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UC Irvine School of Law Gets New Dean

L. Song Richardson replaces the law school's inaugural dean, Erwin Chemerinsky, who left to become dean at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.

By Angela Morris | December 21, 2017



L. Song Richardson.

Starting on New Year's Day, California's newest public law school will welcome its second dean since its founding.

L. Song Richardson on Jan. 1 will become dean of the University of California, Irvine School of Law, which became the first public law school in California in nearly 50 years when it opened in 2009. Richardson has already been leading the school as interim dean since July, when founding dean [Erwin Chemerinsky left](https://www.law.com/therecorder/sites/therecorder/2017/05/17/chemerinsky-named-law-dean-at-uc-berkeley/?back=law) (<https://www.law.com/therecorder/sites/therecorder/2017/05/17/chemerinsky-named-law-dean-at-uc-berkeley/?back=law>) to become dean at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.

Chemerinsky, a well-known constitutional law expert, helped catapult U.C. Irvine into a top tier of U.S. News & World Report's law school rankings. The school opened in 2009 to students, won full accreditation in 2014, and debuted at No. 30 in the U.S. News rankings, which was extraordinary for a new school. This year, it landed at No. 28. The

school's pass rate for the July bar exam was 83 percent, the fifth highest in the state among the 21 California law schools accredited by the American Bar Association.

Chemerinsky said in an email Thursday that Song will take the school "to another level of excellence." He added, "She is a terrific leader and a visionary in legal education."

Continuing U.C. Irvine's trajectory is a key goal for Richardson, who has taught criminal law and procedure and law and social science at U.C. Irvine since 2014, and served from 2016 to 2017 as senior associate dean for academic affairs.

"I'd like to work with the entire law school community and the university as a whole to continue to redefine, reinvent, and reimagine the future of legal education. We want to be where legal education is going, not where it's been," she said, explaining that she'll tackle challenges such as how the legal profession should face technological advances, and the problem of access to justice.

With Richardson's appointment, she becomes the only woman of color currently leading a Top 30 law school.

"Through my life I have been inspired by other women and the incredible work they've done, and I hope with me in this position it will potentially inspire other women to dream big and work hard to achieve their dreams," she said.

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