



**OPEN SESSION  
AGENDA ITEM V.C.  
AUGUST 2023  
COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS**

**DATE:** August 18, 2023

**TO:** Members, Committee of Bar Examiners

**FROM:** Natalie Leonard, Principal Program Analyst, Office of Admissions

**SUBJECT:** Action on Motion for Major Change – Add Distance JD Program – San Joaquin College of Law

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

San Joaquin of Law (San Joaquin) is an accredited law school that has filed a major change request seeking the Committee of Bar Examiners' (committee) approval to add a distance learning JD program at its law school, in addition to its approved fixed-facility JD program. (Rule 4.165(A)(9)). Specifically, San Joaquin request to offer its JD degree in an additional, 100 percent online modality, beginning in fall 2023. (Attachment A, B).

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**BACKGROUND**

San Joaquin has offered a JD program since 1969 and it has been continuously accredited since 1976. The law school's most recent 2023 Minimum, Cumulative Five-Year Bar Exam Pass Rate is 79.7 percent. The law school currently enrolls 145 students according to its 2022 Annual Report.

Under Rule 4.165, "[an] accredited law school contemplating a major change requiring advance approval must notify the Committee and . . . [t]he notice must explain in detail any effect the change might have on the law school's compliance with these rules" including any major change to the JD curriculum."

## DISCUSSION

San Joaquin provided the required major change request, and also submitted a copy of its application and approval for the program through its institutional accreditor, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). (Attachment C). San Joaquin now seeks approval from the State Bar, its programmatic accreditor, to deliver a distance learning JD program fully online. The law school's detailed application describes that the curriculum in this program will mirror the offerings of the current fixed-facility program, and explains how the law school will maintain continuous compliance with the Rules and Guidelines for Accredited Law Schools as the program is implemented.

Upon approval by the committee, the law school will begin in fall 2023 to offer two options for students – an in-person fixed-facility JD program, and a fully online distance learning JD program. The two programs will operate on the same schedules and with the same course curricula requiring 1290 hours of verified academic engagement, exceeding the 1200 hour minimum requirement, and 86 credits, exceeding the 80 credit minimum requirement.

The distance learning JD program will contain the same elements as the law school's approved in-person JD program, last inspected and found compliant in 2021. San Joaquin had the opportunity to test the distance learning concept during the pandemic. The law school reports that students performed very well, with each individual graduating class reaching the pass rate required by American Bar Association approved schools, according to San Joaquin.

Attendance will be tracked via class attendance or clinic timesheets, and all students will be required to complete at least 80 percent of the verified academic engagement activities.

Eight hours of practical skills training will be required, exceeding the six-hour minimum, and 17 hours will be available, as in the fixed-facility program. Distance learning students can also participate in externships and clinics. San Joaquin has extensive experience placing students in local externships. It has some experience setting up out-of-area externships and would like to expand this capability as it begins to accept students from a wider geographic area.

Students in the online program are expected to be able to access all the scholastic and extracurricular opportunities offered by the law school, including its two legal clinics. Students will apply to one program or the other but may later transfer from one program to the other. Students will be able to elect whether to attend online or in person at set intervals.

While some classes will be offered fully online, others will be offered in blended format, with some students attending in the classroom, while others attend online. The law school has invested in owl cameras that can swivel to ensure that the student who is talking in a classroom is visible to those attending via distance learning. The law school has also installed large screens to allow all students to participate in the discussion, whether attending in-person or via distance learning.

Distance learning students must attend the lectures in interactive synchronous format to earn attendance credit in the distance learning JD program. All courses will, however, be recorded for review, and students can watch or re-watch any lectures, though attendance will not be granted for viewing recorded lectures.

Because the law school is utilizing the same approved curriculum and course progression, as well as similarly robust tracking, it appears that both of the law school's JD programs contain compliant content. San Joaquin will also be taking the helpful step of requiring synchronous, live attendance for all students, increasing the opportunities to build engagement and to network.

San Joaquin appears to have adequate financial resources to add and implement the distance learning JD program. The law school has already purchased the technology equipment required for the program and does not expect to add significantly to its marketing budget to promote the program, as students are already affirmatively asking for such a program. The law school plans a modest, phased rollout focusing on students in California. Though no further expenditure is needed, the opportunity to generate more revenue will more than offset any continuing technology costs even with modest enrollment.

San Joaquin's application demonstrates how it will maintain compliance with all aspects of the rules as soon as it is launched in fall 2023.

San Joaquin has already been assessing the learning outcomes for its JD program taught in fixed-facility format versus online format and will continue to do so.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee of Bar Examiners receive, file and grant San Joaquin College of Law's major change request to add a fully distance learning JD program in addition to its fixed-facility JD program, using the same course curriculum and course progression via distance learning, synchronous format.

It is also recommended that the law school provide a progress report as to the implementation of the program in the law school's 2023 Annual Report, including enrollment, syllabi, measurement efforts taken to date and planned, and program successes and challenges.

## **PROPOSED MOTION**

**Should the Committee of Bar Examiners agree with the staff recommendations, the following motion should be made:**

**MOVE**, that the Committee of Bar Examiners receive and file and grant San Joaquin College of Law's major change request to add a fully distance learning JD program in addition to its fixed-facility JD program, using the same course curriculum and course progression via distance learning, synchronous format.

**FURTHER MOVE**, that the law school provide a progress report as to the implementation of the program in the law school's 2023 Annual Report, including enrollment, syllabi, measurement efforts taken to date and planned, and program successes and challenges.

**ATTACHMENTS LIST**

- A. Application for Major Change – San Joaquin College of Law
- B. Photos of Immersive Blended Learning Classroom
- C. Online JD Program Application and Approval from WASC



## San Joaquin College of Law Major Change Request Juris Doctor Remote Option Program

### Introduction

Pursuant to Rule 4.165 of the Accredited Law School Rules, San Joaquin College of Law (SJCL), hereby submits this Major Change Request ("Request"), seeking permission from the Committee of Bar Examiners (Committee) to offer a fully online J.D. program ("Remote Option") in addition to SJCL's existing fixed facility classroom program.

### Institutional Background

San Joaquin College of Law (SJCL) is a private, nonprofit, single-degree institution founded in 1969. SJCL has had continuous accreditation since 1976, with its most recent Committee site visit occurring in 2021. SJCL exists to provide residents of the San Joaquin Valley an opportunity to attain a sound legal education at an affordable price. The SJCL Juris Doctor (JD) program is a standard, in-person law school curriculum that can be completed in 3, 4, or 5 years. JD courses are offered both during the day and evening. This flexibility in length of time to finish the program and scheduling provides an opportunity for a variety of students, including those who work full-time or have substantial family or other commitments, to realize their dreams of becoming attorneys. This request for a Major Change is a continuation of SJCL's mission to provide a flexible, reasonably priced, and solid legal education to San Joaquin Valley residents, and potentially beyond, who otherwise would not have the opportunity to go to law school.

SJCL graduates have long played crucial roles throughout the region and beyond. Sixty-seven of SJCL graduates are, or have been judges, commissioners, and administrative law judges. The current district attorneys of Fresno, Madera, and Kings Counties are SJCL graduates. At one time or another, the district attorney of all surrounding counties has been an SJCL graduate, three successive district attorneys covering more than 25 years in Fresno County. SJCL graduates have served as Secretary of the California Department of Health and Human Services, Chair of the California Water Resources Control Board, Vice President of Human Resources for Chevron, Chief Counsel for Fortune 500 companies, and Regulatory Compliance Officer for the Dallas Mavericks. In addition, hundreds of graduates have served as assistant district attorneys and assistant public defenders, city attorneys, county counsel, and in virtually every private firm in the region. Over 80% of SJCL's nearly 1700 graduates have passed the California bar exam. Roughly one third of the practicing lawyers in the Fresno area are SJCL graduates. Of women lawyers, 39% are SJCL graduates and 39% of Latinx lawyers are graduates.

Before 2020, SJCL had never offered classes remotely, other than providing temporary medical accommodations to students with approved petitions. During the pandemic, however, SJCL was forced to move classes completely online. The online experience for faculty and students, while awkward at first, became much more effective as faculty gained experience and attended trainings. In the fall of



2021, SJCL decided to bring as many classes back to campus as possible. Nonetheless, many SJCL students and faculty remained concerned about being in large groups of people, citing their own health concerns or concerns about bringing the virus back to immunocompromised family and friends. As a result, SJCL purchased and installed equipment to offer classes in a hybrid fashion, allowing approved remote students to attend in-person classes via the Zoom platform. Much like the experience with the initial online courses, the hybrid-type teaching was difficult, with students attending both in a physical class and on a screen. However, with practice, training, and much better equipment, the educational experience of both faculty and students has become exponentially better. The SJCL administration and faculty agree that the current hybrid system provides students in the Remote Option with an effective, participatory, and engaging online experience, equal to the in-person experience.

Evidence of SJCL's ability to deliver an effective online program is shown in the bar results of the classes of 2021 and 2022. Those classes attended SJCL completely online for part of academic year 2019-2020, all of academic year 2020-2021, with some student continuing to attend online, pursuant to remote waivers, during the 2021-2022 academic year. After four administrations, the class of 2021 has an overall pass rate of 82%. After just two administrations, the class of 2022 has an overall pass rate of 75%. With the most recent bar results, SJCL has met or exceeded the ABA standard for bar passage for the graduating classes of 2020, 2021, and 2022.

### **Remote Option Program Need**

SJCL's in-person JD program is over 50 years old. A review of SJCL's Committee and WASC inspection reports, indicating continuous improvements, show SJCL's dedication to provide a solid legal education at a reasonable price.

The Remote Option directly expands on SJCL's commitment to provide a quality legal education to San Joaquin Valley (Valley) residents. SJCL students hail from all over the Valley, including students who travel as much as two hours to attend classes. Nonetheless, while many students have chosen to make the commute rather than uproot their lives and family, many qualified potential students have not enrolled in SJCL, specifically because of the commute. The Remote Option would allow those students to cut down on the number of commuting days by providing flexibility in methods of attendance. In addition, considering the cost of commuting, the Remote Option would be a welcomed opportunity for our current commuting students.

The Valley has one of the most diverse populations in the United States. Many of the Valley's remote areas are heavily populated by people of color. It is those underserved, remote areas that SJCL would like to target with the Remote Option. SJCL is committed to diversity and equity over all dimensions and in every aspect of its operations. A core SJCL mission is to diversify the legal profession through recruiting, training, and graduating students of color. To make informed institutional decisions, SJCL, for many years, has maintained and analyzed disaggregated data related to all aspects of SJCL's academic program and eventual bar passage. From admissions to graduation to becoming an attorney, SJCL data provides insight into how its students from various backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and gender have performed as groups and as compared to their peers. For example, in terms of bar passage for SJCL's



classes of 2019 through 2021, female students outperformed their male counterparts (79% (42 of 53) v 71% (35 of 49)) and Latino students outperformed their white counterparts (82% (32 of 39) v 67% (28 of 42)). These successes are directly related to SJCL's concerted efforts in educating and supporting the Valley's diverse population. As mentioned earlier, the bar statistics from 2021 and 2022 come from students who attended a significant portion of their SJCL schooling online. By opening the program to students from outside the immediate Fresno and Clovis areas, the Remote Option will open the door to many students from underrepresented communities to attend law school and become attorneys.

The Valley needs lawyers. With the Remote Option, SJCL immediately expands access to a legal education and to the law profession. Such access is crucial in the Valley where there is a dire shortage of attorneys. From public agencies like the District Attorney, Public Defender, and cities and counties, to all sorts of private legal practices, employers cannot find attorneys to take positions. Employers have raised salaries and even provided remote work options, but there are simply not enough attorneys to fill the need. The local news recently ran a story about the attorney shortage, including footage of SJCL's career fair and some interviews with current students. That story can be found at this link: <https://abc30.com/central-valley-lawyer-shortage-attorneys-needed-vacancies/12357720/>. In addition, many employers are moving to remote options for attorneys. Remote opportunities for attorneys were not generally an available option in the past. If employers are now willing to allow attorneys to work remotely, it only makes sense that SJCL provide the option to earn a JD remotely as well. In fact, students and future attorneys demand that type of flexibility.

