

# Brave New World

› The Honorable Ron Parraguirre Tells the Class of 2011 to Be Ready for Changes on the Legal Landscape

## WHERE WILL YOUR PATH LEAD YOU?

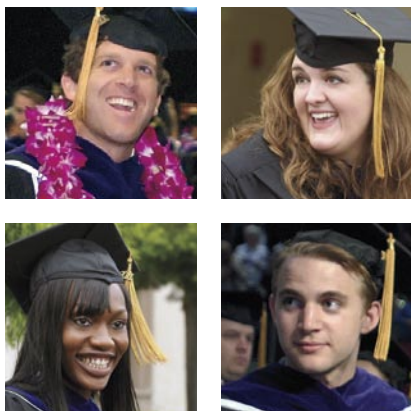
Whether it be difficult or prosperous economic times, professional success depends upon a lawyer's ability to adapt. Within change lies opportunity. This was the main message of the keynote address delivered by Nevada Supreme Court Chief Justice and USD School of Law alumnus Ron Parraguirre, '85, at the commencement and conferral of law degrees on Saturday, May 14, 2011.

"I believe there are changes occurring right now that will, in fact, be permanent changes as a result of the economy," said Parraguirre. "Within these changes, opportunities await."

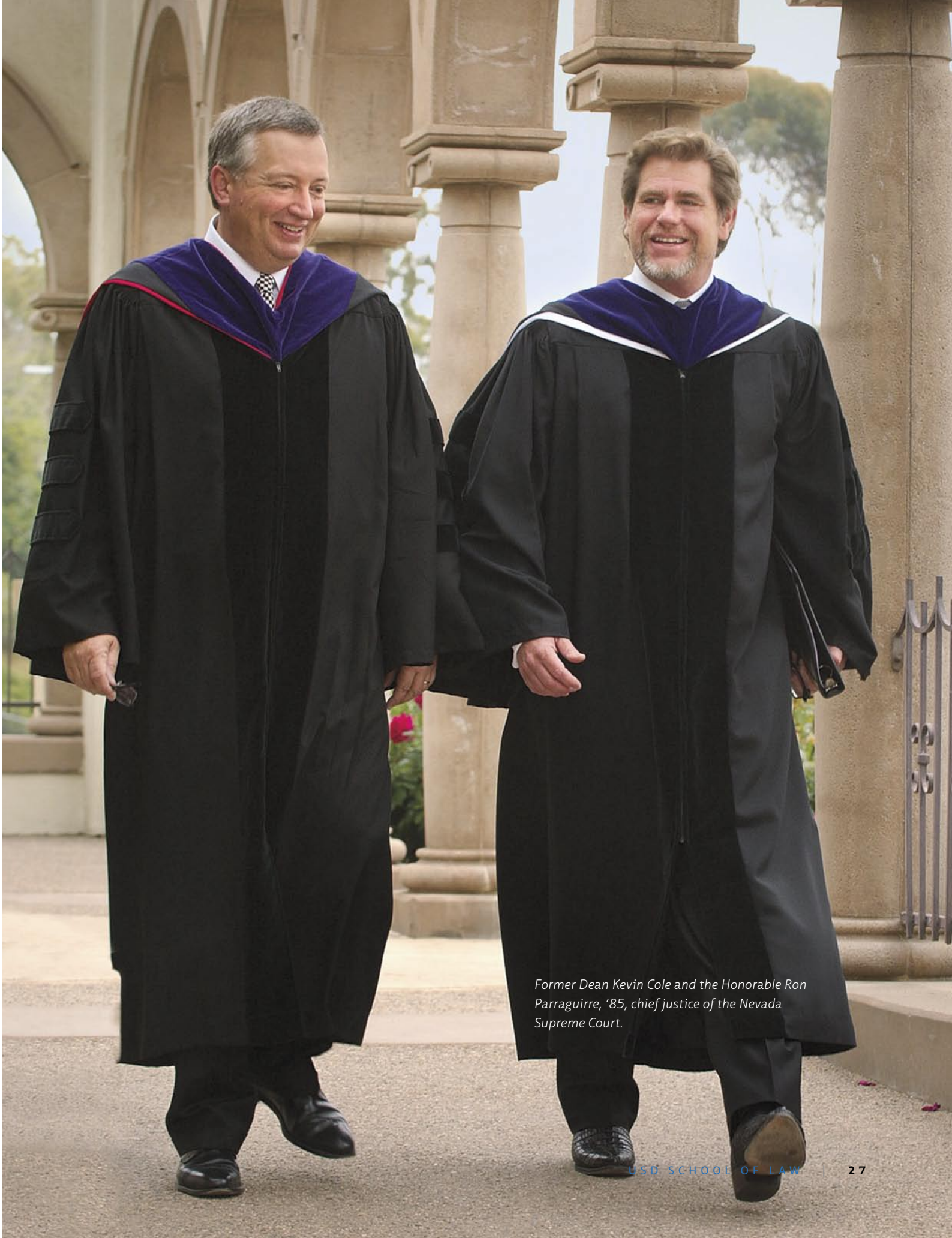
Explaining one such change, Parraguirre pointed out the cost of litigation is far beyond what most of the general population can afford. As a result of the slow and often painful process, parties are turning away from traditional, expensive litigation practices and demanding alternative dispute resolution methods. Mediation and arbitration are becoming the preferred mechanism for resolving disputes.

