

The Learning Curve

MARCH 2001

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From the Editor:

This issue marks the return of "The Learning Curve", which has been on hiatus for several years. It is intended to be an informal newsletter reporting on issues and ideas for school academic support professionals.

Please contact me with ideas, etc. I am "easily" reached at Pbateman@swlaw.edu, 213.738-6750 at Southwestern University School of Law, Los Angeles.

Special thanks to the contributors to this issue and to Sheilah Vance at Villanova University School of Law for technical and layout help.

Paul Bateman
Editor

Regional Academic Assistance Summer Workshops, Summer 2001

Kris Knaplund (UCLA) has announced that the LSAC is sponsoring four regional academic workshops in academic assistance for summer 2001. LSAC approved six years of these workshops for academic assistance professionals.

The LSAC is currently seeking schools to host a regional workshop for Summer 2001. Workshops can be for a day, of a day-and-a-half. The LSAC would like to have a regional conference in the Northeast, South, Midwest and West. LSAC requires that one of the four regionals be geared to newcomers in academic assistance.

The LSAC has agreed to the following schedule:

Summer 2002, national conference
 Summer 2003, four regionals
 Summer 2004 national
 Summer 2005 four regionals
 Summer 2006 national

For the first time, thanks to Kent and the Minority Affairs Committee, we can plan long-term for these conferences.

Message From the Chair

Barbara Glesner Fines

University of Missouri – Kansas City

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Next year's meeting of the Association of American Law Schools will return to New Orleans. For the academic support section, this represents something of a return to our beginnings. In 1995, when the AALS was meeting in New Orleans, a group of academic support professionals prepared a petition asking the AALS to grant provisional status to a section on academic support programs. The section was given an extraordinary firm foundation by the first officers of the section, Chair, Kris Knaplund (UCLA); Chair-Elect, Charles Daye (North Carolina); Paula Lustbader (Seattle); Cathaleen Roach (DePaul); Leo Romero (New Mexico); Athornia Steele (Capital); Laurie Zimet (Santa Clara).

Since then, the section has grown in membership and influence. We can be justly proud of our accomplishments in such a short time. Our section

membership models the type of resource sharing and mentorship that is the key to effective sections. The section electronic listserve makes that mutual support so much the easier. Our programs at AALS have set the standard for engaging, timely discussion of developments in the field. Our liason with LSAC, under the leadership of Kris Knaplund (UCLA), has promised us six years of LSAC-sponsored summer workshops for academic assistance professionals. With this issue of The Learning Curve, guided by the editorial power of Paul Bateman (Southwestern) of Southwestern, the section resumes another fine tradition of the section.

Enthusiasm for a project ordinarily declines in geometric terms. The enthusiasm of the membership of the ASP section, fueled by a group of extraordinary new talent in our field, has never flagged. So back to New Orleans!!

Section Officers

Chairperson: Barbara Glesner Fines (UMKC)

Immediate Part Chairperson: Rod Fong (Santa Clara)

Chairperson-Elect: Linda Feldman (Brooklyn)

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*Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Section
or the American Association of Law Schools*

Academic Support *Into* the Millennium: AN INTERIM UPDATE

an address by
Charles E. Daye
Henry Brandis Professor of Law
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

[Editor's note: Adam G. Todd provides the following preface to Charles Daye's speech]:

My early afternoon flight from New York (La Guardia) to Kansas City on June 14, 2000 to attend the LSAC Academic Assistance Training Workshop at the University of Missouri - Kansas City School of Law, was a nightmare. After sitting on the runway for a number of hours, the airplane taxied backed to the gate with the announcement that the flight was canceled. I then knew I was going to miss the opening of the conference. By hook and crook, I got onto another flight and got into my hotel room in the KC Marriot around 3:00 a.m. En route to the buses in the morning, I ran into Paul Bateman and I told him my travel woes. He responded by saying something like "You missed a great speech by Charles Daye last night." Others I ran into at the conference made similar comments about the speech. Thus, when attending a brief meeting of people interested in helping get this newsletter off the ground and the idea was floated of trying to get Professor Daye's speech into the newsletter, I eagerly volunteered to contact Prof. Daye about getting and printing a copy of his speech that I had the misfortune of missing.

