

**Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan for the
ABA Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar**

November 1, 2006

(*The Strategic Plan goals are shown in bold, with the Implementation Strategies listed numerically underneath each goal.)

I. Accreditation Project

A. Engage in a conceptual review of the current Standards and Interpretations that govern the Accreditation Project to consider whether they are appropriately focused to accomplish the goals of accreditation as required by the Department of Education, whether they avoid unnecessarily micromanaging individual schools, and whether there are ways to identify more output, rather than input, measures by which to assess schools' achievements.

1. Appoint an Accreditation Policy Task Force to develop a statement of policy goals to guide the accreditation process.

2. Charge the Standards Review and Accreditation Committees with the task of reviewing the current standards and processes to suggest where change would be appropriate to implement the policy goals developed by the Accreditation Policy Task Force and to avoid regulations that do not foster or respond to those policies.

3. Charge the Graduate Legal Education Committee with the task of reviewing the current approach to advanced degree programs, including LL.M. programs for foreign lawyers, to consider the appropriate role of the Section, if any, in reviewing those programs and whether or how the Section (a) can ensure public understanding of the limited review related to acquiescence; (b) can engage in a more thorough review of academic content meriting accreditation; or (c) can help to develop a set of model rules for bar admissions authorities to follow in assessing admissions applications for LL.M. graduates.

4. Review the standards to ensure consistency in application, in particular as related to bar-exam performance, and how the standards are applied to schools seeking provisional approval and later final approval as compared to ABA schools that may be placed on report or probation.

5. Consider ways to explore and rethink how better to achieve diversity goals, including such things as: (a)

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mechanisms for obtaining the right data and evaluating it as it relates to compliance with Standards 210-212, and (b) rethinking how the ABA uses examinations (bar exam and LSAT) in accreditation and how that influences diversity goals, as well as relations between deans and the bar exam's credibility.

6. Review the Library standards to take into account the changing role of libraries in legal education and the rise of technology in the research realm and how that should change the basic requirements needed for a law school library to meet accreditation standards.

7. Gather information on schools using distance-learning and review the standards to determine whether they appropriately foster these developments, while protecting educational quality.

- B. Review the processes and procedures involved in the site-evaluation and accreditation process to develop more effective means of managing the accreditation process, including consideration of how to better notify and communicate with the affected schools, how to better train site teams to promote consistency in inspections and reports, and how to ensure the timely appointment of site-inspection teams and chairs, as well as delivery of reports and actions by the teams and Accreditation Committee and Council to the schools.**

1. Employ staff resources to provide greater assistance to site-team chairs and to enhance completeness and accuracy of site-evaluation reports.

2. Consider ways to make the training for site-inspection chairs and teams better and more effective and to continue to appoint chairs and teams that are inclusive of all segments of legal education and the profession.

3. Develop means of regularly surveying inspected schools and site teams after visits to determine how well the process worked and where any improvements could be made. Ask team chairs to formally assess whether team members performed adequately and to suggest whether they should be used again.

4. Consider adopting protocols for site teams, site reports, and action letters regarding the use of

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terminology and standard phrases.

5. Consider ways to improve the submission of site-evaluation reports in a timely fashion.

6. Consider how to increase the benefits of accreditation for law schools.

C. Develop better ways to educate schools and deans of what is expected of them during the site-inspection process and how to prepare effective materials for the team and Accreditation Committee, including offering training on how to engage in a strategic-planning process that can be helpful to them.

1. Develop training materials on how to successfully engage in self-studies and in a strategic-planning process and offer to schools approaching a sabbatical inspection, or seeking provisional or full approval. These may include, for example, articles identifying information that is useful in developing a strategic plan, or perhaps a video that could be distributed, or a workshop that could be convened annually.

2. Consider ways to expand technological means for schools to provide materials for site-inspection teams to reduce the burden on schools and teams.

3. Develop ways in which schools can receive more information on the standards and how they are interpreted and applied by the Accreditation Committee.

II. Leadership in Legal Education and the Legal Profession.

A. Develop a plan to ensure that the Section maintains a leadership role in the legal profession, serving as a primary institutional speaker on major issues confronting legal education and the legal profession and as a catalyst for developing solutions to pressing problems. In particular, focus on the challenges posed by bar admissions issues, globalization, maintaining a diverse profession, and technology and distance education.

1. Create opportunities for the bar, bench, and academy to work together for the improvement of the profession.

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2. Appoint a committee to consider the Section's appropriate role in the international arena in light of current needs and interests both of U.S. law schools and of foreign institutions and the increasing globalization of law practice. Any recommendations should take into account how Section activities may relate to international efforts of the ABA, as well as to those of the AALS, and how or when collaborative efforts might be fostered.

3. Appoint a working group to look carefully at technology, how it is currently functioning and will function in the future and what are the regulatory issues the Section faces as a result of the growth of distance-learning programs.

4. Consider ways to develop a national discussion on the implications of accreditation for the practice of law. In particular, consider holding a Legal Education Convocation, inviting a group of legal educators, judges, and bar leaders to spend a few days discussing the future of legal education and how the three branches of the legal system can work more closely together.

5. Develop a plan on how to ensure the Council participates in discussions related to GATS, including potentially forming a new Committee to work with other sections in the ABA and be directly involved in all discussions re GATS and the opening-up of legal practice. Consider studying what other country's bars have done and developing a bench memo on these issues.

6. To help foster diversity goals in the profession, investigate if there are ways to identify success after law school that might help law schools and bar admissions authorities to evaluate and further develop criteria for law school and bar admissions purposes, and consider how to better publicize ABA diversity services so that students would know what they can use.

