



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

MEI TSANG

Finding a Home in the OCBA: My Journey and Vision as President

I am beyond thrilled and honored to serve as President of the OCBA this year. It feels surreal! How did an awkward immigrant teenager end up here? I couldn't have done it without the support of so many wonderful people along the way, and the OCBA has been instrumental in my journey.

By age 33, I had moved 31 times. Many moves were beyond my control in the early years. I was born in China to an Indonesian father and a Chinese mother from Xi'an. My father's foreigner status allowed us to move to Hong Kong during British rule—a stark contrast to mainland China. Then came the big move to the U.S. at age 13, to Chesterton, Indiana—a town of 8,000. In each new environment, I had a choice: retreat due to language and cultural barriers, or go with it and see what happened. I chose the latter. I learned that British English differed from American (you don't go to the WC, you go to the restroom), watched TV shows like *Growing Pains*, sang along to Cyndi Lauper songs, and discovered that a corn dog is lunch—not dessert!

In 2006, my family finally settled in Orange County. The OCBA has been instrumental in helping me feel at home here. It provided a supportive community where I could connect with attorneys from diverse backgrounds and practices. It gave me a purpose rooted in serving others, a value I deeply cherish. Through the OCBA, I developed leadership skills, brought relevant programs to our members, and learned about pressing legal issues. The OCBA gave me friendships and a supportive network. I even met my mentor, OCBA Past President Dean Zipser, during my first term on the Board. And that led me to become a partner at Umberg/Zipser where I would lead the firm's Intellectual Property group, and work alongside another great OCBA Past President, Scott Garner.

The OCBA is a remarkable organization with stats to back up that claim: 2025 marks the OCBA's 124th year, serving over 7,000 members. The OCBA encompasses 26 practice sections, 21 committees, a Young Lawyers Division, a Masters Division, and partnerships with 16 affiliate bars. In 2024 alone, the OCBA conducted 217 CLE programs and 307 specialty events—a total of 524 events in one year (that is almost two a day). It also offers a Legal History Podcast, Career Center, Ethics Opinions, and hosts a myriad of community events. The OCBA Charitable Fund raised a record amount of \$215,000 for the benefit of local law-related nonprofits.

As president, my goal is to highlight the OCBA's outstanding work and to strengthen our profession among evolving challenges. To achieve this, we need to foster curiosity—about each other, our profession, and our community—and build meaningful connections.



We live in a unique time with four generations in the workforce: Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z. With such diversity, we must make an extra effort to understand each other. Different generations may have distinct values, outlooks, and tastes, but as attorneys, service providers, community members, and colleagues, we share common experiences. We want these experiences to turn into positive outcomes.

Regardless of our background or age, our legal profession faces significant challenges: AI technology is reshaping legal practice. Many are curious about what AI means for the future practice of law: Will AI bring more access to justice and efficiency to the practice or will AI replace attorneys? Also, there is continued pressure from the State Bar to change licensing requirements for lawyers; how will this impact our profession? Members of our communities will continue to face new and complex legal issues ranging from immigration to employment to intellectual property. Our courts continued to be understaffed and under budget, yet access to justice is even more crucial than ever. More than ever, attorneys are needed, and it's vital that we work together to address these challenges.

This year, I will aim to form an AI task force, strengthen our dialogue with the State Bar and the legislature, and continue to work with judges and our affiliate and affinity bars to address their concerns. We will return Bridging the Gap to local law schools, have an OCBA Community Fair, and host meetings with various stakeholders of our legal community to help us make these connections and effect positive change.

Being part of the OCBA Board, I've learned this is a team effort and I am blessed with 25 dedicated board members as well as guidance from past presidents and other leaders in the community. I'm especially grateful to follow in the footsteps of our Immediate Past President, Christina Zabat-Fran, whose leadership taught me so much about being innovative and collaborative. I am also honored to be the first (and hopefully not last) woman president to be between two other women presidents (Shirin Forootan is now President-Elect). Our board is in good hands, but we cannot do this without our new CEO/Executive Director, Dennis Slaughter, who succeeded the beloved Trudy Levindofske last year and leads the impressive OCBA team.

To do all this, I also need your help. Please come join us, form some connections, and let's make a difference together this year. I promise you it will be worthwhile. Cheers!

Mei Tsang is the 2025 OCBA President. She is an intellectual property partner at Umberg/Zipser LLP. She invites you to be at Judges' Night on January 16 at Irvine Marriott for a good time. She can be reached at mtsang@umbergzipser.com.