

Monterey College of Law
Monterey, CA



PRESIDENT AND CEO SEARCH
Specification

OVERVIEW

Monterey College of Law (“MCL”), a not-for-profit, California Accredited Law School (“CAL S”) founded in 1972 and today a system of four community-identified campuses and a hybrid online option serving the Northern and Central California region, seeks a new President and CEO (the “President”), following the announced July 2025 retirement of its current president after 20 years of exemplary service.

MCL provides one of the most robust alternative models to the kind of traditional legal education that necessitates residence near an ABA-approved campus and imposes a high financial burden on students for tuition and other costs of attendance. In doing so, MCL remains committed to the vision of its founding practitioners and judges. They believed it important to provide a high-quality legal education in a part-time evening program at a reasonable cost for working adults who did not have access to a traditional ABA-approved law school and wanted to serve their local communities. More than 50 years later, MCL continues to expand access to legal services and justice by providing affordable, high-quality, community-based legal education at four California campuses located in Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Bakersfield and Santa Rosa—communities that are among the most significant areas of population growth in the state. MCL also offers one of the first California-accredited online hybrid JD programs, where students complete 85-90% of the curriculum in a combined synchronous/asynchronous online model.

In 2015, MCL began a strategy of regional expansion by extending its proven academic programs from Monterey to additional California communities that are likewise remote from other law schools. MCL opened San Luis Obispo College of Law in 2015, Kern County College of Law in 2016, its online hybrid program in 2018 and Empire College of Law in Santa Rosa in 2023. In addition to its academic programs, MCL provides the only comprehensive free and low-cost legal services available to all Monterey County residents through its Community Justice Center. MCL is also home to the Mandell Gisnet Center for Conflict Management, which offers training in alternative dispute resolution to law students and the Monterey community.

With approximately 140 part-time faculty members drawn from the bar and bench in the communities that it serves, MCL provides instruction to approximately 250 students in small classes averaging 12 – 18 students. The long service of many faculty members is notable, reflecting their commitment to the mission of MCL and its success in community building. Students are supported on-site at each location by a campus dean and campus administrator, with other administrative, business and academic support services provided by a central administrative team. The President is part of a three-member executive team, along with the Chief Academic Officer and CFO/COO. In addition, 13 full-time and seven part-time administrators provide institutional and academic management. As a part-time program, class sessions, both on-site and on-line, are primarily in the evenings Monday through Thursday, with three semesters per year— Fall, Spring and Summer. MCL graduates approximately 30 students each year across all campuses.

MCL intends to be an “opportunity law school” that reflects the demographics of the communities it serves. Currently, 60 – 65% of its enrollment identify from groups historically underrepresented in the California Bar. With an operating budget of approximately \$5,000,000 and an undiscounted tuition that is one-third to one-half that of ABA-approved law schools, MCL is one of the few California law schools that extends a “guaranteed tuition plan” that locks students into a tuition rate when they first enroll and stay enrolled and in good financial standing. Accredited by the Committee of Bar Examiners of the State Bar of California since 1981, MCL was granted eligibility in its efforts to seek accreditation by WSCUC in 2022. It achieved candidacy in March 2024 and is currently under consideration for initial accreditation. In addition to its imprimatur of academic excellence, WSCUC accreditation would confer MCL Title IV institutional status, making its students eligible for federal student loans.

Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the following statement if they wish to describe that status publicly:

Monterey College of Law has been recognized as a Candidate for Accreditation by WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC), 1080 Marina Village Parkway, Suite 500, Alameda, CA 94501, 510.748.9001. This status is a preliminary affiliation with the Commission awarded for a maximum period of five years. Candidacy is an indication that the institution is progressing toward Accreditation. Candidacy is not Accreditation and does not ensure eventual Accreditation.

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President serves as chief executive officer of MCL and a non-voting member of the Board, managing and overseeing all operational, academic and financial matters, including the four on-site campus locations and the hybrid online degree programs. Direct

reports include the Chief Academic Officer, the Chief Financial and Operating Officer, the Assistant Dean of Admissions and Marketing and the Chief Development Officer. The new President will lead strategic planning that responds to future marketing challenges for legal education, a growing demand for lawyers to serve rural and regional communities and the integration of technology such as Artificial Intelligence in legal education and law practice. The new President will be supported by a devoted, seasoned and highly functional administrative staff that works well as a team and individually to meet designated goals and outcomes.

THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the President serves as chief executive officer of MCL and a non-voting member of the Board, managing and overseeing all operational, academic and financial matters, including the four on-site campus locations and the hybrid online degree enrollment option. Direct reports include the Chief Academic Officer, the CFO/COO, the Assistant Dean of Admissions and Marketing and the Assistant Dean of Development. With a new senior leadership structure that delegates internal administrative authority to these direct reports, the new President will have the opportunity to advance the interests of MCL externally, sustaining community relationships that the outgoing president has nurtured over 20 years, while consolidating and improving the infrastructure that supports the MCL system. With MCL graduates now extending back more than 50 years, the opportunity is ripe for the new President to raise an endowment for the law school from grateful alumni and the resourceful local communities that MCL serves. The new President will lead strategic planning that responds to future marketing challenges for legal education, a growing demand for lawyers to serve rural and regional communities, and the integration of technology such as Artificial Intelligence in legal education and the practice of law.

Under its outgoing President, MCL has promoted access to legal education and removing barriers to the diversification of the legal profession in California. The new President will have the opportunity to continue this advocacy with the State Bar of California and the California State Legislature, while also taking up leadership roles within the association of CALS institutions, and locally in one or more of the communities served by the law school. The new President will be supported by a devoted, seasoned, and highly functional administrative staff that works well, both as a team, and individually to meet established goals and outcomes.

The President serves as the chief executive officer of MCL. This position requires broad management oversight of all operational, academic and financial matters, including the four residential campus locations, and the hybrid degree programs. The President acts as MCL's primary spokesperson and representative; maintains an effective and positive working relationship with the Board of Trustees, the faculty, the alumni, the student body, staff and community members in all MCL's constituent local communities.

The President oversees the development and implementation of the strategic plan; general operating, capital and scholarship budgets as well as specific project budgets; ensures budget compliance, manages payroll and monitors and approves expenditures. The President ensures compliance with applicable accreditation standards of the California State Bar Committee of Bar Examiners ("CBE"), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges ("WASC") and the U. S. Department of Education and directs and digests the analysis and reporting provided by MCL's

outside auditor. The President leads and oversees all fundraising and alumni and community relations.

GOVERNANCE

MCL is governed by an independent, self-perpetuating board of 15-25 trustees, who serve for an initial three-year term and can be reappointed for a second three-year term. Members are limited to two consecutive terms but may be reappointed after at least a one-year layoff.

THE FACULTY

Law school faculty are practicing lawyers and judges who teach in the part-time evening program. MCL's faculty have a history of long-term dedication to the program: 51% of professors have been teaching 3 years or more, 32% of professors have been teaching for five years or more and 20% have been teaching for more than ten years.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Under a new senior leadership structure devised by outgoing President Mitchel Winick in anticipation of WSCUC accreditation and the presidential transition upon his retirement, the new President will be supported by a seasoned senior leadership team.

Chief Academic Officer Elizabeth Xyr is an experienced senior administrator with a demonstrated history of working in legal education. Dean Xyr is a graduate of Monterey College of Law and a licensed California attorney. She holds a M.A. in criminal justice from CSU Stanislas, and a B.A. in political science and history from Notre Dame de Namur University. Prior to her current role as Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, over a period of 16 years, Dean Xyr has served in successively senior positions of responsibility at MCL as Program Director of Bar Studies, Director of Academic Support, Assistant Dean of Academic Success, Associate Dean of Academic Success, and Dean of Academics.

Greg Brandes is an experienced senior law school executive who agreed to join MCL as Chief Financial and Operating Officer in 2023. A senior law school executive with considerable experience, Brandes previously served as dean of St. Francis School of Law, dean of San Francisco Law School, and dean of Concord Law School, now Purdue Global Law School, all CALS accredited law schools. Over his 40+ year career, in addition to senior academic leadership roles, he has extensive experience in bar review preparation, served in the role of corporate general counsel, and was a practicing attorney. Greg is the co-convenor of the annual Online & Hybrid Learning Conference at the University of Denver's Sturm College of Law. He earned his JD from the Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

Dena Dowsett is the Assistant Dean of Admissions and Marketing for the Monterey College of Law family of law schools. She's been in the admissions position since 2019 but has been with the law school for thirteen years. From 2006 - 2010, Dena served as the Program Director for the Mandell Gisnet Center for Conflict Management with California Senator Bill Monning (Ret.), the Executive Director. After Mr. Monning won a seat in the California General Assembly, Dena

managed the Center's mediation programs and projects, simultaneously working as the ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) Coordinator for the Monterey County Superior Court. After a brief hiatus, Dena moved to San Luis Obispo in 2015 to help the law school launch its SLO campus. She helped the law school establish Kern County College of Law in 2017, the hybrid online program in 2018, and Empire College of Law in 2023. In her current position in admissions and marketing, Dena oversees the Admissions Department for the Monterey College of Law family of law schools. She is also the director of MSKE Agency, the school's in-house ad agency, and handles all marketing and promotional initiatives. Dena earned a bachelor's degree from Illinois State University and an associate's degree from Black Hawk College. She is a Leadership SLO graduate and a volunteer for City Farm SLO, a non-profit urban farm.

