read cases but learn how they are argued by analyzing appellate briefs and oral arguments. Students then have a chance to apply these skills by arguing simulated cases that Jouet designs. “My teaching is multifaceted as I draw upon a host of sources, ranging from traditional ones to litigation materials, documentaries and occasionally art. Novels and music can illustratively capture key social questions and historical periods. John Coltrane’s *Alabama*, for instance, can partly be understood as a reflection on criminal justice.”

Jouet’s research has been published or is forthcoming in numerous journals and law reviews, including the *American Journal of Comparative Law*, *American Journal of Criminal Law*, and the *American Journal of Legal History*, which recently awarded him the 2022 Alfred L. Brophy Prize for “Revolutionary Criminal Punishments: Treason, Mercy, and the American Revolution” (2021) for the most significant annual contribution in U.S. legal history.
Does technology build and support community or weaken and undermine it? USC Gould School of Law Visiting Assistant Professor Ángel Díaz poses such questions in his scholarship focusing on how social media and other technology intersects with racial discrimination.

His research covers everything from regulation of law enforcement surveillance tools such as license plate readers to prevent them from being used for mass surveillance, to content moderation by social media platforms and how profit and growth priorities can lead to the censorship of marginalized communities. Experience in both the public and private sector gives Díaz the foundation from which to conduct his investigations.

“I have worked with early stage technology companies to improve their privacy practices, and for public interest organizations advocating for constitutional rights in the digital age; both experiences inform my scholarship and advocacy,” says Díaz, a visiting assistant professor who will be with the USC Gould School of Law for two years.

That background includes serving as lecturer in law at UCLA, counsel in the Liberty & National Security Program at the New York University Brennan Center for Justice and an adjunct professor of clinical law at NYU School of Law, and a technology associate at Gunderson Dettmer LLP. He earned a bachelor’s degree in English and JD from University of California, Berkeley, where he had editing roles at the California Law Review and the Berkeley Technology Law Journal, in addition to working as a legal research and writing teaching assistant.

In his first semester at Gould, Díaz is teaching Race, Social Media and the Law, a seminar course that examines how social media companies create new forms of racial discrimination and perpetuate existing forms. He is inspired by his students’ experiences with social media and their desire to craft practical solutions to address digital discrimination.

“Our class incorporates lessons from critical race theory and movement law, using them to examine social media’s relationship with governments,” Díaz says. “Rather than thinking of social media solely in terms of freedom of speech and privacy, we analyze social media’s role in automating racial stratification through a private bureaucracy that evades public scrutiny.”


Born and raised in Los Angeles, Díaz says he appreciates the opportunity to tackle inequality by connecting theory to practice in his hometown.

“It’s great that USC is in a vibrant place like L.A. with a long history of community organizing and forward-thinking policy interventions,” he says. “I’m proud to help train a new generation of attorneys to continue that legacy and help address the urgent problems confronting our city.”
FRANITA TOLSON

What was the most challenging part of the role amid the pandemic?
It was the high degree of uncertainty. No one knew the extent to which COVID would disrupt society, we just knew that it would be a disruption and it was difficult trying to plan for every contingency. Looking back, I am proud of what we did ... we managed to deliver a world-class legal education and build community without sacrificing safety.

What accomplishment are you proudest of as vice dean?
The first is the Race, Racism and the Law requirement that the faculty adopted last year. As vice dean, I was responsible for overseeing the curriculum, and I also served as co-chair of the committee that recommended it be a required course to graduate. In those dual roles, I was able to advocate for this requirement along with a number of my colleagues (including committee co-chair Professor Ariela Gross). Second, I am proud of the Visiting Assistant Professor program we started at the law school this year, which will help us serve as a pipeline for prospective law professors, many of whom are from historically underrepresented groups.

What was the most rewarding part?
The best part of being vice dean was the relationships that I built with my colleagues, various staff members, and many of our students. At a very basic level, the job of the vice dean is to be of service to others. That is the job. It is unsurprising that one leaves the vice dean position having stronger relationships with so many of the people who make Gould a great place to work. It was a privilege to serve in the role, and I am honored that my colleagues trusted me with the responsibility.