In addition to students in the Valley, the Remote Option could expand SJCL's reach to other similar communities around California. Expanding SJCL's reach to outside the Valley would also help expand the pool of qualified attorneys to take jobs. A student attending SJCL, even remotely, is plugged into an extensive alumni network, with access to jobs. SJCL hopes to entice some of those qualified people to attend school and work in the Valley.

### **Internal Planning for Remote Option**

Planning at SJCL commences with faculty. Faculty started planning for the Remote Option in 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, faculty were involved in the different stages of going to online education and transitioning back to in-person learning, including the hybrid option. At each point, the SJCL IT department was involved in researching equipment and software, testing, troubleshooting, and student and professor training. SJCL made significant monetary investments in the latest classroom technology. During the pandemic faculty became accustomed to teaching online or, more commonly, teaching in-person classes with students attending via Zoom. After teaching with the latest equipment, raised comfort level, and training, it was rather easy for SJCL faculty to approve an online program. The Remote Option was approved by SJCL full-time faculty, the Faculty Committee, and by the Board of Trustees.



### **Advertisement, Target Audience, and Enrollment Expectations**

SJCL plans to market the Remote Option program as a fully online program. However, SJCL will indicate that there is the option to switch to SJCL's in-person program, as described below in the Remote Option Election portion of this Request. In advertisement materials for the Remote Option, SJCL will indicate that the courses are live, synchronous classes in which the Remote Option student will be attending a traditional Zoom class or, in most circumstances, be joining an in-person class via Zoom. When joining the in-person class via Zoom, the classroom technology will allow the Remote Option student to participate and interact with the instructor and students (in-person or other Remote Option students).

Initially, SJCL plans to limit its advertisement efforts of the Remote Option to California residents. However, if there are qualified out-of-state applicants who apply (and assuming SJCL has proper state-authorization for a remote program in that state and has provided proper disclosure to the applicant about the limitations of a JD degree from a non-ABA school), SJCL will accept and enroll qualified out-of-state students.

In terms of initial enrollment in the Remote Option, SJCL does not expect a large number of first-year applicants, at least in the first year of availability. However, assuming sufficient resources in terms of maintaining a high-quality education, there are no internal limitations placed on the number of qualified applicants that SJCL will accept and enroll in the Remote Option.

### **Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Approval for Remote Option**

In addition to being a Committee accredited school, SJCL is an accredited WASC Senior College and University Commission institution. On November 18, 2022, SJCL submitted a Substantive Change Request to WASC. The substantive change panel granted full approval for SJCL's Remote Option on March 22, 2023. Since the WASC approval, and detailed in this Major Change Request, SJCL has made further progress and has fully digitized all services and solidified policies related to the Remote Option. Both the Substantive Change Request and resulting Substantive Change Report are attached as **Exhibit A**.

### **Remote Option Program Design and Compliance with Accredited Law School Rules**

Pursuant to Rule 4.165, a major change request must explain in detail any effect the change might have on compliance with the Rules of Accredited Law Schools ("Rules"). SJCL's Major Change Request relates exclusively to an additional modality of instruction of its current JD program. All other SJCL policies, procedures, assessment mechanisms, and program requirements related to the Remote Option are identical to those of the in-person program. After the Committee's 2021 site visit, SJCL's JD program was deemed compliant, and accreditation was continued through 2026. In addition, SJCL filed its annual report in 2022, demonstrating its compliance with the Rules.

The proposed Remote Option program can be completed fully online. No in-person experiences are required. Since this Major Change Request involves solely SJCL's ability to offer its JD program 100% remotely, the following represents a description of the JD program from the perspective of a student





attending SJCL in the Remote Option. The purpose of the description is to discuss SJCL's compliance with the Rules potentially affected by an addition of a delivery modality. More specifically, the program description discusses the Remote Option's compliance with Rules related to verified academic engagement, practice-based skills, academic and student support (including access to faculty), access to library resources, and sufficient infrastructure to provide a sound legal education, remotely.

#### Verified Academic Engagement

The Rules require at least 1200 hours of verified academic engagement through physical classroom time, distance learning technology, or experiential/clinical programs. All SJCL students must complete 1290 verified hours. Remote Option students can complete verified hours as follows:

##### Class Instruction and Grading Procedures:

Remote Option students will attend all classes as live, synchronous courses. All SJCL's course offerings will be available to Remote Option students. Although there will be some Zoom-only offerings, most courses in the Remote Option will be hybrid courses, meaning that the Remote Option students will be attending an in-person class via Zoom. In a hybrid course, the instructor will be able to interact with in-person and Remote Option students, simultaneously. Each hybrid classroom contains a large video screen, prominently displayed on one of the walls of the classroom. The instructor and in-person students can clearly see the faces of the Remote Option students on the screen. In addition, through a high-definition camera focused on the instructor and another camera focused on the in-person students, the Remote Option students can both see the instructor and in-person students. Finally, the newly installed microphone and speaker system allows Remote Option students not only to hear the instructor lecture, but also permits them to hear in-person student questions and participate, effectively, in class dialogue. A description of the classroom equipment, with photos, is attached as **Exhibit B**.

SJCL faculty strongly believe that the best legal education requires live, active, and participatory classes. SJCL's goal is to replicate, as best possible, the in-person experience for students electing to attend in the Remote Option. Classroom policies, including attendance, participation, and group work, are identical for the Remote Option and in-person students. For example, to receive credit for attendance, Remote Option students must have their cameras on and be prepared to answer the instructor's questions. Students must attend at least 80% of scheduled class sessions or be administratively withdrawn. Instructors verify attendance through submission of roll sheets. The Law Coordinator maintains attendance records.

All courses are recorded and available to rewatch. Although students cannot get attendance credit for simply watching the recorded video in lieu of attending the live class, SJCL students find the recordings useful if they miss class or desire to watch the recording to solidify understanding of the material presented in class. Class recordings are available in SJCL's Student Resources page.



SJCL recently contracted with Examsoft to extend proctoring services to Remote Option students. Student identities are authenticated, and the entirety of the exam is proctored by Examsoft.

In terms of submitting graded papers and other written materials, SJCL uses Westlaw's student/faculty exchange called TWEN. SJCL currently uses TWEN for all in-person students.

#### Clinical Experiences:

SJCL houses two clinics. Both clinics operated in a completely remote fashion during the pandemic. Both clinics will offer virtual clinical experiences to Remote Option students. The whole of the in-house clinical experience can be replicated, virtually. Remote Option students are notified both in the student handbook and in the semester registration packets that the in-house clinical experience can be completed virtually.

In addition to SJCL's in-house clinics, students may earn up to 4 units in external clinics (more fully described in the Practice Based Skills section, below). Remote Option students will have the same option. One clinical unit requires 72 hours of verified clinical work. Participation and verification of compliance with the Rules related to experiential units is done through submission of timesheets and other substantiating documents. The Registrar maintains all clinical documents. Credit for clinical experiences never exceeds 12.5 per cent of the hours required for graduation.

#### Tracking Academic Engagement:

Classroom hours are tracked and verified through attendance records. Experiential/clinical hours are verified through timesheets and other substantiating documents. All required 1290 hours are verified and tracked through one of those methods.

#### Practice-Based Skills Instruction

The Rules mandate that an accredited law school require a minimum of 6 semester units in practice-based skills courses and the opportunity to complete a minimum of 15 semester units of practice-based skills.

All students, including Remote Option students, are required to complete at least 8 units of practice-based instruction. In addition, SJCL's program provides the opportunity for all students to complete at least 15 units of practice-based instruction through practice-based courses and the clinical experiences described above.

Required, practice-based courses: Appellate Advocacy for 2 units, Moot Court for 2 units, Real Property Drafting, for 1 unit, and Advanced Research and Writing for 3 units. (8 units total)

Elective, practice-based courses routinely offered: Law Practice Management, Pretrial Civil Litigation, Civil Trial Practice, Criminal Trial Practice, and SJCL's in-house immigration and special education clinics. All but Law Practice Management are 3-unit courses (17 units total).



In addition to those practice-based classes listed, SJCL also has a robust externship program where students may earn up to 4 units working in a variety of legal settings, including all types of legal practices in the private and public sector, judges' chambers, both state and federal, and other non-profit clinics. Throughout the Central Valley (Bakersfield to Merced), SJCL has extensive connections with potential clinical placements. As a result, finding clinical placements relatively near to where Central Valley Remote Option students live will not be an issue. For Remote Option students living outside the Central Valley, finding placements is going to take more work. However, SJCL is already working with local practitioners who offer virtual clinical placements without any physical presence requirement. In addition, SJCL staff and faculty will help students outside the Central Valley contact legal practitioners in their area to help arrange placements closer to where they reside. SJCL staff already has some experience arranging clinical experiences in areas outside the Central Valley, specifically for students who return to home cities during the summer months or obtain jobs outside the area. SJCL will build on that experience to provide clinical experiences to all Remote Option students.

#### Academic Support, Access to Faculty, and Access to Administrative Services

The Rules require that the law school, through faculty or otherwise, provide academic counseling to students. SJCL has a demonstrated commitment to a built-in academic support program through student-focused faculty and staff. SJCL will provide the same academic support to Remote Option students, through virtual methods.

During the pandemic, faculty were forced to use Zoom-type platforms for office hours and other student meetings. Faculty, including adjunct faculty, are accustomed to and continue to use Zoom for student meetings and office hours because it is convenient for both faculty and students. All faculty members are required to hold office hours and will be required to offer remote options for office hours if they do not already offer that option. In addition, the Dean, Dean of Students, and Academic Dean regularly consult with students via Zoom on a variety of matters.

SJCL administration and staff have been offering virtual services ever since the pandemic began. All SJCL departments will continue to offer those virtual services to Remote Option students. Remote Option students can and should expect the same level of service as their in-person counterparts. Many current students prefer to interact with SJCL administration via virtual methods due to convenience.

Currently, all student services have been digitized and offered virtually. There is no service, document, form, or other service that requires a student's physical presence.

#### Access to Library and Classroom Materials

SJCL's physical and virtual library are both compliant with Rule 4.160. All necessary and relevant library materials are accessible to Remote Option students online. In fact, even most in-person students exclusively use online options. All students have full access to Westlaw and Lexis, in addition to various other databases accessible through the SJCL library's webpage.



All students have access to SJCL's Online Student Resource Portal, where students find syllabi, prior exams, paperwork for clinical and research work, and other important documents. In addition, it is within this portal that students find their grades, unofficial transcripts, class schedules, financial information, and other student-related information.

Finally, each course has a dedicated TWEN page where instructors post handouts, assignments, sign-up sheets, polls, and other class-related documents.

### Resources and Infrastructure to Support the Remote Option

#### Classrooms:

SJCL has made significant investment, including money, time, and training, in equipping its classrooms to offer hybrid classes effectively. SJCL faculty now have close to three years of experience with online provision of education, the last two years directly related to the hybrid format proposed in this Major Change Request.

#### Training:

SJCL faculty and staff already have significant experience and training in providing services, remotely. Nonetheless, SJCL will continue to provide faculty and staff training on best practices in virtual services.

#### I.T. Support:

Throughout the development of the Remote Option, the SJCL IT department has been charged with researching, testing, and implementing necessary equipment and software to support online and hybrid classes. In addition, they provided support to students and faculty during the period SJCL was conducting online and hybrid classes. As a result, IT has developed procedures and protocols designed to provide comprehensive support to both faculty and students teaching or attending in the Remote Option. In-person IT support is available from 9 am to 8 pm, Monday through Thursday, and from 9am to 4pm on Friday. Virtual IT support (phone, e-mail, or helpdesk request) is available from 9 am to 9:30 pm, Monday through Thursday, and from 9am to 4pm on Friday. SJCL classes are held, generally, Monday through Thursday at time between 9am and 9:30pm. In cases of activities or other urgent matters, virtual IT support is available on the weekends, provided the request be marked priority in the help desk request. Hours and methods of contact are provided in the Student and Faculty Handbooks and are listed in every classroom.

