

# Song Remains the Same at UCI Law

## EDUCATION: New dean will promote tech, business ties

By SUBRINA HUDSON

L. Song Richardson has a problem saying no, a habit that landed her in academia.

The longtime criminal defense attorney was partner at a boutique Seattle firm when she decided to take a Midwest road trip for a visiting professorship at **DePaul University**. That was 2005. Today she's the newly appointed dean of the **University of California-Irvine School of Law**.



Richardson: UCI Law 'not known for connections to business community ... which is a shame'

Richardson served as interim dean after founding dean **Erwin Chemerinsky** left last summer to run the law school at the **University of California-Berkeley**.

UCI Chancellor **Howard Gillman** said his law school has exceeded expectations since it opened in 2009, a trend he expects to continue.

"Make no mistake: Dean Richardson will be a great leader and partner to those legal professionals who work every day to serve our business and nonprofit institutions to ensure a brighter future for our region," Gillman said.

Richardson's vision is to redefine legal education by focusing even more on technology, the global community, and the school's relationship with the private sector in Orange County.

She inherits a program that's managed to fly into some legal headwinds. From 2007 to 2016, U.S. law school applications were down 33% from 84,000 to 56,000, according to the Law School Admission Council. Applications turned

up a bit last year, but UCI Law has consistently beaten the national average.

"What's been interesting is that UCI has not had that problem," Richardson said. "Ours (applications) are up 33% from last year."

The new dean is also aware that making a living as a lawyer has grown more challenging—a tighter job market at the outset, the burden of school debt, and the loss of some dependable revenue streams due to technology.

"A lot of corporate clients are not willing to pay to have first-years working on cases," said **Thomas Suh**, co-managing partner at **LTLAttorneys** and head of its Irvine office. "Yes, first-years contribute, but remember they're green, so they take more time. We also know of a lot of law firms doing away with summer associate programs because they know they can't bill it to the client."

Richardson acknowledges the larger challenges facing the industry but is unfazed by her ability or the school's to adapt.

"We want to be where legal education is going and not where it's been," she said. "The benefit we have is we're a new school. We were created to be innovative and different. We're not mired in the old ways of thinking, so we're nimble."

### Quick Start

UCI Law was the first new public law school in California in nearly 50 years when it opened in 2009. It's grown from an inaugural class of 60 students to 159 in the class of 2020.

Chemerinsky, a constitutional scholar, thrust the school into the national spotlight, helping it reach No. 30 of 200 American Bar Association-accredited law schools in U.S. News & World Report's 2015 ranking. It's now No. 28.

**Star Leal**, a third-year law student who's expecting her fourth child, wanted to stay in West Palm Beach, Fla., with her family.

"UCI Law had a different environment," she said. "Students are not a number. The require-



No ivory tower: new dean says she'll still teach a class in spring

ment to take one of eight core clinics, from international justice to intellectual property, was also attractive.

"Within two weeks of joining a clinic, I was in the courtroom making my own argument in front of a judge," Leal said. "Little things like talking to a client, it's a skill to work on, but when you do pro bono for three years, it helps."

Suh of LTL Attorneys said the practical experience will help UCI Law build its reputation in the legal community and give students an edge over Ivy League graduates.

"Every school has a reputation, from Yale being more academic to Stanford having more technically trained litigators because of Silicon Valley," Suh said. "When [UCI Law students] get out, they can hit the ground running, and eventually its reputation will grow."

### Shaping a Legacy

In addition to a curriculum focused on practical experience, Richardson said the key to the school's success also hinges on relationships with the OC legal and business communities. She often met with local executives, even before she became interim dean in July.

"We're not as known for our connections with the private community, the business community, the entrepreneurial community in Orange County and abroad, which is a shame," she said.