THOMAS LYON

What excites you most about this leadership role?
I've always loved USC Gould, and have served on just about every committee in my 27 years here. But as vice dean I get to sit "ex officio" on all the major committees, including Appointments, meet regularly with Dean Guzman and the Vice Deans Lybby Carroll and Donald Scotten, and work with the faculty and staff on building the curriculum. As such, I can see all the moving parts that make USC Gould a great law school.

What goals do you hope to accomplish?
Franita’s a tough act to follow, and so if I can keep things running as smoothly as she did during the toughest times of COVID, then I’ll be happy. We’ve been through some very tough times. We’ve always been a very collegial faculty, and it’s the relaxed and informal personal encounters that make us so. We’re a growing faculty, and have a large group of young scholars, and my goal is to instill and nurture our values of peer mentoring, rigorous scholarship and student-centered teaching. With respect to teaching, I’d like to help expand our JD offerings at the same time that we build the undergraduate major. With respect to scholarship, one particularly exciting opportunity is to form partnerships with other law schools to encourage visiting teachers and scholars, and to give our faculty similar opportunities.
EXPLORING
“COMPOUNDED DISADVANTAGE”

Professor Emily Ryo receives NSF grant to create a comprehensive dataset for criminal and immigration law research

By Leslie Ridgeway

Emily Ryo

USC Gould School of Law Professor Emily Ryo is the recipient of a $337,000 National Science Foundation grant supporting her work in creating a unique, comprehensive dataset of immigration courts and judges that she hopes will advance the next generation of research on intersections between criminal and immigration law.

Ryo, professor of law and sociology, whose research is focused on immigration and criminal justice, will spend the next three years combing through government and other data sources on the “Compounded Disadvantage” study, which endeavors to answer three questions about immigrants in deportation proceedings: whether and to what extent racial/ethnic disparities exist in legal outcomes for immigrants with a criminal history; the role of judicial bias in creating these disparities; and how legal representation lessens or worsens inequalities in the system.

“For immigrants, even minor and relatively routine interactions with law enforcement, such as a traffic stop, can dramatically increase the chances of detention and deportation. Immigrants with a criminal history are some of the least legally protected groups in our justice system,” Ryo says. “Many are long-term residents with families and deep social ties to the U.S. immigration and criminal justice systems are very much intertwined, and the human and socioeconomic consequences of that convergence are important to understand.”

Ryo plans to spend the first year of the three-year study collecting and cleaning data and documenting how it can be used; the second year analyzing the data; and the third year on scholarly examination and writing papers on the findings. She will be assisted by students, including law students, in the project: “It’s exciting to get to mentor and train students in the field,” she says.

Also gratifying is the potential for the project to help other scholars understand the immigrant experience with the American criminal justice system and immigration court process. Ryo believes her dataset will benefit multiple disciplines including law, criminology, public policy, sociology and related fields, and she looks forward to helping future researchers in their own investigations.

“We will be building the immigration judge dataset from scratch and plan to merge it with data from immigration courts to make it useful and available for other researchers,” Ryo says. “After years of trying to analyze a variety of administrative data from the government, I realized how difficult it is to make sense of it.”

SHARING EXPERTISE AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

Ryo’s past research on immigration adjudication has been of interest to government agencies wanting to improve their processes. At the end of April, Ryo was asked by the United States Citizenship and Immigration System to participate in a virtual briefing to discuss “The Importance of Race, Gender and Religion in Naturalization Adjudication in the United States,” research by Ryo and a graduate student co-author published in early 2022 in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It was the first time an agency from the Department of Homeland Security invited Ryo for such a briefing, she says.

The study revealed that naturalization adjudication outcomes are different based on race, gender and religion.

Ryo says the USCIS was interested in her findings, the study’s goals and how the analysis was conducted.

“They were very engaged and wanted to know my next steps in that area of research and what steps they should be taking,” she says. “As a researcher, one of the most gratifying aspects of my work is to help the government become more transparent and addressing problems that might be related to disparities in our adjudication system.”

