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# UC-Hastings Law Dean to Focus on Bar Passage, Real Estate Development

Rebecca Cohen, The Recorder

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SAN FRANCISCO — Now that he has been given the role full time, UC-Hastings College of the Law Chancellor and Dean David Faigman has big plans to bolster the school's stature, including improving what he called a "horrific" bar passage rate.

Hastings' board of directors unanimously voted to keep Faigman on after a search committee evaluated nearly 100 candidates. He replaces Frank Wu, who [stepped down](#) at the beginning of 2016, just one year after his appointment had been renewed through 2020. Faigman has been serving as interim dean since then.

Before assuming his current position, Faigman was a professor of law at Hastings. He also teaches in the psychiatry department at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, and is the founding director of the UCSF/UC Hastings Consortium on Law, Science & Health Policy. He said he's excited to stay on.

"I am absolutely incredibly optimistic about where we're going as a school, because I think we have the pieces in place to really catapult into national pre-eminence," Faigman said. "I have every intention of making UC-Hastings a national powerhouse."

Faigman's "bold, decisive leadership" made him the right candidate for the job, said Tom Gede, chairman of the board of directors, in a statement.

"David possesses the vision and mindset UC Hastings needs today for the implementation of changes that will radically benefit students and the institution as a whole," Gede said.

A schoolwide survey showed that Faigman was Hastings students' preferred candidate for dean, said Samuel Chang, a second-year student and the president of the Associated Students, UC Hastings.

"After meeting and interacting with all the final candidates, students believed that Professor Faigman stood out as being the most dedicated and engaged," Chang said in a statement.

At the top of Faigman's priority list is boosting the school's bar exam passage rate, he said. Just 51 percent of Hastings' first-time exam takers passed this summer, a number Faigman called "horrific" in an email to campus officials and students. He wants Hastings professors to adjust their testing techniques so students can have more practice with the bar exam's timed, closed-book format, and he suggested that additional midterm exams could provide students with valuable feedback.

"I think our basic obligation as a professional school is to ensure that our students and graduates are prepared to practice law, and that means training them to be great lawyers, which Hastings has been very good at historically, but also ensuring that they get through the entrance exam to be a lawyer," Faigman said Tuesday. "As I've been very honest about and very clear about over the last few years, we as a faculty have not done as much in that regard."

Wu, Faigman's predecessor as dean, faced scrutiny over Hastings' slipping U.S. News & World Report ranking, which slid from No. 42 in 2010 to No. 59 in 2015. Wu, along with some other law school deans, [challenged U.S. News' metrics](#).

Faigman stressed that those rankings are highly variable, and below the top 15 spots there's a lot of movement from year to year. Nevertheless, he said, he thinks they're important.

"One has to take it seriously, because students deciding where to go to law school take it seriously," Faigman said. "Our national reputation among academics and lawyers and judges has been quite good over time. But the employment figures are extraordinarily poor, and they're challenging for us because a lot of our students want to stay in California and specifically in the Bay Area, and it's a tough market."

His plans for making Hastings more attractive to potential students include two major real estate development projects. In the next three years, Hastings is planning to replace its academic facilities with a new building about a block away. It will then team up with UCSF to build subsidized student housing on the site of the old academic building. Students and faculty of both schools will share the space, which will give Hastings a total of 1,000 units of on-campus housing, about four times what it has now.

"We'll be able to have subsidized student housing for virtually all of our students, and that will put us in the position to bring in students who might otherwise have gone to other schools," Faigman said.

Faigman said he's looking to New York University as a model for what Hastings might accomplish. Since the 1980s, NYU has been able to expand its academic programs by developing its real estate in Greenwich Village. Hastings, with its campus in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood, is in the same position now that NYU was in 30 years ago, Faigman said.

"Legal education has a lot of challenges, but I really am absolutely honest in saying that Hastings is in as good a position as any school in the country, if not better, to advance," he said.

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