



# SCALE: The Premier Accelerated J.D.

Southwestern's pioneering  
SCALE two-year J.D. program  
has been on the cutting edge of  
legal education for four decades



# The Premier Accelerated J.D.

**IN** the summer of 2013, while addressing a crowd of academics and legal scholars, President Obama suggested law schools consider reducing J.D. programs from three years to two. One of the questions was whether it is possible for law schools to design two-year programs that still give students all the necessary skills and knowledge to become successful lawyers.

If you ask any of the 1,000-plus graduates of Southwestern Law School's two-year SCALE program, the answer is a clear and resounding "Yes!"

Long before the concept of a two-year J.D. came into focus, Southwestern became a pioneer in the field by creating the nation's first alternative two-year law degree program, called SCALE, in 1974. The program is offered in addition to

the school's three- and four-year programs and, with a carefully structured curriculum, allows students to complete the 87 units of course credit required for the J.D. within a two-year period. SCALE alumni have gone on to successful careers ranging from elected office and the bench to private practice and entertainment law.

What sets the SCALE program apart from other schools' two-year programs is its unique model, combining small class sizes—30 to 40 students—and a commitment to practical, skills-based education, rather than simply condensing a typical three-year curriculum into two years. The small class sizes, the close interaction with faculty and the year-round curriculum provide students the opportunity to obtain a well-rounded legal education in two years.



SCALE® alumni and students reflect on Southwestern's trailblazing two-year J.D. program



RALPH GONZALES

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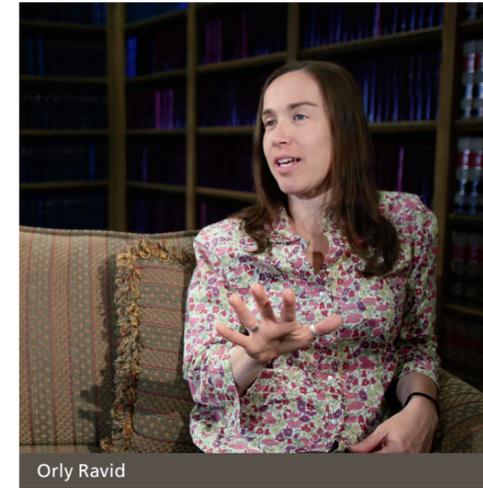
Mackenzie Brown



Melissa Hanna



Michael Maguire



Orly Ravid

“SCALE has exceeded my expectations. It’s been incredibly in-depth learning with top-notch professors. Truly, it’s people from the best schools in the country who are super-committed to teaching, with a class size that’s intimate but also diverse and compelling.”

—Orly Ravid

As the longest-running accelerated J.D. program, the SCALE curriculum and structure have evolved over 40 years to meet the changing needs of the profession that new SCALE graduates will be entering.

SW Law spoke with several recent graduates and current students to find out how their experiences in the SCALE program have translated in the real world. They included second-year SCALE students **Orly Ravid '14** and **Carly Sanchez '14**, first-year SCALE J.D./M.B.A. student **Melissa Hanna '15**, new attorney **Mackenzie Brown '13**, family law attorney **Michael Maguire '08**, television executive **Noah Solomon '01**, and corporate and health care law attorney **Stephen Sullivan '06**.

#### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THE SCALE PROGRAM?

**Melissa Hanna:** I was working in academia and business strategy development for tech companies and felt like I was hitting a ceiling. I decided to pursue a legal education to develop skills so I could make a greater impact. I chose SCALE after sitting in on a few classes and speaking with alums. Right away, I knew that these were the kind of people I wanted to be in school with. The SCALE program is intense, but once I heard

about students' experiences and I met the faculty, I knew it was the right fit for me. [And] I decided to pursue the SCALE J.D./M.B.A. so I would have both the legal and business skills that I need for the career I want to have.

**Carly Sanchez:** I was working for a small personal injury firm and had a great experience there. My employers encouraged me to come to SCALE, knowing that I would get a comprehensive legal education with a lot of practical experience.

**Michael Maguire:** I was a performer, but had always wanted to go to law school. I had been on Broadway in *Les Misérables* and also had a wonderful career singing with symphonies. After winning a Tony Award, I started thinking about law school [again], as strange as that may seem. SCALE was the perfect program. I had young children and I wanted to get through law school quickly, and I felt that I was up to the task of doing it in a concentrated way.