—

42 USCLaw magazine
SELECT RECENT PUBLICATIONS

JONATHAN BARNETT
“The ‘License as Tax’ Fallacy”
Michigan Technology Law Review (2022)

ROBIN CRAIG (with J.B. Ruhl)
“Designing Extreme Climate Change Scenarios for Anticipatory Governance”
Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (Forthcoming)

FELIPE JIMÉNEZ
“Legal Principles, Law, and Tradition”
Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities (2022)

DOROTHY LUND
“Asset Managers as Regulators”
University of Pennsylvania Law Review (Forthcoming)

THOMAS LYON (with Colleen Sullivan, Stacia N. Stolzenberg, Shanna Williams)
“Children's Underextended Understanding of Touch”
Psychology, Public Policy, and Law (Forthcoming)

JEESOO NAM
“Lenity and the Meaning of Statutes”
Southern California Law Review (Forthcoming)

MARCELA PRIETO
“El Populismo y Su Antagonismo Hacia El Derecho Internacional: Lecciones Desde Latinoamérica (Populism’s Antagonism to International Law: Lessons from Latin America)”
American Journal of International Law (2022)

EMILY RYO (with Reed Humphrey)
“Citizenship Disparities”
Minnesota Law Review (Forthcoming)

ELYN R. SAKS
“Holding onto the center: Lived experience and the construct of schizophrenia”
Schizophrenia Research (2022)

MICHAEL SIMKOVIC (with Laleh Jalilian, Irene Wu, Jakun Ing, Xuezhi Dong, Joshua Sadik, George Pan, Heather Hitson, Erin Thomas, Tristan Grogan, Nirav Kamdar)
“Evaluation of Telemedicine Use for Anesthesiology Pain Division: Retrospective, Observational Case Series Study”
Journal of Medical Internet Research (JMIR Perioperative Medicine) (2022)

FRANITA TOLSON
“Enforcing the Political Constitution”
Stanford Law Review Online (2022)

ABBY K. WOOD
“Voters Use Campaign Finance Transparency and Compliance Information”
Political Behavior (2022)

To view the full list of articles, awards and presentations, visit: gould.usc.edu/faculty/scholarship/

AWARDS & NOTES

PROF. ELYN SAKS received the American Psychiatric Association’s 2022 Patient Advocacy Award, which recognizes a public figure who champions the rights and needs of persons with mental illness and substance use disorders.

PROF. DOROTHY LUND and her co-author won the 2022 Cleary Gottlieb Law Prize for best ECGI law paper, for “The Corporate Governance Machine” (Columbia Law Review).

PROF. MUGAMBI JOUET received the Brophy Prize from the American Journal of Legal History, in recognition of his paper — “Revolutionary Criminal Punishments: Treason, Mercy, and the American Revolution” — which “most significantly breaks new ground and adds new insights” to the study of U.S. legal history.

PROF. LEE EPSTEIN along with her co-authors, received the 2022 Lasting Contribution Award from the American Political Science Association (APSA) Law and Courts Section for their article, “Untangling the Causal Effects of Sex on Judging.”

PROF. FRANITA TOLSON was elected to the American Law Institute.

PROF. ROBIN CRAIG received the Clyde O. Martz Teaching Award from the Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law — the highest teaching honor the foundation gives. Prof. Craig was also elected secretary of the American College of Environmental Lawyers.

PROF. ALEXANDER CAPRON was named the 2022-2024 Phi Kappa Phi Scholar, the nation’s oldest multidisciplinary honor society; the award recognizes excellence in teaching, research, and public service.

PROF. LEE EPSTEIN (ranked No. 26) and PROF. THOMAS LYON (No. 71) were among the nation’s most-cited law professors by Google Scholar H-Index All.

PROF. EDWARD MCCAFFERY (ranked No. 7) and PROF. MICHAEL SIMKOVIC (No. 22) were among the nation’s most-cited tax law professors by Google Scholar H-Index All, over the past five years.
GRADUATES CELEBRATED AT 122 ND USC GOULD COMMENCEMENT

Graduates complete degrees through the pandemic

In commencement ceremonies on May 13, USC Gould School of Law celebrated 213 JD graduates, followed by a record-setting 653 graduates of USC Gould’s Graduate and International Programs, all of whom completed their degrees through the pandemic. The ceremonies, at the USC University Village Great Lawn, featured influential civil rights attorney, activist and author Constance “Connie” L. Rice, who advised JD students not to “let democracy die in the apathy of silence,” and John Iino (JD 1987), chief diversity officer of the global law firm Reed Smith LLP, who told G&IP graduates, “Find your motivation and you can change the world.” The graduates were also addressed by 3L class president Oluwatomisin T. “Tomi” Johnson, Student Bar Association (SBA) president Rebecca Alch (JD) and Chandra Montgomery, a graduate of the Master of Studies in Law program, as well as Professor and former Dean Bob Rasmussen.
“Find your motivation and you can change the world.” —John Iino (JD 1987)
What are your plans for the Gould Board of Councilors?
I really believe that we’re at a great inflection point to take Gould’s reputation as one of the premier law schools in the country to the next level. As a board, we can best support the dean and his team in this effort by focusing on two main areas: First, the execution of aligned strategic priorities, including the new building campaign and the initiative to support Gould’s need-based and general scholarships. These projects will make Gould an even more attractive destination for the best students and faculty.

