

## Faculty Meeting Minutes

June 19, 2020 (via Zoom)

*The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. by Dean Sergio Pareja, once a quorum was reached. The following people were present for at least some portion of the meeting.*

**Faculty:** Maryam Ahranjani, George Bach, Reed Benson, Camille Carey, Barbara Creel, Elizabeth Elia, Scott England, Paul Figueroa, Marc-Tizoc González, Veronica Gonzales-Zamora, Vinay Harpalani, Steven Homer, John Kang, Joshua Kastenberg, April Land, John LaVelle, Jennifer Laws, Ernesto Longa, Nathalie Martin, Jennifer Moore, Gabe Pacyniak, Mary Leto Pareja, Sergio Pareja, Sonia Gipson Rankin, Michelle Rigual, Leo Romero, Alexandra Siek, Joseph Schremmer, Sarah Steadman, David Stout, Carol Suzuki, Sherri Thomas, Cliff Villa, Samuel Winder, and Peter Winograd (20 needed for quorum; names that count toward quorum in bold)

**Staff:** Beverly Akin, Krista Allen, Chad Covey, Stephanie Grant, Tony Anderson, Bonnie Stepleton

**Students:** Jessica Arreola, Taylor Bingham

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dean Pareja welcomed the faculty to another “Zoom” faculty meeting and apologized for any glitches that may occur. Dean Pareja similarly announced that Vice Dean Camille Carey would be monitoring questions and comments, and Tony Anderson would be monitoring the technology in the background.

**Juneteenth.** Associate Dean Sherri Thomas wished everyone a Happy Juneteenth. Professor Thomas thanked Professor Sonia Gipson Rankin for penning the following statement. Associate Dean Thomas noted that she is particularly happy to read it because her father’s ancestors were from the Freeport, Galveston, Houston, Texas, area. Here is the statement:

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when federal orders reached Galveston, Texas, informing the formerly enslaved persons that they were legally free. It was 2 ½ years after the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863) had formally freed them and two months after the end of the Civil War. Juneteenth has been celebrated by Black Americans in the United States since the late 1800s and has been a recognized holiday in New Mexico since 2006. It is a reminder that as a nation, we can always go back and right past wrongs to increase freedom, justice, and equity for everyone.

**Admissions.** Dean Pareja then announced that admissions numbers were looking strong. The second deposit deadline passed earlier this week, and so far we’ve received 97 second deposits, with three people having been given an extension until early next week. In the end, we are likely to have around 100 second deposits, and we have not begun admitting students from the waitlist or from PLSI. The median

GPA of this group is 3.46, and the median LSAT score is 155. It's about half male and half female. There are seven Native Americans, two Asian Americans, five African Americans, and 24 Hispanics/Latinos. Dean Pareja thanked Professor Maryam Ahranjani, the Admissions Committee, Emeritus Professor and Acting Director of Admissions, Peter Winograd, Krysta Madrid-Arellano, and Justin Goodman for all their hard work during this particularly challenging year.

**Orientation:** Dean Pareja stated he wrote to the Provost this morning with a potential plan for orientation. He proposed that on the first day of orientation, from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., if it's safe to do so, we would like to get the entire incoming 1L class together outside where graduation usually happens. We have mapped out and confirmed that they can be seated at least seven feet apart for social distancing. The dean would welcome them. The keynote speaker, Court of Appeals Judge Shammara Henderson, would then deliver her remarks. Students would be given a small boxed brunch, like breakfast burritos, and then they would break into small groups in classrooms. This is a work in progress, and everything is subject to change. Any and all ideas are welcomed. This is the effort to build community in this unusual situation.

**Fall Semester:** Dean Pareja stated that for people who are in the building in the fall, anyone who is in a public area or a classroom will be required to wear a mask. One issue is how to enforce that. A concern is that the Provost could require us to close the building on a moment's notice if word gets out that people aren't wearing masks. Dean Pareja and Vice Dean Camille Carey are brainstorming regarding ways to ensure that people wear masks and/or face shields while teaching or attending in-person classes. One thing you are likely to see in fall is rope barriers (like at movie theaters) for students waiting to enter classes.

