

ASSESSMENT

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Plenary

Problem: There is a widespread recognition that law schools must change their curriculum and their priorities to do a better job at teaching law students not just how to *think* like a lawyer but to *be* one. Law schools tend to be faculty-centered and not student-centered. When it comes to teaching, law schools tend to make decisions focused on inputs and not outputs. This focus means there is little thought given to whether the curriculum and co-curriculum offerings accomplish the outcomes students desire and need to be successful in law and life.

Innovation: Charlotte School of Law is a new law school, just entering its third year of providing a legal education. Its mission is to provide a legal education that: (1) is student-centered; (2) facilitates practice readiness; and (3) serves underserved communities, both in the provision of legal education and in serving the larger community. To support these three mission pillars, the faculty and administration are building a curriculum and co-curriculum that strives for congruence and progression. We are seeking to integrate the teaching of knowledge, skills and professional values throughout a student’s three years. And we are seeking to assess whether what is taught is, indeed, learned.

Process: We are currently on step 3 of a multi-step process, designed and directed by the Director of Experiential Learning, Cindy Adcock.

Step 1: Identify Outcomes. Professor Adcock introduced the faculty to the recommendations of *Best Practices* and the *Carnegie Report* at a faculty retreat in August of 2007. We spent significant time on the various statements of desirable outcomes found in *Best Practices*. We broke into small groups and discussed our mission pillars and what they mean in terms of actual outcomes. Starting with a draft framework, the faculty then discussed the possible educational outcomes identified by the groups and composed a draft list of those outcomes, with descriptions, upon which there was consensus. The outcomes, pasted below, were finalized at a subsequent workshop and through follow-up emails. The policy statement framing the list of educational outcomes was added later and approved at a faculty retreat in August of 2008.

Step 2: Introduction of Curriculum Mapping to Faculty. Professor Adcock introduced the faculty to curriculum mapping at a workshop during the school year. We identified the broad components of our curriculum, co-curriculum and extra-curriculum through which learning does or can occur. The faculty broke into small groups. They were given a matrix of our agreed upon desired educational outcomes

and were asked to identify where in a student's three or four years at the law school, the student is a) introduced to information necessary to each outcome, b) provided the opportunity to practice the skills or values necessary for the outcome, and c) provided the opportunity to refine the necessary knowledge, skills or values. After the workshop, Professor Adcock compiled the information provided by the groups into a master Educational Outcomes Alignment Matrix.

Step 3. Faculty Committee Identifies Essential Subjects, Skills & Attributes. We next asked what specifically must students learn and be able to demonstrate for them to evidence accomplishment of the desired outcomes. This summer, the Professional Readiness Team (our Curriculum Committee) divided up the 10 sets of educational outcomes and individually listed the subjects, skills and attributes he or she believes are essential for students to learn in order to accomplish the desired outcomes. These lists were studied by Professor Adcock who then removed duplicate elements, combined similar ones and grouped them into the following categories: Foundational Knowledge, Cognitive Skills, Communication Skills, Relational Skills and Professionalism Skills. She created a matrix for each category that contains all the various subjects, skills and attributes identified by the Professional Readiness Team and that aligns them into descriptive components. At this year's faculty retreat in August 2008, the faculty were again divided into groups, given copies of the matrixes, and assigned one of the five categories. Their task was to review the relevant chart and mark it up with their ideas on what should be included and what should not be included as essential for every student to know or to be able to do to accomplish the components of their category. Professor Adcock then revised the charts per the recommendations of each group, noting significant changes for future discussion.

Next steps will likely include 1) identifying how and where students will be introduced to, practice and refine the essential knowledge, skills and values identified, leading to an educational program map more detailed than the Educational Outcomes Alignment Matrix, 2) developing the benchmarks expected of every student by graduation for each category, and 3) identifying the assessment tools to be used, plotting their use across the educational program map.

Evaluation: We will design our process for accessing institutional effectiveness using the best practices identified in Chapter 8 of *Best Practices* and by Gregory Munro in *Outcomes Assessment for Law Schools*.