#### Data Gathering and Analysis:

Akin to other areas of SJCL's operations, SJCL will gather and analyze extensive, disaggregated data involving the delivery and success of the Remote Option program. That data and related analysis will permit SJCL to adjust and continually improve the Remote Option program. For example, SJCL will use the data to compare and analyze, among other things, academic exclusion rates, grades, and bar



passage rates of students who attend remotely. SJCL has the ability to collect and analyze data about virtually any aspect of the Remote Option program and how it compares to in-person attendance.

### **Remote Option Election and Related Policies**

The Remote Option JD can be completed fully online. There are no in-person experiences required. SJCL's proposed policy requires that all students elect, before each semester, to attend as either an In-Person or Remote Option student. Once elected, a student is locked into that option for an entire semester. Students are not permitted to select the modality on a course-by-course basis. Rather, the election is done on a program-wide basis and applies to every course in which the student is enrolled during that semester. SJCL will start with this policy. However, although SJCL faculty have proposed this initial policy, they have discussed the option of allowing students to elect the modality of attendance on a class-by-class basis. If the Committee grants this Major Change Request, SJCL will start with the semester-by-semester election. However, SJCL seeks permission to alter the policy to a class-by-class election in the future.

Students in either option will be allotted a certain number of "flex days." Flex days allow students in one option to get attendance credit for attending class in the modality of the other option. For example, an in-person student could use a flex day to attend class virtually instead of in-person. Flex days provide some flexibility for in-person students who, for some unforeseen reason, cannot make it to campus on a particular day. In addition, Remote-Option students will have flex days in which they can get attendance credit for in-person attendance. SJCL will encourage Remote-Option students to use flex days, if possible, for purposes of meeting their instructors, SJCL staff, and other students, in person.

The number of allowed flex days depends on the unit value and type of class. For example, students enrolled in a 3-unit course (15 sessions, 3 hours each) would be allowed 3 flex days. Students enrolled in a 2-unit course (10 sessions, 2 hours each) would be allowed 2 flex days. After exhausting the allotted flex days, any attendance outside of the elected modality will result in an absence. The current number of flex days proposed represents 1/5 of the class sessions. SJCL seeks the ability to raise the number of flex days, upon faculty committee approval, but in no event greater than 1/2 of the class sessions.

All policies and procedures regarding the election of program will be detailed in acceptance materials, registration materials, and in the Student Handbook.

### **Conclusion**

Over the last three years, SJCL has demonstrated its ability to deliver robust and successful law courses, remotely. SJCL has been careful and deliberate in its planning of the Remote Option, will dedicate sufficient resources to Remote Option students, and will collect extensive data to assess whether the Remote Option is successful and to adjust where needed. The Remote Option is SJCL's next step in fulfilling its mission to offer and provide quality legal education to students who otherwise may not have the opportunity. As a result, SJCL respectfully requests that the Committee grant this Major Change.



## EXHIBIT B

# Immersive Hybrid Classroom

### In-classroom experience

The remote students are displayed on an 86" TV where both the in-person class and the instructor can easily see them. Microphones in the ceiling can pick up the voices (even at a whisper) of the professor and in-class students. Speakers in the ceiling project the voices of the on-line students.





## Remote experience

The remote students can view the in-class students via a camera positioned above the instructor and can see the instructor with the second camera at the back of the room.



Professor view on the top left and the in-class view at top right. These views can also be pinned if they only want to see the professor.

## Substantive Change: Doctoral Programs

Please read these instructions carefully before beginning your proposal. Proposals filled out incorrectly will not be forwarded to a Substantive Change panel.

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Please answer each question. If a question is not applicable, enter "N/A" in the appropriate section. Incomplete proposals will not be forwarded to the Substantive Change committee for review. Do not delete the questions.
- We strongly recommend that you review the document [Common Issues in Substantive Change Proposals](#) which identifies common areas of weakness in proposals and can be a useful tool as you draft your proposal.
- The proposal should be no more than 10,000 words, not including attachments.
- The proposal must be saved as a Microsoft Word document. Attachments are preferred as PDF.

### NAMING YOUR PROPOSAL AND ATTACHMENTS

Use the following naming convention for your document. Incorrectly named documents will not be reviewed.

**[Review Year-Month], [Institution Name]: [Degree/Program Name]**

Example: 2005\_Sunshine University\_PhD in Engineering

Please make sure that all attachments are named consistently and referenced with the same name in the appropriate place in the narrative. The name of the attachment should begin with the Section number and question to which it is referring. For example, "Attachment III.A.7: Curriculum Map", would reference the curriculum map requirement in Section III, question A.7. Attachments are preferred as PDFs.

### REVIEWING YOUR PROPOSAL

Before submitting your proposal, the Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) should conduct a review of the draft to ensure that the proposal is clear and complete. This review should ensure that:

- The proposal uses the appropriate form and is named correctly.
- All questions in the proposal are answered completely and directly, or marked as "N/A".
- The narrative is clear and understandable to someone outside of the department or institution.
- All attachments open.
- All attachments are referenced in the narrative in the appropriate section.
- All hyperlinks function appropriately. Hyperlinks should be used sparingly. As much as possible, please summarize the information requested or copy the appropriate information in an attachment to the proposal. Hyperlinks should directly take the reviewer to the specific information being referenced. (Don't include a link to the entire catalog, for instance, when referencing only one program described in it.)
- There are no font or formatting inconsistencies that might distract the readers.



## SUBMITTING YOUR PROPOSAL

- Refer to the “READ ME FIRST Sub Change Proposal Submission Instructions” document in the Box.com folder for this proposal.
- Please have your institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer notify Konami Chisholm ([kchisholm@wascsenior.org](mailto:kchisholm@wascsenior.org)) once the proposal is complete and has been uploaded to Box.com.

## RESOURCES

- For more information on substantive change policy and procedures, please refer to the [Substantive Change Manual](#).
- [Guidelines for the Review of Graduate Programs](#)
- The rubric used by the panel for scoring the proposal can be found in the Box.com folder for this review.
- Additional resources and documents may be found on the [Substantive Change page](#) or in the [Document Library](#) on the [WSCUC website](#).

## NEXT STEPS

WSCUC staff will conduct a preliminary review of the proposal to determine if additional information is needed before forwarding the proposal to the Substantive Change review panel. Approximately one month prior to the conference call date, the ALO will receive an email notification requesting response to these questions with detailed information about how to revise the proposal. You will have one week to respond. After the revised proposal is submitted, it will be forwarded to the Substantive Change panel for review.

## Degree or Program Name:

### Section I: Institutional and Program Overview

#### A. Program Overview

##### 1. Name of proposed degree program.

Juris Doctor- Remote Option

##### 2. Initial date of offering.

January, 2023 (Spring semester), or August, 2023 (Fall semester)

##### 3. Percent of the program being offered via distance education and/or off-campus, if applicable.

The Remote Option program will allow students to take courses in SJCL's current JD program remotely. This application is simply a for SJCL to have flexibility in modality of delivery of its courses. Upon approval, SJCL students would have the option to complete 100% of the program via distance education.

#### B. Descriptive Background, History, and Context (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 2.2, 2.2b, 4.6, 4.7)

##### 1. Provide a brief description of the institution(s), including the broader institutional context in which the new program will exist. Connect the anticipated substantive change with the mission, purpose, and strategic plan of the institution(s).

San Joaquin College of Law (SJCL) is a private, nonprofit, single-degree institution founded in 1969. It exists to provide residents of the San Joaquin Valley an opportunity to attain a sound legal education at an affordable price. The SJCL Juris Doctor (JD) program is a standard, in-person law school curriculum that can be completed in 3, 4, or 5 years. JD courses are offered both during the day and evening. This flexibility in length of time to finish the program and scheduling provides an opportunity for a variety of students, including those who work full-time or have substantial family or other commitments, to realize their dreams of becoming attorneys. This request for a substantive change is a continuation of SJCL's mission to provide a flexible, reasonably priced, and solid legal education to San Joaquin Valley residents, and potentially beyond, who otherwise would not have the opportunity to go to law school.

SJCL graduates have long played crucial roles throughout the region and beyond. Sixty-five of SJCL graduates are, or have been judges, commissioners, and administrative law judges. The current district attorneys of Fresno, Madera, and Kings Counties are SJCL graduates. At one time or another, the district attorney of all surrounding counties has been an SJCL graduate, three successive ones covering more than 25 years in Fresno County. SJCL graduates have served as Secretary of the California Department of Health and Human Services, Chair of the California Water Resources Control Board, Vice President of Human Resources for Chevron, Chief Counsel for Fortune 500 companies, and Regulatory Compliance Officer for the Dallas Mavericks. In addition, hundreds of graduates have served as assistant district attorneys and assistant public defenders, city attorneys, county counsel, and in virtually every private firm in the region. Over 80% of SJCL's nearly 1700 graduates have passed the California bar exam.

Roughly one third of the practicing lawyers in the Fresno area are SJCL graduates. Of women lawyers, 39% are SJCL graduates and 39% of Latinx lawyers are graduates.

Before 2020, SJCL had never offered classes remotely, other than providing temporary medical accommodations to students with approved petitions. During the pandemic, however, SJCL was forced to move classes completely online. The online experience for faculty and students, while awkward at first, became much more effective as faculty gained experience and attended trainings. In the fall of 2021, SJCL decided to bring as many classes back to campus as possible. Nonetheless, many SJCL students and faculty remained concerned about being in large groups of people, citing their own health concerns or concerns about bringing the virus back to immunocompromised family and friends. As a result, and pursuant to the WASC temporary authorization, SJCL purchased and installed equipment to offer classes in a hybrid fashion, allowing approved remote students to attend in-person classes via the Zoom platform. Much like the experience with the initial online courses, the hybrid-type teaching was difficult, with students attending both in a physical class and on a screen. However, with practice, training, and much better equipment, the educational experience of both faculty and students has become exponentially better, as shown in SJCL student surveys. The IT department, over the last 2 years, has spent significant resources and time to upgrade and finetune the SJCL hybrid system and will continue to make improvements. The SJCL administration and faculty agree that the current hybrid system provides remote students with an effective, participatory, and engaging online experience, almost equal to the in-person experience.

Evidence of SJCL's ability to deliver an effective online or hybrid program is shown in the bar results of the class of 2021. That class attended SJCL totally online for part of academic year 2019-2020 and all of academic year 2020-2021. That class passed the July 2021 bar exam at a first-time rate of 53% and after two administrations has a cumulative pass rate of 72%.

**2. If this is a joint program, identify the roles and responsibilities of each institution in developing, delivering, and assessing the program.**

N/A

**3. List the number, variety and longevity of other doctoral programs currently being offered, including student enrollment and projected time to graduation, if applicable, for each doctoral program. At least three and no more than five years of data should be provided. If this is a joint doctoral program, provide this data for each institution.**

SJCL offers only one program, the JD program. The JD program has been offered for over 50 years. Students can finish in 3, 4, or 5 years. Most students choose to finish in 4 years, with a handful finishing in 3. Very few students choose to finish in 5 years. SJCL policy requires that, at the very most, students finish within 5 years of commencing the program.

**4. If 50% or more of the program will be offered via distance education, describe the institution's prior experience offering distance education. For joint programs, provide this information for each institution.**

As described in (I)(B)(1), before the pandemic SJCL had almost no experience delivering distance education courses. However, for over two years (during the waiver period), SJCL has been successfully

offering a variety of online and hybrid options, all in a synchronous fashion. SJCL continues to use the Zoom platform for full on-line courses. In terms of hybrid classes, SJCL made significant investments in state-of-the art equipment for classrooms, allowing for a hybrid, synchronous experience for students attending virtually. SJCL staff and faculty continue to make improvements, but positive student surveys and excellent outcomes show that the virtual experience has been a successful option for many students.

**5. If the institution currently offers a joint doctorate(s) in this discipline, indicate whether the program(s) will continue and provide details on how the proposed program fits into the strategic plan of the institution. If the joint program will be discontinued, refer to Section VI on teach-out requirements.**

N/A

### **C. Institutional Accrediting History Relevant to Substantive Change (CFR 1.8)**

**1. Provide a brief response to issues noted in prior substantive change reviews since the institution's last comprehensive review, even if the programs reviewed were at a different degree level or offered in a different discipline. If this is a joint program, provide this information for each institution.**

There have been no prior substantive change reviews.

