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Thinking Local: Associate Professor Rick Su Focuses on Immigration and Local Government Law

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Thinking local

*Associate
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Rick Su
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Rick Su knows how to make a summer internship pay off. In the summer after his first year at Harvard Law School he worked as a research assistant for Professors David Barron and Gerald E. Frug. The end result was a book that he co-authored with Professors Barron and Frug, called *Dispelling the Myth of Home Rule*. Although Su was initially considering a career in litigation, this experience changed his mind. Su discovered that he had found his niche.

“That summer really solidified not only my interest in legal scholarship but my interest in local government law,” he says. “I just fell in love with it.”


“It is not just how local issues get resolved, or how local democratic institutions work, but also how localities affect each other,” Su explains. “Issues like urban segregation, and the allocation of resources, are based on the geography of how we lay out our neighborhoods. The allocation of power between local governments and the state, and the kind of legal presumptions that go into those decisions, contribute or become a primary cause of a lot of problems”

After graduating magna cum laude from Harvard Law, where he was also articles editor for the *Harvard Law Review*, Su clerked for a year in the California-based Ninth Circuit of the U.S. Court of Appeals. He then returned to Harvard Law on an academic research fellowship, exercising a new interest in immigration law scholarship. Next, he joined the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development in Boston, where he worked on litigation involving fraud and HUD-insured mortgages.

Throughout his career, teaching and scholarship remained Su’s primary goal. Su joined the UB Law School faculty in the fall, and he taught immigration law in his first semester and will teach local government law in the spring. He continues to work on immigration issues as well, and is working on several articles dealing with the intersection of immigration and local government law.

Having interviewed at a number of law schools, he says he was attracted by UB Law’s people and programs. “A big part of my decision was the kind of work, especially the interdisciplinary work, that people are involved in at UB,” he says. “The Baldy Center is a great resource, and it is exciting to see that the Law School and the rest of the social sciences are heavily integrated. Sociology plays a big part in my work, and from the immigration side, political science plays a big part as well.”

Su lives in Buffalo with his wife, Jessica Houston Su, a sociologist who continues to do welfare research for the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.



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—Associate Professor Rick Su