William S. Boyd School of Law
2016 Academic Assessment Report – Juris Doctorate Degree

Student Learning Outcomes

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete a program at BSL will be able to demonstrate:

Legal and Law-Related Knowledge - Knowledge of specific areas or aspects of substantive law, legal theory, or legal procedure

Analysis and Decision-Making – Understand and develop solutions to legal problems.
Policy Evaluation - Draw connections between specific legal issues and policy contexts or values

Professional Identity - Responsibilities of lawyers to their profession and society

Writing - Written professional communication for a variety of professional purposes

Oral Communication - Using oral communication for a variety of professional purposes

Information Gathering and Processing – Obtaining and assessing information about facts, law, procedure, and people

Interpersonal Perspectives – Emotionally intelligent engagement, team building, collaboration, cooperation, and leadership

Client and Practice Management – Skills required to ethically and effectively manage ethical, professional and business aspects of the legal profession

LEARNING OUTCOMES – HIGHER EDUCATION

- Engage in theory based, data driving decision making within the higher education context
- Undertake leadership and research positions in two and four-year College and University settings
- Discuss and articulate an informed perspective on several issues in higher
education (e.g., policy, finance, law, etc.)

- Discuss the historical and philosophical influences that have guided the evolution of higher education in the U.S.
- Demonstrate knowledge regarding participation in the academy as a professor in higher education

### Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The law school curriculum requires students to complete eight foundational courses in the first year: Property, Torts, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, Contracts, Constitutional Law, and two courses in Legal Writing. The courses in the first-year curriculum assess all of the student learning outcomes in part, and successful completion of the first-year courses is one indicator of successful attainment of these outcomes.

The law school’s elective courses and graduation requirements assess these learning outcomes with more precision and rigor in the students’ second and third years. These elective courses are designed to provide students with both breadth and depth. Some students may choose to master a specific topic by taking a number of courses in one area. For example, a student may take multiple courses in environmental law, health law, business law, or litigation. Other students may take a variety of courses in different areas or complementary areas to prepare themselves for a more generalized practice. For example, a student might take administrative law, health law, and immigration law in preparation for a career in regulatory compliance. The upper-level curriculum supports either curricular pathway, and the electives as a whole focus on learning outcomes 1-3 and 5 and 6 (though some touch on outcomes 4 and 7-9). The law school has adopted four graduation requirements that focus more directly on learning outcomes 6-10: (1) a professional skills requirement (Any of learning outcomes 1-9); (2) a capstone writing requirement (learning outcomes 5 & 7), (3) a third legal writing course (learning outcome 5), and (4) a professional responsibility course (learning outcomes 4, 8, and 9). Finally, the law school measures learning outcomes through performance on the Nevada bar examination and the results of a national Law School Student Survey Engagement (LSSSE).

Along with their legal education, dual-degree students also pursuing a Ph.D. in Education may specialize in one of three areas: Educational Psychology, Higher Education Leadership, and Special Education. Students will earn between 54-63 credits in education, and their individualized course load will be determined in consultation with their graduate advisor.

### Professional Skills Requirement

The professional skills requirement assesses the counseling, negotiation, litigation and advanced dispute resolution, organization and management of legal work, and ethics student outcomes. All students must complete a professional skills course or courses, amounting to a minimum of two credit hours, before graduation. Courses should engage each student in skills performances that are assessed by the professor.

In the 2016-17 academic year, the law school offered 45 professional skills courses with a total enrollment of 509 (some students enrolled in more than one course). Students' successful completion of these courses is one indicator of successful attainment of these outcomes.
Capstone Writing Requirement

The capstone writing requirement assesses the legal writing and information gathering and processing learning outcomes. Completion of the legal writing course is one indicator of successful attainment of these learning outcomes. This requirement can be satisfied by any analytical, intellectually rigorous law-related writing project that requires research, drafting, and revision of and all law students must complete this requirement before graduation.

