

# Program Review and Academic Program Assessment

Law School  
Program Review & Assessment Summary  
2007-08

## I. Program Review

[Submitted separately]

## II. Academic Program Assessment

**A. Concentrations.** The Law School continued its review of the sequencing of its curriculum in order to develop practice-area concentrations. Concentrations are designed to give students the ability to focus on gaining the breadth and depth needed to develop a defined level of competence in a particular area of law. The concentrations also give students the opportunity to take advantage of employment opportunities that require more than one or two introductory level courses. Concentrations have now been developed for the following practice areas: Criminal Law, Family Law, International Law, Labor and Employment Law, and Estate Planning.

The concentrations provide a recognized sequence of courses. Each provides students with an introductory level course, several secondary level courses that are more specialized, and, for some concentrations, a third level of courses that may also involve externships or clinical experiences. Full-time faculty lead curricular programming in each of these practice areas, and experienced attorneys from private practice, government, and nonprofit organizations enrich the curricular offerings. Finally, developing these sequences of courses provides a measure of accountability in the Law School's curriculum and enables instructors to rely on what the students have learned in other courses.

**B. First-Year Curriculum.** The Law School's Curriculum Committee, a standing faculty committee with student members, began a review of the Law School's first-year curriculum. The review, which is in line with a call for law schools to revamp the legal education system nationwide, is examining ways the curriculum can increase the integration of analytical thinking and legal doctrine with practical knowledge and skill training.

**C. Legal Research & Writing.** The Law School continued to review and revise its Legal Research & Writing Program. Several faculty members experimented with different formats, with the focus on integrating the writing component of the first year with substantive classes. The Curriculum Committee is reviewing the sequence of the writing classes and the number of credits required, particularly in the first-year program.

## III. Assessment Plan

The Law School's assessment plan will be revised once the ABA's Accreditation Report is completed and accepted.

#### **IV. On-going Assessment Activities**

In addition to the activities discussed above, the Law School's annual assessment activities include the following:

- The Law School regularly reviews changes made by the ABA's Standards for Approval of Law Schools, which are the requirements a law school must meet to obtain and retain ABA accreditation.
- The Law School does an annual review in order to respond to two significant questionnaires. The first, the ABA's Annual Questionnaire, is a comprehensive series of questions that law schools are required to answer in order to maintain their accreditation. The ABA Annual Questionnaire, to which we respond each fall, inquires into facts relevant to continued compliance with accrediting ABA Standards for Legal Education. The questionnaire elicits information regarding significant changes in curriculum, facilities, fiscal and administrative capacity, student retention, bar passage rates, and student placement data. Information obtained is reported to the ABA's Accreditation Committee. The second questionnaire to which we respond is the comprehensive questionnaire from *U.S. News and World Report's* professional school rankings initiative.
- The Law School administers student evaluation forms in all of its classes every semester. These forms are reviewed by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, with a view both to evaluating the effectiveness of individual teachers and courses and to assess the extent to which the curriculum is keeping pace with changes arising within the profession, or from methodological shifts in legal education. The review of these evaluations often leads to one-on-one discussions with teachers with respect to all aspects of that teacher's instructional goals, and ways in which those goals can be more effectively achieved.
- The student services administrators meet regularly with the leadership of the Student Bar Association, both to accept input from student leaders on matters of concern to the student body and to seek the assistance of the student leadership in keeping students informed about changes that may affect them.
- The Law School monitors the results of licensing examinations and placement efforts.
- The Law School has an active Board of Visitors that meets annually and provides the Law School with feedback and observations about its program.

*Submitted by Carolyn Lazar Butler.*