

**University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
Assessment Progress Report Form / Spring 2005**

**William H. Bowen School of Law**

**Degree Program:** Juris Doctor (J.D.)  
**Department and College:** Law, William H. Bowen School of Law  
**Prepared by:** Coleen M. Barger, Associate Professor of Law, and Adjoa Aiyetoro, Assistant Professor of Law

---

**Use of Assessment for Program Building and Improvement:**

**The most important goal for any assessment project is to provide information to build and improve programs. This section should, therefore, be weighted the most heavily of all in your overall score evaluation.**

**Please discuss how you have used assessment findings this past year to understand, improve, and/or make decisions regarding the program. What have been your main findings? How did you analyze them? How do you interpret them? Have these findings led to making any significant changes in your program? If so, what are they? Please focus on evidence for or proposed changes that will lead to improvements in student learning outcomes.**

(1) Long-Range Planning Committee Study of Arkansas Bar Examination Results

The primary assessment tool used by the Law School is the Arkansas Bar Examination, administered twice each year by the Arkansas State Board of Law Examiners. In the 2004-2005 school year, the Long-Range Planning Committee of the Law School commenced an in-depth study of bar passage data. This study includes the following:

- Searching through multiple years of academic records data to identify correlations with bar performance.
- Researching the scholarly literature on bar performance/predictors and summarizing the findings.
- Identifying all the providers of formal bar preparation programs and learning about their costs, their schedules, the materials they cover, the amount of Arkansas specific material they contain, and the amount of time they require the participant to spend studying outside of class.
- Gathering detailed information about the Arkansas Bar Exam, including the topics it covers, how questions are created, how questions are graded and scored, and how the pass point is determined; writing a memorandum report for the faculty detailing this information.
- Preparing a written analysis of the results, including any recommendations that the results suggest.

(2) Law School Survey of Student Engagement

The Law School joined forty-one other law schools in participating in the first national Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE), in which approximately 13,000 law students were surveyed. The students answered questions about their academic environment and the effect it has on their learning, their satisfaction with the law school experience, and the ways they manage the many demands on their time. Among other topics covered by LSSSE were students' preparation for and participation in class, their academic relationships with other students and their professors, and their perceptions of the levels to which they felt challenged to meet high expectations.

LSSSE provided the Law School with three kinds of data:

- (a) Data file — a file of student responses that can be linked with other law school data;
- (b) Institutional profile — a customized analysis (averages and percentages) of student responses grouped by class level.
- (c) Aggregated comparative responses — information that compares our student responses to those of students from other law schools participating in the LSSSE 2004. See attachment 1 for the summary.

(3) Classroom Assessment

(a) Socratic Dialogue Instruction Method

The School of Law continues to follow the Socratic Dialogue method of instruction as its most prevalent and effective classroom assessment device, which is a teaching technique employed at least to a degree in nearly all law school classes. This in-class question and answer dialogue with students allows the faculty member to assess the extent to which students have read material assigned for class, the level of the students' understanding of underlying theoretical and policy themes, and the degree of maturation of student critical thinking skills. Using the Socratic method, faculty can make instant adjustments in teaching technique and course coverage in reaction to the level of student learning and understanding revealed during the dialogue.

(b) Faculty Classroom Assessment Activities

The most prevalent forms of classroom assessment involve problem-based application exercises, faculty-directed reviews, and reflective writing assignments, along with some specialized techniques for student self-assessment. See attachment 2 for detailed descriptions.

(c) Assessment in the Legal Clinic programs

In Litigation Clinic, students complete evaluations of clinic orientation. In Mediation Clinic, Tax Clinic, and Litigation Clinic, students assess the entire clinical experience at the end of the semester. Students are asked to assess the supervisor's competence, the class component, and the general clinical experience itself.

Furthermore, the Litigation Clinic clients and the individuals who participate in mediation are given satisfaction surveys at the conclusion of the service. These surveys are used to help the clinic director and the supervisors in the individual clinics assess how effective the services were to the population receiving them. See attachment 3 for samples of assessment instruments used in the Clinics.

**Faculty and Stake Holder Involvement:**

**Please describe how faculty, students, and other stakeholders have been involved in the assessment process and the decisions arising out of assessment findings. How have you shared the results and your interpretation with your stakeholders?**

(a) In August 2004, the law faculty reviewed and discussed the data gathered through the 2004 Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE).

(b) As part of its study on the Arkansas Bar Examination, the Long-Range Planning Committee has surveyed recent graduates to find out about their preparation for and experience with the Arkansas Bar Exam, including bar courses taken in law school, bar preparation classes taken, amount of time spent studying for the exam, whether or not they passed the bar, and how many times they took the exam.

(c) See Legal Clinic assessment programs above for description of satisfaction surveys distributed to students, clients, and patrons of Litigation, Mediation, and Tax Clinics.

