



## **A Weekend of Learning, Family & Magic: The ACC California Summit 2025**

**Community**

**Skills and Professional Development**

This August, in the ornate surroundings of the Disney Grand Resort, the chapters of the Association of Corporate Counsel (ACC) in California came together for a unique convergence of professional development, networking, and family fun. Hosted by ACC Southern California, ACC San Francisco Bay Area, ACC Sacramento, and ACC San Diego, the Summit delivered CLE training, family-friendly activities, and a bit of that special Disney sparkle.

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## What made it special



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By: Cristina Hwang

What set the ACC California Summit apart was the blend: rigorous, high-value CLE work by day; extended family, fun, and Disney enchantment by night and over the weekend. The setting at Disney Grand Resort wasn't just a backdrop, it became part of the experience. Whether savoring Mickey waffles, introducing one another over lunch, seeing kids in Disney character costumes, or gathering overnight under the lights of the park show, there was an unmistakable sense that this was more than just professional development. It was community.

Attendees, many of whom are in-house counsel juggling responsibilities at work *and* at home, remarked on how rare and valuable it was to bring one's family along, to share both parts of one's life in such a magical place. That sense of "Parent of the Year" wasn't just tongue in cheek. It was real.

The ACC California Summit 2025 delivered. We loved seeing the:

- Comprehensive CLE programming;
- Thoughtful amenities (from patio lunches to themed treats);
- Deep networking and collaboration among California-based ACC chapters;
- Family-centered events that let children and spouses participate and enjoy; and
- Magic — literally — in the Disney setting.

To all who helped plan and execute this: congratulations. To all who attended: thank you for bringing your energy, your families, and your enthusiasm. The combination of professional growth *and* family time made this Summit one to remember.

## Dawn of learning



Attendees began checking in bright and early, by 8:00 am, for a full day of continuing legal education



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sessions on Friday, Aug. 29, 2025. The CLE portion, offering five hours of credit in California, spanned the morning through the afternoon.

Lunch was served on a beautiful patio, where the gentle breeze and lush surroundings set a relaxed yet focused tone. Afterward, the CLE programming resumed, followed by a delightful afternoon refreshment break that brought a bit of whimsy: Mickey-Mouse-shaped cookies and Mickey-Mouse Rice Krispies treats. It was a welcome sugar lift between sessions.

Between educational blocks, there was an opportunity for introductions. Each attendee shared their name, role, and many cheekily claimed the “Parent of the Year” award for bringing their families to Disney.

The CLE sessions wrapped up with an evening networking cocktail, complete with a ruffle (a festive touch), vendors, and sponsors. It was the perfect occasion to connect, unwind, and trade stories of work, family, and travel. Everyone seemed genuinely happy, energized both by learning and laughter.

Later that night, families gathered for a family dessert table. Kids dressed as princesses or classic Disney characters made the scene even more joyful, and, after dessert, the group was guided to the park to take in the nighttime light show. Camaraderie, excitement, and a hint of magic filled the air.



**Magic continues: Saturday morning and beyond**

Saturday began with what may have been the sweetest meal of the Summit: the Disney family breakfast. Mickey and Minnie-shaped waffles were on the menu, and of course, lines formed as families waited their turn to take photos with favorite Disney icons Mickey, Minnie, Donald, and more. The characters did not disappoint, bringing smiles and plenty of photo ops.









After breakfast, a variety of options opened up. Families either headed to the Disney parks, took a dip in the resort pool, or visited Disney Downtown, each choosing their own version of magical downtime. Some attendees took advantage of the generous Summit package to extend their stay through the weekend and enjoy the resort amenities, especially with the Labor Day weekend approaching.

## **The chapters and organizing committee**

This Summit was a joint effort by California's ACC Chapters:

- [ACC Southern California](#)
- [ACC San Francisco Bay Area](#)
- [ACC Sacramento](#)
- [ACC San Diego](#)





Kudos to the organizing committee from these chapters for pulling together an event that balanced serious professional development with genuine family fun. Coordination of CLE programming, vendor and sponsor participation, family activities, discounted ticketing, and the resort logistics, all under the banner of collaboration across chapters, was no small feat. Their work not only enriched the attendees' skills but also created lasting memories.

## Beyond the Surface: Addressing Implicit Bias in Corporate Culture

By: Vincent Gonzales

*At the ACC California Summit 2025, attendees took a deep dive into one of the most pressing issues facing today's workplaces: implicit bias. In a powerful session led by Cozen O'Connor's Michelle Ballard Miller and Nicole Perkin, legal professionals explored how unconscious bias shows up in hiring, performance reviews, and even AI-driven decision-making.*

The third program at the ACC California Summit was "Bias in the Workplace: What are the Political and Practical Risks and How Can Companies Mitigate Them?" This program met the new California requirement for one hour of MCLE focusing on implicit bias and on strategies to reduce such bias.

The program was presented by the firm Cozen O'Connor, and the two speakers were Michelle Ballard Miller and Nicole Perkin. Nicole is a member of the firm and is based in Santa Monica. She represents clients in all aspects of employment litigation, including defending them against claims for wrongful termination, discrimination and harassment, and wage and hour violations. Michelle chairs the West Coast Labor & Employment practice group and is based in San Francisco. She is a widely recognized management-side labor and employment attorney. For more than 30 years, she's represented businesses in single and multiple plaintiff cases and collective actions.

The program began with an implicit bias test wherein audience members were shown pictures of various individuals and asked whether they think the individual is either successful or unsuccessful. The results indicated how pervasive implicit biases based on gender, race and age, among others, can get, even among lawyers. The panelists then discussed how implicit bias manifests itself in the workplace, often as micro-aggressions, and also how unconscious bias often drives acts of incivility



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between attorneys.

Employers also have to be careful in their use of AI when hiring workers, monitoring their performance, and determining pay or promotions., given the tendency of AI algorithms to reflect, if not reinforce unconscious biases. The panelists gave examples of how Amazon scrapped an AI recruitment program that was biased against women, and how an algorithm used in US hospitals to prescribe medical care favored white patients over black patients. The panel concluded with a list of actions for tackling implicit bias in recruiting and hiring.

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[Cristina Hwang](#)



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Cristina Hwang serves on the board of the ACC Southern California chapter. She is the Chair of the

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Summer Internship Committee and the Co-Chair of the Gala Dinner Committee.

She is Senior Vice President, Associate General Counsel & Assistant Corporate Secretary at Hanmi Financial Corporation, a publicly traded bank holding company, and its wholly owned subsidiary, Hanmi Bank. Before joining Hanmi, she served as Project General Counsel and managed the Commercial and Contracts Department at Odebrecht S.A. (now Novonor S.A.), a Brazilian conglomerate, for complex international energy and infrastructure projects across Argentina, the United States, and Africa. Earlier in her career, Hwang worked at Dentons Rattagan Arocena in Argentina, where she advised both local and multinational companies on general corporate matters.

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Vincent Gonzales recently retired from Sempra Energy/Southern California Gas Company after serving 25 years as its Senior Environmental Counsel. Prior to Sempra, Vince was in-house at Atlantic Richfield Company and before that he was an associate at O'Melveny & Myers.

