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Barry Currier Named Managing Director of Accreditation & Legal Education

Barry Currier has been named the managing director of accreditation and legal education at the American Bar Association. The appointment was announced by Kent Syverud, dean of Washington University School of Law and chairperson of the Section Council, and Jack Rives, ABA executive director.

Currier has been interim consultant on legal education since June 2012. He comes to the position of managing director with considerable experience in higher education, including having been dean of two law schools and a long-time volunteer in the accreditation process. He also has prior experience as deputy consultant to the section.

Currier’s title as managing director, rather than consultant, reflects the increasing importance and scope of the section’s regulatory role. The title change will not affect the variety of activities and programs that the section offers to support the work of law schools and their faculties and administrators.

Syverud, who chaired the search committee, stated: “We had a strong pool of fine candidates for this leadership position. The Council decided that, at a time when legal education must deal with fundamental changes in both the legal profession and higher education, Barry Currier has the right combination of skills, vision and determination. He will make sure that the law school accreditation process allows room for innovation, while still ensuring that law schools offer rigorous education.”

Currier thanked the Council and the ABA for their confidence, noting: “The environment in which law schools and the legal profession are operating creates both the need and opportunity for innovation and change that can make legal education better and more accessible. The law school accreditation process, while insisting that schools offer sound programs of legal education, should do all that it can to facilitate schools taking steps to better serve their students and the public interest.”

Solomon Oliver, chief judge of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio and chair-elect of the Section, commented: “The Council and the staff have done a good job over the last two years in dealing with demands for more transparency in the accreditation process. I am confident that, with Barry’s help and leadership, we will continue to improve our performance in this regard, collecting more useful and more reliable data about legal education and reporting it more quickly and comprehensively. I look forward to working closely with Barry over the coming year.”
Making the Case: A Law School Magazine Reinvents Itself
By Lisa Grace Lednicer

About the Author
Lisa Lednicer is the communications director at Willamette University College of Law and editor of Willamette Lawyer.

With all the bad press that legal education receives in the mainstream media, it is crucial for law schools to be able to tell compelling stories about their students, faculty, and alumni. Those stories help sway prospective students to choose one particular school over another and convince donors to re-engage with their alma mater by donating their money or their time. If done really well, those stories can also help raise the law school’s profile in the legal academy and the community at large, which in turn may help improve reputational rankings and convince government agencies and law firms to hire students as externs and clerks.

Yet a glance at most law school alumni magazines shows that storytelling remains low on law schools’ agendas. Magazines are a tremendous opportunity to connect with multiple audiences, to stimulate and engage readers, and get them to appreciate the fine intellectual work that goes on at your law school and beyond. A magazine should represent your school in one alluring, provocative package. Your readers are busy people; the law school’s alumni magazine competes with The New Yorker, Bloomberg Business Week, and reams of junk mail and fundraising appeals for their attention. So why not seize their interest with stories they’ll actually want to read?

Last fall, as part of Willamette University College of Law's strategic goal-setting process, Dean Peter Letsou and I decided to re-conceive the Willamette Lawyer, the law school’s twice-yearly alumni magazine. We are the only law school in the Pacific Northwest located across the street from the state Legislature, the Supreme Court, and the Department of Justice. Our graduates include three former state Supreme Court chief justices, a governor, a U.S. senator, prominent criminal defense attorneys, and partners in top law firms in Portland and Seattle. We are well positioned to comment on the intersection of law and policy, and we thought that adding regular reporting on legal issues that are primarily of interest to the Pacific Northwest would align well with our goal of enhancing our connections to state and local government and the judiciary. We aim for every issue to reflect the intellect of a university magazine and the spark of a regional magazine of ideas.

The idea is to communicate the fact that Willamette is a place where serious people engage in the most stimulating intellectual issues of our time and that connecting with Willamette—whether by hiring a student or donating one’s time or money to the school—can enrich one’s life whether or not one is a Willamette grad. To expand our reach, we’ve added to the mailing list elected officials, prosecutors, criminal defense attorneys, lobbyists, state agency heads and all judges in the Ninth Circuit. With the downsizing of newspapers in the Pacific Northwest, we believe we can drive the debate on legal topics of concern to lawyers and non-lawyers, graduates of Willamette, and graduates of other schools.

The fall 2012 issue contains three feature stories about hot-button issues in Oregon: the death penalty, the retirement system for Oregon public employees, and campaign financing. Every story has ties to Willamette, but each one is interesting enough to hold the attention of readers who don’t have any ties to the school. We’re still an alumni magazine; we include news about professors, the entering class, and a “Class Action” section for alumni. But even in those areas, we’ve tried to freshen up the content. For instance, we’ve begun a new feature called “Dicta,” for our professors to explore provocative legal topics in a way that non-lawyers understand. The inaugural essay was written by the head of our dispute resolution program, who states that neuroscience explains why conservatives will never forgive Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts for his decision on the Affordable Health Care Act. Another new feature, “The Willamette Law Interview,” is a lively question-and-answer forum in which we interview a legal newsmaker who may or may not be a graduate – but with whom the law school wishes to establish a close relationship.

