CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND SOCIETY
BERKELEY LAW

CSLS SPEAKER SERIES

Monday, August 27, 2018

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“Law Students’ Faustian Bargain with Debt: Findings from UCI Law’s Natural Experiment with Tuition Remission”

As the cost of attending law school has skyrocketed, graduates leave with more debt at graduation. Legal scholars and commentators have argued that a policy of financing legal education through debt is highly contingent on everything falling into place, from passing the bar to finding a job with a salary sufficient to pay back one’s loans and begin a meaningful transition to adulthood; one might argue that law students are making a Faustian bargain—a short-term risk for a long-term gain. Legal scholars have also argued that this model of financing legal education makes it difficult, if not impossible, for most students to take seriously a career path in Government and Public Interest (GPI) law. In the aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008, concerns about the contingent nature of a policy of law student debt to finance education took on even greater urgency.

Against the backdrop of the Great Recession, in 2009 The University of California Irvine School of Law (UCI Law) welcomed its first cohort of students. To attract top-tier students UCI Law offered the first three cohorts tuition remission. UCI Law presents a rich opportunity to design a quasi-experiment to shed empirical light on policy debates facing legal education. We draw from an original, longitudinal, on-line survey of UCI law students, the classes of 2012 to 2016. The first set of findings focus on the question, what is the impact of tuition remission on students’ debt behavior? These findings are reported in the attached article in the *Journal of Legal Education*. I then turn to preliminary findings from a second paper, a work-in-progress, which asks, is debt a significant impediment to a career in government and public interest law?

Professor Seron’s related paper published in *Journal of Legal Education* is available on our website and in hard copy at the Center.

PLACE	**Room 170, Berkeley Law**
TIME	**12:45 – 2:00pm**. Coffee and water provided. Bag lunches welcome.
INFO	https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/
EMAIL	csls@law.berkeley.edu

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