



## A Note from the Office of Dean Leonard M. Baynes

During May, I am delighted to celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

The commemoration of AAPI heritage began in 1977 when Rep. Frank Horton of New York, and Rep. Norman Y. Mineta of California, introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives calling for the establishment of Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week. This resolution intended to honor, as part of U.S. history, the contributions, achievements and cultural heritage of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush signed a bill to expand Asian American and Pacific American Heritage Week into a month-long tradition to provide a broader platform for recognizing the diverse cultures and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

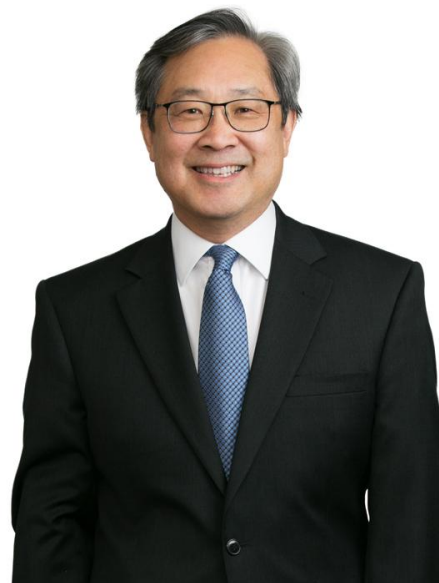
It is important to recognize the strides that Asian Americans have made in the legal profession.

According to the 2021 [National Lawyer Population Survey](#), 2.5% of all attorneys in the U.S. were Asian American. A year later, that figure more than doubled to 5.5. In 2023, it increased again to 6%.

This rapid increase in representation could be attributable to the California Bar Association's recent ramping up its demographic data collection efforts. As the nation's most populous and diverse state, California is likely to have a significant impact on the number of lawyers nationwide of all backgrounds.

As the representation of Asian Americans in the legal profession is now comparable to their 6.3% share in the U.S. population. At the University of Houston Law Center, Asian American students comprise almost 17% of our 2023 1L entering class.

I would like to use AAPI month as an opportunity to recognize the impressive career of Russell Wong, a 1985 graduate of the Law Center.



Wong is a partner in the Intellectual Property Litigation section of Blank Rome's Houston office. In addition to his impressive roster of cases and clients, he has also served as a leader at his firm, the Law Center, and other statewide committees. Among these roles was his time as president of the Asian American Bar Association of Houston. For his alma mater, he is a Board of Advisors member for the Institute of Intellectual Property and Information Law. He was a co-founder and past chair for the Asia Pacific Interest Section for the State Bar of Texas, and a co-chair for the Texas Minority Counsel Program. At Blank Rome, he is a member of its Executive Committee and Diversity & Inclusion Committee.

Wong's level of commitment to his work for the betterment of the legal profession is admirable, and I am proud to count him among the excellent company of our outstanding alumni. His successful career serves as an exemplar to students of all backgrounds and highlights that a legal education at the Law Center presents endless professional opportunities for success.

Please take a moment to [click through the slideshow](#) to see more about other AAPI alumni, staff, faculty, and students who have made significant strides in their industries, be it in law practice, academic institutions, or other entities.

Sincerely,

Leonard M. Baynes

Dean, Hugh Roy and Lillie Cranz Cullen Distinguished Chair, and Professor of Law  
University of Houston Law Center

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