The reaction has been immediate and gratifying: lobbyists have sent admiring e-mails; alums have sent in essays and poetry for inclusion in future issues; and the Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers Association asked for extra copies to distribute to board members. Universities around the country are asking for copies of the Lawyer because they want to try what we are doing. The magazine also won two awards from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education. Our upcoming issue has stories about Oregon’s foray into veterans court (three courts in the state are led
by alums); children’s rights in Africa (highlighting the work of one of our professors who researched the topic while on a Fulbright grant in South Africa) and a lengthy interview with the new chief justice of the Oregon Supreme Court.

If law schools are to survive, they must remain relevant, and one of the most cost-effective ways to do so is to tell stories about your professors and your alums in a way that gets attention from your alumni and from other influential readers. You can’t do that by filling your magazine with bits of information or message-driven copy; people won’t read it. They want stories. The legal world is ripe for storytelling; it’s where the best and the worst of human nature intersect, after all. If you fill your magazine with copy that reflects that, you’ll be amazed at what can happen.

Visit the Willamette Lawyer.
Revisions Proposed for Chapters 2, 5, 6 and 7 of the ABA Standards for Approval of Law Schools

At its November 30–December 1, 2012, meeting, the Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar approved for Notice and Comment proposed revisions to Chapter 6 (Library and Information Resources) and Chapter 7 (Facilities, Equipment, and Technology) of the ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools.

At its meeting held on March 15-16, 2013, the Council approved for Notice and Comment proposed revisions to Chapter 2 (Organization and Administration) and Chapter 5 (Admissions and Student Services).

The proposed revisions and accompanying explanations are published on the Notice and Comment page of the Section’s website.

We solicit and encourage written comments on the proposed changes by letter or e-mail. A hearing on these proposed changes is scheduled for 2 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, May 14, 2013, at the American Bar Association, 321 N. Clark St., Chicago, IL 60654. Please address written comments on the proposal and requests to speak at the hearing to JR Clark, jr.clark@americanbar.org. Comments should be submitted no later than Friday, May 10, 2013.

The Section’s Standards Review Committee has been conducting a comprehensive review of the Standards. As part of that review, the committee considered multiple drafts and received informal comments from many interested persons and entities.
Join us in San Francisco at the 2013 ABA Annual Meeting

Hotel Nikko
222 Mason Street
San Francisco, California 94102
415.394.1111

PRELIMINARY SECTION SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8
Council Meeting
Chair’s Dinner

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9
Council Meeting
Kutak Award Reception

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10
Deans Breakfast
Annual Section Business Meeting

Details will be posted on the Section’s website as they become available.
Nominating Committee Solicits Names for 2013–2014 Council Slate

The Section’s Nominating Committee invites suggestions for nominations to the 2013–2014 Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar.

Four member-at-large seats and the vice chair position are to be filled for the 2013–2014 term. Nominees in the categories of judges, academics, practitioners, and public members are sought.

The slate of Section officers and Council members will be presented for election at the Section’s business meeting during the ABA Annual Meeting in San Francisco in August.

The deadline for nominations is April 15. All nominations must be submitted through the online Council Nominations process.

2012-2013 Nominating Committee
Deadline for Fall 2013 Visits is August 1, 2013

Pursuant to the Department of Education criteria, the Section is required to give notice of, and solicit comments about, the law schools scheduled for upcoming site visits. Interested parties wishing to comment on current compliance with accreditation standards by law schools undergoing accreditation site visits during fall 2013 are encouraged to submit signed, written comments.

Law schools undergoing accreditation site visits in fall 2013 are:
The University of Alabama School of Law
University of Arkansas School of Law-Fayetteville
University of California-Irvine, School of Law
Charleston School of Law
Drexel University Earle Mack School of Law
Liberty University School of Law
Loyola University-Chicago, School of Law
Michigan State University College of Law
University of Missouri-Kansas City, School of Law
Ohio Northern University, Claude W. Pettit College of Law
University of Oregon School of Law
Phoenix School of Law
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico Faculty of Law
The University of Toledo College of Law
University of Wyoming College of Law

Written comments must be received by August 1, 2013 and sent to:

Shirley Gonzalez
American Bar Association
Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
321 N. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60654-7598

Your comments must be signed. Comments, with the signatures redacted, may be provided to the law school and to members of the site team reviewing the law school. Only comments directly relating to the ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools will be considered.
New from the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar

2011–2012 Annual Report of the Consultant on Legal Education to the ABA

An overview of the events and activities of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar during the previous association year, the Annual Report includes lists of the Section’s volunteer leadership, law schools site evaluations conducted during the 2011–2012 academic year, and the ABA-approved law schools.

2013 Comprehensive Guide to Bar Admission Requirements

Published annually in collaboration with the National Conference of Bar Examiners, the Comprehensive Guide outlines the rules and practices of all U.S. jurisdictions for admission to the bar by examination and on motion including legal education, character and fitness, bar examinations, and special licenses. The Guide is also available as a free download on the Publications page of the Section’s website.

Visit the Section’s Publications page to view these and other publications:

The ABA Guide to International Bar Admissions

The Unofficial Guide to Legal Studies in the U.S. for Foreign Lawyers

A Survey of Law School Curricula: 2002-2010