On my return from Kansas City to La Guardia, my flight was again canceled. I was quickly put on another flight, however, and, additionally, had the good fortune of being seated in the First Class section. Similar good luck followed me when I contacted Prof. Daye a number of weeks after the conference and he graciously sent me a copy of his speech. There are two copies of his speech available. One is fairly complete and one I have edited down.

With the shortened version, I have now done Prof. Daye the disservice of trying to fit his remarks into a brief newsletter. My editing and excerpting have tried to keep the central points of Prof. Daye's speech, but unfortunately, I have lost some of the

humor and grace of Prof. Daye's remarks in the cuts I made of the text. To you reading the edited version and Prof. Daye, I apologize and I thank Prof. Daye for sharing these remarks with us.

Professor Daye is an active participant in and past president of LSAC. He is currently Henry Brandis Professor of Law at North Carolina School of Law, a school at which he also served as dean. He teaches torts, housing law and administrative process.

Adam G. Todd, Assistant Professor and Director of Academic Support, Salmon P. Chase College of Law, Northern Kentucky University.]

Academic Support *Into* the Millennium: AN INTERIM UPDATE

an address by
Charles E. Daye
Henry Brandis Professor of Law
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
June 14, 2000

Kansas City, MO

I am calling tonight's little conversation "**Academic Support *Into* the Millennium: AN INTERIM UPDATE.**" In 1995, I spoke about what academic support might be in the Year 2010 which at that time was 15 years into the future, but which is now only 10 years into the future. In other words, since 1995 we have traveled one-third of the way to the Year 2010.... Since *NOW* is 2000, Where Are We On Our Way to 2010?

In 1995, I announced that "The thrust among proponents of academic support for legitimacy is succeeding!" I attributed that success to success to five factors:

A. The Professional Competence of Academic Support Professionals

B. The Applicant Volume Downturn: Demographics of Survival

C. The Mainstreaming Academic Support in Law School

D. The Development of Academic Support as a Discipline within the Academy

E. The Response to Demands for Participation and Leadership

So where are we and what are we doing in 2000?
Let me address the five factors that I cited in 1995, each in turn.

The First Factor: A. Professionalism and Academic Support Professionals

The first strong factor has been the sheer competence and utter dedication of academic support professionals. The drive by academic support faculty to professionalize the ranks has continued unabated. The LSAC and the AALS have continued to support the thrust to organize, network, and learn among academic support professionals. Critical analysis and examination of the way to advance the quality of learning in law school and of the rationale for academic support have proceeded apace, as the agenda of that 1995 San Diego Conference showed. These professionals have brought relevant training, appropriate backgrounds, and strong interests so that they are competent to direct, implement, and refine academic support programs. This growing cadre of professionalized academic support faculty has been about the creation of academic support as a true discipline worthy of scholarly analysis and creative insight. (More on this in a moment.)

The Second Factor: B. The Applicant Volume Downturn – The Demographics of Survival.

The second thing that happened was the applicant volume decline. The 1991-92 academic year marked the highest level of interest in the legal profession in the United States. That year nearly 100,000 applicants sought places in the 44,000 available seats in the first year classes of US law schools. There were 2.25 (two and a quarter) applicants for every seat for the Fall of 1991.

In that competitive environment, issues of whether

minority students (or other academic support beneficiaries) were getting some unfair advantage became an important and sometimes divisive problem. This was the “backlash” problem we worried about back then. Also in that environment, where few students flunked out, the question of being embarrassed or harmed by participating in academic support was a problem. That was the vexatious “stigma” problem that we addressed in the early 1990s in academic support programs.

