



Judicial delegation tours SD's incubator programs

By **DOUG SHERWIN**, The Daily Transcript
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San Diego's innovative attorney incubator projects have received some very special visitors. A delegation led by California Supreme Court Justice Goodwin Liu toured California Western School of Law's Access to Law Initiative and Thomas Jefferson School of Law's Center for Solo Practitioners.

The visits were held in conjunction with the State Bar of California's annual meeting, held this month at the San Diego Convention Center.

"We have a tremendous justice gap in this country and in this state," Liu said. "We have tremendous legal needs that people of ordinary means still can't afford. What [CWSL and TJSL] are doing is a very significant part of what legal practice will be in the future, and it's happening right here."

California Western's Access to Law Initiative (ALI) is a group of graduate lawyers who share space, receive guidance and training, and help each other succeed in their law practice. They, in turn, deliver affordable legal services to communities in need.

Likewise, TJSL's Center for Solo Practitioners provides a business incubator setting to new solo practitioners with the goal of producing successful, public service-oriented attorneys.

The program facilitates access to affordable office space, guidance in managing a legal practice, quality continuing legal education, seasoned mentors and Thomas Jefferson's network of alumni attorneys.

While they are building their practices, the lawyers in the incubator are encouraged to provide pro bono and low bono services to increase access to civil legal services for those in need. Liu was joined by Third District Court of Appeal Justice Ronald Robie and Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Mark Juhas.

Robie chairs the state bar's California Commission on Access to Justice.

"The Access to Justice Commission's focus is on providing access to people who wouldn't otherwise have it," Robie said. "That's why that component of the incubator program is so important to the commission."

The judges spent an hour touring California Western's ALI offices and conducted a roundtable with the California Western alumni who are the program's lawyers.

The jurists were very enthusiastic about what they saw and heard.

"It was an honor to host a state and local delegation for a tour of the Access to Law Initiative office, and a meeting with the incubator participants," said San Diego attorney Bob Seibel, director of the ALI program.

"The ALI attorneys all work hard to improve access to justice, which is part of our mission, so it is important for us to have the support of the Access to Justice Commission."