Second is continuing to increase engagement in giving among the alumni, including by expanding the base of giving: the percentage of alumni who make donations. When I started my term, I told the board about two questions I ponder now that I’m retired: What got me to where I am, and what do I want my legacy to be? Gould is a key part of the answer to both questions and I hope to increase the number of people who also feel that way.

Next February, we plan to hold the first in-person mentor lunch (alumni and first year students) since the pandemic. We will get the board back together in person regularly. We’re also talking with the dean and his team about how to most effectively engage with the broader base of alumni, whether it’s reunions or other impactful special events.

What activities have you engaged in as chair?
I had the honor and privilege of speaking at orientation for first year students. I am still both humbled and energized by that experience. The level of awareness, maturity, energy and accomplishment in this class is through the roof. I welcomed them into the Trojan/Gould Family and encouraged them to make full use of it. Alumni want to see students succeed and the school bolster its reputation. I also went to the C. David Molina First Generation Professionals Program reception and saw the significant positive impact on those who participate.

How did your Gould education help you in your career — and how will it help you as chair?
As I wrote my remarks for orientation, I realized key parts of the mindset I developed over the course of my career had roots in my time at Gould. For instance, in my office I had a framed saying, “Life begins at the end of your comfort zone.” One of my more meaningful activities at Gould was joining the Post-Conviction Justice Project representing inmates at Terminal Island. Working in an unfamiliar environment and being trusted to create and execute a plan enables you to assess the situation, build a hypothesis on how to proceed and learn and adjust as you go. And, of course, Gould is a place where you build deep relationships, where people root for each other to succeed. Thirty-six years after graduation, I still have a core group of friends from law school who have stuck with me through my many moves around the country.

“Gould is a place where you build deep relationships.”
—Tom Larkins, chair, USC Gould Board of Councilors
NEW USC GOULD BOARD OF COUNCILORS MEMBERS

**Karine Akopchikyan (JD 2015)**

Karine Akopchikyan is a litigation associate at Allen Matkins LLP, having previously worked in the business litigation practice group of Stubbs Alderton & Markiles LLP, and in commercial and insurance coverage litigation at Lathrop & Gage. After obtaining teaching credentials, she pursued her interest in law, starting at Loyola Law School, later transferring to USC Gould School of Law. Akopchikyan is serving a two-year term as a member of the Board of Councilors while serving as president of the USC Gould Alumni Association. Akopchikyan volunteers as an attorney proctor for the Los Angeles Superior Court’s Teen Court Program, which focuses on rehabilitating juvenile offenders. Her husband, Ovsep Akopchikyan is an administrative law judge in the California Office of Tax Appeals.

**Amber Finch (JD 2002)**

Amber Finch is managing partner in Reed Smith LLP’s Los Angeles office and is a member of the firm’s insurance recovery group. Before joining the firm in 2011, she was a senior associate at Howrey LLP in Los Angeles and practiced at Brown, White & Osborn LLP and at Sheppard Mullin LLP, also in Los Angeles. Finch is a past president of the nonprofit Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, and is on the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles board of directors. From 2007-08, she was an adjunct professor in legal writing, research, and advocacy at USC Gould School of Law. While a law student, she was a semi-finalist and board member of the Hale Moot Court Honors Program and a judicial extern for a federal judge. She earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Stanford University.

**David Taghioff (BS 1995)**

David Taghioff is CEO of Library Pictures International, LLC, a film investment company. He has extensive experience working in the global media and entertainment industry, with an emphasis on emerging markets. Previously, he was the co-head of global client strategy and executive of corporate development at Creative Artists Agency. He earned a bachelor’s degree in planning and development from the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy in 1995 and his JD in 1998 from Santa Clara University, with a focus on intellectual property law. His daughter, Allana, is in the music industry program at USC Thornton School of Music.

