

Press Release

USC Gould School of Law and Akerman LLP launch flagship Law+AI Initiative to bridge legal scholarship and commercial innovation

January 13, 2026

New partnership unites top legal scholars and nationally recognized practicing lawyers to facilitate global knowledge sharing and influence cross-market standards for AI adoption.

The nationally recognized University of Southern California Gould School of Law and Am Law 100 law firm Akerman today announced the launch of their Law+AI Initiative. This groundbreaking collaboration creates the first dedicated knowledge-sharing platform merging the theoretical rigor of top legal scholars with the commercial acumen of practicing attorneys deeply experienced in emerging technology. The Initiative aims to participate in developing the standards and regulatory path for full-scale AI adoption across fields and industries.

“The Law+AI Initiative represents a new paradigm for the legal industry’s approach to AI,” said William Heller, the Law+AI Initiative’s Executive Director and Chair of Akerman’s Consumer Financial Services, Data and Technology Practice Group (CFS+). “By partnering with USC Gould, we’re not just reacting to regulations and lawsuits; we will help shape the legal frameworks that will decide how AI systems learn, operate, and innovate. For AI investors and designers, the Initiative is positioned to provide foresight and clarity for deploying capital and code confidently.”

Related People

William P. Heller
Scott A. Meyers

Related Work

Consumer Financial Services, Data and Technology (CFS+)

Related Offices

Atlanta
Austin
Boca Raton
Charlotte
Chicago
Dallas
Denver
Fort Lauderdale
Houston
Jacksonville
Las Vegas
Los Angeles
Miami
Naples
New Orleans
New York
Orlando
Salt Lake City
San Antonio
Tallahassee

As technologies rapidly evolve, the gap between technical capability and existing legal frameworks has widened, causing uncertainty for investors, designers, and other stakeholders. The Law+AI Initiative engages this challenge by moving beyond traditional academic study or isolated legal analysis. It creates a synergistic ecosystem where industry expertise, legal theory, and courtroom reality can inform one another in real time. The Initiative also plans to serve as a vital resource, tracking legislation and rulemaking as well as litigation on an international scale.

“We look forward to bringing together the minds who are defining AI’s use and redefining its future,” noted USC Gould Dean Franita Tolson, whose leadership facilitated this unique partnership at the intersection of legal academia and practice. As part of Dean Tolson’s vision, USC Gould’s Center for Sports, Entertainment, Media, and Technology Law will be the academic home of the new Initiative.

A Strategic Resource for the AI Ecosystem

Unlike traditional legal institutes, the Law+AI Initiative is designed as an active bridge to the tech sector by engaging industry leaders and experts to shape programming and research. There are three core pillars:

- **Collaborative Knowledge Sharing:** A dynamic exchange within a distinguished university where legal scholars and law firm practitioners identify issues, develop theories, and test their application in current market scenarios.
- **Cross-Market Influence:** Developing unified standards for ethics and algorithmic integrity, intellectual property rights, general liability, and compliance.
- **Accelerating Purposeful Adoption:** Confronting friction points currently stalling the integration of AI into global enterprise with an intellectually balanced approach to the interests of innovators, investors, rights holders, and end users.

“The rapid integration of AI into sectors like entertainment, sports, and media, for example,

Tampa
Washington, D.C.
West Palm Beach
Wilmington

Contact

Marlisa Serrano
marlisa.serrano@akerman.c

demands a new level of legal agility,” said Jeffrey Schneider, Executive Director of USC Gould’s Center for Sports, Entertainment, Media, and Technology Law. “This Initiative bridges that gap.”

Schneider, an accomplished entertainment attorney and longtime senior media executive, added, “By uniting USC Gould’s expertise and academic rigor with Akerman’s market-leading practice, we’re creating a unique knowledge leadership and problem-solving platform. We aren’t just analyzing the future of law and AI; we’re helping build it.”

Advisory Board of Industry Experts

The Law+AI Initiative is currently assembling an inaugural Advisory Board comprising experts and leaders from multiple sectors, including technology, investment, entertainment, sports, media, and healthcare, among others. This body will guide the Initiative’s research agenda and strategic outreach, ensuring it remains responsive to the immediate needs of the global AI economy.

“Across industries, fields, and sectors, today’s top executives and experts recognize the critical importance and evolving impact of AI in our world,” said Scott Meyers, Akerman Chairman and CEO. “We look forward to bringing together the minds who are defining AI’s use and redefining its future.”

For more information, visit gould.law/ai-initiative.

About USC Gould School of Law

The USC Gould School of Law is a top private law school with a reputation for academic excellence and a world-class faculty. USC Gould is known for its collaborative and collegial student setting, its leadership in clinical education, and its supportive and global alumni network. USC Gould is also recognized for its deep ties to the entertainment, media, sports, and technology industries. Located in Los Angeles, one of the nation’s top legal markets and a hub for major law and entertainment firms, USC Gould offers a dynamic laboratory for legal training. For more information, visit gould.usc.edu.

About Akerman

Founded in 1920, Akerman LLP, an Am Law 100 law firm, is one of the country's premier law firms, with 700 lawyers and consultants throughout the United States. Akerman is recognized for its innovative approach to client service and its strong presence in technology, intellectual property, regulatory compliance and policy, global trade, financial services, and international litigation. For more information, visit akerman.com.