



**OPEN SESSION
AGENDA ITEM IV.A.
APRIL 2024
COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS**

DATE: April 19, 2024

TO: Members, Committee of Bar Examiners

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

SUBJECT: Action on Major Change – Change of Ownership – Taft Law School

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Taft Law School (Taft), a registered, unaccredited correspondence law school, requests approval from the Committee of Bar Examiners' (committee) to change ownership of the law school from the Boyd Family Trust to direct ownership by C. Robert Boyd outright, as set forth in the attached major change motion. (Attachment A).

BACKGROUND

Under Unaccredited Law School Rule 4.245 “[a] registered law school contemplating a major change must notify the [c]ommittee and obtain its prior approval before making the change. The notice must explain in detail any effect the change might have on the law school’s compliance.” Rule 4.246 defines major changes to include a law school’s request to change ownership.

Taft Law School a for-profit school that is part of the Taft University system. This system includes both Taft Law School, headquartered in Santa Ana, California, and William H. Taft University, located in Homewood, Colorado. The Taft University System is accredited as an institution by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC), a national accreditor.

Due to this institutional accreditation, eligible students at Taft Law School can participate in Title IV federal student loan programs.

Taft Law School's degree-granting authority comes from the State Bar of California through its status as an unaccredited correspondence law school, and it requests to maintain that status as the school changes ownership.

William H. Taft University is authorized to operate its distance and correspondence programs by the State of Colorado, complies with that state's rules, and derives its degree-granting authority from the State of Colorado. The university does not offer a bar-qualifying JD program.

DISCUSSION

Taft Law School seeks approval to maintain registration as an unaccredited correspondence law school as it transfers ownership of the law school from the Boyd Family Trust, for the benefit of several family trustees (C. Robert Boyd, Kelly Boyd, Loni Yaeger), to outright ownership by family member C. Robert Boyd.

Since 2019, Mr. Boyd has been the president of the Taft University System and has met bi-weekly with the dean of Taft Law School to set and monitor strategy for the law school. He also personally made a significant equity contribution to the Taft University System to support upgrading its technology and adding key positions.

Mr. Boyd plans to continue operations of the law school unchanged. He understands that the law school will be subject to inspection this year and agrees to this responsibility. Mr. Boyd indicates that he has not only a commitment to the work of the law school but also a commitment to the stewardship of the law school created by his family. The law school will be inspected this year; if compliance concerns are observed, they can be addressed in that inspection.

It is recommended that the Committee of Bar Examiners approve Taft Law School's Request for Major Change seeking approval of a change of ownership from the Boyd Family Trust to C. Robert Boyd, as set forth in Attachment A, effective immediately. The law school agrees that it will undergo an inspection in 2024. Taft Law School should be advised to provide a schedule as to when the transaction will be complete within 30 days, and to confirm completion to the State Bar within 30 days after the change of ownership is complete or provide a status update by August 1, 2024, whichever comes first.

PROPOSED MOTION

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

MOVE, that the Committee of Bar Examiners approve Taft Law School's Request for Major Change of ownership effective immediately from the Boyd Family Trust to C. Robert Boyd. Taft Law School is directed to provide a schedule as to when the transaction will be complete within 30 days, and to confirm completion of the transaction to the State Bar within 30 days after the change of ownership is complete, or provide a status update by August 1, 2024, whichever comes first. The law school's inspection schedule will remain unchanged, with the next inspection to take place in 2024.

ATTACHMENT LIST

- A.** Taft Law School Major Change Request – Change Ownership

To the Office of admissions and all parties in this matter:

Taft Law School ("Taft") formally presents this motion seeking prior approval for a major change in accordance with the California State Bar Title 4. Admissions and Education Standards, Division 2. Accredited Law Schools, Rule 4.165 and Division 3. Unaccredited Law Schools, Rules 4.245 and 4.246. This request pertains to the proposed change of Taft Law School's ownership from The Boyd Trust to C. Robert "Bob" Boyd. Further, Taft graciously seeks a waiver of the 180-day rule and to set this matter for an expedited hearing for the reasons stated below.

Background:

Founded in 1984 by David Boyd, Taft Law School (Taft) has been a labor of love for the Boyd family - including C. Robert "Bob" Boyd, a testament to their vision and dedication to bring legal education opportunities to working adults. From Taft's humble beginnings during Bob Boyd's childhood, Bob and his family worked tirelessly with his father David Boyd to nurture Taft's growth and ensure its success, embodying a commitment to educational excellence and integrity that defines Taft's values and commitment to its students. However, David Boyd passed away in November 2019.