**Harry E. Sloan**

Harry E. Sloan is a founder, public company CEO and investor in the media, entertainment and technology industries. He is former chairman and CEO of MGM Studios, Inc. Over the past decade, Sloan and partner, former CBS President Jeff Sagansky, have raised aggregate gross proceeds of over $5 billion in public market SPACs (Special Purpose Acquisition Companies) to invest in emerging businesses with innovative thinking and business models. As chairman and CEO of Eagle Equity Partners LLC, Sloan has taken public seven companies including DraftKings in 2020 and Ginkgo Bioworks, in a record deal valued at $17.5 billion in 2021. Sloan is a director of both public companies. In January 2022, Sloan and his partners launched Screaming Eagle Acquisition Corp with $750 million in proceeds. Screaming Eagle is the largest IPO of a public acquisition vehicle since March 2021. Sloan, chairman and CEO of MGM Studios from 2005-2010, previously founded and led two public companies in the media arena, New World Entertainment in Los Angeles, and SBS Broadcasting, S.A., one of Europe’s largest broadcasters. Currently, Sloan is a member of the Lions Gate Entertainment board of directors. Sloan is also a board member for the Pacific Council on International Policy, an independent organization committed to building the capacity of Los Angeles and California for impact on global issues, discourse, and policy.
Coming full circle

Army veteran and counterintelligence officer deepens expertise in defense with USC Gould

By Becca Von Sambeck

In 2000, John Esparza was hit with disappointment when he received the news he had not gained admission to USC to pursue his bachelor’s degree.

More than two decades later, he graduated from his dream school after completing the online Master of Studies in Law (MSL) program at USC Gould School of Law.

He previously earned a certificate in Homeland Security and Public Policy from USC before being hired as a counterintelligence officer by the U.S. Department of Defense, where he’s worked for the past nine years.

Still, Esparza felt his USC journey was not quite over.

"It’s a full circle moment, a lifelong journey completed 22 years later. It’s quite a goal to achieve for myself, a personal goal I had," Esparza says.

Esparza pursued higher education elsewhere, but paused his studies to join the Army as a counterintelligence special agent.

“I had a lot of great opportunities open up to me in the military. I was deployed to Iraq twice, and I was stationed in Korea for a year. When I got out in 2009, I stayed on the East Coast and got a job in Washington D.C. and worked in the defense contracting sector for a couple of years, and then I decided it was time to finish out my degree," he says.

Esparza went back to school full time at American University to study film, writing and directing a short film that was part of the GI Film Festival in D.C. He graduated in 2021.

"When I was looking to pursue a graduate degree, I always thought of USC as where I wanted to be. I saw there were degrees available in law, and especially with the Privacy Law and Cybersecurity Certificate, it made sense as that was very applicable to what I’ve been doing at work,” he explains.

Working in intelligence, Esparza is well aware of the laws and regulations the government must adhere to, and he knew a deeper understanding of the law would be “very beneficial” to his career.

Reflecting on his MSL coursework, Esparza noted “Business Organizations” as a particular program highlight, as he was able to immediately put the learnings to use at his current position.

As a working professional and father of two young children, Esparza needed the flexibility of an online graduate program. He noted that he would not have been able to complete the program without the support of his wife, who was fully on board with his higher education goals.

“I would talk to my wife about the potential graduate programs I was looking at, and she would always say, 'Don’t just do it just for a degree, do it because you’re going to really enjoy the courses and it’s going to benefit you in the future.' That’s great advice, and when I found the MSL program, I had her support,” he said.

This article was originally published on USC Online.
Daniel Ahn (JD 2004), recently joined Reed Smith LLP as a partner in the firm’s Global Regulatory Enforcement practice group. Previously, Ahn served for 10 years as a deputy chief, acting chief, and senior litigation counsel at the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Central District of California.

David Ajalat (JD 2012) was promoted to partner in technology practice in Latham & Watkins LLP’s Santa Monica office.

Elizabeth Atlee (JD 1993) was named to Latino Leaders Magazine’s Top 100 Latinas of 2022 list.

Carolynn Beck (JD 2009) joined Eisner LLP as partner in New York.