Recently, Parraguirre and his colleagues on the Nevada Supreme Court passed rules to allow for private-stipulated jury trials. The parties determine and control the litigation costs and the length of the process, and ideally end up with a swift and cost-effective way to resolve their disputes.

Practitioners who have been able to spot this opportunity are prospering. Law firms now are adding fully equipped courtrooms to their offices, shifting the practice emphasis to meet this need.



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*Former Dean Kevin Cole and the Honorable Ron Parraguirre, '85, chief justice of the Nevada Supreme Court.*



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Adaptability is the key. He knows this firsthand, as he adapted to circumstances he could not possibly have foreseen in his own career.

Parraguirre graduated from USD School of Law in 1985 determined to enter civil litigation in Las Vegas. After completing an internship in Washington, D.C., he accepted a position as a counsel with the Senate Judiciary Committee. Parraguirre was then unexpectedly called back to Nevada in 1987, where he spent a few years in private practice.

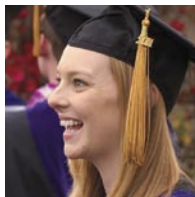
When a bench position opened in Las Vegas, he and some friends put together a campaign on a whim, with Parraguirre as the candidate. He won. Twenty years later, Parraguirre now serves as the chief justice on the Nevada Supreme Court and cannot imagine doing anything else.

Parraguirre told the candidates not to worry if they didn’t have a clear career plan right now and to be open to any career option that presented itself. Many of the decisions made in legal careers are unplanned. Lawyers are trained to be logical, contemplative thinkers and make the most of opportunities that arise.

“I stand here 20-some years later, and I don’t regret any of those unplanned decisions that I made,” said Parraguirre. “I am here because of a series of circumstances that I couldn’t have foreseen. That’s something I want you to understand. Your path is going to take you where it takes you, and you’re all going to be fine.”

Parraguirre concluded his remarks with a brief discussion about responsibility, reinforcing in students their responsibility to the public, to fellow legal professionals and to themselves.

He reminded the students that law is a service profession. The individuals



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most in need cannot afford legal representation, so the system relies on practitioners to provide pro bono service.

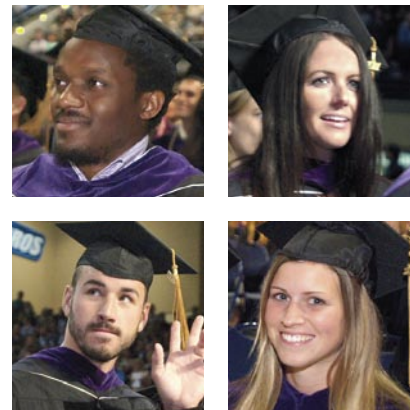
“It’s good for your souls,” he said. “You will never feel as fully compensated as when you see the relief and the gratitude in a pro bono client’s face as you stand with them navigating a complex and very frightening process.”

Lawyers are painted with a very broad brush; the bad conduct of just a few reflects on all. Parraguirre asked the students to do their part to build the reputation of the profession and strive for civility in their dealings with clients, office staff, judges and other attorneys.

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Making his point about personal responsibility, Parraguirre encouraged graduates to stay grounded and balanced. With all that lawyers do professionally, they must make time to develop and nurture their own interests and pursuits in order to keep life balanced and fulfilling.

“Success is not the key to happiness,” Parraguirre concluded, quoting Albert Schweitzer. “Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful. Congratulations. You have a magnificent future ahead of you.”



Above: JD and LLM candidates from the 2011 commencement. Left: Commencement ceremonies at USD’s Jenny Craig Pavilion. Opposite page, above: Justice Parraguirre addresses 2011 candidates. Opposite page, below: JD and LLM candidates from the 2011 commencement.