Doctoral candidates in Education must complete a dissertation in their selected field.

Legal Writing Course

Each student must complete a third legal writing course, Lawyering Process III, after the first year. Though the substantive coverage of each course varies from securities law to advanced advocacy to rhetoric and persuasion, the course provides another opportunity for students to master the legal writing and information gathering and processing outcomes. Completion of the legal writing course is one indicator of successful attainment of these learning outcomes.

Professional Responsibility Course

A required course in professional responsibility assesses the professional identity, interpersonal interactions, and client and practice management outcomes.

Course Level Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Each student is required to take a minimum number of units in required and elective courses. Each course in the law school's curriculum focuses on one or more of the law school's learning outcomes. Completion of a law school course is one indicator of the attainment of the learning outcomes for that course.

Performance on the Nevada Bar Examination

Performance on the Nevada Bar Examination assesses legal knowledge, analysis and decision making, and legal writing outcomes.

Sixty-six percent of first-time takers from the Boyd Law School passed the July 2016 bar exam compared to the 51% pass rate for all first-time takers.

LSSSE Results

Students also complete a Law School Survey of Student Engagement each year. In 2016, Boyd students ranked the law school significantly higher than that of the comparison group in the following categories:

1. Student advising
2. Law school environment
3. Career counseling
4. Pro bono work and public service
5. Providing the support needed to succeed academically
6. Serious conversations with those different from you (religions beliefs, political opinions, etc.

The students (93%) reported perceived gains in thinking critically and analytically. Ninety percent of graduating students rated their overall experiences as excellent or good, and 95% said they would definitely or probably attend Boyd again.

What Was Learned And How Is The Program Responding?

Professional Standards

In addition to UNLV assessment requirements and Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) accreditation requirements, the law school is subject to accreditation as a professional school by the American Bar Association (ABA). In August 2014, the ABA adopted new standards related to learning outcomes and assessment. Those standards are: 301(b), 302, 314 and 315 (the "New Standards"). The New Standards became legally effective at the end of the ABA Annual meeting on August 12, 2014. The ABA mandated that the New Standards be applied to students entering law school in the 2016-2017 academic year. In light of the mandatory implementation of the New Standards in 2016-2017, the dean created an Ad Hoc Assessment Committee to facilitate faculty discussion around learning outcomes and assessment in 2015-2016. Those discussions resulted in the adoption of new law school learning outcomes by the faculty.

New Learning Outcomes

In 2015-2016, the law school engaged the faculty as a whole in a review of the law school's learning outcomes and the drafting of revised learning outcomes for the law school. The new learning outcomes were approved by the faculty in Spring 2016 and implemented in Fall 2017.

Course-Level Assessment

Collection of data on specific learning outcomes at the course-level has been a focus of the law school's assessment activities for the past few years. Work in this area included a two-year (2012-2013 and 2013-2014) self-study of the lawyering competencies taught in law school courses during that time period and a review of the intersection between law practice in Nevada and the law school's upper-level curriculum. In Spring 2017 the law school is piloting course-level, technology-assisted, data-collection, which will be refined over the summer and implemented beginning Fall 2017.

Bar Examination

The Nevada bar examination cut score is among the highest in the nation. As bar exam pass rates decline across the country, maintaining an abnormally high cut score means that fewer graduates will pass the bar examination in Nevada. Nevada assigns the lowest percentage weight (33%) to the Multistate Bar Examination of all state jurisdictions. The essay portion of the Nevada bar exam is far greater in scope, depth, and length than most other state jurisdictions.
To better enable more qualified graduates to pass the Nevada state bar examination, a statewide commission has been formed to address bar examination reform. Dean Daniel Hamilton is a member of the commission.

The Boyd School of Law provides a series of Bar Examination Workshops free of charge for all graduating students and alumni. These sessions are part of an integrated program to best prepare graduates for the bar exam. Additionally, faculty and staff mentor students studying for the exam to keep them on track for success.