**2. Provide the institutional response to issues relevant to doctoral level education noted in the last Commission or Interim Report Committee letters or in related team reports. If this is a joint program, provide this information for each institution.**

Attached as **Attachment I.C.2: Interim Report Action Summary**, is the Interim Report Action Summary that resulted from SJCL's 2021 Interim Report Review. It does not identify any significant deficiencies or issues.

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please list each of the 4 recommendations listed in the 2021 Interim Report Review and briefly describe how the institution has responded to each of the recommendations to date.

#### **Interim Report Recommendations**

The Interim Report Recommendations were received July 27, 2021, less than a year and a half ago.

#### **1. CONTINUE THE PROGRESS ON COLLECTING DATA AND ASSESSING THE PROGRAM.**

The Interim Report included the reports and data relied upon for the academic year **2019-2020** (August 1, 2019 through July 31, 2020) report. Both the academic program and co-curricular program were assessed.

SJCL continues to collect all the academic and co-curricular data relied upon in the Interim Report. For academic year **2020-2021** (August 1, 2020 through July 31, 2021), only the co-curricular program was assessed. Extensive data reports were submitted by all departments.

Recommendations included making greater use of digital data storage, techniques for educating students about the availability of helpdesks, and holding orientations for upper division students as well as entering students. Further, each department should prepare an in-depth presentation as to how their department interacts with other departments. This could include the story of a student's life-cycle at SJCL.

For academic year **2021-2022** (August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022), the co-curricular report has been completed. The Program Review Committee concluded that the systems supporting the academic program are working well. Javier Rosas, the assessment leader, suggested that once a goal had been achieved, it was time to identify a new goal that would further improve a department's delivery of services to students. Once a goal is demonstrated to be achieved, the data should continue to be collected. In two or three years, the data for a goal should be examined again to confirm that it is still being achieved. Many departments are using many data points to determine if a goal is being achieved. Two to three goals per cycle with one or two data points is sufficient.

One theme was the need to get more routine work digitalized – for example, making the course completion check for graduation available online for students.

Many departments are relying upon student and alumni surveys to measure if a goal is being achieved. The Co-Curricular group discussed the danger of survey fatigue, having seen a decline in participation in surveys even when incentives are offered. Departments should determine what surveys and what survey questions are needed.

Another theme was the need for cross-training between departments. Another priority was for all departments to consider how they can effectively contribute to recruitment and support of students.

Academic Program review for 2021-2022 will be completed by January 31, 2023.

For academic year **2022-2023** (August 1, 2022 to July 31, 2023), the goals for each co-curricular department have been specified. On the academic side, protocols for the retention of all documents that will be needed for the external writing review have been created. This year, law students' oral skills will be evaluated using recordings of the internal Moot Court competition that occurs in April of 2023.

The schedule for completion of the 2022-2023 co-curricular and academic program reviews is as follows:

September 1, 2023 – All department and academic reports completed.

November 1, 2023 – All Program Review completed.

## **2. CONTINUE THE SUCCESSFUL PROGRESS ON DIVERSIFYING THE BOARD.**

Since the time of receipt of the recommendations, there have been three vacancies on the Board. One was filled by a black woman graduate of SJCL, who is the Managing Partner of the Fresno office of a statewide law firm. The second was filled by a highly accomplished CPA who is white and an SJCL graduate. SJCL felt that the expertise of another CPA on the Board and the Finance Committee was needed. One position remains and at least one further position is expected to be vacant in March of 2023. SJCL has identified possible candidates of color to fill these positions.

### **3. CONTINUE TO EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR DIVERSIFYING THE ADJUNCT AND FULL-TIME FACULTY (when positions are available) WITH THE CONSIDERATION OF ALUMNI WHO COULD DIVERSIFY THE FACULTY BUT WHO HAVE SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE AFTER THE DEGREE PROGRAM**

SJCL is a small institution with seven full-time faculty. No vacancies have occurred amongst the full-time faculty, nor have any additional positions been created, since the Interim Recommendations were received.

Three individuals of color have been added to the adjunct faculty. Professor Ana de Alba, United States Judge for the Eastern District of California, is Latina and teaches Civil Rights. Professor Tina Botts, who is black, teaches Academic Legal Writing. Professor Jaskaran Gill is East Indian and teaches one of the sections of Advanced Research and Writing.

### **4. CONTINUE ANNUAL EVALUATION OF STAFF WITH THE CONSIDERATION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

The SJCL staff is small so there is little room for advancement. Once here, staff rarely leave. However, a significant number of staff are 60 years of age or older, so retirements must be anticipated. Hence, SJCL is facilitating cross-training of staff wherever an individual appears interested in and capable of performing a new position. Since the Interim Recommendations, evaluation of 15 staff members has occurred. That is more than half of the staff of SJCL. The Dean and Director of Human Resources have set a target of February 28, 2023 for the completion of the next round of evaluations.

**3. If the proposed program is within a school accredited by a professional accrediting agency, or is related to a program that is accredited by a professional accrediting agency, list the agency, year accredited, and attach a copy of the most recent team evaluation report and agency action. Also, indicate whether the specialized agency needs to review and approve the proposed program prior to implementation and when the review will be completed.**

SJCL's JD program is accredited by the State Bar of California, Committee of Bar Examiners, which allows SJCL graduates to sit for the California Bar Exam. SJCL has had continuous accreditation since 1976. SJCL's most recent site visit occurred in 2021. The site team evaluation report is included as **Attachment I:C.3: Periodic Inspection Report**.

SJCL is concurrently seeking approval for the Remote JD Program from the State Bar of California. The State Bar's review will need to be completed before implementation. As of now, there is no deadline for the review to be completed.

## **Section II: Program Need and Approval**

## **A. Program Need** (CFRs 1.1, 1.7, 1.8, 2.1, 2.12, 4.1 – 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)

**1. Identify the program need/rationale framed by the institution's mission and strategic goals. Local program need should be documented in addition to any national or statewide need. For joint programs, provide this information for each institution.**

SJCL's in-person JD program is over 50 years old. A review of SJCL's WASC reviews and continuous improvements show SJCL's dedication to provide a solid legal education at a reasonable price.

The Remote Option directly expands on SJCL's commitment to provide a quality legal education to San Joaquin Valley residents. SJCL students hail from all over the San Joaquin Valley, including students who travel as much as two hours to attend classes. Nonetheless, while many students have chosen to make that commute, rather than uproot family, many qualified potential students have not enrolled in SJCL, specifically because of the commute. An online or hybrid option would allow those students to cut down on the number of commuting days by providing flexibility in methods of attendance. In addition, considering soaring gas prices, a remote option would be a welcomed opportunity for our current commuting students.

SJCL is in the San Joaquin Valley, which has one of the most diverse populations in the United States. Many of the Valley's remote areas are heavily populated by people of color. It is those remote areas the SJCL would like to target with the Remote Option. SJCL is committed to diversity and equity over all dimensions in every aspect of its operation. A core SJCL mission is to diversify the legal profession through recruiting, training, and graduating students of color. For many years, SJCL has maintained and analyzed disaggregated data related to all aspects of SJCL's academic program and eventual bar passage. From admissions to graduation to becoming an attorney, SJCL data provides insight into how its students from various backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and gender have performed as groups and as compared to their peers. For example, in terms of bar passage for the classes of 2020 and 2021, SJCL female students have passed at higher rates than male students (81% v 79% in '20 and 73% v 71% in '21), SJCL Latino students have passed at higher rates than their white counterparts (83% v 67% in '20 and 89% v 63% in '21), and Asian students have also done better than their white counterparts (86% v 67% in '20 and 75% v 63% in '21). As mentioned earlier, the bar stats from 2021 come from students who attended a significant portion of their SJCL schooling online. The Remote Option will open the door to many students, from underrepresented communities, to attend law school and become attorneys.

Bar stats are only one of the major focuses of investigation. SJCL does the same type of analysis for admissions, academic exclusions, performance in the first year, voluntary withdrawals, and graduation rates. SJCL has a culture of using stats to make decisions and does so with disaggregated stats based on gender, race, ethnicity, veteran status, first-generation status, and other metrics. This allows faculty to know when it appears a policy or procedure may be disparately impacting a particular group and make necessary changes. SJCL will continue to collect and disaggregate stats to devise plans to reach a more diverse audience of students through the Remote Option.

The Central Valley needs lawyers. With the Remote Option, SJCL immediately expands access to a legal education and to the law profession. Such access is crucial in the San Joaquin Valley where there is a dire shortage of attorneys. From public agencies like the District Attorney, Public Defender, and cities and counties, to all sorts of private legal practices, employers cannot find attorneys to take positions. Employers have raised salaries and even provided remote work options, but there are simply not

enough attorneys to fill the need. The local news recently ran a story about the attorney shortage, including footage of SJCL's career fair and some interviews with current students. That story can be found at this link: <https://abc30.com/central-valley-lawyer-shortage-attorneys-needed-vacancies/12357720/>. In addition, many employers are moving to remote options for attorneys. Remote opportunities for attorneys were not generally an available option in the past. If employers are now willing to allow attorneys to work remotely, it only makes sense that SJCL provide the option to earn a JD remotely as well. In fact, students and future attorneys demand that type of flexibility.

In addition to students in California's Central Valley, the Remote Option could expand SJCL's reach to other similar communities around California. SJCL prides itself on offering a solid legal education at a fraction of the cost of other law schools. Expanding our reach to outside the valley would also help expand the pool of qualified attorneys to take jobs. A student attending SJCL, even remotely, is plugged into an extensive alumni network, with access to jobs. SJCL hopes to entice some of those qualified people to attend school and work in the San Joaquin Valley.

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please note that peer reviewers are not required to search websites for information needed for this proposal. If the information is required, please summarize in the narrative or provide as an attachment.

The linked article simply speaks to the attorney shortage in the Central Valley and beyond. It is not required for this proposal.

## **2. Describe the process and results used to establish the need. Please provide a summary of the findings, not the full study.**

For many years, applicants have inquired about an online program at SJCL. SJCL administration and faculty had never seriously contemplated offering an online program, feeling that the student experience would not be as effective as it is in person. Nonetheless, SJCL was forced to offer online classes during the pandemic, and thus forced to invest in training, equipment, and personnel time to make the online or hybrid experience the best possible experience. That experience taught SJCL administration and faculty that an online or hybrid education, when done well, can result in effective teaching and results.

## **3. What evidence (surveys, focus groups, documented inquiries, etc.) was used to support enrollment projections and to support the conclusion that interest in the program is sufficient to sustain it at expected levels?**

While SJCL hopes that more students will enroll with the added flexibility of an online option, the JD program does not depend on any number of students attending via the Remote Option. Over the years students have continuously requested the flexibility to attend remotely when needed. Some of the reasons cited include child and kin care, financial implication of the commute, sickness, emergencies, and general flexibility. For more, see **Attachment II.A.4: Recruitment Marketing Plan**.

## **4. Attach the recruitment and/or marketing plan for the program. Describe the geographic scope of the program. (Note that all materials regarding this program should clearly state, "Pending WSCUC approval" prior to Commission approval.)**



See **Attachment II.A.4: Recruitment Marketing Plan.**

WSCUC reviewer Comment: The peer review panel will expect to see estimated costs for each of the marketing activities. Total costs for marketing (according to the Plan) should be represented in the attached program budget.

## **MARKETING**

SJCL expects no addition to the marketing budget in initiating a hybrid or fully virtual law degree program. That option will be built into the marketing already conducted.

### **B. Planning/Approval Process (CFRs 1.8, 4.1, 4.2)**

**1. Describe the planning and approval process within the institution(s), indicating how the faculty and other groups (administrators, trustees, stakeholders, etc.) were involved in the review and approval of the program. Include any campus established criteria for doctoral level work. Attach documentation of necessary approvals. CSU campuses must attach a letter of approval from the Chancellor's office.**

Planning at SJCL commences with faculty. Throughout the pandemic, faculty were involved in the different stages of going to online education, transitioning back to in-person learning, including a hybrid option. At each point, SJCL I.T. department was involved in researching equipment and software, testing, troubleshooting, and student and professor training. During the pandemic faculty became accustomed to teaching online or, more commonly, teaching in-person classes with student attending via zoom. While the idea of online classes would have been unthinkable to SJCL faculty before the pandemic, after teaching with the latest equipment, training, and just raising their comfort level, it has been rather easy for our faculty to approve an online program. The Remote Option was approved by our full-time faculty, the Faculty Committee, and by our Board of Trustees.

