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## Downtown's New Law School

**State-of-the art campus will offer more than degrees and shiny fixtures — student housing will be a short walk away**



Dean Rudy Hasl

By Manny Cruz

Long before the foundation was poured for Thomas Jefferson School of Law's new Downtown campus, school officials knew that something special was happening at the 11th and Island Avenues site. During the excavation of the property, fragments of prehistoric creatures were discovered by paleontologists from the San Diego Natural History Museum.

Fossils unearthed at the site included the prehistoric bones of a mammoth, a whale and what is believed to be a giant ground sloth. Museum paleontologist Pat Sena found the remains of the sloth after previously discovering the mammoth and whale remains. "I'm stunned by this project. It's amazing there are so many here," said Sena of the fossil-rich environment. "Are these fossils all over Downtown, or are they just here? This area may have been a catch point."

While that question will require further examination, Rudy Hasl, dean of the 41-year-old law school since 2005, can say for certain that the new law school building — one of the newest structures in East Village — will offer state-of-the-art features that students will find fascinating when classes begin next January. These include a computer center, wireless access and audio video capabilities throughout the eight-story structure, expansive view terraces on the fifth and eighth floors and a roof that supports a 50 kilowatt solar array with 270 modules. The school is seeking LEED Gold certification for the building from the U.S. Green Building Council.

Also included are two learning centers, a moot courtroom, two recording studios, five conference rooms, an executive board room and a 40,000-square-foot library with future space for a café, bookstore and a law clinic.

Three levels of parking below the building will offer 177 parking spaces. The building was designed by Carrier Johnson Architects, S2 Architecture and ID Studios. Midwest General was the construction manager and the general contractor was Bovis Lend Lease. Hasl put the value of the project at about \$90 million, which includes construction costs of \$68.3 million.

What may attract more attention from students than anything else will be the location of student housing within a few blocks of the law school building. Hasl said the school is in negotiations to obtain a master lease on nearby property that will be turned into student housing — an effective recruiting tool given the scarcity of affordable living spaces Downtown and the scarcity of street parking. The property has 172 parking spaces available.

“We also will be able to do some programming in the (student housing) building to add to the education of the student,” says Hasl. That would include putting counselors in the building to assist law students and using the space for social events.

Besides its regular law degree programs, Thomas Jefferson partners with the College of Business Administration at San Diego State to offer a combined Juris Doctor-Master of Business Administration that allows students to earn both a law degree and a master's in business administration at the same time.

The Thomas Jefferson School of Law was founded in 1969 as the San Diego campus of Western State University College of Law. It became independent in 1995 and was granted provisional accreditation from the American Bar Association in 1996. Full ABA accreditation came in 2001. The law school joined the Association of American Law Schools in 2008.

The law school's current campus is at 2121 San Diego Ave. in Old Town, where it's been since 1983. But it's not new to Downtown. Before it settled in Old Town, the campus was on Front Street.

On July 1, Hasl started his 30th year as a law school dean, a matter of pride for the 67-year-old ex-Army captain who served as both a prosecutor and defense attorney trying court martial cases as part of the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam during that war. “I have the dubious distinction of being the longest serving dean of a law school — of an ABA-approved law school — in the United States,” says Hasl. The average turnover, he notes, is six or seven years.

Hasl's previous deanships were at St. Louis University, St. John's University in New York and Seattle University — “a nice progression across the country,” he says. While most of his career has been at university-affiliated law schools, Hasl says a

freestanding school such as Thomas Jefferson School of Law has much greater flexibility on allocating resources and developing programs. "There's a distinct advantage in having management control over your resources," says Hasl. The move to Downtown, he adds, would have been much more difficult to accomplish if Thomas Jefferson was affiliated with a university.

Enrollment at Thomas Jefferson stands now at 889 students, which will climb to 975 next year. "We project we will grow to 1,025 by the fall of 2011 and stay at that level for the foreseeable future," Hasl says.

Thomas Jefferson School of Law will join California Western School of Law as the only law schools Downtown. But Cal Western, located at 225 Cedar St., is in discussions with UCSD to consider an affiliation that could lead to the establishment of a UCSD School of Law at the Cal Western campus.