Mili Davé (LLM 2017) was elevated to agent in WME’s brand partnerships division where she builds WME’s footprint across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

Steffi Gascón Hafen (JD 2010) was named managing partner of Snell & Wilmer’s San Diego office.

Shaun Gordon (BS 2011, JD 2014) was named to the 2022 Southern California Rising Stars list by the Super Lawyers rating service.

Karen Grant-Selma (JD 1994) was honored with the Corporate Excellence award at the Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles Foundation’s 46th Annual Scholarship Fundraiser and Awards Luncheon.

Meghan Grim (JD 2013) joined the Los Angeles County Counsel’s Office as deputy county counsel in the dependency trial division. She also recently welcomed a baby boy.

Ximeng Guo (LLM 2013) started a new position as legal officer for the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs in New York City.


Kelsey McGregor (JD 2015) joined the USC Gould International Human Rights Clinic for six months as a senior supervising attorney. McGregor, counsel at WilmerHale in Los Angeles, was awarded the firm’s prestigious Pickering Fellowship, allowing her to be seconded to the clinic.

Mike Mikawa (JD 2017) started a new position as trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, Antitrust Division in San Francisco.

Marisa Murillo (JD 2002) was named to the 2022 Notable Women in Law list in Crain’s Chicago Business.

Joshlyn R. Pulliam (JD 2005) was appointed by Gov. Gavin Newsom as a judge in the Riverside County Superior Court.

Amy Proctor (JD 2011), of Irell & Manella LLP, Michael Davis (JD 2011), of Greenberg Traurig, LLP, and Alexander James “AJ” Merton (JD 2011) of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan, LLP were recognized in Bloomberg Law’s 2022 “They’ve Got Next: 40 Under 40” list.

Niyati Shah (LLM 2022) joined Prime Video & Amazon Studios as a legal consultant in their Originals (India) Division.

Sanjana Swaroop (LLM 2016) founded EcoDhaga, a company that brings sustainable fashion to India and aims to minimize textile waste.
IN MEMORIAM

ASHLEY NISSENSBERG JOFFE (JD 2005), 41, died on May 7, 2022 after being diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer in 2021. She is remembered as a compassionate, joyful and kind person who was a fierce and effective advocate for her clients. Joffe is survived by her husband, Brett, and her three children.

IRA LISTON (JD 2012) died on June 1, 2022. After graduating from law school, Liston worked as a staff immigration attorney at the Public Law Center in Santa Ana, Calif. He advocated zealously for the human treatment of his clients, most of whom were victims of sex trafficking.

HEATHER GRAY (JD 1996) died on July 30, 2022, at age 50. Gray was the executive producer and showrunner of the CBS daytime talk show The Talk. For her work on The Talk, Gray earned Daytime Emmy awards for Outstanding The Talk, Entertainment in 2016 and 2018, along with an NAACP Image Award in 2016. She is survived by her adoring friends, aunts, and uncle, her loving mother Carol, sister Nichole, her goddaughter Parker, and her 7-year-old cocker spaniel Winston.

JUDGE KATHLEEN M. WHITE (JD 1984) died on July 31, 2022, at age 68. Judge White was appointed to the Yolo County Superior Court bench in 2003; she served with distinction until retiring due to illness in July 2018. She served the judicial branch statewide, teaching seminars and writing numerous educational materials. She is survived by her husband of 35 years, Ray Ramirez, and sons James, John (Jack), and Matthew.

DAVID BERRY (JD 1983) died on Oct. 3 at the age of 66 following a battle with lymphatic cancer.

After graduation, Berry led a successful career handling civil litigation cases across the country. He is survived by his beloved wife, Paula; mother, Marjorie, and sister, Susan, of Kendall Park, N.J.; brother, Thomas of Bonita Springs, Fla.; and two nieces and two nephews.

ANDREA LYNN KUSHNER (JD 1997) passed away on Oct. 18. Kushner earned a BA from UCLA before earning her JD from USC Gould School of Law. She went on to complete an LLM in taxation at Loyola Marymount Law School.

Kushner practiced law at several Los Angeles law firms and in 2015, joined Bernstein Private Wealth Management as a director and senior vice president.

Kushner is survived by her two children, Benjamin and Carrie, her father Sheldon and brother Allen.