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please provide documentation of the approvals from FT Faculty, Faculty Governance Committees, and the Board of Trustees. Documentation may include formal minutes (preferred), formal memoranda, resolutions, etc.)

There are no formal approvals necessary for SJCL's change in modality of instruction. The full-time faculty has discussed at length, but there are no minutes of the discussion. The Faculty Committee has discussed as well. Attached as **Attachment II.B.1: Faculty Committee Minutes** are minutes from the July 2022, Faculty Committee meeting in which the Hybrid Option was discussed. In addition, Attached as **Attachment II.B.1: Board of Trustee Minutes** are minutes from the September 13, 2022 Board Meeting in which the future Hybrid Program is discussed. The Board of Trustee leaves administrative decisions, such as modality of instruction, to SJCL administration.

**2. If the institution(s) is/are part of a university system, describe the review process at the system level, including any system requirements for doctoral level work. Attach documentation of approval.**

N/A

**3. For international programs ONLY:**

**a.) Attach evidence that any necessary governmental licensure or approvals required to operate in the host country have been attained.**

N/A

**b.) Is the institution recognized by an accrediting agency or the Ministry of Education in the proposed country? Describe the due diligence conducted to qualify the partner and what criteria were used.**

N/A

**c.) Describe the nature of the relationship with the partner institution in terms of admissions, faculty, governance, finances, and support services.**

N/A

**4. Describe the institution's plan for obtaining State Authorizations for distance education delivery. List current authorizations, applications in process, and future applications and the timeline they are expected.**

SJCL plans only to offer the Remote Option to California residents. Should SJCL decide to offer the Remote Option outside California, all required State Authorizations will be submitted and approved before enrolling any students.

### **C. Collaborative/Cooperative Agreements (CFRs 1.8, 4.1, 4.2)**

1. If the proposed program includes collaboration or cooperation with outside agencies, institutions or other entities, please describe the purpose and nature of the relationships. Attach relevant signed Memoranda of Agreement or other documentation. If this is the first program to be offered 50% or more online, or if the LMS provider has recently changed, please attach the contract with the provider. Please see WSCUC's [Agreements with Unaccredited Entities Policy and Guidelines](#).

N/A

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please provide, at minimum, one final and signed Memorandum of Agreement with a site used for internships/externships which fully delineates the responsibilities of both the University and the externship site.

A final, signed agreement is attached as **Attachment II.C.1: Madera County Agreement**.

## Section III: Program Description

(For more information see Program Description in the [Guidelines for the Review of Graduate Programs](#))

### A. Curriculum (CFRs 2.1 – 2.5, 2.8, 3.5, 4.1, 4.4, 4.7)

**1. Provide an overall description of the program including the alignment of the program philosophy, curricular design, pedagogical methods, and degree nomenclature selected. Identify the program's emphasis as a professional-practice (applied research, practice-oriented, or clinical) degree or a scholarly research-oriented degree.**

The SJCL JD curriculum is geared towards producing competent legal practitioners. SJCL requires 86 units for graduation. Of those 86 units, 69 are in required courses while 17 are in elective courses. Substantive required classes include all topics tested on the Bar Examination. Most of these subjects are taught as two-semester, year-long classes, with unit values varying between 4 and 6 units. Contracts, Criminal Law and Procedure, Constitutional Law, and Evidence are all 6-unit courses, 3 units each semester. Torts, Civil Procedure, Real Property, and Wills and Trusts are all 5-unit courses, 2 or 3 units each semester. In addition to Real Property, students are required to take a 1-unit Real Property Drafting course. Remedies and Business Organizations are both 4 units, 2 units per semester, over two semesters. Other bar topics taught as single-semester courses are Community Property for 3 units and Professional Responsibility for 2 units.

In addition to substantive required courses, there are required courses with a substantial research and writing component. Students must take Legal Methods I and II, 2 units each, during their first year. During their second year, students must enroll in both Appellate Advocacy and Moot Court, both 2-unit courses. SJCL added Appellate Advocacy in 2020 to provide students with more opportunities to produce written work and receive feedback. Students complete various writing tasks, including appellate briefs. The final appellate briefs are used for oral argument in the Moot Court course the following semester.

Finally, Advanced Research and Writing, a required 3-unit writing course, must be taken in the third or fourth year. Students who complete a publishable law review comment may receive up to 3 units of academic credit. Academic credit for the law review comment may substitute for the Advanced Research and Writing requirement.

To fulfill a portion of the elective requirement, students may take earn up to 4 units by working in externships and internships in the legal community. In addition, students may earn up to 4 more units by participating in the SJCL's in-house immigration or special education clinics. The students enrolled in the immigration or special education clinics are required to attend a weekly classroom component on top of clinic duties. The in-house clinics are directed and taught by full-time faculty.

**2.a If 50% or more of the program will be offered via distance education, provide a detailed description of the modality and format being proposed (i.e., synchronous, asynchronous, online, correspondence, teleconference, video on demand, etc.). Provide guest log-in access to the learning**

**management system for this program for at least one course for which a syllabus is provided. The course must be part of the proposed program, not from another program.**

The Remote Option would allow students to attend any class 1) in person or 2) in a hybrid fashion, meaning the student would be able to attend an in-person class remotely. In addition, there will be a handful of courses offered in an online-only fashion, via Zoom or Teams. Whether a student is in person or attending remotely, the class will always be synchronous. In addition, courses are recorded, allowing students, however they attend, to review the course material again. Office hours will be provided both remotely and in person.

The following links provide access to the learning management system and recordings for three courses. In addition, there is a link and access credential for SJCL's student resource page:

### **Learning Management System (TWEN)**

TWEN: [lawschool.westlaw.com](https://lawschool.westlaw.com) - The most comprehensive Web site for law school students and faculty

TWEN Login: username: [REDACTED](#) password: REDACTED

Civil Procedure:

<https://lawschool.westlaw.com/manage/HomePage.aspx?NavChoice=mycourses&task=coursehomepag&courseid=307529>

Contracts:

<https://lawschool.westlaw.com/manage/HomePage.aspx?NavChoice=mycourses&task=coursehomepag&courseid=308831>

Property:

<https://lawschool.westlaw.com/manage/HomePage.aspx?NavChoice=mycourses&task=coursehomepag&courseid=309500>

### **RECORDING ACCESS**

Recordings login: [REDACTED](#) password: REDACTED

Civ Pro: <https://web.microsoftstream.com/group/37eee970-7f12-4f6f-8965-73f51d19a39a>

Contracts: <https://web.microsoftstream.com/group/350118c2-f60d-49b8-9dea-ae11522b085d>

Property: <https://web.microsoftstream.com/group/a17868cc-7977-4404-b2b9-9158932518b7>

### **STUDENT RESOURCE PAGE**

Student Resource Page: [Student Resources - SJCL](#)

login: [REDACTED](#) password: REDACTED

**2.b If this proposal involves distance delivery of any portion of the curriculum, describe how the program meets expectations for “Academic Engagement” and “Faculty-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction” as defined by the federal regulations (see Code of Federal Regulations §600.2 Academic Engagement & Distance Education). Identify where/how these required elements are incorporated into the proposed program.**

Academic Engagement requires active participation by a student in the student’s course of study. SJCL provides this through synchronous classes, submission of assignment, exams, interactions among fellow students, and regular and required interaction with faculty outside of class.

Faculty-Initiated Regular and Substantive Interaction requires documented substantive interaction between faculty and remote students. SJCL provides this through direct instruction, providing feedback on course assignments and exams, office hours, email communication, phone communication, and group discussions. All of this is completed on various online platforms. In addition, faculty are required to schedule regular office hours. SJCL faculty regularly make themselves available at times that fit a particular student’s needs. Finally, regular attendance is required and monitored, as is class participation.

**2.c Describe the institution’s process for disclosing to students how state licensure requirements are met by the proposed program, whether licensure requirements are not met by the proposed program, or whether the institution has not determined where licensure requirements are met by the proposed program.**

SJCL is heavily regulated by the State Bar of California, Committee of Bar Examiners. SJCL is required to report, publish statistics, and otherwise disseminate information to potential students.

**3. If 50% or more of the program will be offered via distance education, describe how the curricular design and pedagogical approach has been adapted to the modality of the program.**

In a strictly on-line course, the classes are still small, allowing the faculty member to require active participation from students. In a hybrid class, where a professor is teaching in-person, but also has students participating online, the professor will be able to see the faces, and interact with those participating online. In addition, SJCL has gone to great lengths to ensure that the online participants in an in-person class can also hear their fellow students. Our research indicates that most hybrid programs focus solely on the presentation of the professor. In law classes, however, it is important for students to be able to hear a react to what other students are saying. Professors have been trained to engage the online students.

**4. If applicable, describe each track within the program being proposed including the capacity of the institution to support each track. Each track will be acted on independently.**

There is only one degree program and only one track. The Remote Option allows flexibility in terms of how a student is able to attend law courses. Remote students, unable to physically visit the facilities, will have access to all resources, co-curricular services, and all other services to which in-person students have access.

**5. Describe how a doctoral level culture will be established to support the proposed program, including such elements as doctoral level course requirements, nature of the research environment, balance between applied and research components of the degree, and type of culminating experience (full dissertation or a culminating project). Also include plans for faculty research, faculty hires, library resources, and peer and campus collaboration. Discuss how students (both full-time and part-time) will be integrated into the intellectual community of the department and institution. If this is a joint program, provide this information for each institution.**

While SJCL's focus has always been on a professional degree and the practice of law, it has a culture of professionalism, engagement, curiosity, collaboration, and collegiality. The school offers both theoretical and practical training, providing a useful background for publishing in journals and law reviews as well, transactional writing and brief writing. Although the curriculum is rigorous, SJCL also promotes a doctoral level culture through access to programs that broaden their professional and leadership skills, connect them with student organizations, unlock public and community service opportunities, and network with future colleagues in the legal community.

Faculty members have long been willing collaborators and mentors when individual students approach them with new ideas they wish to explore through directed research and robust discussion. The interactive professor-student relationships and small class sizes give students opportunities to complete individualized academic research and writing under the close supervision of any faculty member or adjunct member approved by the Academic Dean to supervise a student.

Through its courses and clinical opportunities, the SJCL fosters exploration, going beyond the boundaries of bar courses to electives in various areas in academic legal writing, legal technology, law firm management, and specialized topics such as tribal law, environmental law, prisoners' rights, and trial practice, to name a few.

To support a doctoral level culture, the school frequently hosts presentations by attorneys and alumni ranging from Q&As to meet-and-greets to annual Constitution Day lectures.

**6. Provide the student learning outcomes for the proposed program.**

The student learning outcomes, adopted in 2019, are the following:

1. Demonstrate comprehension of the structures and processes of the U.S. legal system and foundational substantive law.
2. Demonstrate proficiency in legal analysis and problem solving.
3. Demonstrate competence in written and oral communication.
4. Demonstrate mastery of strategies and technologies of legal research.
5. Recognize and resolve ethical issues.

**7. Attach a curricular map aligning program learning outcomes with course learning outcomes, and demonstrating the progression from introductory to advanced levels.**

SJCL maintains a detailed curricular map for the JD program and provided that to WASC at the last site visit. That curricular map would be the same for the Remote Option.

**8. Include a list of all courses in the program, identifying which are required.**

Please see Attachment III.A.8: All Courses.

**9. Describe the process by which syllabi are reviewed and approved to ensure that 1) course learning outcomes are described and are linked to program learning outcomes; 2) materials are current; and 3) pedagogy is appropriate for the modality of the course.**

Course proposals and approvals are handled by the curriculum committee. The professor who wishes to teach a new course provides a course description, completed syllabus, and proposed textbook or other materials. The curriculum committee reviews the proposal, ensures that the proposed syllabus links the materials to the learning outcomes, and reviews the materials, testing mechanisms, class procedures, then provides feedback. The professor then implements the feedback for final approval. The law coordinator also reviews all syllabi every semester, to ensure the learning outcomes are listed and linked on the class schedule.