7. Consider taking a leadership role in thinking through the future of the modern law library in light of technological changes, with the presentation of white papers, conferences, etc.

B. Improve collaboration and develop closer working

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relationships with the ABA leadership, other entities within the ABA, state bar leaders, and other professional organizations to foster continued understanding and cooperation on issues of mutual interest.

1. Place a high priority on building and maintaining close collaborative relationships with the AALS, LSAC, NALP, NCBE, and other affiliated organizations.

2. Continue work of the Bar Admissions Committee on evolving an uniform bar standard to facilitate multi-jurisdictional practice initiatives of the ABA, including developing ways to foster a national discussion on the uniformity of bar admissions standards.

3. Work with bar-examination entities on studies on bar exams and with state courts to consider the adoption of uniform standards nationally.

4. Help to identify trends in law practice and how that relates to law school curricula and ultimately should relate to bar exams.

5. Work to impress jurisdictions of the need to release bar pass data to schools in order to allow the schools to do effective studies of success and failure, the impact of the curriculum, academic support, etc.

6. Consider ways to have the Council be a stronger presence in affiliated groups, such as by putting forth a positive face of legal education to the Conference of Chief Justices. This might include a regular mailing to all new Chiefs introducing them to the Section and obtaining a regularly scheduled event on the CCJ agenda so as to be a presence at their meetings.

7. Identify other sections in the ABA with which we should be working more closely on a regular basis and establish a process for doing so.

8. Get to know ABA leadership and identify future leaders and seek to get them on the Council and on site teams. Conversely, seek to get Section participants on other relevant ABA committees.

9. Consider how to develop a process to ensure that the Section is involved in relevant issues with other ABA

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sections or entities.

C. Improve communications with deans and faculty regarding efforts of the Council and Section on issues facing Legal Education, encouraging their input as to matters on which the Section could be helpful or instrumental in fostering a broader dialogue and could better fulfill its Leadership role.

1. Have the Council's Communications and Professional Relations Committee develop a plan for how to communicate more broadly and effectively to deans and faculty about the work of the Section and how to improve the input the Council receives from those constituencies.

2. Consider how to further develop relations with deans outside of individual school or Standard issues.

3. Consider ways to ensure the broadest possible participation of law schools and bar examiners in the Section's work.

4. Continue to enhance the Section's print and electronic publications to make them more effective vehicles for disseminating information and facilitating dialogue concerning Section activities and developments related to areas of potential interest to Section members.

III. Service Functions

A. Investigate ways in which the Section could expand its service to the schools by the presentation of conferences and workshops on issues of interest to the law schools.

1. Reexamine the Section's past regular conference schedule and experiences and future trends and develop plans that respond to future needs.

2. Administer periodic surveys of deans to assess the effectiveness of the Section's work and the operation of the Standards and Interpretations.

B. Consider whether there are additional ways in which the

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Section can provide helpful information to the schools through further refinements of the Annual Questionnaire, Site Evaluation Questionnaire, and 509 Publication.

1. Consider what information being collected and disseminated is necessary and helpful to consumers and deans and how to avoid unnecessary data collection.

2. Consider ways to make more of the information collected available electronically.

3. Consider whether it would be useful to develop a listing of "effective practices" collected as an outgrowth of accreditation site visits as an information source for the law schools.

C. Continue to identify issues, such as the ongoing work on student loans, on which the Section should make a major governmental relations effort on behalf of legal education, working collaboratively within the ABA and with other legal education and higher education organizations.

1. Develop an annual legislative agenda on which the Section should make a major governmental relations effort on behalf of legal education, working collaboratively within the ABA and with other legal education and higher education organizations.

2. Continue to work on federal legislation regarding law student loans and debt.

IV. Administration and Support Functions

A. Continue to develop a strong relationship with the ABA and the new Executive Director, seeking increased resources to support the activities of the Section.

1. Develop plans for the Consultant and the ABA Executive Director to establish appropriate lines of authority and to build a strong relationship between the Section and the Executive Director, while maintaining the strong separate and independent character of the Section.

2. Continue to do budget forecasts, including projected

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revenues and expenses as a means of relating activities to realistic financial projections.

B. Ensure a transparent organizational staffing structure to allow individuals working or communicating with the Consultant's Office to understand how responsibilities are assigned and who is the best person to contact on a given issue.

1. Have the Consultant review current and future tasks and determine what office reorganization or additional staffing would be helpful and report to the Council. Survey or talk with existing staff about their ideas for the office and possible future services.

2. Develop realistic assessments of staffing needs and resources as related to projects undertaken by (a) developing a more transparent organization staffing structure and job descriptions; (b) developing a sense of future litigation and how to plan staffing resources to accommodate it; and (c) ensuring the staffing to do all of the goals identified in the strategic plan or prioritizing accordingly.

3. Hire a new Assistant Consultant to help implement decisions made in adopting the new Strategic Plan.

C. Maintain a system of governance for the Council that facilitates the effective functioning of the Section, the Council, and its Committees.

1. Appoint a Governance Committee to study and recommend ways to improve governance structures and processes.

2. Consider ways to ensure diverse appointments to the Council and Section committees

3. More carefully delineate the interaction between the Council and its committees by preparing a report about existing committees, jurisdiction, etc. to present to the Council, as well as recommendations for changes in structure and how to implement them so as to make more effective use of Council committees.

4. Consider how business is distributed across all the Council meetings and how other organizations are included, particularly in light of large accreditation

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agendas, to determine if there are ways to increase the opportunities for more formal time devoted to larger policy discussions.

5. Ensure that the Council nominations process is optimally designed to attract and select the best people to address the issues confronting the Section, legal education, and admissions to the bar.