ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR
FOR THE BUSINESS MEETING OF THE
SECTION OF LEGAL EDUCATION
AND ADMISSIONS TO THE BAR

This is the Managing Director’s report to the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar for the 2019-2020 year, as required by Article III, Section 4 of the Section’s Bylaws.

1. Council Leadership

For the 2020-2021 year, which officially begins at the conclusion of the ABA Annual Meeting on August 4th, the leadership of the Council will be: Scott Bales, former Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court and Executive Director of the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS) [Chair]; Leo Martinez, Dean Emeritus and Professor Emeritus, University of California, Hastings College of the Law, and former President of AALS [Chair-Elect]; and Joseph West, Partner and Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, Duane Morris LLP [Vice Chair].

Members leaving the Council include: Zachary Faircloth, James Hanks, Jr., Jeffrey Lewis, and Gregory Murphy.

Members joining the Council are: Craig Boise, Dean, Syracuse University College of Law (3-year term); Susan Kay, Associate Dean for Experiential Education and Clinical Professor of Law, Vanderbilt University Law School (3-year term); Honorable Bridget Mary McCormack, Chief Justice, Michigan Supreme Court (3-year term); and Anders Miller, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, JD Expected May 2021 (1-year term).

2. Bar Passage Standard

The revised Standard 316 became effective this year. Ten schools’ 2017 classes failed to meet the 75% requirement. The schools will have two years to come into compliance. Some are likely to come within compliance within the year. How the postponement and cancellation of the summer 2020 exam in various jurisdictions should affect the compliance determinations for the 2018 classes will be discussed by the Council.

3. School Matters

There were 203 law schools approved by the Council to grant the J.D. degree at the beginning of the year. Three of those schools, Arizona Summit, Whittier, and Valparaiso have completed their teach-out plans, graduating all students remaining at the schools. Another school, Concordia has announced its closure in August and has submitted a Teach-out Plan, which has been approved. One school, the University of North Texas – Dallas, is provisionally approved.

During the past year, the Council removed approval from Thomas Jefferson School of Law. It will teach-out the remaining students who entered when the school was approved, and it will continue as a state-approved law school. LaVerne Law School has announced that it will voluntarily
relinquish its ABA approval and will teach out the students who entered while it has been approved. It will also remain open as a state-approved school.

Public notice of non-compliance with one or more of the core standards on finances, program of legal education, and admissions is currently in effect for: U. District of Columbia and Texas Southern University. During the past year the following schools were found out of compliance on some or all of these core standards and have satisfied the Council that they took steps to address their issues and have been found in compliance with respect to them. They are: Florida Coastal, Western New England, and U. Louisville.

4. Law School Admissions Tests

Although still a very small percentage of test-takers and new 1L students, more schools are accepting applicants who report a score on an admission test other than the LSAT on their applications. The 203 ABA-approved law schools enrolled approximately 38,300 new first-year students in the fall 2019 term. Fewer than 300 (<.8%) were admitted with an admissions test score other than an LSAT score. This compares to 175 (<.5%) for the fall 2018 class. 38 law schools reported enrolling a total of 277 students based in part on a GRE score in 2019. This compares to 20 law schools enrolling a total of 111 students based in part on a GRE score in 2018. ABA Standard 503 allows scores on admissions tests other than the LSAT in several specific circumstances.

We expect the number of schools using admissions tests other than the LSAT to grow, and the number of matriculates to increase. Data and conversations with deans and admissions professionals suggest that schools are proceeding carefully as they explore other test options.

5. Outcomes and Data:

Following is a synopsis of key outcomes reported by ABA-approved law schools to the Council for the 2019-2020 Council year:

• New 1L students, fall 2019: 38,286
• Total J.D. enrollment, fall 2019: 112,879
• Non-J.D. enrollment, fall 2019: 19,819
• Total enrollment at ABA-approved law schools, fall 2019: 132,798
• Aggregate 2-year ultimate bar passage outcomes, 2017 graduates: 89.47%
• Aggregate 1st-time bar passage outcome, 2019 graduates: 79.64%
• Percentage of 2019 graduates employed 10-months after graduation in full-time, long term, bar passage required positions: 72.1%
• Percentage of 2019 graduates employed 10-months after graduation in bar-pass required or J.D. advantage positions: 80.6%

On behalf of the staff in the Managing Director’s Office, thanks to the Council and Chair Diane Bosse; to the many dozens of volunteers in the ABA site visit process; and to the deans, staff, and faculty of ABA-approved law schools for their cooperation and assistance during the past year, particularly in light of the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

William Adams
Managing Director
July 2020