**10. Attach three sample syllabi and the syllabus for the dissertation or culminating experience, which are adapted to the modality of the course. Sample syllabi must demonstrate rigor appropriate to a doctoral-level course in terms of required reading, course content/topics, and assignments/grading policy. Course syllabi should reflect a learning outcomes orientation and be linked to program outcomes. Syllabi should demonstrate that extensive research, including applied research as applicable, is required.**

Syllabi must include:

- specific student learning outcomes for the course
- a course schedule including a schedule of all assignments
- the number of credit hours earned in the course and expectations for how those hours are earned both in and out of class (seat time, lab time, homework, etc.)
- use of the library
- relevant university/departmental policies

Syllabi must also be adapted to the modality of the course, and be appropriate to the level of the degree. Online courses must include information about the learning management system and expectations for students participating in the online modality, netiquette, and other considerations specific to the modality.

#### **Attachment III.A.10: Syllabi for Contracts, Property, and Civil Procedure**

In addition, starting on page 58 of the Student Handbook (**Attachment III.A.12: Student Handbook**) the SJCL attendance and preparedness policy speaks to online requirements.

**11. Describe the clinical, practicum, or internship requirements and monitoring procedures, if required. Attach a sample MOU or agreement with a clinical, practicum, or internship site (if applicable).**



Students in the three-year option program are required to complete 4 clinical units, either in our in-house clinics or in external placements. Students in the 4 or 5-year program may, but are not required, up to 4 clinical units. Please see **Attachment III.B.6: Clinical Unit Information Packet**.

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please list the criteria used to approve internship/externship sites. Also describe how internship supervisors are oriented to the PLOs of the program and how sites are monitored to ensure adequate educational experiences.

Any internship/externship site must be approved by the Academic Dean. Before approval, students must submit a clinical information form, included in **Attachment III.B.6: Clinical Unit Information Packet**, detailing the type of tasks and work the student will perform at the site. Once the packet is turned in, either the Registrar or Academic Dean review the proposed work to ensure that the work is 1) attorney-type work, and 2) aligns with SJCL's Student Learning Outcome. For the most part, if the proposed work is attorney-type work, it will align with the Student Learning Outcomes. During the internship/externship, the student keeps track of hours and types of assignments. Those documents, along with required work product, are turned in to SJCL before any credit is awarded. The Registrar or Academic Dean again review the completed log and work product to ensure that the work qualifies both as attorney-type work and that it aligns with the Student Learning Outcomes. Finally, both the student and supervision attorney fill out an evaluation form. That form is included in **Attachment III.B.6: Clinical Unit Information Packet**.

## **12. List any special requirements for graduation.**

Graduation requirements are listed in the Student Handbook and on the website. Please see **Attachment III.A.12: Student Handbook**, starting on page 35.

## **B. Schedule/Format Requirements (CFRs 1.6 – 1.8, 2.1 – 2.3, 2.5, 2.10, 2.12, 3.1, 4.1)**

(For more information see Schedule/Format Requirements in the [Guidelines for the Review of Graduate Programs](#))

### **1. Describe the length of time that the typical student is expected to complete all requirements for the program.**

The typical curriculum is designed to be completed in 4 years, and most student so choose. High-achieving students, attaining a certain grade point average after the first year, have the option of accelerating their studies to finish in 3 years. Finally, students with substantial commitments outside of school may, upon administrative approval, switch to the five-year program. Only a handful of students elect the five-year program.

### **2. Describe the cohort or open registration model being used. Provide the minimum attendance/participation requirements and provisions made for students to make up assignments or for students who withdraw and seek to re-enroll. Include a matrix showing the number of students per cohort throughout the first five years of the program and the faculty resources to support such estimates.**

SJCL enrolls students each fall semester. SJCL considers all students entering in any particular year as a cohort. Each cohort moves through each year of the program, together, unless students accelerate to the three-year option or move to the five-year option. In those cases, the students are placed with the

cohort of students with whom they expect to graduate. All students, irrespective of attendance modality, will have the same access to academic, administrative, and co-curricular services.

SJCL policies regarding attendance, enrollment, and class procedures apply to every student equally, irrespective of the modality of attendance chosen.

Attendance and other academic procedures start on page 57 of the Student Handbook. Leaves of absence and reenrollment starts on page 68. (**Attachment III.A.12: Student Handbook**)

### **3. Describe the typical class size throughout the program.**

In the last five years, average class size for first-year substantive courses (Contracts, Torts, Civil Procedure) has ranged from 25-32 students. The average class size of first-year research and writing classes has ranged from 8 and 12 students. Upper-division required courses have ranges of 15 to 25 students over last five years, while upper-division writing classes are typically limited to no more than 12 students. Elective courses range from 5 to 35 students. With the approval of a Remote Option, SJCL does not expect class size to change. Should class sizes grow larger, SJCL will divide classes into more sections to ensure a high level of interaction that is necessary for proper law teaching.

### **4. Describe how timely and appropriate interactions between students and faculty, and among students will be assured, including detailed information for online courses. For programs being offered via distance education, describe the provisions available to faculty to ensure that the enrolled student is the student completing the coursework.**

SJCL classes are relatively small. In addition, the nature of law teaching requires students to actively participate. Students attending remotely will be required to participate and are subject to the same attendance and participation requirements. Faculty must provide office hours. Since the pandemic, many professors have maintained online office hours, via Zoom. It is convenient for our adjunct faculty, all attorneys or judges, and for our student population who have substantial obligation outside of school. Students are encouraged to find study groups and interact outside of class sessions, many times via Zoom. Online students are subject to the same requirements for course completion. Attendance is always tracked. If students fall behind, the professor contacts them or they are referred to our Dean of Students.

### **5. Describe the timeframe of courses, i.e. accelerated, weekend, traditional, etc. If courses are not offered in the traditional 10 week quarter or 15-16 week semester system, please explain how credit hour and course content expectations can be met within the timeframe established for the program. An institution must allow adequate time for students to reflect on the material presented in class. Faculty using the accelerated course format should be expected to require pre- and post-course assignments, as appropriate. The Committee will expect course syllabi for accelerated courses to be adjusted accordingly to reflect the pre- and post-course assignments, the accelerated nature of the curriculum, and conform to the institution's Credit Hour policy.**

The SJCL curriculum is based on a 15-week semester system in Fall and Spring. The summer semester is 5 weeks, with double the number of classes per week. Each unit of credit represents at least 15 hours of in-class instruction. For each hour of in-class instruction, students must or should complete at least 2 hours of outside work, including preparing for class or completing assignments.

Classes are offered in either three-hour blocks, once a week, or in 1 hour 20 minute blocks, twice per week.

**6. Attach the institution's Credit Hour Policy, in compliance with WSCUC's [Credit Hour Policy](#). For programs that contain courses that include requirements other than traditional seat time (i.e., laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, hybrid courses, online courses, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours), please identify these courses and explain how the time requirements are equivalent to the credit hour requirements as described in WSCUC's Credit Hour Policy.**

SJCL's Credit Hour Policy related to seat time is the same regardless of the modality of attendance. The Credit Hour Policy can be found on page 39 of the Student Handbook (**Attachment III.A.12: Student Handbook**). The policies for non-classroom units are also the same, irrespective of modality. Those can be found in **Attachment III.B.6: Clinical Unit Information Packet** and **Attachment III.B.6: Assistantship Unit Information Packet**.

**7. Provide a sample schedule of courses for a full cycle of the program, with faculty assignments if available.**

The typical curricula for the 3, 4, and 5-year program can be found on the SJCL website, here: <https://www.sjcl.edu/index.php/academics/curriculum/typical-curriculum>

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please provide the response to Item #7 above within the narrative provide as an attachment.

SJCL courses are taught by both full-time faculty and a variety of adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty are attorneys or judges with specializations related to the course they are teaching.

The sample schedule is attached as **Attachment III.B.7: Sample Schedule**

## **C. Admissions Requirements (CFRs 1.1, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.10, 2.12, 2.14)**

(For more information see Admissions Requirements in the [Guidelines for the Review of Graduate Programs](#))

### **1. List the admissions requirements.**

Several academic factors influence the admission decision: undergraduate grade point average (GPA), Law School Admission Test (LSAT) or Graduate Record Examination (GRE) score, a record of improvement in undergraduate study, graduate education, additional training, and continuing education. Honors, publications, and community service are also relevant.

### **2. Identify the type of student targeted and qualifications required for the program.**

SJCL attempts to discover students who show the capacity to succeed in law. SJCL's broad policy includes consideration of community involvement, life experience, employment history and accomplishments, motivation, and maturity – factors which indicate the applicant will add a unique perspective to the student body

**3. If any part of the program will be offered via distance education, describe how the student's ability to succeed in distance education programs will be addressed and linked to admissions and recruiting policies and decisions.**

SJCL will maintain exhaustive statistics regarding student success as related to the modality of instruction. SJCL faculty will analyze those stats to determine if there is any difference among students who attend most classes in-person and those who elect to attend some or classes remotely.

**4. Describe the residency requirements and policies on the number of credits that students may transfer into the program.**

Residency requirements apply equally to in-person and remote students. Those requirements are found on page 39 of **Attachment III.A.12: Student Handbook**.

The SJCL transfer policy allows a maximum of half the units required for graduation. The policy can be found here:

<https://www.sjcl.edu/index.php/admissions/transfer-students>

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please provide the response to Item #7 above within the narrative provide as an attachment.

### **Hours of Study in Residence**

Satisfaction of the school's residency requirements will also satisfy the *California Committee of Bar Examiners'* requirement of **1200 hours of study in residence**. (See Rule VII, Section 5, Rules Regulating Admission to Practice Law in California.) The COBE requires 120 weeks of residency credit for part-time students (students completing their degrees in 4 or 5 years), calculated at a minimum of 8 hours of attendance per week, and 90 weeks of residency credit for full-time students (students on the 3 Year Option), calculated at a minimum of 10 hours of attendance per week. The "minimum" required by the COBE is really a maximum since hours of study in excess of the minimum (8 or 10) do not "count" in calculating number of weeks in satisfaction of the study in residence requirements. For example, a part-time student enrolled and completing 8 units during a regular semester will receive 17 weeks (the average length of a regular semester) residency credit; a part-time student enrolled and completing 12 units during a regular semester will also receive 17 weeks residency credit. A full-time student registered for 10 units and completing 9 units, during a regular semester will receive 17 weeks of residency credit; a full-time student registered for and completing 15 units during a semester will also receive 17 weeks of residency credit.

During the **summer session**, lasting 5 weeks, residency week credit is earned at double the unit value, as classes which meet twice a week. **For example**, a student registered for 4 units will receive 8 weeks residency credit.

Proportional credit is also given, if a part-time student does not register for and complete the equivalent of 8 units per regular semester or a full-time student does not register for the equivalent of 10 units, and complete 9 units, per regular semester. For example, a part-time student who registers for and completes 6 units during a regular semester will receive 6/8ths residency weeks credit, or a total of 12.75 residency weeks credit. A full-time student who registers for and completes 8 units during a regular semester, will receive 8/10ths residency weeks credit or a total of 13.6 residency weeks credit. A

part-time student who registers for and completes 2 units during the summer session, will receive 4 weeks residency credit under the proportional credit rule. A full-time student who registers for and completes 2 units during the summer would receive 3.2 residency weeks credit. Or, a part-time student who registers for 8 units during a regular semester but receives a failing grade in a 2-unit course, will receive 6/8ths credit, or a total of 12.75 residency weeks credit.

Thus, any part-time student who completes at least 8 units each regular semester during the 4 years here will satisfy the COBE's residency requirements; similarly, any full-time student who completes at least 10 units per regular semester will satisfy the COBE's residency requirements. Students whose schedules have varied greatly from these norms can check their residency credit status with the Registrar.

SJCL's Transfer Policy is attached as **Attachment III.C.4: Transfer Policy**

5. Attach a sample brochure or admissions material for this program that will be made available to prospective students. (Note that this material must clearly state, "Pending WSCUC approval" prior to Commission approval.)

Potential advertisements for SJCL's Remote Option can be found in **Attachment II.A.4: Recruitment Marketing Plan**.