By 1995, applicant volume had declined by nearly 25% (to about 75,800 applicants) from 1991 levels. I thought then that the volume decline might have a linear progression of perhaps as much as 5% per year for the next several years and then would level off at about 60,000 applicants in the year 2010. That still might happen. But from 1997 to 1998, applicants actually increased by 1.2% from 66,700 to 67,500 in 1998. Total first year enrollment declined from a high of just over 44,000 in 1991 to just under 43,000 in 1998. That was not a big enough decline in seats to offset the decline in applicants. So, in 1998 there were not 2.25 applicants for every first-year seat that was filled but only about 1.6 applicants per seat.

I am not now so sure that this will mean that by 2010 there will be only about 1.33 (one and one-third) applicants per seat in US law schools. In fact, some law schools may not be able to fill all the seats they would like to fill, and the population demographics may be expected to show an increase in the college-going students in years ahead for a time. Counter factors might well be the projected opening of several new law schools around the country in the next few years.

But no matter what these changes portend, the applicant volumes and applicant credentials, have in fact reduced some of the competitive pressures to get into many law schools. That decreased competition for a place in the law schools is leading directly to increasing interest in and pressure on academic support programs. With increasing awareness among applicants about success assurance efforts of law school academic support programs, it really is still to some extent a matter of law school competitiveness, if not actual survival, to have an effective academic support system. Also with a fo-

cus on output measures and concepts of the value added by a legal education, it has become more and more advantageous and necessary for law schools to have effective academic support efforts and programs.

In 1995, I suggested the demographics within student bodies would shift but I believed, well, maybe, I just strongly hoped that, owing in part to the applicant downturn and to steadfast resistance, the attack on affirmative action would fail, ultimately. Whether that will be so by 2010, I am less confident with the Michigan litigation in full swing and with referenda and right wing agitation still strong in many places. What we have seen is that the total proportion of students of color enrolled in law schools increased from about 10% in 1985 to 20% in 1995. I thought that with changing demographics, enrollment of students of color in law school might reach as high as 37% by 2010. The trend to date is not that strong, although it could still happen. In 1998, however, students of color comprised just about 21% of the total enrollment with a total enrollment of 25,266 students of color.

But a lot of racially simplistic and simple-minded two track and quota-based affirmative action has disappeared. African American students as a proportion of the total population of students of color declined from about 50% in 1985, to 40% in 1995, to only 31.2% in 1998. This drop in the proportion of African Americans has already surpassed the drop (to about 35%) that I thought we might see by 2010. While blacks decreased *as a proportion* of students of color there has been no precipitous drop in the *number* of blacks enrolled. Indeed the numbers of blacks increased steadily to peak at 9,681 in 1994 and has declined by a little more than 400 by 1998 to 9,271.

Asians increased both their numbers and their proportions of the students of color – with increases from 1985 of 2,153 (17% of students of color) to 7,877 (31% of students of color).

American Indians and Alaska natives also both increased their numbers (which are still small) from 463 (or 3.7%) to 1,064 (with 4.2%).

Hispanics increased their numbers from 3,679 in

1985 to 7,054 in 1998 (but their proportion of students color enrolled in law school still declined slightly from 29.8% to 27.9%.)

Moreover, there is some evidence that poorly performing, but academically eligible, students are more likely to terminate their enrollment prior to getting a law degree in the current environment. Since quantifiable credentials have declined, it has become (for some law schools) a matter of law school survival not merely to have students who survive law school, but to have students who are satisfied enough with law school and with their level of performance in law school to stay the course for the duration to earn a degree, so the law school can collect that tuition.

The Third Factor: C. Mainstreaming Academic Support in Law School

The competence of academic support professionals, and the downturn in applicants with its attendant demographic changes, has meant that academic support is being mainstreamed in Law Schools. I expect this mainstreaming to continue through 2010.

