

An unexpected leader in International Law

Santa Clara University's proximity to Silicon Valley and 40-year focus on international law helps it rank among the nation's elite schools.

BY JACK CRITTENDEN

Santa Clara University School of Law stands among titans when it comes to international law. The law school, which is part of a small Jesuit university in Santa Clara, Calif., is one of 13 in the nation to earn an A+ in this practice area.

It rubs shoulders with schools such as Columbia Law School, Duke University, Georgetown University, University of Michigan and UC Berkeley School of Law — large schools with ample resources to throw at popular practice areas such as international law.

What makes Santa Clara's accomplishment even more impressive is that, arguably, international law is not even its top offering. That would go to intellectual property, for which it has been ranked in the top five in the nation. That makes sense, given the school's location. Other than Stanford University, it is the only law school located in Silicon Valley — home to the world's most creative tech companies, including Apple, Google and Intel.

But on closer look, the school's vast offerings in international law are closely tied to Silicon Valley, the school's own IP offering and some good foresight 40 years ago.

George Alexander became dean of the law school in 1970, moving from Syracuse University, where he specialized in space law. The then 39-year-old dean arrived with a background in technology and experience in civil liberties. He had previously served as vice chairman of the board of the New York Civil Liberties Union and had served as a consultant to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights from 1962 to 1963.

Alexander focused the school on three concentrations: social justice, international law and intellectual property.

In hindsight, he was the perfect hire



SANTA CLARA'S NEW BUILDING: Panetta Plaza is named after Leon Panetta, the former U.S. Secretary of Defense, who is a graduate of the law school.

for the time and place. Within four years, Silicon Valley was exploding following the release of the first microchip. The tech companies needed law firms that were well versed in two areas: IP and international law.

"In Silicon Valley, a lot of the litigation and transactions have to do with IP rights, and all of them are international in nature," explained Don Polden, who was dean of the law school from 2003 to 2013. "IP rights don't stop at the border."



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additional resources and offerings. That is reflected today in its three centers: Center for Global Law & Policy, Center for Social Justice & Public Service and its High Tech

Law Institute.

In international law, it started its study abroad programs in 1974, being the first to offer a program in Asia. Today, it offers more study abroad programs than any other law school, with programs in Shanghai, Singapore, Tokyo, Sydney, Oxford, Munich, Geneva, The Hague, Vienna and Costa Rica.

Unlike many study abroad programs, Santa Clara's hires most faculty members from local universities, and students can take externships. This gives them the opportunity to get practical international experience, enhancing their skill sets and resumes.

Santa Clara added an LL.M. program in the early 1990s, bringing foreign attorneys into the same classes as J.D. students. It added to the student body's international mix by adding exchange students from Europe and Asia. Today there are 15 to 25 per semester.

Santa Clara started its Journal of International Law in 2002 and its International Human Rights Clinic in 2012, giving students even more opportunities. It offers a certificate in international law, allowing students to choose from one of three specializations: Public International Law, International Business and Comparative Law. Each has its own required courses and a study abroad experience.

“A lot of the work that our graduates do has direct connections to international law,” Polden said. “It’s an aspect of a lot of our curriculum as a result.”

While dean, Polden oversaw continued growth. When he arrived in 2003, the law school was housed in 13 different buildings. Slowly, he worked to merge the school into a smaller number of buildings. At the same time, he sought donations for a new building.

Dean Lisa Kloppenberg, who took over from Polden in 2013, secured a \$10 million gift in 2014 from a Silicon Valley tech founder to go toward the new building. But it wasn’t until the university received a \$100 million gift in 2017 that the law school had the resources to start construction.

The new 96,000-square-foot building, which cost \$58 million, opened in October.

“It looks like Silicon Valley tech space with teaching space that is first rate,” Polden said of the new building. “There is a lot of technology and collaborative spaces.”

The building’s location, adjacent to the business school, places the law school squarely in the campus’s professional neighborhood, and leaders are hopeful it will encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among students of business, law, technology, social justice and ethics.

Throughout the eco-friendly building, there are numerous cozy corners, couches, tables, benches and conference rooms for students to gather, collaborate and study together. The technology is cutting edge, including numerous LED monitors, smart keys for classrooms and an artificial intelligence lab. It also features open spaces, modern design and lots of natural light.



International law: a global view

International law can involve everything from human rights to intellectual property to soybeans. Yep, soybeans. When President Trump imposed tariffs on some goods from China, China did the same on a number of U.S. goods, including soybeans. Trade is a major part of international law.

As nations have become more interconnected, this specialty has broadened. And technological advances will likely only speed and complicate globalization moving forward. Law schools have long understood the importance of this specialty, and many having expansive, venerable programs. Thirteen received A+ grades in our rankings. They boast top faculty,

International Law

A+

American University
Brooklyn Law School
California Western School of Law
Case Western Reserve University
Columbia Law School
Duke University
Georgetown University
Loyola Law School, Los Angeles
Santa Clara Law
UC Berkeley School of Law
UCLA Law
University of Michigan
University of Washington

A

Boston College
Cardozo School of Law
DePaul University
Emory University School of Law
Fordham Law School
Harvard Law School

NYU School of Law
Southwestern Law School
University of Hawaii
University of Miami
University of Minnesota
University of Oklahoma
Washington and Lee University
Yale Law School

A-

George Washington University
Penn State Law
Pepperdine University
Regent University
Temple University
University of Arizona
University of Georgia
University of Pittsburgh
University of San Francisco
University of Utah
University of Virginia
Vanderbilt Law School

preLaw magazine graded law schools based on the breadth of their curricular offerings. The scores were weighted as follows: 30% for a concentration, 24% for a clinic, 12% for a center, 12% for an externship, 9% for a journal, 8% for a student group and 5% for a certificate. An A represents a score of 90% or higher, an A- is 78% to 89% and a B+ is 72% to 77%.