**Approach:**

**Help place your efforts for the time period reported here in context for your reader by briefly summarizing the goals and student learning objectives of your program. Were there any significant changes since last year's report?**

The goal of the School of Law is to provide a challenging legal education that equips its graduates with the skills, analytical ability, and sense of ethical and professional responsibility that is essential to counsel and represent the public successfully, competently, and professionally throughout their careers in law. The School's goal for graduates who will not use their degrees as practicing attorneys is that the skills, values, and knowledge gained in law school will enhance their effectiveness in other occupations. The central learning objectives at the school of law are for each law student to:

## Plan No. 103

- (a) be able to identify and formulate the legal issues and theories that apply to the facts of a described situation or problem;
- (b) have knowledge of, and ability to use, fundamental tools of legal research, including understanding the process of devising and implementing a coherent and effective research design;
- (c) possess basic knowledge of the nature and sources of ethical standards of the legal profession and processes for recognizing and addressing ethical dilemmas;
- (d) show an understanding of the significance of being a member of the legal profession by striving to promote justice and fairness through the tradition of leadership and public service in a wide range of professional and other community involvement;
- (e) have confidence in legal problem-solving skills and concepts, including identifying and diagnosing a problem, determining the need for planning factual investigation, identifying and formulating relevant legal theories, generating alternative solutions and strategies, and developing and implementing a plan of action.

During the past year there were no changes in the goals and student learning objectives of the program of the School of Law.

**What methods did you use to measure the student learning outcome objective(s) assessed since last year's report? Have there been any significant changes here? If so, please explain why. What measures do you propose to use next year? How are you addressing the reliability and validity of those measures?**

(a) The methods used to measure student learning outcome objectives assessed since last year's report are described above under "Use of Assessment for Program Building and Improvement."

(b) The Bowen School of Law will participate again in the 2005 LSSSE, along with fifty-three other law schools, with more than 43,000 law students being asked to complete the survey. As each year's survey increases in scope, we are able to obtain both a better *national* picture of the perceived quality of the legal education environment, and a more informative picture of *our own* students' experiences.

**How does what you did this past year fit into the overall assessment plan for your program? Please include any changes you may have made to your plan in response to last year's feedback. Do you plan to make any changes in your assessment plan itself? What will your targets be for the coming assessment year?**

(1) Overall Assessment Plan for the School of Law Program

This year's assessment activities have been consistent with the School of Law's overall assessment plan. We have added two faculty members to the Assessment Committee. We have finalized plans for a Classroom Assessment Techniques workshop to take place in the Spring 2005 semester. No changes have been made to the School of Law Assessment Plan in response to last year's feedback and no changes in the assessment plan are now contemplated.

(2) School of Law Assessment Targets for the Coming Assessment Year

(a) Analysis of Data from 2005 LSSSE

Once the Law School receives our school's data from the 2005 LSSSE, we will have a basis for comparison with the 2004 LSSSE data and can begin to track specific trends, strengths, problem areas, and areas for further study. In addition, the Law School is one of the candidate schools in the running for an on-site LSSSE workshop in the 2005-2006 school year.

(b) On-Going Assessment of Curriculum

Upon reviewing the recommendations of the Curriculum Committee concerning the Lawyering Skills I, the Faculty approved modifications to that course, including decentralization of the lecture/workshop instructional model and adoption of uniform evaluation procedures.

The Curriculum Committee and Faculty will continue to monitor and evaluate the course during the 2005-2006 school year.

(c) Continuation of Ongoing Assessment Activities

For the coming year the School of Law will also continue to engage in all of the ongoing assessment activities described in this report.

**Assessing Assessment (for information purposes only—not to be rated by readers panels):**  
**a). What changes, if any, would you recommend in the assessment process in your college or in the university as a whole?**

Through its in-depth study of the Law School's primary assessment tool, the Arkansas Bar Examination passage rate, the Long-Range Planning Committee will make recommendations to the Faculty for changes in the required curriculum, bar course electives, and bar examination preparation of its students.

The Law School Assessment Committee will continue to encourage faculty to develop and share classroom assessment techniques.

The School of Law has no recommendations for changes to the assessment process in the

University as a whole.

**b). What additional resources could the university provide that would be of most help to you in your assessment efforts?**

To the extent that the University could provide assessment funds to assist the Law School, we would like to use those resources to bring in speakers, conduct workshops, and otherwise improve the level and quality of our assessment activities.

**c). Please estimate what resources you have spent on assessment this last year, including both time and money.**

The School of Law has received no funding to support assessment activities. Since the Assessment Committee does not request that individuals involved in assessment activities report time and money expended, the Assessment Committee is unable to accurately estimate the amount of time or money spent on assessment except to say that the time devoted to assessment activities has been significant.

**d). Courses offered through distance learning technologies are becoming a part of more and more programs. These courses should be treated like any other course offered by a department—including being part of the assessment of the program. For example, if students are supposed to include something from every upper-level course in their major, then they need to include distance as well as on-campus courses. What guidelines have you put into place to be sure that courses offered through distance learning technology are included in the assessment of the program?**

The School of Law does not offer any distance learning course or courses utilizing distance learning technologies.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1. 2004 LSSSE Summary.

Attachment 2. Classroom Assessment Activities Reported by Law Faculty in Professional Activity Reports.

Attachment 3. Legal Clinic Evaluation Instruments.

Attachments are not appended to the on-line version of the Law School's Assessment Progress Report, but are available for inspection upon request to the Office of the Dean at the Bowen School of Law or the Chair of the Assessment Committee.