For me, the rationale for academic support was always, in major part, based on deficiencies of the methods, materials, resources, and pedagogy of legal education. Thus, even back in the days of the early 1990s, it was recognized that with appropriate interventions, students would not merely survive, but that their performance could be actually enhanced. Thus, we sometimes spoke of “a survival model” and “an enhancement model” – such as those we discussed in the 1992 LSAC booklet INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC PROGRAMS. In 2010 that dichotomous perspective will seem quaint, because we are seeing a re-designation of the mission of academic support.

Academic support programs increasingly are being rationalized in major part on what I shall call “a fulfillment model.” Law schools determine, within the limits of their educational approaches and institutional resources, to assure that every student achieves maximum personal and academic fulfillment. We expect not merely improved academic performance, but a corresponding improvement in

the students' satisfactions with their legal educational experiences and a higher quality affectational outcome. We are on the way there.

But there are still challenges enough to be met and even dangers in the mainstreaming of the academic support effort. We now know that quality of the learning experience, to the extent that is reflected in law school GPAs, is highly predictive of bar passage probabilities. So academic support professionals are being urged to do more, to keep programs throughout the three or more years, to include more students in the programs, to consult with the other faculty more, to conduct academic support programs in various substantive classes, to improve test taking skills of the students, to mount bar preparation programs, and on and on.

More evidence of mainstreaming is shown by surveys on academic support.

We did a survey that was the basis for data in the 1988 LSAC, SUMMARY REPORT ON SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR MINORITY STUDENTS. Extrapolation of the 1988 data would show perhaps a little better than 25% of the ABA-approved schools saying they had any kind of academic support program (but with two schools prohibiting disclosure of data about whether they had academic support or other "special programs for minority students.") Now the majority of schools have academic support programs. One recent survey had 48% of its responding schools report having school-year programs, 37% report both school-year and summer programs, and 12% report summer only programs. The LSAC 2000 OFFICIAL GUIDE in the Key Facts section (on pp. 44-53) lists 172 schools reporting "Academic Support Programs." But I think it also reflects a sea change in attitudes about the very concept of academic support from even as late as 1988.

Fourth Factor: D. Academic Support Develops as a Discipline within the Academy

The development of academic support as a true discipline is the fourth thing that is happening.

Since the 1995 Conference perhaps one of the signal events in the life of the Academic Sup-

port Movement was the approval in 1998 of an Academic Support Section of the Association of American Law Schools. I'm happy to say I played some small part in helping to bring that about.

Another measure of the quality of the emerging discipline is the growing body of scholarship that is today advancing consideration of the full range of issues, problems, contexts, prospects, theories, methodologies, concerns and so forth. Directly related to the adoption of academic support tenets as a valued component of the legal educational enterprise, academic support has continued to define itself as a recognized area of inquiry and expertise. Analysts and academic support scholars in increasing numbers are proposing, theorizing, critiquing, and developing the intellectual foundations for the academic support effort.

Subjects of inquiry have continued to be learning theories, motivational dimensions of learning, the use of new technologies to improve learning, learning more about how and why people learn, examining the relationship between environment and performance, examining methods of testing, devising alternative ways to provide incentives, and developing measures for evaluating not merely the effectiveness of academic support programs, but measures for evaluating the effectiveness of various aspects of legal education itself.

Concepts of difference, learning styles, value systems, broad-gauged approaches, goal setting, performance measures, and evaluation were proposed, critiqued, examined, revised, and re-critiqued and re-revised. A rich literature of theory, analysis, and development of academic support concepts is being produced. Gradually, part-time, "lets-do-something," well-intentioned professors, adjuncts and other volunteers who were involved in academic support as a sideline, are being replaced by full-time, lets-do-it-right academic support professional faculty members whose lives and careers are devoted to academic support.

I really do believe that the audience to which academic support scholars write in 2010 will avowedly include rank and file professors, law school deans, deans of students, registrars, assistant deans, directors of career services, and other

service providers within the legal academy.

