

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Board of Regents  
**From:** Board Office  
**Subject:** Accreditation Report for the College of Law, University of Iowa  
**Date:** April 9, 2001

**Recommended Action:**

Receive the report on the re-accreditation of the College of Law, University of Iowa.

**Executive Summary:**

On January 26-27, 2001, the American Bar Association's Committee on Accreditation re-accredited the College of Law of the University of Iowa. The next review for the College of Law will occur in 2006-2007.

The College of Law, which had last been visited in 1993, met all standards. The Site Visitation Team provided a lengthy narrative that analyzed strengths of the program and offered some suggestions and recommendations. These will be described later in the memorandum. In November 2000, the Committee on Accreditation notified the College that a standard requiring field placement programs be approved and periodically reviewed by the College was not met. The College successfully resolved this concern through its response letter.

The College prepared a Self-Study in 1998-1999 which detailed the history of the College, its degree programs and curriculum, faculty qualifications and productivity, student body composition and performance, administration and services, and resources (financial and physical). The Law Library was highlighted in a separate chapter. The faculty and student committee responsible for the Self-Study included assessments of both the strengths and areas of need within the College. The needs centered on additional staff and upgraded facilities.

One method of measuring quality of academic programs is through periodic accreditation by appropriate professional/state agencies. The accrediting process typically focuses on the internal governance structure, faculty, curriculum, student background and performance, facilities, and resources. Accreditation is consistent with Key Result Area 1.0.0.0, Quality, of the Board of Regents' strategic plan. More specifically, it relates to Objective 1.1.0.0, "to improve the quality of existing and newly created educational programs," and Strategy 1.1.2.0, "strengthen the quality of graduate and professional education at Regent institutions within the unique mission of each institution."

**Background:**

The University of Iowa College of Law was founded in 1865. It is the only state-supported law school in Iowa. It was one of the 30 founding members of the Association of American Law Schools in 1900. The University of Iowa considers itself to be ranked among the top 10 public law schools in the United States. The College states that it is committed to having the largest public law school library in the United States; currently, the library is ranked second nationally.

The mission of the College of Law is to "provide a superior legal education for its students, to engage in leading-edge research regarding law-related questions, to disseminate the resulting scholarship to scholars, legal professionals and the public, and to perform professional and public service activities consistent with its teaching and research obligations." (Source: University of Iowa Law School Strategic Plan, May 1999). The College is committed to the teaching of legal writing. The normal teaching load for faculty is twelve hours.

In 1998-99, the Self-Study year, the College consisted of 50 full-time faculty members and 682 students. Forty-one of that faculty total were tenured, two were on the tenure-track, and seven were on the clinical track. In addition, the College of Law had 11 adjunct faculty members and two visiting faculty members in 1998-99. Of the total number of students, 664 were candidates for the J.D. degree (Juris Doctorate), 12 were candidates for the Master's degree in International and Comparative Law (LL.M.), and six were visiting students. Since 1995, the student body has included degree candidates from 27 countries. The College also offers joint degrees with other units of the University. In 1998-99, there were 37 students in joint degree programs at the University. In that same year, 14 joint degrees were awarded; seven were the joint J.D./M.B.A. degrees.

The College of Law is located in the Boyd Law Building. The Site Visitation Team judged the building to be in very good condition and attractive for the heavy use it gets on a day-by-day basis. The Self-Study stated that the building needed upgrading (electronically) and that clinical space and storage areas were inadequate.

**Analysis:**

**Strengths**

The Site Visitation Team commended the University for its outstanding law school. It noted that the student body was diverse (approximately 20 percent of its enrollment came from ethnic and racial underrepresented groups), had fine academic credentials, was actively engaged in the classroom and field experiences, and seemed to be pleased with their legal education.

The Team report described the faculty as diverse, although both it and the Self-Study noted that the percentage of minority faculty had declined from the time of the 1993 visit (from 13 percent to 10 percent). The report indicated that faculty took their teaching responsibilities seriously, were accessible to students, were productive in scholarship, and were involved in public service activities.