Chelsea Wright is an MCL alumnus, the Campus Dean for MCL's hybrid online option and the Associate Dean of Academics for all campuses. Chelsea advises a group of students, supports the advising department with her experience, drafts class schedules for all campuses, works with faculty and administration on curriculum and assessment, and leads the Annual Hybrid Symposium Committee and WASC Committee. Chelsea has high school teaching experience and worked for Legal Services for Seniors in Seaside, California, before moving abroad to England in 2014 from where she works remotely for MCL.

Deborah ("Debbie") Ewan Howitt is the Assistant Dean of Development at Monterey College of Law. She has been in nonprofit fundraising and development in Monterey County since 2001. Debbie has 23 years of experience in critical aspects of major gift fundraising, including annual fund, capital campaigns, planned giving, and special projects. She has also accepted nonprofit consulting assignments since 2019. Before joining Monterey College of Law, Debbie held various positions in development at Natividad Medical Foundation, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, Hospice Giving Foundation, and Cal State Monterey Bay, where she served as a Director of Development and Planned Gifts.

THE MCL COMMUNITIES AND THEIR PROGRAMS

From its original campus serving the Monterey County community, MCL has grown –via a multi-year strategy to bring its proven academic programs and services to communities in the Northern and Central California region– to comprise five “campuses”: Monterey College of Law (“MCL”), San Luis Obispo College of Law (“SLOCL”), Kern County College of Law (“KCCL”), Empire College of Law (“ECL”), and the MCL Hybrid Online JD enrollment option (“Hybrid Online JD”). Currently, the system enrolls 162 students who self-identified as first-gen college or law students. Two-thirds are women, and 2/3 identify as Hispanic/Latino, Black, Asian or more than one race. The current student body age range is 24 – 39.

Programs offered at all campuses are the Doctor of Jurisprudence (“JD”), Master of Legal Studies (“MLS”), dual JD/MLS, and the postgraduate Master of Laws (LLM). All subjects tested on the California Bar Exam (“CBX”) are offered and required for the JD. Dozens of electives, covering doctrinal subjects and practical lawyering skills, are offered each year. Every JD graduate completes 12 doctrinal courses, six skills courses, and two clinical or experiential learning units, in addition to electives. Eight units of legal research and writing are required.

MCL's flagship campus is in Seaside, CA, and is the administrative hub for all programs and campuses. Occupying its current location since 2005, the campus includes 3.2 acres with two academic buildings on former Fort Ord U. S. Army property adjacent to California State University Monterey Bay in Seaside, California. It includes the main administration/classroom building and the Community Justice Center ("CJC") and Courtroom. The CJC is a Platinum LEED designed community resource where MCL's clinical programs are headquartered, along with the Mandell Gisnet Center for Conflict Management ("MGC"), where mediation, and other dispute resolution methods are taught and practiced.

SLOCL opened as the first California-accredited branch of MCL in 2015. It operates from leased space in the rapidly growing commercial area near the airport in San Luis Obispo, California. SLOCL celebrated its first graduating class in 2019. Campus Dean Erica Flores Baltodano has over 20 years' experience as an attorney and policy advocate in the areas of civil rights, environmental justice, and employment law. After graduating from UCLA with honors, Ms. Baltodano earned her law degree at UC Berkeley School of Law. She spent the first decade of her career serving Black, Latinx, and low-income communities in Los Angeles and reshaping the environmental justice movement to address civil rights and health equity issues associated with access to public resources like parks, recreation, beaches, and forests. In 2010, Dean Baltodano moved to the Central Coast and became Managing Partner of an employment law firm she co-founded with her husband focused on workers' rights and increasing access to justice.

KCCL was the second California-accredited MCL branch, opening in 2017 in Bakersfield, California. It is located in leased space in the downtown Bakersfield business district near the Kern County Superior Court and numerous law offices. KCCL celebrated its inaugural graduating class in 2021 and achieved a 100% (5 for 5) bar pass rate by the members of the inaugural class who sat for the February 2021 California Bar Exam ("CBX"). Campus Dean M. ("Bud") Starr earned a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of the Pacific School of Engineering in May of 1973 and became a Registered Civil Engineer in March 1976. He graduated from the University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law in May of 1979. He worked for one year for the Pacific Legal Foundation in Sacramento, in private practice in Sacramento and as a supervising attorney for California's Office of Administrative Law from June 1983 to May 1985. He then moved to Bakersfield, California to take a job as an associate with a small business litigation firm where he worked until April of 1987. He then worked from May of 1987 until July of 2016 as a Deputy District Attorney for the Kern County District Attorney's Office where he tried over 200 criminal jury trials. After retiring, he started working with the MCL to bring a branch campus to Bakersfield. He has served as Campus Dean for that branch since August of 2017.

