



President and Dean Sean M. Scott's tenure at California Western School of Law has been nothing short of transformative. As her time as President and Dean comes to a close this summer, the institution celebrates her extraordinary leadership, vision, and unwavering dedication to student success. Over the past five years, Dean Scott has guided the school through a global pandemic, advanced academic excellence, and championed principles of social justice and modernization in legal education.

A Tribute to President and Dean Sean M. Scott

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

In 2020, Dean Scott made history, becoming the first woman and the first person of color in the school's 100-year history to hold the positions of President and Dean. Once at the helm, she identified three strategic priorities for California Western: ensuring the school's financial sustainability, modernizing its facilities and curriculum, and raising its academic profile. Despite beginning her tenure in one of the most challenging periods in modern education, she led with a steady hand and resolute commitment to these goals.

Under Dean Scott's leadership, California Western achieved unprecedented financial growth. A centennial campaign raised \$10 million in just three years, enabling improved facilities, increased scholarships, investment in technological upgrades, and recruitment of top-tier faculty. One of the most significant achievements of Dean Scott's tenure was the historic \$3 million donation from Elaine Galinson and Herb Solomon, with an additional \$1 million in matching funds. The largest gift in the school's history will create "an intellectual hub for addressing the complex systems of oppression in the United States," Dean Scott said, providing for an endowed chair and speaker series dedicated to social justice and ample student scholarships for years to come.

Financial stability allowed California Western to invest heavily in academic improvements and innovation. The school has significantly upgraded its facilities, including a multimillion-dollar renovation of the main academic building, which now features a vibrant student center designed to foster connection, collaboration, and focused study. Dean Scott also created the first dedicated practice space for the Competitive Advocacy Program, providing students with a focused environment to hone their skills and continue to succeed at the highest levels. "I can't emphasize the modernization enough," said Professor



Elaine Galinson, Herb Solomon, and Sean M. Scott

Hannah Brenner Johnson, Vice Dean of Academic Affairs. "All the work behind the scenes — bringing infrastructure, financial practices, classrooms, and curriculum into the 21st century — it all has come from Dean Scott's driving motivation to improve the student experience and ensure the long-term success of the school."

"'Show me the data' has been her motto," Professor Brenner Johnson continued, noting the emphasis Dean Scott has placed on empirical practices to improve student success. She initiated comprehensive reviews of the school's curriculum, bar passage rates, and student achievement programs, which led to modernized curricula for 1Ls and upper-division students, an enhanced bar pass program, and the introduction of two new academic concentrations: one in social justice and another in intellectual property, privacy, and media law. Dean Scott also transitioned the school's part-time program to an evening format to increase enrollment and the trimester to a semester system to ensure consistent academic success.



CHAMPIONING EQUITY AND INNOVATION

Throughout her career, Dean Scott has been a staunch advocate for equity in the legal profession. She has emphasized the vital role lawyers play in protecting democratic norms, saying, “Equal representation under the law requires that attorneys understand the diverse populations they serve and the historical oppression that continues to shape their clients’ experiences and access to justice.” To ensure the school remains accountable in its commitment to inclusivity, Dean Scott created California Western’s inaugural Dean of Campus Equity position and established the Equity, Justice, and Engagement Steering Committee.

Dean Scott’s legacy is also seen in the faculty. “Dean Scott has built a scholarly community at California Western,” said Professor William Aceves, one of the school’s longest-tenured faculty members. In the last five years, faculty publications in top-tier law reviews have flourished, and the school has welcomed six new faculty members, bringing expertise in artificial intelligence, criminal justice reform, environmental law, and legal automation.

In 2023, Dean Scott spearheaded the Law, Justice, and Technology Initiative (LJTI), recognizing the critical need for students to



understand how emerging technologies will shape the course of their careers and their clients’ lives. Under the LJTI banner, the school hosted panels on algorithmic bias and privacy law and provided funding for students pursuing advanced certifications in privacy law. Last year, the school’s law reviews cohosted a two-day symposium on AI regulation, further cementing California Western’s role as a thought leader in legal tech.

SETTING THE COURSE FOR CWSL’S SECOND CENTURY

This year, Dean Scott led the school’s centennial celebration, honoring California Western’s hundred-year history and setting a course for its next century. As part of the celebration, the school partnered with the Smithsonian Institution to host *The Bias Inside Us* exhibit, fostering critical discussions on social justice. The school has also hosted an impressive roster of guest speakers, including California Secretary of State Shirley Weber, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Louis Menand, Harvard Law School Professor Randall Kennedy, and ACLU President Deborah Archer.



As she prepares to transition into a sabbatical for the 2025-26 academic year, Dean Scott's dedication to leadership in legal education remains steadfast. She will continue to serve as Co-President of the Society of American Law Teachers and Co-Chair of the AALS Section on Deans. A sought-after speaker on diversity in law and education, Dean Scott will continue shaping critical conversations in the legal community.

"My tenure here has been immensely gratifying," Dean Scott remarked. "We have worked together to build a thriving institution that puts our students' education first. I look forward to seeing California Western continue to grow, empowering students and championing innovation and inclusivity in the law for many years to come."

As California Western enters its second century and latest chapter, it does so with the indelible mark of Dean Scott's leadership — one that has strengthened the institution, broadened opportunities for students, and set the stage for a new era of excellence.

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