

Seattle University School of Law dean recognized by national publication as one of nation's top legal education leaders

Honor from The National Jurist underscores Anthony E. Varona's national impact and forward-looking leadership in legal education.

SEATTLE, WA, UNITED STATES, February 4, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Seattle University School of Law](#) Dean Anthony E. Varona has been recognized by [The National Jurist](#) as one of the [25 most influential leaders in legal education in the United States](#). The list, published in the magazine's new Spring issue released this month, celebrates "voices who are moving the field forward and redefining what leadership looks like in a changing landscape," noting that the featured leaders "sparked new ideas, introduced reforms, inspired their peers, or pushed them to see their work differently."



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Shane Martin, Seattle University Provost

At No. 16 on the list, Varona is the only dean in the Pacific Northwest and the only Latinx dean to be honored. He ranks ninth out of American law school deans on the list.

“This honor reflects the extraordinary leadership Dean Varona brings to Seattle University School of Law and to legal education nationally,” said Shane Martin, provost of Seattle University. “Tony is a bold and principled leader whose ideas are shaping the future of the profession. We are proud to see his work recognized at the highest level.”

Throughout his three-decade career in legal education, Varona has achieved a reputation as a tireless and visionary leader with a long track record of trailblazing, innovation, and achievement.

He is known for marrying excellence and access, improving the student experience, and promoting the success of faculty and staff colleagues. As a first-generation immigrant himself who has achieved many “firsts,” he is especially recognized as a leader making legal education, and the legal academy, more accessible to students, faculty, and administrators from the broadest diversity of backgrounds.

In July of 2022, Varona became the first Latinx dean of any law school in the Pacific Northwest. He similarly was the first Latinx and first openly gay dean of the University of Miami School of Law, where he served as dean until 2021 (when he was named dean emeritus).

During his time at Seattle University, Varona’s leadership has taken the law school to new heights of distinction. Since his arrival in July 2022, Varona has achieved a long list of accomplishments, including having:

- Led the recruitment of the academically strongest, and most diverse, entering 1L classes in the law school’s history.
- Launched new initiatives leveraging the law school’s location and new links to industry-leading corporate partners in Seattle’s global technology hub, such as the innovative Technology, Innovation Law and Ethics Institute.
- Recruited many new nationally and internationally celebrated and sought-after professors, leading the Seattle U Law faculty to be recognized as the #1 most impactful law faculty in the entire Pacific Northwest (in the prominent FLAIR and Sisk Leiter rankings).
- Led the launch of a new SJD (legal PhD) program, and the largest ever expansion (well over tenfold) of the Seattle U Law graduate international programs.
- Forged new partnerships with prominent universities and law schools around the globe, regularly engaging in international academic diplomacy missions in order to build two-way cross-border pathways for students and faculty alike.
- Strategically positioned the law school to receive unprecedented new distinctions such as “top 20 most innovative law schools,” #1 law school for public service in the Pacific Northwest, and top national law school honors in legal writing, clinical education, international law, business law, racial justice, criminal law, human rights, and other areas.
- Led significant fundraising achievements to support student success and faculty resources, including a one-of-a-kind pipeline-to-licensure partnership with AccessLex that will reduce students’ overall financial burden and promote their academic and bar success.
- Oversaw the biggest increase in graduate employment rate in the law school’s history, recognized in the Top 25 nationally as an “Employment Leader” by preLaw Magazine.
- Expanded the law school’s civil rights center to include a new cutting-edge Critical Justice Initiative, led by internationally renowned critical justice scholars.
- Co-chaired the Washington State Bar Licensure Task Force (WBLTF), whose recommendations led the Washington Supreme Court to adopt the most comprehensive set of attorney licensure reforms in the nation, balancing the protection of the public with enhancing access to legal services, especially across the large legal desert regions in the state.
- Conceived of and launched the innovative “Hybrid Hubs” initiative, leveraging technology to

create vibrant hybrid law school presences in legal desert areas of Washington and Alaska. Varona designed comprehensive partnership agreements with five prominent regional universities, which provide access to affordable legal education, expedited admission and graduation, and ample in-person, in-region resources to local students who ultimately graduate in situ to provide much needed legal services to underserved communities.

- Served as a powerful voice and convener of dialogue urging reform of the U.S. News and World Report annual law school rankings methodology, which disadvantages mission-driven law schools such as those that seek to broaden access for underrepresented students and address access to justice challenges.
- Attracted various recent high-profile national legal education conferences, and secured hosting rights for Seattle U Law for the prestigious National People of Color Legal Scholarship Conference, which takes place every 8- to 10 years.
- Developed Seattle U Law's 1L Communities & Commons Program, a year-long program that incorporates structured opportunities for first-year students to feel more at home in law school, collaborate and form a community with their classmates, law school staff, and faculty members.
- Conceived of and oversaw the deployment of a University-wide 3+3 advanced law school admissions pathway.
- Served as founding co-chair of the Hispanic National Bar Association's Task Force on Law Faculty and Deans.

Varona is a Public Member on the Administrative Conference of the United States. He also currently is an Elected Life Fellow for the American Bar Foundation, and a member of the Washington Leadership Institute's Board of Advisors, a Ninth Circuit Merit Screening Committee (for judicial selection), and the Executive Committee of the AALS Section on the Dean.

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