

OC Law Schools Up ABA Ante, Raise Bar on Skills



Bilingual clinic: Trinity Law School student Delphine Martinez helps a man with a legal need

Further Integrate 'Practice Ready' Trend in Training

By PAUL HUGHES

The "practice-ready" trend in law schools that began taking shape locally last year heated up this summer when the American Bar Association House of Delegates revised its Standard 303 to increase the number of credit hours.

The ABA will require six credit hours per student of "experiential courses"—either a simulation, law clinic, or some kind of fieldwork. The previous requirement was one credit hour.

It said instruction is experiential if it offers multiple opportunities to develop professional

skills and has a strong evaluation element.

The State Bar of California is expected to phase in several related requirements starting next year, with its own skills-based requirements for law schools by 2017.

"This is the biggest trend in legal education right now," said **Jack Crittenden**, editor of San Diego-based law school trade magazine **National Jurist**. "Every law school is moving toward more practical training."

Law schools are ramping up programs to provide practical training versus the traditional theoretical coursework, to prepare students to practice law. That usually means law clinics for public legal needs, simulated legal scenarios in class, interaction with working attorneys, or integration of all three.

Theory isn't going away, but local law school deans are beefing up programs, some of them beyond even what the ABA now mandates.

Skills Courses

"It was important, no matter what the ABA did," said **Tom Campbell**, dean of the Dale E. Fowler School of Law at **Chapman University** in Orange.

The school's practical focus is on hybrid courses in which a law professor teaches two sessions per week and a professional attorney in the legal field being studied takes the third session.

Campbell said the law school has the courses in place for subjects including securities law, land use, wills and trusts, and regulatory law. Next year, it plans to add civil procedure and courses involving transactional law. The third phase, slated for 2016, will incorporate courses in criminal practice.

"Students will have a lab component in each of their three years and in all areas: civil, transactional and criminal," he said.

The work is funded by \$750,000 from the **Fletcher Jones Foundation** in Pasadena and \$300,000 from members of the law school's advisory board.

The school is shooting for \$2 million in total funding, he said.

A third of all courses at **Whittier Law School** in Costa Mesa now have a substantial experiential element, said Associate Dean **Martin Pritikin**, including more than half of the 89 units students must pass to graduate.

This year it also added a one-unit class that teaches concepts such as emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills.

"We want to integrate practical skills into the classroom, and not just for upper-division students," he said.

A first-year course in civil procedure that previously involved discussion of jurisdiction via U.S. Supreme Court cases over the past 100 years now stages mock, in-class litigation.

"You're in California, and the defendant is in Nevada," Pritikin said. "What would you do?"

Allen Easley, dean of **Western State College of Law** in Fullerton, said that this year the school added applicable components to torts and criminal law so that first-year students learn "what lawyers actually do."

In criminal law, students took a burglary case, but instead of litigating it, they focused on a plea bargain.

"Most cases are resolved that way in the field," Easley explained.

Western State also added hybrid classes in third-year courses to bookend students' experiences in school.

Easley's work in that process has even involved his own "experience."

He said that when he taught classes, students would come back for their second year of law school after spending the previous summer as interns, fresh with real-world experience.

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Nonprofit

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After moving to Orange County in 1972 and becoming the **Southern California College of Optometry**—which formed the core of its volunteer work in vision care—it established free eye-care clinics in Buena Park, at the Boys & Girls Club in Garden Grove, and at the Orange County Rescue Mission in Tustin. It also provides eye exams to elementary school students in Santa Ana and Fullerton.

Last year, Ketchum added a mobile clinic called the Eye Force One Vision Van.

Ketchum added a physician's assistant program in April 2013, thereby becoming a university. The new program received 800 applicants for 26 available spaces.

Classes started this fall, and now the physician assistant students are also volunteering.

"Our PAs are already working with the screenings to take vital signs, blood pressure and so

on," Stover said.

Ketchum plans to add a pharmacy degree in the fall of 2016 and said it expects those students to contribute.

Global and Local

The volume of volunteering is growing, say local schools leaders.

Vanguard's Morgan said colleges and universities are ideally positioned to work with businesses, government and other groups to provide services they only can give.

"We're committed to using our platform for research and study, and then to share that information with students and the community," she said. "Collaboration prevents wasted resources."

She said schools can link local work to national and global efforts in order to expand on what others are doing.

"One thing people have been talking about is coordination, collaboration and capacity," she said. "And as a Christian nonprofit, we can add the element of compassion." ■



Ketchum clinic: faculty member Dr. Lynn Lowell conducts eye exam for a Santa Ana elementary school student

Practice

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"They'd tell me how it had finally started to make sense, and now we're making that connection sooner."

The Clinical Way

Law school clinics commonly focus on a particular area of law, and supervised by an attorney, students help the public with legal issues.

University of California-Irvine School of Law Dean **Erwin Chemerinsky** said the school hits practice-ready requirements in that way.

"Every student is required to do a clinic," he said.

The law school offers seven:

■ Litigation before the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit;

■ Community economic development for county businesses;

■ Domestic violence;

■ Environmental law;

■ Immigrants' rights;

■ International human rights;

■ and intellectual property, its newest clinic, added this year.

Trinity Law School in Santa Ana is also making the change through clinics.

"Trinity has an extraordinary number of clinics, given its size," said Dean **Myron Steeves**.

It expanded its alternative dispute resolution clinic this year, as well as a mobile bilingual legal clinic that on Thursday afternoons parks at the county court complex in Santa Ana.

He said the mobile clinic helps about 100 people a week. Most cases involve family law or basic criminal work, such as clearing juvenile records.

The school also has a religious liberty clinic—Trinity is part of a faith-based university in Illinois—a bankruptcy clinic, and a poverty law clinic, the latter of which it holds at the Orange County Rescue Mission.

"They have a medical clinic through UCI

and a counseling clinic through **Concordia University**," he said. "We provide the legal help."

Steeves said three more clinics are planned: nonprofit law, juvenile justice, and crime-victim assistance. ■

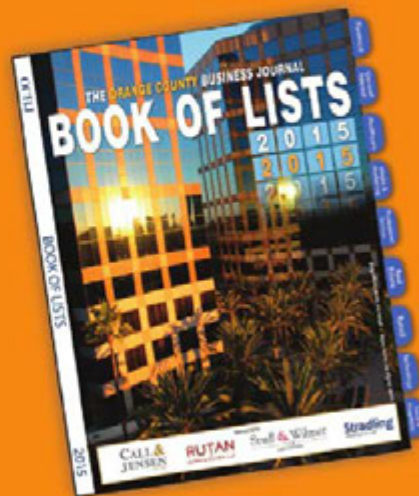
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