

# School of Law

*Advocating for Justice*

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THE CAMPAIGN FOR USD

## Law Clinics: \$3 million

### Background

The School of Law is seeking \$3 million to expand its **law clinics**. The clinical education program at USD's School of Law is one of the most extensive in the nation, with 11 client-focused clinics, and eight placement and policy clinics. In providing hands-on practice experience to our students, our clinics also provide much needed legal services to low-income individuals, families and others in the San Diego community who lack access to legal representation.

During the 2013-14 academic year, our students logged nearly 22,000 hours of work for our client focused clinics, closed more than 642 client cases, and provided \$4.4 million in free legal assistance to our local communities.

Now more than ever, the profession recognizes the importance of clinical legal education. The American Bar Association and the State Bar of California strongly emphasize the value of practical skills training, with the State Bar set on phasing in a practical skills requirement for admission to practice by 2017.

### Objectives

The School of Law's client-focused clinics are currently crowded into a space that limits future expansion. Additional space is needed, both to expand the legal services these clinics provide, as well as to accommodate the anticipated increase in the number of students who will participate in the clinics as a result of the new graduation and State Bar admission requirements.

The current space does not allow for such expansion, and is not optimal either in making the clinics accessible to the clients who need legal services or providing adequate office space for confidential, and often sensitive, client consultation.

In addition, there is growing recognition of the need for attorneys to provide "modest means" or "low-bono" legal services for people who do not qualify for pro bono legal assistance, but who can't afford standard-

priced legal services. The legal needs of many of these people could be met by those of our graduates who aspire to be solo practitioners and to specialize in high-demand practice areas — such as immigration, landlord-tenant disputes and education and disability — but who find it difficult to do so given the challenges of starting a practice, especially due to the costs of space and administrative support.

To address these needs, the law school seeks to establish a solo practice incubator connected to its legal clinics. It will be known as the Legal Services Center. Adjoining the clinics, the Legal Services Center will provide recent graduates starting as solo practitioners with office space, secretarial and administrative support, as well as continued training and mentoring in substantive law, ethics and practice management. These new lawyers would also be available to receive referrals from clients in USD's clinics who don't qualify for pro bono services, but need and deserve legal assistance.

As envisioned, the center would enable the School of Law to "incubate" between 10 and 12 solo practitioners for two to three years or until they can independently sustain their own practices.

The School of Law also seeks to develop facilities at the university's Alcalá West campus on Morena Boulevard in order to enhance its connection to the community, expand its clinics and establish the Legal Services Center.

### Enhancing the Student Experience

The Law Clinics and Legal Services Center will enhance USD's core values of academic excellence, knowledge, ethical conduct, and compassionate service in ways that are consistent with its designation as a Changemaker campus. A new and visible Law Clinics/Legal Services Center at the Alcalá West campus will both concretely and symbolically demonstrate the School of Law's commitment to serving the needs of the San Diego community.

The impact of the new facility for the Law Clinics and Legal Services Center will be measured by improved hands-on practical legal training for our students, enhanced opportunities for our graduates to launch their legal careers successfully and expanded pro bono and low bono legal services that demonstrate our commitment to be true Changemakers in the San Diego community.

## For More Information

**Sandra Ciallella '87**

Associate Vice President, Development  
University Relations  
(619) 260-2720  
[sciallella@sandiego.edu](mailto:sciallella@sandiego.edu)  
[leadingchange.sandiego.edu](http://leadingchange.sandiego.edu)