Educational Outcomes for the Practice-Ready Graduate Charlotte School of Law

1. Intellectual and Analytical Reasoning

Graduates are expected to be able to:

- a. research legal issues thoroughly and effectively based on a core knowledge and understanding of the law and legal institutions;

- b. apply the applicable law to the factual context; and
- c. think critically, practically and creatively.

2. Problem-Solving and Solution Design

Graduates are expected to be able to:

- a. work with clients to identify their needs, goals and objectives, generate possible solutions, understand and evaluate the merits and risks of available options, and counsel clients on possible plans of action;
- b. determine the need for factual investigation and take the steps necessary to discover the relevant facts;
- c. progress matters towards resolution using a range of techniques and approaches;
- d. integrate global perspectives and opportunities into decision-making processes,
- e. draft agreements and other documentation to enable actions and transactions to be completed; and
- f. anticipate possible new issues and problems and plan accordingly.

3. Written and Oral Communication

Graduates are expected to be able to:

- a. express knowledge, ideas and opinions in their professional field, both orally and in written form, with confidence and clarity;
- b. deal sensitively and effectively with clients, colleagues and others from a range of social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, identifying and responding positively and appropriately to issues of culture, disability, and language that might affect communication, and
- c. develop systems and procedures to ensure prompt responses to communication from clients, colleagues and others.

4. Information and Communication Technology

Graduates are expected to be able to:

- a. effectively use current technologies and strategies to store, retrieve and analyze information and to undertake factual and legal research;
- b. efficiently use technology to acquire information needed to accomplish goals; and
- c. select and use appropriate technology to efficiently communicate with clients, colleagues and others.

5. Negotiation

Graduates are expected to be able to:

- a. work with clients to frame issues and gather information in preparation for negotiation;
- b. effectively negotiate on behalf of a client's interests, understanding the barriers to negotiated agreements and the means for overcoming them; and
- c. counsel a client through a negotiation and implement the client's decision.

6. Practice Management

Graduates are expected to be able to:

- a. demonstrate adaptability, leadership, and resourcefulness in managing their professional practice;
- b. initiate new ideas, implement decisions and cope with uncertainty;
- c. develop systems and procedures to ensure that time, effort, and resources are allocated efficiently and that work is performed and completed at the appropriate time; and
- d. develop systems and procedures for effectively working with other people and for efficiently administering a law office.

7. Professional Relations

Graduates are expected to:

- a. work cooperatively and effectively with others when part of a team;
- b. take initiative and demonstrate leadership;
- c. show reliability and willingness to accept responsibility;
- d. demonstrate tolerance, patience, empathy and a high level of emotional intelligence; and
- e. respect the rights of others irrespective of their differences.

8. Professional Ethics

Graduates are expected to:

- a. recognize and resolve ethical dilemmas consistent with applicable ethical standards;
- b. think independently and act with integrity in a range of situations, including contentious and non-contentious areas of work;
- c. recognize professional limitations and act accordingly;
- d. promote justice, fairness, and morality in their daily practice;
- e. exercise proper decorum and respect in professional life; and
- f. appreciate the social and cultural context of the legal profession and participate in activities that improve the profession.

9. Leadership in Social Responsibility

Graduates are expected to:

- a. demonstrate an understanding of economic, political, social, and environmental systems and the role of the law in these systems; and
- b. understand the existing gap in the availability of legal service to the poor and marginalized and contribute to and help lead the profession's fulfillment of its responsibility to ensure that adequate legal services are provided to those who cannot afford to pay for or otherwise do not have access to legal services.

10. Self-Reflection and Lifelong Learning

Graduates are expected to:

- a. seek out and take advantage of opportunities to increase their knowledge and improve their skills for lifelong learning;
- b. be aware of the range of learning styles and how they best learn;
- c. possess self-knowledge and the ability to assess their own performance critically and accurately; and have an understanding of how to apply their knowledge and abilities to many different contexts and fields.