**Fall Semester Curriculum:** Vice Dean Carey started by saying that anybody who is not willing to teach in person at all in the fall should let her know as soon as possible because that affects curricular planning. Vice Dean Carey also noted that Chad Covey has ordered enough face shields for everyone who is teaching in the fall. The "shields" will allow students to see your facial expressions. Each faculty member is likely to have the option of utilizing a mask or a face shield (or both) while teaching in the fall. Teaching in-person without one of those is not an option, and you should let Vice Dean Carey know as soon as possible if you are not willing to teach in one of those. In that case, you will need to give all of your classes remotely.

Vice Dean Carey indicated that there is a certain kind of psychological calm to the current, modified spacing of seats in our classrooms. For example, in the larger rooms, we skipped rows, rather than just alternating seats in every row. Vice Dean Carey stated you all have received the room numbers from Dean Pareja, and reiterated that 2401 now only accommodates 35 students, 2402 now only accommodates 20 students, 2404 now only accommodates 17 students, and 2405 and 2406 now only accommodate 15 students. As for the smaller seminar rooms that do not accommodate social distancing guidelines, they will be repurposed.

Vice Dean Carey thanked the faculty for submitting their modalities for their preferences for teaching – from face-to-face, remote, and/or blended schedule.

Vice Dean Carey indicated that they have polled the 1Ls, 2Ls and 3Ls as to whether they are comfortable attending classes in person in the fall. As of right now, the policy is that if a student states “they have a serious COVID-19 related concern” they can participate in classes remotely in the fall, and they do not have to reveal whatever health situation is underlying this. Vice Dean Carey indicated that she has three incoming 1Ls who have contacted her who would like to participate remotely. There are two 2Ls, three 3Ls, and one MSL student who have already said that they will only participate remotely. There are likely to be additional ones as we go forward.

Vice Dean Carey also informed the faculty that cleaning between classes will need to be done; therefore, Chad Covey is working on having the cleaning crew come during the day to cover the entire teaching schedule. However, because the classrooms will need to be cleaned after each class, we are going to have the custodial staff assess how long it will take to clean and sanitize between classes. Separately, we are facing the issue of ensuring that we have enough cleaning supplies. They are currently very expensive and hard to come by. We also are working on the technology issue, as some classrooms are set up for Zoom while others are not.

Dean Pareja reminded faculty that he is adopting the Task Force’s recommendation that we prioritize in-person instruction of 1Ls. This means that some 2L and 3L classes may have to occur exclusively on-line. Vice Dean Carey also noted that we have serious limitations on building occupancy. We need to limit the number of faculty, staff, and students in the building. This means that people should not be there if they don’t need to be once the semester starts. Vice Dean Carey reminded everybody that this is just the preliminary plan and that at any point we could go 100 percent remote. Dean Pareja also noted that main campus is shifting the schedule so that all in-person classes end by Thanksgiving. Fortunately, the law school was already set to end in-person classes by Thanksgiving.

**Training:** Professor Mary Leto Pareja announced that there is main campus training for on-line teaching and encouraged the faculty to look into the Center for Distance Learning. She noted that the professors are very good; they are really helpful in identifying the resources that can support you (not just doing Zoom, but using Learning Management and thinking about how you might redesign your courses in light of the reduced interaction).

**Committee Assignments:** Dean Pareja announced that he was planning to work on committee assignments in July and is trying to figure out ways to build community. One thing he is planning is to have a committee that is focused exclusively on planning social events online. Ideally, there will be a schedule of events, with something happening online every week or two.

**Annual Reviews:** Dean Pareja asked the faculty to bear with him on faculty annual reviews. He is behind due in part to judicial selection and in part due to all the COVID planning.

