

Greetings future JFK Juris Doctor students,

We are very excited that you are interested in learning more about the JFK School of Law at Northcentral University, but we know you may be wondering what our probationary status means to our future law students. The JFK School of Law has been continually accredited by the Committee of Bar Examiners for the State Bar of California since 1981, and our current accreditation is not impacted. The law school continues to be an accredited J.D. Program by the CA State Bar.

Why do we have probationary status right now?

Our multi-year bar pass rate (MPR) fell just below the minimum 40% required by the State Bar, to 39.7%. This number reflects students who took the CA Bar from 2015-2019 and graduated under a vastly different JD Program than the one offered today. Simply put, the quality and rigor of our **current** JD Program is not reflected in our bar pass rate which is the reason for our probationary status.

Why is this important?

This is important because the JFK School of Law at Northcentral University launched a brand new, online JD Program in the fall 2020, with the specific goal of increasing student learning while in law school and to ensure greater success on the CA Bar Exam.

Some of the more significant enhancements we have made are outlined below:

- **A New Curriculum Model** – Traditional law school involves weekly lectures and discussion with one exam at the end of the term to gauge student knowledge and understanding of the material. Formative assessment throughout law programs is not the norm. Instead, students are either successful (or not) based upon one exam at the end of each course. **This is not the model of our current J.D. Program.** Our online approach to legal education requires active engagement by our students in all courses, each week. In addition to traditional coursework such as reading and briefing cases, students engage with the material by answering bar-styled multiple-choice questions, draft answers to hypotheticals, and take practice examinations all with individualized faculty feedback. Additionally, students have access to several supplemental materials to actively improve students' knowledge and skills in all bar tested subjects. Our new model is coupled with several synchronous class sessions to engage with one another and faculty to further increase student learning at key points in each course.
- **Extended Bar Preparation** – Starting bar preparation early is a primary key to success. Our law students begin bar preparation an entire year before graduating via our two semester-long extended bar review courses. These courses provide both a deep review of doctrine in the major topics covered on the California Bar Exam and ample practice with essay exam writing, multiple choice questions, and the performance exam. Beginning a formal bar review course with this solid foundation will significantly assist students' ultimate success on the bar.
- **Additional Bar Preparation Services:** All students have access to a full array of bar preparation resources from the beginning of law school. We have partnered with BarBri, a premiere bar review program. The cost is embedded into the tuition which allows



students access to bar preparation materials from the very beginning of the Program. Additionally, all students have access to a bar coach to assist from the first term of law school through the CA Bar Exam.

- **Summer MBE Courses:** The CA Bar Exam consists of three parts: 1) analytical essays, 2) MBE questions (multiple choice), and 3) the Performance Exam. *The MBE portion is worth 50% of the overall score.* Becoming proficient in answering multiple choice questions is critical. Students take MBE courses each summer to refresh their recollection of the law covered on this portion of the bar exam, reinforcing critical legal doctrine and the strategies for taking multiple choice questions.
- **Enhanced Academic Support Services:** Our academic support services have been greatly enhanced. Leveraging NCU's 25-year history of offering quality online graduate education, we offer an excellent program of academic support, including legal writing coaches and several law librarians dedicated to assist all law students.
- **Faculty Mentorship and Live Sessions:** We believe that faculty mentorship and student to faculty and student to student interaction is imperative to legal education. We fulfill this through both synchronous class sessions at key points in the curriculum and through weekly office hours (optional) in each course for students to meet with faculty to review material, interact with each other, and engage in discussion.

We are proud of the rigor and quality of our online JD Program curriculum, academic support model, and the steps we are taking to increase our graduates' success on the CA Bar Examination. We are confident that, through these efforts, our bar pass rate will well exceed the 40% minimum required by the rules.

I welcome the opportunity to meet personally with anyone interested in learning more about the J.D. Program at Northcentral and the exciting opportunities a legal education can provide!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa L. Hutton".

Lisa Hutton, JD
Dean, JFK School of Law at Northcentral University