SJCL's current law catalog, accessible by prospective students, can be found here:  
[https://www.sjcl.edu/images/stories/Prospective\\_Students/sjcllawcatalog.pdf](https://www.sjcl.edu/images/stories/Prospective_Students/sjcllawcatalog.pdf)

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please provide the response to Item #7 above within the narrative provide as an attachment.

Besides the prospective advertisements included in **Attachment II.A.4: Recruitment Marketing Plan**, SJCL has not developed any other marketing material specific to the Hybrid Option. The current SJCL Law Catalog, provided to prospective students, is attached as **Attachment III.C.5: Law Catalog**.

## Section IV: Educational Effectiveness

(For more information see Educational Effectiveness in the [Guidelines for the Review of Graduate Programs](#))

### **A. Plan for Evaluating Educational Effectiveness (CFRs 1.2, 2.1, 2.2b, 2.3 – 2.9, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1 – 4.7)**

Assessment should be described at three levels:

**1. Annual assessment leading to the program review: Describe the annual assessment process for year one and subsequent years leading to the overall program review. Attach an assessment plan for the first several years of the program that describes how core faculty review the performance of the students in each cohort as it progresses annually to determine satisfactory progress. The assessment plan should include the review of student work and achievement of program learning outcomes as well as rubrics for assessment of the qualifying exam, dissertation, and clinical work, as applicable.**

Annual assessment will continue as it has for the all in-person program. However, in addition to the annual assessment for the JD program in general, SJCL will collect and analyze student performance data related to students who attend all, or some, of their classes remotely. The standards will remain the same. In SJCL's 2021 interim report SJCL described, at length, the process and results of SJCL's program review. The Interim Report Committee commended SJCL in its efforts.

**2. Program review: Describe how and when this program will be incorporated into the department, school and institution's regular assessment and program review processes.**

As soon as approved, the Remote Option will allow current and future students to choose the modality of attendance for any particular course. Availability of those modalities will not change SJCL's current comprehensive review processes. SJCL administration will, however, maintain detailed statistics involving mode and method of attendance. This will allow faculty to compare how students performed while attending in different modalities.

**3. External review: Describe any plans for an external review of the program. (External review refers to the evaluation of the program by one or more evaluators unaffiliated with the institution. Please note that professional accreditation reviews can be included, but are not expected to be the sole source evaluating the effectiveness of the program.)**

SJCL's robust external review program will not change. Student work will be externally reviewed using the same metrics, irrespective of modality of attendance. SJCL will continue to maintain detailed statistics relevant to modalities, enabling faculty to compare how students perform based on modality of instruction.

**4. How will the educational effectiveness of the program (including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) be evaluated? Include appropriate comparisons with campus-based programs.**

The assessment of the remote JD program will be the same as the in-person program. The fact is that law students and future lawyers must learn the same skills and be held to the same standards, irrespective of the method of delivery of instruction. As a result, the students attending remotely will be

part of the institutional and program review. Nonetheless, SJCL will break out the students attending all or some classes remotely in an effort to compare how those students fair compared to in-person students in all aspects of SJCL's program.

#### **5. Describe how "Regular and Substantive Interaction" is monitored, by whom, and how often?**

Student attending remotely are held to the same standards as an in-person student. SJCL and State Bar policies require that student attend at least 80% of scheduled classes. If a student falls below 80%, the student is administratively withdrawn. Attendance is taken in every class and maintained by the Law Coordinator. Remote students must have their cameras on and must participate just like in-person students. If a student is unprepared, the professor can deem the student absent.

**WSCUC Reviewer Comment:** Please identify WHO is responsible to monitor online modality courses for "regular and substantive Interaction" in alignment with federal expectations.

The responsibility to monitor online modality courses is divided among various people:

**Instructor.** Before each class, the instructor is responsible for taking attendance using a standardized roll sheet. After class, the instructor must sign the roll sheet and turn it in to the Law Coordinator. For the online modality, students must have cameras on and respond to instructor questions. If a student's camera is off, the student is not prepared to answer questions or participate, or if the student is not online for the full class, the student is marked absent for that class period. Student must attend 80% of all scheduled classes or be administratively withdrawn from the course.

**Law Coordinator.** The Law Coordinator is responsible for collecting and maintaining attendance records for all students. The Law Coordinator also sends out warnings to students who are approaching the 80% threshold. In addition, the Law Coordinator alerts the Dean of Students if a student is approaching the 80% threshold or otherwise is uncharacteristically missing class.

**I.T. Department.** Upon request, the IT department runs and produces login reports for classes using the online modality. These are used to crosscheck attendance records, ensuring students attending remotely are logged in for the full class.

**Academic Dean.** The Academic Dean establishes policy for online modalities to ensure instructor understanding of "regular and substantive interaction." Each syllabus must include the availability of virtual office hours. In addition, the teaching evaluations include a section about whether students feel that they have sufficient access to professors outside of class. The Academic Dean is responsible for monitoring teaching evaluations and giving corrective feedback to instructors.

**Dean of Students.** Should a student be near the 80% attendance threshold, consistently be marked absent for lack of preparation, not having video on, or experience other issues related to the online modality, the Dean of Students is responsible for contacting the student to offer support and reiterate SJCL policy.

**Peer Evaluator.** As part of faculty evaluation, the SJCL Faculty Chair organizes and implements, on a semester basis, SJCL's peer evaluation program. Peer evaluation procedures and questions of fully online courses are nearly identical to those related to in-person classes. SJCL expects students to actively participate in both modalities. In addition, when an evaluation occurs of a hybrid course (both in-person

and online students), the evaluation document asks to what extent the instructor has included the online students in class discussion. SJCL is dedicated to effective teaching in a hybrid model and will provide ongoing training to its faculty.

**6. Describe procedures to evaluate teaching effectiveness in the distance education modality.**

Through a mix of peer evaluation, administrative evaluation, student reviews, student surveys, and student performance, faculty are evaluated. In terms of the distance education modality, every class is recorded. As a result, peer and administration evaluation of those classes can happen at any time. Student reviews and student surveys will have specific questions about the online experience. With regard to student performance, students attending in-person and online are subject to the same exams, assignments, and other assessment mechanisms. SJCL plans to keep detailed statistics regarding modality of attendance to assess and evaluate how students are performing, based on modality. Such data will allow SJCL to assess the effectiveness of teaching.



## Section V: Resources

(For more information see Resources/Faculty and Resources/Infrastructure in the [Guidelines for the Review of Graduate Programs](#))

### **A. Faculty** (CFRs 2.1, 2.2b, 2.8, 3.1 – 3.5, 3.7)

**1. List the number and type (full-time, part-time, tenured, non-tenured) of faculty allocated to support the program in terms of developing the curriculum, delivering instruction to students, supervising internships and dissertations, and evaluating educational effectiveness.**

There are seven [full-time faculty](#) members: Justin Atkinson, Linda Barreto, Christine Goodrich, Denise Kerner, Janice Pearson, Jeffrey Purvis and Logan Tennerelli. Dozens of [adjunct faculty members](#) teach each year, some teaching bar classes on a long-term basis and some teaching electives offered every two years. Some adjunct faculty are highly engaged with the institution because they serve on the Faculty Committee, the body charged with the administration of the law school.

Faculty, both adjunct and full-time, are already teaching the courses that will be included in the Remote Option. Faculty are also supervising students in independent research and clinical work both in-person and remotely.

**2. Provide information about the balance of full- and part-time faculty members involved, and how that balance will ensure quality and consistency in instruction and advising.**

Most full-time faculty members are responsible for various administrative functions in addition to teaching. Adjunct professors provide the school with a range of flexible teachers who have the technical or practical expertise and work experience that full-time professors might lack. Because SJCL's adjunct professors are also practitioners and not dependent on adjunct jobs for insurance or salaries, the school is able to maintain an extremely high caliber of individuals who have a love of teaching and passion for training future attorneys. Adjunct faculty members must maintain office hours and are given office space and clerical support. They receive training from the Academic Dean and introduction to their teaching assignments and to the school. The school has an all-faculty meeting annually. As appropriate, they participate in determining institutional policies.

**3. Describe the plan to orient and mentor junior faculty to support their doctoral-level research, scholarship, and dissertation supervision responsibilities.**

SJCL is a small school. As a result, each new faculty member, adjunct or full-time, receives direct support from colleagues and from the administration. For the purposes of the Remote Option, new faculty will receive extensive training about how to use the remote equipment and teach effectively in a remote modality.

**4. Provide an analysis of the impact that the proposed program will have on overall faculty workload,**

including teaching, research, and scholarship. Who will teach courses no longer being taught by the faculty reassigned to this doctoral program? How will units be assigned for dissertation work (i.e., how many for serving as the chair as opposed to serving on the committee)? What will be the maximum number of students that each faculty member can advise? Discuss the implication of the faculty resource matrix included in the program description section, particularly to show the workload implications when one cohort is in the dissertation phase and others are in the coursework phase of the program.

The proposed program does not have any effect on overall faculty workload, other than faculty completing its task, remotely, for those students attending classes in the Remote Option.

**5. Describe the support/resources for faculty to develop a doctoral-level culture, engage in research, and if applicable, receive an orientation in order to chair dissertation committees.**

All faculty members have access to the library resources, WestLaw, and Lexis Nexis to support their research endeavors and aid in their instruction. Faculty members are also encouraged to publish in law reviews, local and state-wide bar publications, and in the school's publication, *Inter Alia*. Full-time faculty often attend seminars.

**6. Describe each core faculty member's workload within and beyond this program.**

In terms of teaching responsibilities, the Remote Option does not add more to faculty workload. Faculty have trained and will continue to train on best practices for the remote modality. In addition to Faculty's in-person responsibilities, faculty is already teaching and offering student service and support, all in a remote fashion.

**7. Describe the faculty background and experience to engage in doctoral-level instruction. Attach abbreviated vitae (three to five pages) for core faculty, which include an overview of the key credentials, publications, and if applicable, prior experience supervising dissertation work. Vitae for core faculty should reflect a range of scholarship including theoretical research, applied research in the field, and practice, as relevant. Vitae should distinguish between peer-reviewed articles and non-peer-reviewed articles.**

Since the last WASC visit, SJCL faculty largely remains the same. The Remote Option does not involve hiring any new faculty. Again, it is the same core group of faculty teaching. The only difference is a remote option for students.

**8. If the program will be offered via distance education, describe the preparedness of faculty to support the modality of instruction, including how and when faculty in the proposed program are trained to understand and implement "regular and substantive interaction" in their course delivery. What faculty development opportunities are available? Include any faculty guidelines for online instruction.**

Faculty have been teaching students via distance education for over two years. Training and upgrades to classrooms is ongoing. Faculty is trained to treat students attending remotely in the same fashion they treat in-person students, including participating in class, completing assignments, and meeting with faculty. Peer and administrative evaluation of faculty include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the professor's techniques with regard to distance teaching.

## **B. Student Support Services (CFRs 2.3, 2.11 - 2.14, 3.1, 3.5, 3.7, 4.7)**

### **1. Describe the support services available for doctoral-level students, such as financial aid, placement and research opportunities.**

Over the last two years, SJCL has been able to provide, remotely (via zoom, email, telephone calls, or other remote technology), the same support services it provides to in-person students. In fact, out of convenience, most of the in-person students take advantage of the online cocurricular services SJCL offers. SJCL has learned that every part of its program can be provided effectively in a remote fashion.

## **C. Information Literacy and Resources (CFRs 2.3, 2.13, 3.4, 3.5)**

### **1. Describe the information literacy competencies expected of graduates and how they will be evaluated.**

According to SJCL's learning outcomes, graduates are expected to "Demonstrate mastery of appropriate strategies and technologies to research legal issues effectively and efficiently." Every research and writing class is dedicated to teaching and evaluating whether student are mastering this outcome. In addition, SJCL uses outside evaluators to assess this outcome. Evaluation of this outcome is part of SJCL's program review.

### **2. Describe the staffing and instructional services that have been put in place, as well as the library and informational resources available to students and faculty in support of the new degree program.**

The physical library contains essential books in print and areas for students to study. There are open seating areas, carrells, tables and desks to accommodate group study or individual study. There are also study rooms that can be reserved. The Library has a comprehensive collection in both print and electronic resources for students and faculty.