**William Rooklidge**, a partner at **Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP**, recalls Richardson approaching the firm to host a welcome mixer for incoming students. The rooftop event in July included 10 other firms, such as **Brown Rudnick LLP** in Irvine and **Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth**, whose Newport Beach office ranks No. 3 in OC attorneys, based on the Business Journal's March list. Gibson Dunn is No. 5, and just hired three UCI Law graduates.

"We wanted to show not only our firm but

other partner firms that joined with us, that the Orange County community is solidly behind UCI and that we view the law students and graduates as being integral to the community," he said.

UCI Law has also partnered with the OC chapter of the **Young Presidents Organization** to launch a CEO fellowship program next semester to give students additional internship opportunities with top companies.

Richardson joined UCI's faculty in 2014. Chemerinsky soon asked her to chair a committee, and she shortly thereafter became senior associate dean.

"It wasn't something I ever thought about doing or sought out to do," she said of becoming an administrator.

It's also true of teaching.

As the daughter of an African-American Army lieutenant colonel and a Korean immigrant, Richardson said the obstacles her parents faced as an interracial couple, in addition to her own experiences, spurred her legal calling.

After graduating from **Harvard University** and **Yale Law**, she established herself as an expert in criminal law and criminal procedure, working as a state and federal public defender in Seattle and as an assistant counsel at the **NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund**.

"There was no world in which I wanted to become a professor," she said. "I wanted to be a practitioner and make change in the world."

Then came DePaul. That one class on criminal procedure, and the campus environment left a lasting impression. Richardson ended up loving her new career and the opportunity to challenge herself and her students.

"I realized that my public service desires and all of the things that motivate me were things that still motivated me as a professor, so that's why I decided to teach." ■

## PEOPLE on the Move

HIRINGS, PROMOTIONS, BOARD MEMBERS AND SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS



### LEGAL

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Insolvency. Real Estate. Business Litigation.

### Robert Marticello Receives American Bankruptcy Institute (ABI) Award

**Robert Marticello** was selected by ABI as one of the top insolvency professionals under the age of 40. ABI noted that Marticello is distinguished in the profession for his excellence in corporate bankruptcy, restructuring and bankruptcy-related litigation. Additionally, he was recognized for his passion, personal integrity and the fairness with which he approaches not only his clients but also his adversaries.



Marticello

### LEGAL

## LATHAM & WATKINS LLP

### David D. Troutman of Latham & Watkins Promoted to Counsel

**David D. Troutman** has been promoted to counsel, effective January 1, 2018. A member of the Litigation & Trial Department, he focuses on intellectual property matters, including litigation and counseling regarding trademarks, trade dress, trade secrets, copyrights, and false advertising, as well as a broad range of issues commonly encountered by website owners and internet service providers.



Troutman

## Addition to Business Journal Newsroom

**Subrina Hudson** has come home. Sort of. From 2013 to 2017, Hudson covered retail and advertising, among other beats, for our sister publication, the Los Angeles Business Journal. She's ventured south to report on those sectors and a few others for us, having started on Jan 1.

"It will be very exciting to prove my L.A. friends wrong about Orange County," Hudson said, with an easy smile and wit I'm excited for our readers to come to know.

Hudson caught the journalism bug early—elementary school. A good thing she didn't have reporter instincts previously, growing up with a dad whose careers in the military and law enforcement included stints as a po-

lice helicopter pilot and investigator.

"He never talked about what he did until I was older," Hudson said. "I'm glad I was initially clueless."

Hudson studied journalism as an undergrad at **Boston University** and got her master's degree at the **University of Southern California**. Once dad dissuaded her from a career covering fashion—we assume Officer Hudson can be persuasive—she was drawn to writing and reporting business stories.

"How do companies operate and grow? I wanted to know, even in college." Subrina seems to have inherited some of Mr. Hudson's intrepid nature, perhaps more than I like.

"Just took up snowboarding," Hudson said. "I'm approaching intermediate." What's that clause they put in athletes' contracts?

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—Pete Weitzner



Hudson: will cover marketing, retail, media