A new breed of younger members of the academy welcomes cooperation with their academic support colleagues, and they are open and, sometimes eager, to incorporate some of the method and pedagogy that have grown out of and been tested in academic support environments.

The Fifth Factor: E. Demands for Participation and Leadership

Because of its relevance, importance, and success, a fifth thing is happening to academic support. First, the academic support professionals enhanced their competence. Second, owing to external factors and the applicant downturn with its demographic significance, academic support became indispensable. Third, academic support, more and more, became a part of the mainstream as a worthy component of the educational enterprise. Fourth, academic support developed as a discipline worthy of study, and research and publication began to engage the attention of a wider range of legal scholars than those directed academic support activities. Then, the fifth thing is happening to improve academic support: a widening array of individuals and groups seek to participate in the development of the academic support community's agenda.

Different groups and interests now and in the future will demand that they be consulted and involved both at the individual law school level and at broader levels within the legal academic community. The cry is heard that academic support belongs to the entire academy and cannot be cornered for input and leadership by any self-designated, small group, or clique of individuals, or narrowly focused group devoted to advancing its members' own career objectives and potential.

Thus, while the academic support community has lobbied and will lobby others and is succeeding in more fully establishing its own credentials, as it gets more established it, in turn, will be lobbied by others for voice and inclusion. Recognizing their diminished proportion within the community of color in law schools, African Americans – students, faculty, and administrators – will demand inclusion in the academic support community. Recognizing

that culture is an important factor affecting success in law school, native Americans, Canadian first peoples, Chicanos and others will demand voice and explicit recognition. Women in second careers with families will demand inclusion. Older students, male and female, attending law school part-time will demand voice and recognition. Gay and lesbian students will demand voice and recognition. Students with disabilities will demand voice and recognition.

The academic support community will, because it must, take positive and decisive steps to assure that the diversity within its community and within its leadership mirrors the diversity of the communities it was developed to serve. We must adopt proactive inclusion. We must notice and develop methodologies and programs, when indicated, to serve divergent needs of students within the diverse communities academic support served.

Our research agenda will pay attention to the varying academic support needs of constituent smaller communities within the communities we serve and we will grapple with the thorny issues of “difference” within our community and those we serve. And we will strive to be inclusive and sensitive.

These five developments do not come easily. They will not come uniformly within a law school nor uniformly among the law schools. Resistance has not been completely eliminated. And unlike the Borg in the Star Trek sagas, we cannot say, “Resistance is futile.” Rather, we must work to overcome resistance and misunderstanding. There have been setbacks and there may be strategic retreats, but overall the direction of the academic support movement – if I may apply that exalted appellation – is inexorably forward, unstoppable, and uncontainable.

III. Where Are We Going? Seeking the Ultimate Potential of Academic Support

Having now described where I think we are, I now want to sketch an even bolder vision of the more distant future which I shall call seeking the *Ultimate Potential* of academic support.

I offer these six items as a sketch involving a possible future sometime beyond the year 2010, which is (I keep reminding myself) a mere 10 years hence – which, it turns out, is merely one-third of the time I have *already* been in legal education.

1. The first Ultimate Potential of academic support must be to change legal education fundamentally, for the better.
2. The second Ultimate Potential for academic support must be to become a fully integral part of the educational process, the academic program, and the institutional missions of law schools
3. The third Ultimate Potential we must have is to demonstrate our cost-effectiveness so that we can successfully compete in resource allocations.
4. Fourth, we must as an Ultimate Potential stay true to the mission that gave rise to our existence – the continued growth in the diversity of the legal *profession*.
5. The fifth Ultimate Potential of academic support is to become an integral part of a “One Stop Fulfillment Center” as a part of student services.
6. Sixth, as an Ultimate Potential we will have to attend to the issues of career development and status for academic support professors and programs.

IV. To Humanize Legal Education

At its essence we are involved in the business of helping our students to realize their dreams – we are dream merchants! And we have been on a course to humanize legal education for a diversity of students. And we are creative at doing that.

