When Bad News Creates New Opportunities

A Presentation by Michael P. Scharf
Co-Dean, Case Western Reserve University
School of Law
Nation-wide Declining Applications

First-year law school enrollment in the US is at a 41-year low

Quartz cq.com
Data: American Bar Association
Nation-wide Declining Bar Pass Rates

Julie Bar Exam Pass Rate

2004 2014
Nation-wide Declining Employment Rates

Law school graduates face diminishing job prospects
95% of class year employed nine months after graduation

Data: National Association for Law Placement
Revolving Leadership
CWRU adopted a Co-Leadership Model
We maintained median LSAT and GPA by shrinking class size and improving marketing/recruiting.

Paid for by central university support, expanding our LLM Program, and launching an SJD Program and other new Masters Programs.
We introduced a new curriculum

Made possible because of smaller student body.
Includes:

First Year Client Experience

Expanded Writing/Skills Program (LLEAP) – three semesters

Second Year Labs and Externships

Third Year intensive Clinic Capstone or Externship
Increased applications and yield

Doubled college visits by Deans – including substantive talks

Deans called each admitted student within 48 hours of acceptance offer; met with nearly every student who visited campus
Created inter-departmental marketing team

Developed a new “responsive design” law school website

Developed videos about Cleveland, and about our nationally ranked international law, IP law, Health Law, and Experiential Education Programs

Sent upgraded Viewbooks and postcards to prospective students

Launched two MOOCs (over 100,000 enrolled)

Dean hosts a law-related radio program on local NPR station, syndicated in Texas, Florida, North Carolina, and Maine
Doubled individual Development visits with Deans

Increased number of alumni receptions (Supreme Court Swearing-In, “All Alumni Reunion” at Rock ‘n Roll Hall of Fame, Panel of International Profs in DC, etc)
Merged our Career Development and Student Services Offices

Deans visited law firms across the country

Launched “Faculty Speaker’s Bureau” and “Case Downtown” Breakfast Presentations
Created a Faculty Committee on Improving the Bar Pass Rate

Faculty endorsed changes including discouraging computers, greater use of midterms with feedback, General Ed requirements, and closed book exams.

Visiting Committee sponsored a Conditional $1,000 Bar Prep Course Scholarship for students who complete 95 percent of the practice questions and essays.

While national average decreased in July 2015; our scores improved 7 percent, moving us from 7th best to 3rd best in the State.
Improved Communications with Alums

- Bi-monthly email updates
- Quarterly mailings
- Upgraded Alumni Magazine in print and online
- Expanded use of Social Media
- Online CLEs
- Faculty View at CWRU video podcast series
Dean’s Forums for Staff (2x per year)

End of year Staff Appreciation Luncheon

Family Fun Day (Faculty/Staff)

Faculty/Spouse Winter Holiday Party and Summer Barbecue at the Deans’ Homes

Winter Holiday Party for faculty and staff with ugly sweater contest, gag gifts, and raffle at the Law School

Faculty voluntarily waived their raise to increase pool for staff raises last year.