### **3. Describe the access to library systems (local, national, or global), electronic services, Internet, information utilities, service providers, and document delivery services for both faculty and students.**

The school's website has a Library page that provides access to the library's catalog, and electronic resources, which include Westlaw Edge, LexisNexis, CEB OnLaw, LexisNexis Digital Library, Hein Online and other Resources. These sources are available through the internet to students and faculty, whether they are on campus or off campus. We are also a member of the OCLC WorldShare Interlibrary Loan system with connections to more than 10,000 libraries which provides access to electronic or print resources.

### **4. Describe staff and services available to students and faculty for instruction on how to use, access, and support information resources, both on-site and remotely.**

In the library, the Librarian and Student Proctors are available during the weekdays, evenings, and weekends to answer any questions and to show students how to access online resources or find material in the library. Most of the instruction for electronic resources such as Westlaw Edge and LexisNexis falls to the instructors of classes with the Library staff as back-up. Lexis and Westlaw also provide training services to faculty and students. All of these services can be accessed remotely.

**5. Describe the availability of library staff to support research activity.**

The Librarian and Proctors are always available during Library hours. If the Proctors are not able to provide support, they will shift support to the Librarian. The Librarian also has the support of the Legal Methods Professors and the Research and Writing Professors. All of these services can be and are provided remotely.

**6. Describe the impact on the maintenance of the institution's library in terms of library and research support appropriate for doctoral-level research. For joint programs, provide this information for each institution.**

Through print and online services, SJCL maintains access to appropriate sources for any type of legal research, both practical and academic. Most professors and students simply use the online services, such as Westlaw or Lexis, which are industry standard for law schools and law offices.

**7. Explain the need for additional cooperative agreements with other institutions to supplement resources for doctoral work. Copies of the agreements should be attached.**

N/A

**D. Technology (CFRs 2.1, 2.13, 3.1, 3.3 – 3.5, 4.7)**

**1. Describe the institution's technological capacity to support teaching and learning in the proposed program. For joint programs, provide this information for each institution.**

SJCL has a dedicated IT team. Over the last two years, the team has researched every possible solution for online and remote education and provided IT support to professors and students who are teaching or learning remotely. The IT department provides stellar support, as evidenced by years of positive cocurricular student surveys.

WSCUC reviewer Comment: Please describe the number of IT staff, daily hours of direct access to the staff, expectations for timely responses to student requests for assistance, and how students at a distance can access IT support.

The SJCL I.T. department has three, full-time employees. Hours of immediate, direct access to I.T. are Monday through Thursday, 9 am to 8:30 pm, and Friday from 9 am to 4 pm. During those hours, students and staff can expect immediate attention, in person, via email, phone, or zoom. For students who cannot come in person, I.T. uses software to enable remote access to any device for purposes of troubleshooting. I.T. does provide support on Friday, after 4pm, and on weekends. However, response times are not always immediate, varying from minutes to a couple of hours. If a request is sent after hours, or late on a weekend evening, students and staff can expect help the following morning.

**2. What level of technology proficiency is expected of students? How will students receive training on how to access required technology used in the program?**

## **See Attachment V.D.2: Tech Orientation Training**

If 50% or more of the program will be offered via distance education:

### **3. Describe the institution's provisions for students in the proposed program to gain full access to course materials. For joint programs, provide this information for each institution.**

All course content is equally accessible for the law program irrespective of modality of instruction.

**WSCUC Reviewer Comment:** Please describe HOW students at a distance gain full access to course materials.

**Required Textbooks:** Students purchase physical or e-textbooks from a variety of sources. The Law Coordinator publishes the list of required textbooks well before the semester begins.

**Class Materials:** All materials used in class must be posted to the student learning management system (TWEN) or emailed to all students in the class. SJCL also provides the Microsoft Office Suite for students to access electronic documents.

**Library Access:** Over the past decade, legal research sources and other legal materials have moved almost completely online. All library resources are accessible through links on the SJCL library website. In addition, all students have access to both Lexis Nexis and Westlaw, the two most-comprehensive research tools available in the legal industry. During the first year of law school, all students receive in-depth training on how to use SJCL's electronic resources.

### **4. Describe how the institution will ensure business continuity during system failures (major or minor) or scheduled service interruptions. For joint programs, provide this information for each institution.**

SJCL has redundant servers, backup and restore procedures, and has data stored onsite and offsite.

### **5. Describe precautions taken by the institution to protect technology from cyber security intrusions. If the institution has outsourced the LMS for a distance education program, describe the precautions taken by that provider.**

Please see Attachment V.D.5: Tech Security

## **E. Physical Resources (CFRs 3.4, 3.5)**

### **1. Describe the physical resources provided to support the proposed program(s) and the impact of the proposed change on the physical resource capacity of the institution(s). This includes, but is not limited to, the physical learning environment, such as classrooms, study spaces, student support areas.**

There are no significant physical resources needed or necessary to support the Remote Option program.

## **F. Financial Resources (CFRs 3.4, 3.5, 4.2, 4.3, 4.6, 4.7)**

### **1. Provide the total cost of the program for students, including tuition and any fees. How are students expected to finance their tuition?**

The total cost of any program at SJCL – in-person, hybrid, online – is the same. Beginning with the summer session of 2023, tuition will be \$995 per unit. Given that completion of the program requires 86 units, the total cost for the Juris Doctor degree will be \$85,570 plus \$2,925 in fees for a total of \$88,495. SJCL is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Hence, students are eligible for federal financial aid. Most students obtain loans for some portion of their cost of attending SJCL.

**2. Provide a narrative describing all start-up costs for the institution(s) and how the costs will be covered, including direct program cost and institutional indirect cost. Explain how the institution ensures that the impact of additional services and support for a new program will be adequately supported as the program grows (i.e, are indirect costs charged on a program basis). For distance education programs, costs for licensing, hardware, software, technical support, training for faculty and students, and instructional design should be included.**

Start-up costs for these alternative programs are minimal. During the pandemic, SJCL spent REDACTED upgrading the capacity to deliver online instruction including computers, cameras, and microphones. As the pandemic waned, SJCL spent additional funds to equip classrooms with sound absorbing panels and additional upgraded microphones to reduce ambient noise interference. All other expenses will be normal replacement for wear and tear or loss.

Administration and faculty became very adept at providing legal education online during the pandemic. Both full-time and adjunct faculty were trained internally and continue to discuss mechanisms to engage students online. All services for students continued during the pandemic and would continue for students fully or partially online.

**3. Describe the financial impact of the new program on the institution(s), including evidence that the institution(s) has/have the capacity to absorb start-up costs. If the institution(s) has/have incurred a deficit in the past three years, supplemental information describing the financial capacity of the institution(s) to start and sustain the new program(s) is required.**

See IV(F)(A) for discussion related to the start-up costs

**4. Identify the minimum number of students necessary to make the program financially viable.**

There is no minimum number of students necessary to make the program financially viable. SJCL has not conducted any formal market study for the addition of a full or partial online program, mirroring the in-person program. SJCL has seen that it has had to turn away a significant number of potential students over the last few years because of their financial or personal inability to attend in-person classes.

**5. Provide a budget projection, for at least the first three years of the proposed program, based on the enrollment data in the market analysis and including projected revenues and costs. The budget should reflect anticipated attrition. The budget should include all budgetary assumptions. (A budget template is linked below to provide a model of the level of detail the Committee expects, but is not required. The template may be modified as appropriate.)**

SJCL experienced enrollment declines in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. SJCL attributes this to many factors. First, after staying at home for months, young people wanted to socialize, not devote

hours to the difficult study of law. Second, uncertainty about the future made people unwilling to take on the debt associated with law school, even at the lower level created by attending a state-accredited school. Third, and perhaps most important, students had become accustomed to attending higher education online and some wanted to continue that option.

As a result, SJCL would have shown a deficit in fiscal 20-21 except for the fact that SJCL received and got forgiveness of a PPP loan totaling REDACTED. That loan also covered a portion of a deficit for fiscal 21-22, the balance absorbed by a surplus from fiscal 19-20. To avoid a deficit in 22-23, SJCL has not filled positions as they became vacant and reorganized responsibilities. The academic program and services to students have improved with these changes. SJCL has expanded its recruitment efforts and expects the ability to offer a hybrid or online program in fall of 2023 will also enhance recruitment. SJCL has reserves sufficient to cover any deficit for many years, although with the changes made and proposed, SJCL does not expect deficits to continue to occur.

The San Joaquin Valley consists of large agricultural counties dotted with small towns. The residents of these small towns have no access to legal representation. The distance and now, the cost of fuel, make commuting to law school prohibitive. At the same time, these potential students tell us that they want to attend a program that connects with where they live and looks like them.

SJCL graduating classes are generally highly diverse, like the region is highly diverse. In 2020, the graduating class was 27% white and 73%. In 2021, the graduating class was 48% white and 48% people of color (2% unknown). The upcoming 2022 graduating class is 30% white and 70% people of color.

In the southern San Joaquin Valley public entities and firms are desperate to hire lawyers. In a study SJCL conducted in August of 2022, in 23 working days, 26 local full-time positions for lawyers were posted on SJCL's Placement page. This does not include positions that were publicized privately. advertised. The Fresno County District Attorney's Office recently reported that it had 41 vacant positions for lawyers. On October 21, 2022, SJCL held a Career Fair inviting local public entities and firms to attend to receive resumes from current students and alumni. Twenty organizations and firms sent attorney representatives to meet briefly with attendees and accept resumes, a significant investment of resources to fill empty positions.

For the good of the community, as well as the law school, SJCL is pursuing the ability to permit students to attend virtually.

WSCUC Reviewer Comment: Please provide a pro forma budget for a minimum of 3 years for the proposed program including new modality options.

### THREE YEAR BUDGET

SJCL expects the virtual program to grow very slowly. Very little additional expense will be needed to deliver this program. The initial focus of the program is to open options for rural students in the San Joaquin Valley by eliminating the cost of travel.

Fall 2023	5 students
Fall 2024	7 students
Fall 2025	9 students

SJCL upgraded the technology significantly in all its classrooms during and since the pandemic shutdown of 2020 and 2021. SJCL plans to take two further steps to make the virtual experience better than what occurs on Zoom now. SJCL is in the process of installing one or more “Owls” in each classroom. An Owl is a machine combining cameras and speakers in a small pillar that looks a great deal like an owl. The Owl rotates to focus on whomever is speaking at the time, enlarging that speaker on Zoom. This makes the image of the speaker bigger for those on Zoom. SJCL is connecting the Owls to a big-screen television in the classroom. Whoever is speaking, online or in-person, will then appear at a much larger size in the classroom, giving a better experience of group collaboration. As an added feature, the balance of the class will be visible above the speaker both on Zoom and in the classroom. When the professor is speaking, the white board is visible behind him or her. Where more than one Owl is needed to cover a classroom effectively, two Owls can be connected and will talk to each other to get the best voice quality.

Having experimented with this technology in the classroom setting this spring, SJCL feels it will promote an interactive experience much like what students experience in SJCL’s in-person classes. With three persons in its Information Technology department, there is sufficient personnel to support the virtual program.

The cost of this additional upgrade will not exceed REDACTED which will be covered by the first year of student tuition in the program.

**6. If the institution has a joint doctorate in the same or a similar disciplinary area and plans to continue to offer it, describe the availability of resources for both programs, and the basis for allocation of resources to support both the joint and the new programs.**

N/A



## **Section VI: Teach Out or Program Discontinuation**

### **A. Plan for Teach-out Provisions (CFRs 1.6 – 1.8)**

**1. Please attach the institution's program discontinuation policy or teach-out policy to account for how enrolled students will be accommodated if the program is discontinued.**

Should the Remote Option be discontinued, any student then currently enrolled in the Remote Option would be able to finish the program in a remote modality.

**2. For joint doctoral programs transitioning to independent doctoral programs, describe the nature of the teach-out plan between/among the partnering institutions, including how financial responsibility and expenses will be shared, students served and dissertations supported. Identify the timelines established for the teach-out and the notice to be given to all students enrolled in the program.**

N/A