HOWARD SLUSHER (JD 1972)

Howard Slusher (JD 1972), a preeminent sports lawyer who helped to build Nike into a major sports company, passed away in Portland, Ore. on July 13 at age 85.

Slusher was born in Jersey City, N.J. and grew up in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y. with his parents and younger brother. He attended Boys High School where he ran track, played baseball, starred on the football team, and was the president of his senior class. He earned a bachelor’s degree from Brooklyn College, winning a Rhodes Scholarship after graduation, and earned a PhD from Ohio State University.

He taught Psychology of the Sport at the University of Maryland and at USC, and is the author of four books. After earning his JD at the USC Gould School of Law, Slusher represented numerous top athletes and entertainers. He was known for his tough negotiating style, earning the nicknames “Holdout Howie” and “Agent Orange.” He worked at Nike for more than 30 years, and was responsible for the construction of the Nike headquarters.

While his work was deeply important to him, his family and personal pursuits were of greater importance. Despite leaving the teaching profession in 1969, he remained a lifelong teacher to those around him and always encouraged others to think outside the box and accomplish great things. He was an avid marathon runner, completing the Boston Marathon, and enjoyed photography as a hobby.

Slusher, along with his wife Rebecca, son John (JD 1994), vice president of global sports marketing at Nike, and daughter-in-law Christine Carr (JD 1994), have generously supported the USC Gould School of Law through the years.

Slusher is survived by his wife, Rebecca; brother Norman; his children, John, Jennifer, and Emily; and his grandchildren, Samantha, Alex, Sydney, and Jason. He loved his dogs, Kachka and Cooper, who were his constant companions. He was a loving and devoted husband, father, and “Grumps” to his four grandchildren and a mentor to many others.
Thank you for your support of the USC Gould School of Law. We strive to maintain accuracy in the preparation of the Donor Annual Report. This report includes gifts recorded as of June 30, 2022. If your name is misspelled, omitted or incorrectly listed, we sincerely apologize. Please contact us in the Office of Development and Alumni Relations at 213-821-3560 with any questions or to inform us of any errors.

LEADERSHIP DONORS
This list acknowledges individuals who made gifts, new pledges and pledge payments of $1,000 or more from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

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“As a first generation law school student, I am extremely grateful to be a recipient of the Fulton W. “Bill” Haight Scholarship. I want to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for your generosity and kind-heartedness in providing this scholarship. It has greatly benefitted my time here at USC and enabled me to succeed both individually and academically.

This past year and a half at USC Gould has been an amazing experience. My professors are brilliant, inspiring individuals, who motivate me to become the best, most diligent professional I can be. Additionally, the students and staff at Gould are beyond supportive and have made my time here better than I could have ever imagined.”

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“I grew up in a small town. Moab, Utah is unique in many ways. It is nearly impossible to find another rural American town as varied or with citizens as involved. I always knew that I wanted to attend a law school that embodied my community’s values — collaboration, respect, hard work, and happiness. While spending time at home and applying to law school during the COVID-19 pandemic, I realized these values were even more important to me. USC Gould was the only school that stood out as a place where students seemed both academically challenged and genuinely happy. I was excited to work in the Smithsonian Office of General Counsel and with my favorite professor, water law expert Robin Craig, as her research assistant last summer. I hope to make an impact at Gould during my three years and to continue Gould’s tradition of academic excellence and sense of community. Without the burden of student loan debt, these goals seem even more achievable. I truly cannot thank you enough for your generosity.”

—ROBIN WILLSCHEIDT, CLASS OF 2024
“When I received my acceptance letter from USC, I was overcome with emotions. I was both so thankful and excited, but scared that I would not be able to attend given the costs of attending. However, after the financial aid office notified me I would receive this generous scholarship, I instantly realized my dream of attending USC Gould became a reality and that is a feeling I will always cherish.”

—OMAR ABDELHAMID, CLASS OF 2024

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Arieh B. Lanin ’00
“I could never fully express my appreciation for your enduring generosity towards the Gould community. Your contributions have allowed myself, and others alike, the rare opportunity to pursue our legal education at our dream school, something I never thought possible. Growing up in rural Michigan, as a first-generation college student, I had always felt my dreams of attending an elite law school such as USC Gould were simply out of reach. Even if I had been accepted, I knew I likely would not be able to manage the daunting cost of tuition. I would again like to thank you for helping support my legal education and for being a part of the Gould community.”