At the time of David Boyd's passing, Taft University System¹(TUS) was, and currently is, owned by the "The Boyd Family Trust." Bob Boyd was appointed President of TUS in or about November 2019. Presently, The Boyd Family Trust seeks to transfer ownership of TUS to Bob Boyd. Patricia Boyd, the primary beneficiary of the Boyd Family Trust, is undergoing treatment for REDACTED and is seeking this transfer in order to ensure a smooth transition to new, but still intrafamily, ownership. In light of the above, it is the intent of The Boyd family Trust's Trustee, Patricia Boyd, to transfer ownership of TUS to Bob Boyd, with the State Bar's approval.

As TUS's President, Bob Boyd sits at the top of the organizational chart of TUS. Further, as TUS's President, Mr. Boyd has been actively involved in the operations of Taft. He approves major decisions in the business and attends bi-weekly leadership meetings with the day-to-day operational leaders of Taft - Dean Melody Jolly and William Howard Taft University (WHTU) - President Amy Kahn. He oversees its major policies, oversees and implements its major financial decisions, and reviews and approves its major leadership decisions. As such, Bob Boyd works diligently to carry on his father's legacy, seeking to successfully carry on his father's vision for Taft through empowering and supporting the daily leadership of Law School Dean Melody Jolly and William Howard Taft University President Amy Kahn.

Bob Boyd's dedication to preserving his father's legacy is not merely a matter of sentiment, but a driving force behind his continued involvement with Taft. As an integral part of its leadership, he actively engages in shaping its future trajectory. His years of participation (formally since 2019 but informally throughout the history of the organization) in key discussions regarding strategic

¹The formal organization of Taft Law School has changed since its formation in 1984. Currently, Taft University System is the entity under which two separate academic facilities - Taft Law School and William Howard Taft University - operate distance education programs via an Internet platform

direction and policymaking underscores his personal investment in Taft's continued growth and relevance in the legal education landscape.

Bob Boyd's role extends beyond mere oversight. It is characterized by hands-on involvement and proactive collaboration. Regular bi-weekly meetings with the Dean and the President serve as a testament to his commitment in fostering a cohesive and forward-thinking leadership team. Through these interactions, Bob contributes valuable insights and provides guidance that steers Taft towards its objectives, while upholding its core values.

Moreover, Bob Boyd's close collaboration with the Dean of the law school highlights his accessibility and responsiveness to the day-to-day needs of the institution. Bob Boyd's willingness to address issues or concerns on a daily basis, if necessary, underscores his hands-on approach and dispels any notion of detachment or unfamiliarity with Taft's operations.

Bob Boyd has also made significant financial commitments to TUS, most recently with a REDACTED equity contribution to the business, primarily to drive new investments in people and technology including the implementation of a new Student Information System. Bob understands clearly the organization's commitment to our students and is prepared to make additional financial contributions should they be necessary.

Additionally, the following questions have been asked by the Office of Admissions (law school regulation department) of the California State Bar, followed by Taft's responses. By signing this letter, Bob Boyd attests on behalf of TUS, including Taft, to the responses:

1. Please explain why the school is moving to ownership of Mr Boyd, rather than remaining in the trust with Mr Boyd as beneficiary?

We are proposing this change now to be proactive in ensuring a seamless transition of the business. Mr Boyd and his two sisters are the beneficiaries of the Trust. As part of their Estate Planning process, it is expected that Mr Boyd would assume full control of TUS as part of the settlement of the Trust with other assets going to the other siblings. We are hoping to get ahead of that transition to ensure there is no negative impact on the school.

2. What is the proposed legal entity status?

As proposed, the equity of the Taft University System would be held by Mr Boyd as an individual.

3. Will there be any change in financial status or capitalization with the change?

No change whatsoever.

4. Does Mr. Boyd agree to have the law school undergo an inspection this year (as previously planned), and to ensure that the law school proactively complies with all requirements including the rules and guidelines for unaccredited law schools and applicable admissions rules and statutes.

Yes, we would expect and agree to undergo an inspection this year as planned.

5. What changes to the operation of the law school are planned or contemplated upon a change of ownership?

None. Mr. Boyd has overseen the organization for several years and no changes to the operation of the law school are planned or contemplated. In sum, Bob Boyd's narrative at Taft Law School is not just one of ownership, but of stewardship—a responsibility he has embraced with passion and dedication. As TUS navigates the transition in ownership, Bob asks that the California Bar Committee recognize Bob Boyd's unwavering commitment to Taft's mission and continued success.

Additionally, Mr. Boyd seeks a waiver of the 180-day rule in order to accommodate and ensure a smooth and prompt ownership change. Thus, Mr. Boyd respectfully requests that the State Bar waive the 180-day rule to avoid the uncertainty and disorder that could occur should the change of ownership approval not occur before REDACTED

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



C. Robert Boyd
President of Taft University System



Melody Jolly, JD
Dean of Taft Law School