

# Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law

## 2014-15 PRAC Annual Report on Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

### **Accreditation**

Indiana University McKinney School of Law (McKinney School of Law), while a part of the IUPUI campus and thus included in the campus requirements for accreditation under the North Central Association's Higher Learning Commission (NCA HLC), is also subject to accreditation by the American Bar Association (ABA). The ABA conducts a full sabbatical site evaluation every seven (7) years. Additionally, every law school is required to complete a comprehensive Annual Questionnaire to ensure continued compliance with accrediting Standards. McKinney's last site visit by the ABA was in October 2009. Notification of full reaccreditation was received on 11 May 2011. (For additional information about the ABA accreditation process, please visit [http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/misc/legal\\_education/2010\\_a\\_ba\\_accreditation\\_brochure\\_authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/misc/legal_education/2010_a_ba_accreditation_brochure_authcheckdam.pdf).) McKinney will undergo a full sabbatical site evaluation at an as yet undetermined date during the 2016-17 academic year (AY).

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

For the 2015-16 AY, the ABA Standards do not require the establishment of student learning outcomes (SLOs). As a result, assessment has been input-based rather than outcome-based (bar passage rates and employment statistics). McKinney School of Law has mentioned in previous PRAC Reports that SLOs and assessment have been contemplated for inclusion in the ABA Standards for several years. In August of 2014, the ABA adopted revised Standards. The Standards now include SLOs and Assessment of Student Learning. From the *2015-2016 Standards for Approval of Law Schools (Revised Standards)*:

#### ***Standard 301. Objectives of Program of Legal Education***

- (a) A law school shall maintain a rigorous program of legal education that prepares its students, upon graduation, for admission to the bar and for effective, ethical, and responsible participation as members of the legal profession.
- (b) A law school shall establish and publish learning outcomes designed to achieve these objectives.

#### ***Standard 302. Learning Outcomes***

A law school shall establish learning outcomes that shall, at a minimum, include competency in the following:

- (a) Knowledge and understanding of substantive and procedural law;
- (b) Legal analysis and reasoning, legal research, problem-solving, and written and oral communication in the legal context;

- (c) Exercise of proper professional and ethical responsibilities to clients and the legal system; and
- (d) Other professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession.

***Standard 314. Assessment of Student Learning***

A law school shall utilize both formative and summative assessment methods in its curriculum to measure and improve student learning and provide meaningful feedback to students.

***Standard 315. Evaluation of Program of Legal Education, Learning Outcomes, and Assessment Methods***

The dean and the faculty of a law school shall conduct ongoing evaluation of the law school's program of legal education, learning outcomes, and assessment methods; and shall use the results of this evaluation to determine the degree of student attainment of competency in the learning outcomes and to make appropriate changes to improve the curriculum.

The revised Standards apply beginning in the 2016-2017 academic year to students matriculating that year. McKinney School of Law is currently in the planning stage of developing a system of assessment that will ensure compliance with the new Standards by the 2016-2017 academic year. Our internal accreditation committee, the American Bar Association Reaccreditation Committee (ABARC) has just formed a subcommittee to develop a long term assessment plan that will be presented to the Dean for consideration and implementation in the spring of 2016. We look forward to being able to report on that plan in upcoming PRAC Reports.

The first step in the efforts of the faculty co-chairs of the ABARC were to spear-head the process of developing a new Mission Statement and Statement of Educational Objectives for McKinney. That process, which included the efforts of many different groups of McKinney stakeholders – students, faculty, staff, and alumni, concluded in mid-2015 when the faculty approved the following Statement of Educational Objectives (SEOs):

A McKinney graduate will be prepared to:

1. Build upon an existing base of legal knowledge and skills to succeed in the graduate's chosen career path;
2. Exercise sound professional judgment and fulfill ethical responsibilities;
3. Exhibit a high degree of competence in legal analysis, reasoning, research, and writing;
4. Demonstrate acumen in oral communication in the legal context;
5. Serve as a leader or contributing team member in professional settings;
6. Transition readily to law practice or other government, non-profit, or private sector employment;
7. Leverage a network of professional relationships; and

8. Appreciate that excellence as a lawyer requires individual, life-long effort.

The McKinney ABARC subcommittee on assessment will be working on a long-term cycle of assessment to measure the six (6) aforementioned SEOs.

The ABA Standards do not require SLOs for programs of education other than the J.D.; however, the NCA HLC requires SLOs for each credential-granting program at IUPUI. In 2011, McKinney developed SLOs for our LL.M. and S.J.D. degrees. The corresponding SLOs are:

**Students who graduate with an LL.M. degree will:**

1. Identify and apply fundamental principles of their selected specialty track of study.
2. Apply strategies for identifying, analyzing, researching and solving legal problems.
3. Analyze a topic in the law related to their selected specialty track of study and write a substantial research paper of publishable quality on said topic (if required by the track of study).

**Students who graduation with an S.J.D. degree will:**

1. Compose and defend a dissertation of publishable quality that constitutes an original and substantial scholarly contribution of the areas of law in which it is written.

McKinney matriculated its first class of students for its new Master of Jurisprudence (MJ) program in the fall of 2014. That program is in the process of developing its SLOs.

**Student Learning Outcome Measurement**

McKinney currently measures SLOs in two ways: Indiana bar passage rates and employment statistics.

***McKinney School of Law bar passage rates (most recent data available) for first-time takers\****

Date	McKinney Candidates	McKinney # Passing	McKinney Pass Rate
February 2015	57	39	68.42%
July 2015	177	147	83.05%

McKinney's bar passage rates continue to meet or exceed ABA accreditation standards for bar passage rates. However, in an effort to improve the passage rate of our graduates, for the spring 2015 semester, McKinney added two 1-credit pass/fail bar preparatory courses. Those course were taught by our academic support staff person.

The faculty elected to continue our efforts in this vein but the course has been finessed into a 2-credit pass/fail elective titled *Proficiency in Analytical Strategies and Skills* and it will be taught by one of our clinical faculty members.

For past McKinney School of Law bar exam statistics through February 2006, please visit <http://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/students/bar-exam/>.

It is important to note that passing the bar exam is only one part of the licensing process adopted by the Indiana Supreme Court, which also includes the requirements that an applicant pass the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE), and graduate from an ABA accredited law school.

### ***Employment statistics***

Our SLOs can also be measured by our employment statistics, as arguably one reason students receive employment offers is because they have demonstrated mastery of the SLOs, which are examples of some of the skills required of attorneys.

Employment status (9 months after graduation) for the 270 of the 279 graduates from the class of 2014 who reported their status is as follows:

- 90.37% employed
- 1.48% enrolled in a full-time degree program
- 5.56% seeking work; and
- 2.59% NOT seeking work at this time.

The class of 2014 includes December 2013, May 2014, and August 2014 degree certifications.

Additional employment information can be found at <http://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/careers/employment-statistics/index.html>.