We all know the story of the student who had a dream and determination but little else Not a high GPA. Not a strong LSAT score. Not a high socio-economic status. But a dream. Just a dream to be somebody. You worked

with that student.

Sometime that student continued to struggle, but struggle she did and she made it! Despite every setback, she made it.

Sometime that student excelled beyond all explanation and, in a way, beyond all reason – except for that dream.

Sometime that student took time to thank you or you got that note years later telling you how that student appreciated you. But no matter – whether you got thanks or not – “at the end of the day,” “the bottom line is,” “this is my final answer,” and every other cliché imaginable – helping our students realize their dreams is the ultimate reason and the ultimate reward for being an academic support professional.

Thank you.

AALS SECTION PROGRAM: “Maximum Bar Performance” Proves Popular

The section’s AALS program, Developing Strategies and Programs for Maximum Bar Performance attracted a large crowd at the AALS annual meeting in San Francisco, January 2001.

Panelists included Richard Cabrera (William Mitchell), and Melinda Drew (Northeastern), who each discussed the programs designed to address bar pass at their law schools; Joan Howarth, Golden Gate), who raised questions about the bar exam as a test of lawyer competency; and Nancy Rapoport (Houston), who provided a dean’s point of view on bar pass rates. Charles Daye moderated the panel discussion.

After brief summaries of their programs and concerns about the bar exam and the law school’s responses to bar pass rates, Charles Daye moderated a lively discussion from the audience. Several audience respondents echoed Professor Howarth’s concern about the appropriateness of the bar exam as a test for competency as a lawyer. Other comments reflected the age-old question of the law school’s role in preparing students for the bar exam.

Linda Feldman (Brooklyn) and Leslie Garfield (Pace) were program co-chairs.

ABSTRACT: Richard Cabrera and Stephanie Zeman, *Law School Academic Support Programs-A Survey of Available Academic Support Programs for the New Century*, 26 Wm. Mitchell L. Rev. 205 (2000).

This article was the result of a survey which was taken between 1996 and mid-1999. One hundred and fifty two law schools, of the one hundred and seventy-five which were contacted, responded. One of these schools refused to provide any data. Fourteen of the reporting schools claimed to have no ASP, but six of those schools said they *did* have some sort of support program. The survey was therefore compiled from data provided by 137 law schools (90.7% of 151). Responses were sought to three categories of questions:

- 1) Does your law school have an academic support program?
- 2) What are the selection criteria for the program, mandatory or voluntary, and what are its components?
- 3) Do the academic support programs target minorities?

ASP selection criteria included: age; undergraduate school, major, and GPA; LSAT score; projected first year average (pfya); disadvantaged status and law school GPA, among others. There were 322 separate ASP programs reported. Of these, only 12.1% were mandatory. Another 4.3% were both mandatory and voluntary. One hundred and twenty-eight of the 152 responding schools offered mainly voluntary programs.

The ASP which were reported to the survey were placed in 12 categories. These categories, and the number of programs in each, were: tutoring/study groups, 98 programs; first year study/exam skills, 85; introductory summer programs, 33; academic or personal counseling, 32; intensive, special classes, 25; special orientation programs, 16; bar exam preparation, 11 (this number must be revised as, at the ASP section program at the 2001 AALS meeting in San Francisco, easily three times that number of people identified their schools as having bar prep programs); advising/mentoring, eight; pre-admission/conditional admission programs, five; study resource libraries, four; social gatherings, two; and summer internships, one. Thirty-seven (27%) of the 137 schools which provided data did target their ASP at minority students.

The article also briefly examined the ASP experience at William Mitchell College of Law. That school began its ASP in 1987-88. Its current programming includes five ASP which range from a summer program to a bar preparation program. William Mitchell is continuing to upgrade its programs and to try to empirically measure them. The results of the survey were valuable to this effort.