The curriculum, the Site Visitation Team noted, had great breadth. The Team was favorably impressed by the strength of the faculty and the extensive offerings in International and Comparative Law. The Team also commended the College's commitment to developing the legal writing skills of students. By keeping first-year class sections small, the College has provided students with increased opportunities to receive feedback on their writing skills.

Other strengths identified by the Site Visitation Team included the library, the experienced administrative team (the dean has the second-longest tenure of law school deans in the United States), and the facilities.

### **Areas Identified for Improvement (and Accreditation Responses)**

The American Bar Association's Committee on Accreditation encourages institutions preparing Self-Studies to provide reports that do more than just highlight achievements and strengths. It suggests institutions also identify areas that can be improved over time, through changes in the curriculum, faculty and student service additions, facilities upgrade, or organizational restructuring. It is important to note that these concerns tend to be relatively minor and the recommendations that the accreditation organization provides are suggestions, not mandates.

The following paragraph is taken from the Site Visitation Team's summary. The point to be emphasized is the final sentence: "the team agrees [with the Self-Study] that these issues and concerns merit close attention and, ultimately, resolution."

These [issues and concerns] include: enhancing the credentials of the school's student body as measured by the LSAT and GPA while maintaining diversity in all senses of that term; increasing the size of the LL.M. program; dealing with a number of curricular issues; resolving concerns about the equitable allocation of teaching responsibilities including teaching load, supervision of independent research, and advising student journals and trial and appellate advocacy programs; finding additional space in the Boyd Law Building for the growing library collection, the school's clinical programs as well as student organizations and activities; supporting the College of Law's ambitions for its excellent Law Library including funding collection growth, housing this growing collection, and hiring a staff large enough to support the collection and an appropriate level of service to the Law School community, the University and the bench and bar; and, having sufficient staffing for admissions, student recruitment, and legal career services. The site inspection team agrees that these issues and concerns merit close attention and, ultimately, resolution. (page 50)

### Concerns

The Site Visitation Team's report mentioned two lesser concerns that had not been discussed in the Self-Study. The first related to faculty resignations. As expressed in an open meeting and interviews with faculty and students, the departure of some tenured faculty members was seen by some with "considerable consternation" while others viewed these events as opportunities for the College of Law. The second was a more nebulous concern. Acknowledging that the College has enjoyed remarkable stability, administratively, some wondered if by the time of the next accreditation, there would be changes in the structure of the College.

*Response: The College did not address either of these concerns in its letter of December 13, 2000.*

The College did respond on December 13, 2000, to a major concern which the Accreditation Committee reported to the University in November 2000. The Committee believed that Standard 305(f) was not met. That standard enumerates ten factors relating to the approval and supervision of externship field placements. It stated that the Site Visitation Team had not seen enough evidence to believe that adequate supervision or evaluation in the externship opportunities were occurring<sup>9</sup>.

*Response: The College pointed out that it has three distinct and highly individualized types of externship field placements. It then described how each externship -- regular, "conflict" clinical, and non-clinical -- are identified, staffed, and how students are evaluated. The response further clarified such matters as the relationship of clinical staff with the University, how curricular reviews were conducted, and how student attendance and participation is assessed. [Based on this explanation, the Accreditation Committee concluded the standard was met.]*

### Conclusion

The report commented on the noteworthy performance of graduates on the Iowa Bar Examination and the placement of graduates. As cited on page 4 of Chapter 9 of the Self-Study, from June 1993 through February 1999, the Iowa Bar examination was offered 12 times. Approximately 40 percent of the graduates of the College of Law took the Iowa Bar Examination, with an 83.5 percent passage rate. In only two of 12 times did the pass rate by all students from other law schools exceed the percentage of the graduates of the University of Iowa.

Of those graduating in the Class of 1998, 99 percent reported (as of October 25, 1999) they were employed. Of that class, 38.6 percent remained in Iowa. The remaining class members were employed in 29 different states. Salary appears to be a major factor in the choice of location of students. The median salary reported by 1998 class graduates was \$40,000. Those who stayed in-state had a median income of \$32,000 while those who were employed out-of-state reported a median salary of \$62,000.

Copies of the Self-Study, Site Visit report, and correspondence between the institution and accrediting organization are on file in the Board Office.

  
Charles R. Kniker

Approved:   
Frank J. Stork