



The Role of Academic Standards in Bar Passage

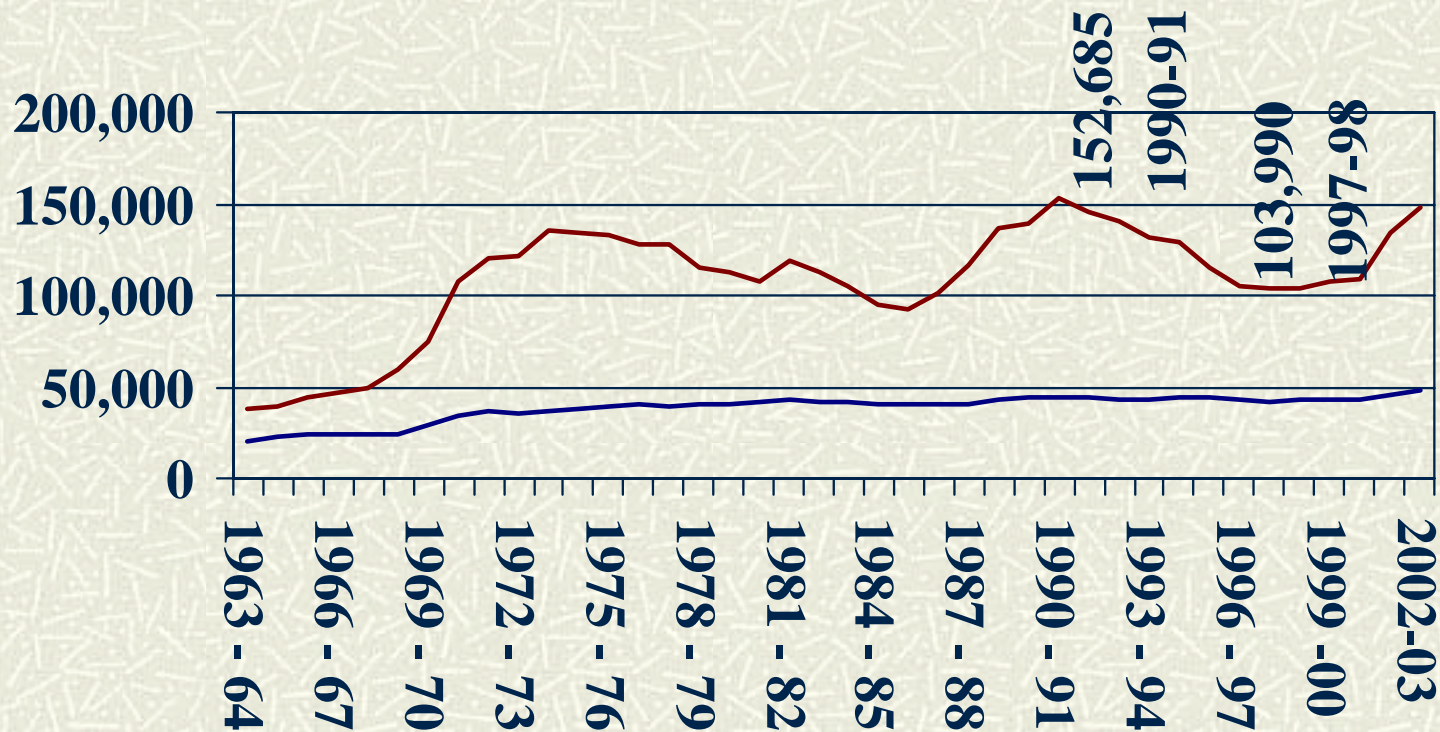
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Why We Need Academic Standards

- The desire to retain students
 - The need to separate some students
 - Their interests
 - The school's interest
 - The public interest
 - If it “Takes a Village,” then what is my role?
 - Village elder?
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Why We Need Academic Standards

LSATS Administered & First Year Enrollment



Why We Need Academic Standards

First Year Attrition, 1981-2001



Models of Academic Attrition Policies

- The “On Track to Meet Graduation GPA Requirement” Model
 - E.g., must maintain a 2.00 GPA at all times
 - Usually a probationary period to raise GPA
 - First assessed at end of first year
 - Stair Step Model
 - E.g., Dismissed if less than a 1.90 GPA at end of first year or less than 2.00 thereafter
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Models of Academic Attrition Policies

- Alternative Low Grade Minimums (the “Control the Soft Grader” Model)
 - Either less than required GPA, **OR**
 - More than *X* number of grades below a certain level
 - E.g., 8 credits of failing grades; more than 10 credits of D, D+ or F
 - Variations:
 - How low the grades must be
 - Electives versus required courses
 - Multi-Tiered: 3 unsatisfactory [68-74] grades after 2d year, or 4 such grades in total, or 3 grades below 68 in required classes
 - This model throws out *high*, but not low grades
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Models of Academic Attrition Policies

- **Curricular Control Model**
 - Requires that students below a certain GPA take listed courses, usually bar content classes
 - **Discretionary Dismissal**
 - Students below a certain GPA are categorically dismissed
 - Those with slightly higher GPAs go through an individualized determination
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Models of Academic Attrition Policies

- Early Intervention Model
 - A few schools will dismiss at the end of the first semester
 - Variant: Automatic readmission after sitting out one semester
 - “Academic Bankruptcy” Model (South Texas College of Law)
 - Only slightly over half return
 - Bar passage rates comparable at same GPAs
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General Observations

- “Generally speaking mushrooms grow quickly”
 - Correct answer: “Generally speaking, mushrooms grow quickly.”
 - Student Answer: “Generally, speaking mushrooms grow quickly.”
 - The teacher has successfully assessed the student’s knowledge of Fungi
- What things are your Faculty testing for?
 - The same things as the Bar Examiners?
 - A matter of Faculty awareness

General Observations

- Faculty commitment to aligning grading to bar passage
 - Competing pedagogical goals (e.g., Clinics)
 - Effect of the Faculty's own law school experience
- Administrative Commitment
 - Frequency of exceptions?
- Suggested or mandatory grading curves
 - Don't buy high and sell low, i.e., mis-time the market

Setting the Grade Curve at the High Point of Credentials

**Grade Curve
Established**

LSATS Administered

