



CONCORD LAW SCHOOL

KAPLAN UNIVERSITY

August 13, 2009

Becky Stretch, Assistant Consultant,
American Bar Association
Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
321 N. Clark St . 21st floor
Chicago, IL 60654-7598

Dear Ms. Stretch:

I thank the committee for inviting comment on ABA Standards for Law Libraries. Some background on our school is in order before I provide my comments.

I am a Professor at Concord Law School of Kaplan University and serve as its Assistant Director of Library Services. Part of Concord's mission is to provide accessible legal education:

1. Affordability – The total cost of a J.D. degree from Concord is approximately \$40,000, about one-third the average cost of a J.D. from a private law school approved by the ABA.
2. Physical Barriers – Students facing difficulties with accessing buildings or finding reliable transportation will be able to access Concord from home.
3. Geography/Travel/Family – A number of our students serve in the armed forces overseas, have positions with travel and difficult hours, live in areas remote from a law school, and have family responsibilities. Because we deliver our coursework remotely, our students, who otherwise would be unlikely to attend school are able to engage in the study of law.

Concord is accredited by the Distance Education Training Council (DETC), an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and Concord is part of Kaplan University, which is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Current ABA rules, however, do not allow a completely online program to be approved.

However, as the rules regarding distance learning evolve, it will be important for the library standards to evolve with them and to establish an appropriate framework for access to legal materials for students studying partially or fully at a distance. Because a comprehensive review of the Standards only takes place every five years or so, it may

well be appropriate to consider now the adoption of standards that can also serve schools that include distance learning opportunities in their programs.

While such changes would be beneficial to a school like Concord, they also may be helpful generally in addressing the larger issues of law school affordability and the shift of the use of resources from book based to electronic. This is not to suggest a carte blanche rule that allows law schools to give up book based collections. I believe that the rule as it currently exists looks to the mission of the school and insist that the school's collection and services support the school's need. Thus, schools would look to the needs of their constituencies and their goals. A law school attached to a research university might have an extensive print collection whereas one like Concord, primarily concerning itself with training practicing lawyers and helping existing professionals expand their careers and operating in a distance learning environment, could rely exclusively or much more so on electronic resources. There are many options, including distance learning programs making cooperative arrangements with physical libraries.

The Standards have been moving in the direction of allowing more flexibility to schools. I hope that this round of reviews will continue that move and not become a barrier that would block Concord's opportunity for ABA approval as the rules on distance learning change.

Respectfully,

Shaun Jamison