A New Curriculum for Academically Underprepared Law Students

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The Problem

Lack of rigor in undergraduate programs

- Little time studying
- Little or no improvement in critical-thinking skills for 36% of college seniors
- Few rigorous writing requirements
- Multiple-choice is not a professional skill
# First Year Curriculum

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Making Up the Deficit: Essential Lawyering Skills

Legal Analysis

IRAC

Technical Writing Skills
Foundations

- Building on Orientation Boot Camp
- Starting IRAC immediately
- Common law & statutes
- Formative assessments, such as feedback on case briefs & written exercises
- Emphasizing problem-solving for a client
- Summative assessments: IRAC exams & beginning memo writing
- Portfolio
Academic Success Program
Former Structure

- Summer
  - ASP
- Fall
  - Workshop Series
- Spring
  - Legal Methods
Academic Success Program
New and Improved

Foundations of Legal Analysis

Dean’s Fellows Program

ASP Workshop Series
Academic Success Skills and Foundations

➢ An Integrated Approach

➢ ASP Foundations Workshops:
  • Sweet Relief: A Case Briefing Workshop
  • Essay Ballet: Teaching the Steps of a Successful Law School Essay
  • We’ve Got the Loot: Teaching You How to Dissect a Statute
  • Emphasis on Synthesis: Synthesizing Cases Workshop

➢ Win-Win Situation
Dean’s Fellows Program

- Learning Communities
  - Led by an High Performing Upper-Level Student
  - Linked to Foundations of Legal Analysis
- Weekly Meetings
  - Discussed Academic Success Skills
  - Assisted Professors
Academic Success Program Workshop Series

- Additional Fall and Spring Workshops
  - Exam Strategy for Doctrinal Courses
    - Contracts
    - Criminal Law
    - Torts
    - Property
    - Civil Procedure
    - Damages & Equities
Legal Research Instruction

• Stand-alone, graded, 1 credit course
• Team-taught by library faculty
• Expanded under new curriculum from 2 to 3 required semesters
• Focus under new LR curriculum on collaborative learning opportunities and frequent assessment
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Legal Communications

- Building on Foundations
- Continuing IRAC: Writing full office memos
- Emphasizing different forms of legal communication: Meeting with partner, correspondence, email memo
- Formative assessments, such as feedback on partial drafts, individual conferences
- Summative assessments: Memos, email memo, letters
Legal Writing I

- Adding research & initial client interview
- Gaining competency in objective legal analysis
- Gaining rudimentary skills in persuasive writing, oral advocacy, and self-assessment
- Formative assessments, such as feedback on drafts, individual conferences
- Summative assessments: Office memo, trial brief, oral argument
2L Year: Legal Writing II

- Two, 7 week, 1 credit courses required
  - Appellate Advocacy
    - General, Moot Court, International Moot Court
  - Introduction to Drafting
  - Legal Journalism
  - Law Review
Questions?

Thank you!