



Cleveland State University

Cleveland-Marshall College of Law

Assessment Report for Cleveland-Marshall College of Law For the 2005-2006 Academic Year

This memorandum is a status report on the outcomes assessment activities at the College of Law, pursuant to the March 10, 2006, memo from Provost Kuo.

Introduction

The Cleveland-Marshall College of Law is accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools. The mission of the College of Law is to foster a more just society through legal education, service, and scholarship. The Law School provides the opportunity for a rigorous legal education, enabling a diverse population of students to become accomplished, ethical citizen-lawyers who will make significant contributions to the region, the nation, and the world.

Research Methods

Last year (as in years past) the law school used the Ohio Bar Exam, and the National Association of Law Placement (“NALP”) as assessment tools. As the law school prepared for the ABA site visit that was conducted in March 2006, the faculty engaged in assessing every aspect of law school operation. The self-study completed in preparation for the visit was designed not only to determine whether ABA standards are being met but also to assure that we are effectively addressing the needs of our students. For the first time, in Spring 2004, the College of Law also participated in the Law School Survey of Student Engagement. We intend to repeat the survey during the 2007 academic year.

Goals And Outcomes

1. Bar Exam

The Law School is working to be among the top law schools in the state in bar exam results by 2009. Improving our Ohio Bar Exam passage rate is a major goal. We have targeted considerable energy and resources to this initiative. The June 1, 2004 report noted that we are collecting data to track bar performance by entering class. We have also just completed the second year of implementation of the “Bar Exam Plan” approved by law faculty, university administration and the Board of Trustees. We are meeting the goals established in the Plan and we expect to accelerate reduction of the size of the

incoming law school class in conformity with the overall goal of making the law school smaller and stronger.

In January 2004, the Curriculum Committee was charged by the Dean to make recommendations to the faculty on how to revise the first year curriculum to further the goals of the “Bar Exam Plan.” The faculty adopted those changes, and the new curriculum for the first year class was introduced in Fall 2005.

2. NALP Statistics

The College of Law surveys its recent graduates concerning their employment status each spring. This information informs us as to their employment patterns and market trends, locally and nationally. The data identify type of employment, geographic location, size of the law firm or other legal entity, and starting salary. We are also able to assess how employers view both the College of Law and our graduates. This database provides comparative statistics, which allows us to measure our progress with that of other law schools.

3. Law School Survey of Student Engagement

In the Spring 2004 Semester, our students participated in the national Law School Survey Student Engagement, conducted by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University and by the American Association of Law Schools and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Forty-two Law schools participated in this online questionnaire. More than 13,000 (out of 26,000) students responded, with a national response rate of 53%. The Cleveland-Marshall student response rate was 40.5% representing both the day and evening divisions.

This year we did not repeat that survey because the College of Law Self Study Committee surveyed students for the report prepared for the ABA site visit. We intend to participate in the LSSSE survey during the 2006-2007 academic year.

Findings

The primary measure of the success of the Bar Pass Plan will come when the first class recruited in accordance with the plan takes the bar exam. For most students, those who attend on a full time basis, that will take place three years after admission to the law school. A secondary measure of the success of the plan is revealed in data on the academic standards of the incoming class. The entering class for the current academic year is stronger by that measure than classes in years prior to implementation of the plan.

The NALP statistics have been relatively stable over the past five years. Other than small changes that reflect overall economic strength of the region, the College of Law continues to be successful in helping graduates find work.

The faculty and administrative staff have been made aware of the results of the Law School Survey of Student Engagement. The Dean of the law school has met frequently with students during dean forums to discuss issues of concern and answer their questions. A more definitive finding will take place in the next academic year when the law school repeats the survey.

Review

Faculty are made aware of assessment issues during faculty meetings held each month. Changes in the curriculum were instituted by the Curriculum Committee and approved by the faculty. Changes in admissions standards have been approved by the faculty and implemented by the admissions staff with oversight by the Admissions Committee. Employment data is collected by the Director of Student Services and reported to the faculty yearly. In addition, staff members are made aware of these issues at monthly meetings of senior staff. The Dean, Associate Deans, and Director of Budget and Administration also meet monthly in part to review these matters. The Bar Pass Committee continues to monitor all aspects of the Bar Pass Plan and to report yearly to the faculty and staff as well as the University Board of Trustees.

Actions

The curriculum now includes a course given for credit devoted to preparation for taking the bar exam. The Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and the Academic Excellence Program Manager oversee this course. They also counsel students who are concerned about their academic progress. In addition to implementing the Bar Pass Plan as drafted, the Assistant Dean of Admissions has been authorized to accelerate slightly the current admissions targeted reductions if necessary to continue to strengthen the incoming class.