**Stephen Sullivan:** I had just graduated from college and wasn't quite ready to enter the business world yet. I thought law school would probably be the next best challenge. I was looking for something that wasn't just the typical three-year program. What I found fascinating about SCALE was that you could finish in two years, get all the same material—but in a different format—and be part of a close-knit group of students for the whole program.

#### WHAT WERE SOME OF THE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS YOU LEARNED IN THE PROGRAM?

**Noah Solomon:** You have to think on your feet in SCALE. That's not to say you don't in traditional programs, but when you're called upon to talk

about a legal issue, you can prepare well in advance. In SCALE, you have many opportunities to speak in a real-world setting, or a real court setting—a real context—which allows you to think quickly. It prepares you so much more.

**Orly Ravid:** In addition to the class-work, we've had a lot of practice labs: We've done a lot of evidence training like role-playing in court, practicing writing complaints—all sorts of civil litigation practice. I've done everything I could have imagined doing, and I can't think of any opportunity that SCALE hasn't afforded me.

**Mackenzie Brown:** SCALE is more of a nontraditional program, and you can really get hands-on experience. In class, we would read cases and learn legal concepts and theories, but we would also learn how to argue appellate briefs and draft motions.

**Stephen Sullivan:** When I was part of the SCALE program, the second year was all about developing professional skills—for example, there was a required course about how to put on a trial. We had Appellate Advocacy, Negotiation and Alternative Dispute Resolution—all different ways of resolving the types of legal conflicts that are out there once you graduate.

I had developed all those critical skills by the time I graduated, which really put me ahead.

#### DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY HONORS PROGRAMS OR OTHER COCURRICULAR ACTIVITIES WHILE IN THE SCALE PROGRAM?

**Mackenzie Brown:** Southwestern is known for trial advocacy, and the Trial Advocacy Honors Program (TAHP) is a testament to our success. I was on a TAHP team that won a regional competition and then went on to the national level where we placed in the top four out of 250 teams. Through TAHP, I was able to do a trial from start to finish, so I was prepared to walk into a courtroom when I graduated.

**Stephen Sullivan:** I participated in both Law Review and Moot Court. One of my best memories of the entire two years was participating in the Moot Court program. I got to take a trip to New York; we advocated there on a very interesting problem that was based on a *Seinfeld* episode. It was engaging, and we made the semifinals.

**Orly Ravid:** I'm on Law Review, and I hope to be published. I'm involved in launching the school's Amicus Project and will be writing an amicus brief for the Ninth Circuit.

#### HOW DID YOUR SCALE EXTERNSHIP PREPARE YOU FOR PRACTICE?

**Michael Maguire:** One of the best parts of the program came at the end, when we were about to graduate. We were sent out into the real world as externs. Some people went to law firms; some worked for law clinics. I worked for a Superior Court judge in Santa Monica who is now one of the primary probate judges in Los Angeles.

**Mackenzie Brown:** I did two externships: for the Screen Actors Guild, which is now SAG/AFTRA, and for the District Attorney's Office. The externships prepared me to practice because I got to work side by side with attorneys.

**Orly Ravid:** This summer, I externed for the judge presiding over the high-profile *Jackson v. AEG* trial. I got to not only watch the trial, but watch the morning calendar, go to the back for sidebar discussions, go to the chambers, and then research and write memos—maybe 10 or 15 of them, all of which have been converted to ruling orders. Being at such a high level so early into my legal studies was amazing. Also, I just received my official acceptance letter from the California Supreme Court for my final SCALE 10-week externship!



Carly Sanchez



Noah Solomon



Stephen Sullivan

## FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE J.D. PROGRAMS

Southwestern is the only American Bar Association-approved law school offering four programs of study leading to a J.D. degree that differ in scheduling and instructional approach. In addition to the accelerated two-year SCALE program, Southwestern has developed a second innovative option: PLEAS, one of the only part-time day programs in the country designed to meet the needs of students with child or elder-care responsibilities.

To learn more, visit [www.swlaw.edu/academics/jd](http://www.swlaw.edu/academics/jd) and [www.swlaw.edu/scalestories](http://www.swlaw.edu/scalestories).

### FOUR J.D. OPTIONS

- Full-time day
- Part-time evening
- Part-time day/PLEAS
- SCALE

### SCALE IN A NUTSHELL

## THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS

BY HARRIET ROLNICK, ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR SCALE

Each year, we welcome a select cohort of about 35 diverse and talented students to our two-year SCALE program. And we have been doing so for 40 years—decades longer than any law school in the country! SCALE not only offers an accelerated route to a J.D., it features a carefully designed skill-centered curriculum that teaches core legal concepts and key lawyering skills. The program includes a required set of courses and an externship, as well as flexibility that allows each student to create a “mini focus area.” By participating in an additional externship, taking summer electives, working in a legal setting or attending a summer-abroad program, a student can explore a particular interest. A three-year SCALE J.D./M.B.A. option with the Drucker School of Management is also available. I’m proud to be part of this trailblazing program that encourages cohesion, collaboration and collegiality with access to all honors programs and activities that Southwestern offers.

