

April 2, 2025

Dear Santa Clara Law Students,

We write to you as individual members of the legal profession who care deeply about law and justice. We care deeply as well about you, our students, keeping in mind the Jesuit university core value of *cura personalis* (“care for the whole person”). As teachers and researchers, we also learn alongside you and from you. This shared and collaborative journey through the law brings us joy and meaning.

Present threats to the rule of law in the United States impel us to call out the significant challenges and harms facing many in the legal profession, in legal education, and in the populace at large. We write to assure you that you are not alone in your concern about the volatility and havoc in national developments. The executive branch’s upheaval of bedrock constitutional principles and norms is unacceptable, regardless of party or partisanship. We do not condone the degradation and unraveling of the rule of law, and we are not remaining silent or passive in the face of it.

Our voices reflect many diverse viewpoints and identities. We believe in the importance of safeguarding the right to be different in all the ways human identities can differ; to hold and express beliefs from diverse cultural, religious, and ideological traditions; and to think in divergent ways, methodologically and philosophically. Yet we are united in our respect for the rule of law, a purposeful collective agreement to adhere to rules and procedures that protect civil liberties and human dignity, thereby to ensure meaningful due process and equal treatment for all.

At present, our universities, our law firms, our government agencies, our courts, and our people are under various and systematic threats. Some entities and individuals have been targeted to satisfy a personal vendetta or under other pretexts that do not withstand legal scrutiny. Our students, faculty, and staff face new potential risks, whether in connection with losses of funding for their research; retribution for expressions of their political views; or unwarranted and unexplained changes to their immigration status. Some among us hold identities whose very existence has been targeted, using an array of different legal tools. And for some among us, this sense of vulnerability under the law may be familiar, if perhaps now felt even more sharply. The risks are real for many. We have already seen, across the nation, frightening instances of extreme and unjust punishment, often meted out without any meaningful procedural safeguards.

Respecting the rule of law is vital to the legal profession. Contrary to recent executive branch actions, a lawyer or law firm should not be targeted for having represented people in opposition to the government. A judge should not be threatened with impeachment for issuing an unpopular ruling. More broadly a student, professor, or staff member should not face loss of professional opportunities or punishment for peaceably expressing their opinions on political matters. People should not find their freedom of movement or immigration status altered without notice or due process. To decry the current legal situation is not to suggest that the prior status quo was without fault or that the aspirations of the rule of law are always realized for all; many inequities have existed within the law, and many will persist in the future even as we strive to do better. Indeed, it is among our aims in this institution to identify and redress such inequities and to train compassionate lawyers attuned to the disparate or disproportionate ways law can land for different people.

We understand that the stress of these times can weigh heavily. We encourage you to engage with us and to avail yourselves of our community's student services and resources for support: lawstudentservices@scu.edu.

Signing off with care for you, for each other as colleagues, for Santa Clara Law, and for the rule of law itself,