**Wellness Center:** Dean Pareja noted that on July 1, 2019, the law school received \$144,000 toward the construction of a Wellness Center. After working with

architects it became apparent that there was not enough money to cover the entire project. In the February 2020 legislative session, the law school received an additional \$65,000 to complete the Wellness Center. In May, orders were received freezing the funding with the indication that the legislature may sweep back the \$65,000.

After talking with the Provost, Dean Pareja asked the architects to rework the plan so that we could complete a “bare bones” project with the original \$144,000. Hopefully we will find a way to keep the additional \$65,000 to complete the job as originally designed. Construction on the bare bones project probably will begin in July, and work is likely to continue into the beginning of the academic year.

**Mental and Emotional Support for Students, Staff and Faculty:** Dean Pareja stated that the contract for the law school’s mental health counselor has been extended through the end of November 2020. We were able to shift some of the law school’s capital reserves toward this.

**ACTION ITEM: Grading in the Fall Semester:** Dean Pareja thanked the Task Force for their really thoughtful report and all the work that has gone into it. Dean Pareja stated that he reached out to the Dean's listserv to find out what other law schools are doing with respect to grading in the fall semester. There are roughly 200 ABA credit law schools in the country, we received over 40 responses. All of them with the exception of two said they were doing fully standard letter grading in the fall for 1Ls, 2Ls and 3Ls (the two exception stated that they had not made a decision yet). In a separate email Dean Pareja wrote to the deans of law schools within our region - CU, DU, Texas Tech, Arizona State, and Arizona - asking them what they were doing for grading in the fall. All of them have responded that they are doing standard letter grading for 1Ls, 2Ls, and 3Ls.

The two questions to be resolved today are (1) how to grade upper division students, and (2) how to grade incoming 1Ls.

The Task Force recommended that 2Ls and 3Ls get standard letter grades in the fall, with a potential optional adjustment that would allow individual students to elect “limited grading” (credit/C-/D+/D/D-/F) for any fall courses. A motion was made and seconded to adopt the recommendation of the committee for standard letter grades in the fall for “students other than first semester 1L’s.” The floor was opened for discussion. The motion then was put to a vote and passed with 93 percent voting in favor.

The next question was whether to remove the cap on limited grading for upper division students, which would allow any student other than a first semester 1L to elect limited grading for any class. This would not count against the student’s overall limit on the number of limited grading credit hours that they may have. The Task Force did not recommend anything one way or another on this. After much discussion a motion was made and seconded to remove the cap on limited grading for upper division students in the fall semester, allowing them to choose “limited grading” for any class. The motion passed with 68 percent voting in favor.

One open question that came up in the discussion and vote on limited grading was whether students who want to elect limited grading would be required to do something specific in order to be permitted to elect limited grading. One proposal was that students would be required to consult with Bonnie Stepleton before making the election. Another was that they would need the approval

of Vice Dean Carey to make the election. Vice Dean Carey expressed a concern that she would want to know the standard for granting or approving such a request if her approval were required. It was decided that the issue of what limitations, if any, might apply before a student can elect limited grading will be decided at a special faculty meeting, most likely in early August before the start of fall classes.

The next action item was grading for 1Ls in the fall. Three possibilities were discussed: regular letter grading, mandatory "limited grading" for all 1Ls, and optional "limited grading" for any 1L. Associate Dean Nathalie Martin made a motion to use regular letter grading for incoming 1Ls, and the motion was seconded by Associate Dean Sherri Thomas. The floor was opened for discussion, but nobody had any comments so it went straight to a vote. It passed with overwhelming support for regular letter grades for 1Ls.

Professor Jenny Moore then made a motion to give any 1L the option of electing limited grading for any course in the fall. Professor John LaVelle seconded the motion. Vice Dean Carey reminded the faculty that limited grading means that if a student gets a C or above, they just get credit, but if they get a C minus or below, they get that letter grade on their transcript. After some discussion, Professors Moore and LaVelle withdrew the motion.

*The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:10 p.m.*