

State Bar of California Implements Policy Changes for Law Schools



Policy Revisions and New Report

On June 21, the State Bar of California's Committee of Bar Examiners approved several significant policy changes affecting state-accredited and unaccredited law schools. These decisions, accompanied by a newly unveiled report, aim to improve outcomes and ensure compliance within these institutions.

Purdue Global Law School's Expansion

Purdue Global Law School, known as the oldest entirely online law school, has received approval to launch a full-time online JD program starting January 2025. This new program will complement its existing part-time program. Although the American Bar Association (ABA) does not accredit fully online law schools, discussions are ongoing regarding the necessary standards for such accreditation.

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Closures of Glendale and Irvine Law Schools

Two law schools, Glendale University College of Law and Irvine College of Law, will voluntarily close their doors. Glendale University College of Law, accredited by the State Bar of California, will cease operations on September 1. Irvine College of Law, an unaccredited distance-learning institution, will close on July 31. Westcliff University will maintain records for Irvine's students and graduates, assisting in their transition to other programs.

Compliance Issues and Renewals

Peoples College of Law, an unaccredited institution, closed on May 31 following long-standing noncompliance issues. Additionally, Lincoln Law School of San Jose and Pacific Coast University School of Law were found to be out of compliance in multiple areas, including financial instability, yet both had their registrations renewed.

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Performance and Attrition Rates

The newly published 2023 California Accredited and Registered Unaccredited Law School Performance Report revealed that in July 2023, only 22% of bar examinees from state-accredited schools passed, compared to 12% from unaccredited schools. Overall, 51% of all examinees passed the exam. Attrition remains a significant issue, with nearly half of the students at both state-accredited and unaccredited schools not continuing beyond their first year.

Decline in Number of Law Schools

Since 2012, the number of state-accredited and unaccredited law schools has decreased from 40 to 28. This decline is largely due to voluntary closures. The report highlights that many unaccredited law schools aim to serve underrepresented students, with more than half of the enrolled students at these institutions being people of color.

Financial Aspects

The report also sheds light on the cost of legal education in these institutions. Completing a JD at a California-accredited law school averages \$74,396 in tuition and fees, compared to \$44,945 at an unaccredited law school. Despite awarding only 1% of JD degrees, unaccredited law schools represent 4% of the state's law school student population.

These policy changes and the insights from the report underscore the ongoing efforts to enhance legal education and maintain standards across all types of law schools in California.

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.