ECL is the third California-accredited MCL branch. Opening in Spring 2023 in Santa Rosa, California, it runs out of leased space in a building shared with the branch location of the Sonoma County Superior Court. Empire College School of Law ("ECSOL"), an existing California Accredited Law School ("CALs") founded in 1973, has contracted with MCL to transition from a stand-alone private for-profit CALs into the accredited ECL branch campus of MCL. The teach-out of ECSOL and parallel transition to the ECL branch campus was approved by the State Bar Committee of Bar Examiners and the Accrediting Council of Independent Schools and Colleges ("ACICS") and will be completed in 2026. Campus Dean Fiona Hall lives in Sonoma County and

is also the Associate Dean of Academic Advising across all MCL campuses, a professor and a faculty representative on the MCL Board of Trustees. She graduated from Empire College School of Law in 2005 and worked for over 15 years as research attorney at the Monterey and Sonoma County Superior Courts. While working for the Monterey Court, she initially collaborated with MCL on their court-connected mediation programs. Later, she taught a 1L skills course at Empire College School of Law and now teaches Core Mediation and an elective on communication skills for lawyers at MCL. After being an academic advisor at MCL for a few years, Fiona became associate dean of the advising program.

The hybrid online enrollment option began classes in 2019 and is one of the first two accredited hybrid online JD programs approved by the State Bar of California. Students in the Hybrid Online JD complete approximately 85-90% of the curriculum in a combined synchronous/asynchronous online model. In addition, Hybrid Online JD students attend several onsite weekend symposia hosted during the three-and-a-half-year program at one of the law school's residential campuses. The first graduates of the Hybrid Online JD were in 2022. As with the residential JD, the Hybrid Online JD faculty includes experienced lawyers and judges from our local communities. However, the Hybrid Online JD format also provides the opportunity to engage faculty from other California regions and a limited number of non-California attorneys with practice-area specialties that enhance the curriculum.

Each of the branch campus locations are operating departments of MCL, not independent corporations, and are registered as "Doing Business As" ("DBA's") in each community. Campus residential locations are designed specifically for classroom teaching. The branch locations are approximately 6,000 to 7,500 square feet, with at least four classrooms, a student lounge area, administrative areas, and faculty offices.

OPPORTUNITIES AND PRIORITIES FOR NEW PRESIDENT

The new President will lead strategic planning that responds to future marketing challenges for legal education, a growing demand for lawyers to serve rural and regional communities, and the integration of technology such as Artificial Intelligence in legal education and the practice of law. With MCL graduates now extending back more than 50 years, the opportunity is ripe for the new President to raise an endowment for the law school from grateful alumni and the resourceful local communities that MCL serves. The new President should also be prepared to focus on increasing MCL's sources of non-tuition revenue, such as individual program grant support and foundation donations.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

A JD degree is strongly preferred, but not required. Candidates must embrace MCL's commitment to teaching excellence, a practice-oriented curriculum, and an access, opportunity and community service mission. A transferable leadership record and relevant administrative experience are essential. Candidates should demonstrate the ability to manage strategically, cultivate professional and personal relationships, strengthen financial sustainability, facilitate program innovation and build MCL's capacity to serve a diverse, striving student population. Candidates should have fundraising aptitude, an informed interest in the future of legal education and ideas for nurturing

high student and alumni institutional affinity. Familiarity with WSCUC or other accreditation protocols would be advantageous. Compensation will be commensurate with the relatively small scale of MCL's operations and its modest budget. The targeted salary is \$200,000, making this presidency a rare service opportunity for an already well-established academic, senior legal practitioner, non-profit executive, successful entrepreneur, financier or senior manager to lead a law school while also living in or near Monterey or one of the branch campus communities, which are among the most scenic and diverse, demographically and economically, in California. Excellent employee benefits and generous flex and vacation time are additional perquisites.

PROCEDURE FOR CANDIDACY

Search committee review of candidate materials will begin immediately and continue until the appointment. Priority will be granted to applications received prior to Friday, January 31, 2025. A complete application will include a letter of interest, a curriculum vitae or resumé, and contact information for five professional references who can speak about the candidate's qualifications for this appointment. Named references will not be contacted without the candidate's prior consent. MCL encourages applications from candidates whose leadership and personal experience will enrich the diversity of faculty and staff.

Expressions of interest, applications, nominations, and inquiries should be directed to MCL's search consultant, Mr. Chuck O'Boyle of C. V. O'Boyle, LLC, at chuck@cvoboyle.com.