*A Southwestern alumna, Dean Rolnick was a civil litigator and an Assistant U.S. Attorney before joining the faculty in 1999. She has directed the SCALE program since 2006.*

**Noah Solomon:** The externship that I did with the general counsel of a major website company was a great experience. It helped prepare me to pass the bar and get my first job. I went from my externship with my first job into traditional entertainment law where you get a wide variety—employment law, labor law, issues with the guilds and unions. Copyright and IP is also paramount to what I do. There are so many aspects of it that started in the SCALE program, and you find that you can apply all the things you learn along the way to your everyday work.

### WHAT WAS YOUR RELATIONSHIP LIKE WITH THE OTHER STUDENTS?

**Stephen Sullivan:** The experience was great from the get-go. The people who tend to sign up for the SCALE program are energetic and enthusiastic about going to law school. I immediately built relationships with a number of my classmates, and we were a close group. We were all in it together.

**Carly Sanchez:** I cannot say enough about the camaraderie I have with my classmates. Our schedule is obviously grueling, but it’s great to be in the trenches with my brothers and sisters.

**Orly Ravid:** We’re a family. SCALE attracts a certain kind of person, and

those people come together and really click. The class that I’m in, we’ve had [students] as young as 20 and as old as 50-something. It’s a broad range, and everyone’s connected. There’s something great and enhancing about the mixture.

**Michael Maguire:** There’s a wide diversity, and yet within that diversity there are common denominators. Almost everybody is a self-starter and inspired to be there. It’s the difference between being drafted in the Army and joining the Marines. You’re deliberately choosing a program that may be more difficult, but the challenge is inspiring. We were a very concentrated group of people who had all passed through this certain ring of fire.

**Melissa Hanna:** I participate in study groups twice a week. I was really against it at first. I thought, ‘No, I’m much better on my own; I just want to read quietly and take my own notes.’ When I finally showed up at a study group, I thought, ‘What have I been missing? This is great!’ In a study group, you really get all the different perspectives on a case and on the lessons in class. I’m completely immersed in this environment, and I totally enjoy spending time with these students and the professors.

### HOW ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENTS AND FACULTY?

**Carly Sanchez:** Because of the small class size, the faculty members know each person in our class by name. We’re able to have great relationships with the professors, whether we need help with our classes or just want to talk about what it’s like to be a lawyer—even if we have personal problems that are affecting our ability to concentrate on law school. The faculty are always available to help us. They really care and invest in our lives.

**Stephen Sullivan:** The professors really wanted to teach in this program, so I felt we were getting the best of the best. We had energetic professors who wanted to present the material in engaging ways and not necessarily just follow a textbook. It was a very personal curriculum that the professors clearly had put a lot of time and thought into developing.

**Orly Ravid:** SCALE has exceeded my expectations. It’s been incredibly in-depth learning with top-notch professors. Truly, it’s people from the best schools in the country who are super-committed to teaching, with a class size that’s intimate, but also diverse and compelling. I feel really challenged and at the same time really comforted.

### WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO YOU THINK FITS BEST IN THE SCALE PROGRAM?

**Michael Maguire:** I would recommend the program to people who have a sense of who they are and what they want to do. Not that they would have to choose the type of law they want to go into, but people who know that they want to apply themselves and be challenged. Everybody in my program was creative, everybody was a hard worker, and they weren’t put off by assignments that they weren’t familiar with. They could quickly and efficiently find out what they needed to know and get the job done on time.

**Carly Sanchez:** I think a person who is motivated to do well would be great for SCALE. Anyone who wants to gain practical experience in law school and gain lifelong friends would be a great candidate.

**Melissa Hanna:** The SCALE program is for people who are passionate about their career and their education. You might think in two years maybe we’re going to skim over a lot of the topics a three-year program would offer. But it’s the opposite: The SCALE program is for people who want to dig into the nuances and explore all the things that legal education has to offer. 

TOP ROW: RALPH GONZALES; BOTTOM: JOEL MARASIGAN

**SCALE PROGRAM**

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**ADMISSIONS**

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