

It's the Law

PCU School of Law celebrates 90th anniversary

By Jerry LaMartina



SCHOOL OF LAW
Founded 1927

Pacific Coast University School of Law is celebrating its 90th anniversary this year — 90 years of serving communities in the Long Beach area.

The PCU School of Law, founded in 1927, is a night and weekend law school that provides an affordable, quality legal education for working adults, says Maren Carmona, the school's dean of students.

"We produce the everyday workhorse attorney," Carmona says. "A lot of them go into workers comp, the public defender's office and the kind of law that your everyday person would need, like family law and wills and trusts or personal injury. We also have people who go into civil service."

Long Beach City Attorney Charles Parkin and City Auditor Laura Doud are among the school's graduates.

"They do the day-to-day work that makes our community function," Carmona says. "Other lawyers who graduate from PCU practice in neighboring cities, both in public service and private practice. We're ideally located for people all over the L.A. basin to come to us."

The average age of a PCU law student is in the mid- to late 30s, which is older than most law schools. Last year, 81-year-old Arlene Cannon graduated from the school, Carmona said. Cannon had been a computer programmer and decided to make a career change. Reflective of her drive is that she celebrated her 80th birthday by climbing Machu Picchu with her husband. It's not the bar exam, true, but it is 7,972 feet high. Not bad.

The law school has seen changes over the years as it has climbed its own mountains. It had 10 graduates in

the class of 1932, and two of them were women, which was rare in that era. It had 48 graduates last year and has an average of 200 students enrolled per year. The school has about 25 faculty, all of whom teach part time and are either practicing attorneys or judges in superior court or administrative law court in the Long Beach area.

The most significant changes the law school has seen since its inception, Carmona says, are acquiring California Bar Examiners Association accreditation, the first time the CBEA had granted accreditation to a law school in a long time; and renting its own space in a fixed facility with regular business hours and a law library. The school had operated in two rented classrooms at a local high school.

One thing that hasn't changed over the years is the law school's fundamental mission.

"We're going to continue to serve the demographic we've always served: working adults who've wanted to pursue law but didn't have the opportunity, or who decided later in their careers to pursue law," Carmona says. "We always strive to produce the highest-quality education we can at an affordable price. We want to prepare students to enter directly into legal practice after the bar exam."

The Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce helps PCU School of Law with that mission by doing what the Chamber does for all its members: helping them network with other businesses and organizations and get involved in the community.

"The Chamber's been a really good thing for us," Carmona says. "Especially because we exist for people who are re-entering school, it's crucial."

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