After the grades are in! Exam Evaluation Guide Sheet

Adriana Moreno Nevarez
DePaul University School of Law

Ruta Stropus and I use the attached “exam evaluation handout” when we meet with students after students have received their grades. As is inevitable with a forced curve grading system, many students are not only displeased with their grades but confused as to the entire grading methodology employed by their professors.

We encourage students to schedule appointments with their professors to discuss their exams. We explain to students that there may not be many markings on those exams that will prove helpful in explaining what they did right and what they did wrong. Hence, our exam evaluation guide sheet.

The guide sheet helps students ask specific questions that will probably elicit helpful responses from the professors that they can in turn use to their advantage in terms of their reading and writing skills.

This list of questions was developed by Cathaleen Roach, former Director of DePaul's ASP.

Exam Evaluation Guide Sheet

I encourage you to speak to each of your professors about your exam performance, particularly if your grade is a C+ or lower. Make it a point to LISTEN EXTREMELY CAREFULLY and to the extent possible, write down everything the professor says.

Most importantly, listen carefully and then try, in a summary fashion, to “mirror back” everything the professor says regarding your exams or level of preparedness.

Finally, try to find “themes” in your professors’ comments where possible (e.g. “You missed the important issues.” Or, “You’ve got the key issues but your development is weak.” Or, “Your substance is pretty good, but the writing is disorganized or confusing.”).

Use this sheet as a guide, if appropriate. For each exam try to discern:

1. Did I spot most of the issues?
2. Did I develop the issues sufficiently?
 - a. Did I get the sub-issues?
 - b. Did I develop the facts sufficiently?
 - c. Should I have used more analogy/distinction from the cases or themes in our text?
 - d. Did I discuss:
 - i. “the other side” enough with respect to the important issues?
 - ii. “an alternate argument” (as distinguished from just “the other side”) sufficiently?
3. Specifically, what does the professor mean by “flaws in my analysis”?
4. Should I have introduced more policy or critical analysis of the current law?
5. Apart from the substance of the exam, was my “exam writing” sufficient?
 - a. Was it organized sufficiently?
 - b. Did I “guide my reader sufficiently” (i.e. was it easy to read) or do I need more transition statements? Better grammar?
6. Other comments?

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS FOR STUDENTS WITH - AND WITHOUT - DISABILITIES

Melinda Drew

Northeastern University School of Law

Changes made in classrooms to accommodate students with disabilities also benefit other students. Here are some ideas for making classrooms more user-friendly for all students.*

Offer students the opportunity to talk with you in office hours about any difficulties they may have in your class.

Consider putting a brief outline on the board of your planned topics for each class.

Give students information through a multi-sensory approach - handouts, overhead transparencies, PowerPoint presentations, etc.

Provide samples of written work as examples.

Write key points on the board **and** read them aloud.

If requested, ask for volunteer note-takers at the first or second session of your class. Often students who take notes for others take better notes, which benefits the note-taker as well.

If a student with a disability requests a front row seat, assist the student, if necessary, in obtaining one.

If you are using video, use a captioned video if available. This benefits not only students with learning disabilities and hearing impairments, but also students for whom English is not their first language. If a video is not captioned, the production company may be able to provide a transcript of the

video. If so, make sure your student using a transcript has a source of light. Clip-on book lights work well for this.

For any written materials you hand out, including exams, make sure the material is readable and has lots of white space.

If requested, make copies of your classroom notes available.

In written materials, emphasize key words (e.g. use *italics*, **bold font**, or the like).

Build in frequent opportunities for students to ask questions during lectures.

Depending on the assignment, consider having students work together in small groups before requiring them to work independently.

Have students work in small groups with hands-on activities or discussion questions that are appropriate for small group discussions. Then have the small groups report back to the larger group.

Share successful classroom tips with others and encourage your colleagues to share their successes with you.

* This list is adapted from "Teaching Students With Disabilities, LRP Publications, Vol. 1, Issue 2, © 2000.