—STEVEN MOORE, CLASS OF 2024

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If you have included USC Gould in your estate plans, please let us know so we can properly thank you and recognize you as a member of the USC Gould Heritage Society. Please contact Margaret Kean, Assistant Dean of Development at mkean@law.usc.edu or call the Development and Alumni Relations Office at 213-821-3560.

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“I thank you for your generosity and kindness in funding this scholarship and for your continued support of the Trojan Family. As a USC alumna myself, I feel particularly honored to be attending the USC Gould School of Law and to be supported by the legacy of fellow Trojans. Since starting law school at USC, I have been nothing but impressed with both the administration and professors, and I am so happy to be back on a campus that I love. I feel supported by my friends and peers in class, challenged and inspired by my professors, and motivated to succeed by the administration and my family. I feel at home at USC and excited for the challenges ahead in my law school career.”

—MADELINE GOOSSEN, CLASS OF 2024

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Despite the unusual nature of my first year of law school during the COVID-19 pandemic, I have never had a more fulfilling and positive academic experience. I was pleased to be able to join the USC community on campus this past fall semester. I have absolutely fallen in love with the campus and the community. My professors and peers have welcomed me with open arms, and I can tell that I will have many lifelong friends. My professors have inspired me to strive for greatness and to bring passion and enthusiasm to all that I do. I am incredibly thankful for the experiences and opportunities that Gould has provided to me. I deeply appreciate your generosity which has allowed me to follow this path at USC, which I hope will not only serve me personally but will help serve those who otherwise might not be able to serve themselves.”
—SOPHIA BOTTI, CLASS OF 2023
ALL TOGETHER NOW

Twenty-seven USC Gould School of Law classes from 1975 to 2017 came together Sept. 24 for the first in-person class reunion since 2019, hosted by the USC Gould Alumni Association at Town and Gown.

1. Nearly 300 alumni enjoyed food, drinks and reminiscing with classmates.
2. From left: Diana Iketani Iorlano (JD 1997) with Ayano Ichida (JD 1997)
3. David Flores (BA 1978, JD 1981) and Terry Solis
4. From left: Bryan Kelly (JD 2002), Robin Mahapatra (JD 2002) and Ayesha Mahapatra (JD 2002)
5. From left: Nicole Martinez (JD 2012) with Timothy Fox (JD 2011)
6. From left: Philip Lee (JD 2012) with Henrietta Wong (JD 2012)
7. From left: Justin Ward (JD 2000), Justin Sanders (JD 2000), and Filemon Kevin Samson (JD 2000)
8. From left: Stephen Demopoulos (JD 2012), Justin Effres (JD 2012), and Sohrab Izadi (JD 2012)
9. Eva and John Iino (JD 1987)
10. From left: Steve Mindel (JD 1985), Nancy Mindel (JD 1986), Lori Levin-Borcover (JD 1985), and Michelle Stern (JD 1985)
Each graduate of the USC Gould School of Law has their own story. What the members of the USC Gould School of Law Heritage Society share is appreciation for their experiences at Gould, relationships they formed there, and their desire to give back to future generations through philanthropy. To read more of their stories, please go to https://uscgould.giftplans.org/.

“Each of us looks at our undergraduate and graduate school backgrounds, and they played such an important part in terms of who we are, how we view the world, our career success, and our personal success,” says John Weiss, who earned his undergraduate and law degrees at USC in 1975 and 1979, respectively. “We want to make that possible for others.”

To join the growing membership of the Heritage Society, please contact the USC Gould Development and Alumni Relations Office to discuss how estate planning can support your family’s financial goals while leaving a legacy that benefits future students. Call (213) 821-3560 or email Margaret Kean, assistant dean of Development at mkean@law.usc.edu.
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University Club  
Friday, January 27, 2023  

MENTOR LUNCH  
Town and Gown  
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HALE MOOT COURT  
HONORS PROGRAM  
FINAL ROUND COMPETITION  
Norris Theatre  
Friday, March 3, 2023  

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TAX INSTITUTE  
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Jonathan Club  
March 2, 2023  
(In-Person and Virtual)  

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INSTITUTE  
Fairmont Miramar Hotel  
March 20–21, 2023  
(In-Person and Virtual)  

For details about these events and others, please visit: gould.usc.edu/events.