

## AALS COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM

### SURVEY OF INNOVATIONS IN LAW SCHOOL CURRICULA

The AALS has decided to focus on the issue of curriculum reform in American Law Schools, and would like to set up a process that enables law schools to share information about what is being done, help each other develop new initiatives, and generally catalyze the effort to bring law teaching into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first step in this process is a survey of current curriculum reform efforts. We understand that surveys come thick and fast these days, but we promise that this is not an effort to collect information that will then sit on someone's shelf, or in someone's hard drive. First, you'll receive information in return, information about new ideas and implementation strategies that other law schools have developed. Second, we'll use the results of the survey to design various settings where law school faculty and administrators can come together to share ideas and develop plans about reforming the law school curriculum.

The following questions are designed to be answered by brief statements, sometimes one or two words, sometimes one or two sentences. We would be delighted if you want to attach a longer description of any program or plan that you regard as particularly worth sharing. In addition, feel free to attach documents you've already prepared for other purposes.

#### I. First Year

##### 1. Do you have an elective in the first year? **yes**

If so, what does it consist of?

A limited number of courses specially designed for the first year

A limited number of upper division courses

Any upper division course the student chooses to take

Something else (please describe)

**First year students are required to take Legal Writing II a three-credit course.  
There are five different topics taught and students are allowed to express a**

**preference for the section they want. All students receive their first or second choice if at all possible.**

2. Do you offer or require any skills courses or training in the first year other than legal writing and/or Legal Research? If so, please describe.

**No other skills courses are currently taught in the first year.**

If you offer or require legal writing, is it something other than a separate class taught by specially-hired, non-tenure track instructors? If so, please describe.

**We are planning to section a fall semester class into sections of approximately 30-35 for fall 2006. Faculty will be required to include at least two writing assignments. This is in addition to our required first semester writing course.**

3. Aside from the electives and skills courses described above, do you require any course other than Torts, Contracts, Civil Procedure, Criminal Law, Property and Constitutional Law?

**no**

If so, what is it?

Legal Methods  
Regulatory Law  
International Law  
Evidence  
Criminal Procedure  
Theories of Law  
Other, please describe

4. Do you offer a separate curriculum in the first year that students can choose, or to which they are assigned? If so, please describe.

**We are planning to offer a section of Criminal Law in the spring semester that all students in the bottom 5% of the class will be required to take. This will fill one-half the seats; the other one-half will be by student choice. The basic subject matter will remain Criminal Law and satisfy that requirement, but there will be an additional analytic and writing skills component.**

5. Have you made significant changes or innovations in your first year curriculum recently other than those described in response to the foregoing questions? If so please describe.

**No. We did offer an Introduction to Lawyering Course for many years which incorporated an introduction to skills, to jurisprudence, to problem solving, and to legal methods. Because it was very unpopular with faculty and with students, we abandoned this course.**

## II. Second and Third Years

1. Do you offer a specialized track or concentration program in any of the following areas?

Business Law  
Public Law  
International Law  
Transnational Law  
Social Justice  
Criminal Law and Procedure  
Other, please describe

### **Environmental Law**

Requires courses that other students can take as well (please specify)

**Environmental Law, Administrative Law, Ecology and 5 distributional requirements**

Offers special courses (please describe)

Requires special courses (please describe) **Env. Writing I and II but this is waived for JD students**

Provides placements, internships or clinical program (please describe) **9 credits of internships**

Grants a certificate (please tell us for what) **MSEL degree (see below)**

Other features (please describe) **We offer a Masters of Studies in Environmental Law which is an additional degree. Many students take this as a joint degree. It has required courses and distributional requirements. See answers above.**

2. Apart from the standard live client clinics, and the clinical programs described in your answer to the previous question, do you offer any other kinds of clinical programs? If so, please describe.

**On campus live client clinics are the South Royalton Legal Clinic (poverty and family law) and the Env. & Natural Resources Clinic. Off campus clinics are the Legislative Clinic and the Mediation Field Work. Field-placement opportunities are the Semester in Practice, the Environmental Semester in Washington, the Judicial Externship, the part-time J.D. externship, the Conservation Law Foundation externship, the M.S.E.L. externship, and the LL.M. externship.**

3. What joint degree or accelerated degree programs do you offer?

**Joint J.D. and Masters of Studies in Environmental Law Degree; Joint J.D. and Masters of Environmental Management with the Yale School of Forestry and Env. Management; Dual degree with the University of Cergy-Pontoise in France; dual J.D./M.S.E.L. with Univ. So. Carolina & Univ. So. Dak.; Joint M.S.E.L. and Masters**

**of Natural Resources with Univ. of Vermont; joint M.S.E.L./M.B.A. with Tuck School of Business**

4. Other than the programs described above, do you have any other interdisciplinary programs of note?

5. Have you made significant changes or innovations in your second and third year curriculum recently other than those described in response to the foregoing questions? If so please describe.

**We have one comparative law class each semester that is taught by a faculty member from a European law school. Students receive half the instruction here early in the semester, usually over two weekends. The second half of the instruction occurs during our fall or spring recess on site. One course is with the University of Trento (Italy) the other with the University of Seville. Both courses are co-taught by a Vermont Law School faculty member who is responsible for evaluation.**

III. Curricular Reform Process

1. Did you gather data in connection with any of the curriculum reforms described earlier? If yes, and if you can share them, please attach a copy or describe their general findings.

**no**

2. How did the most significant curricular change in your school in the last 10 years come about - - who initiated the change and by what process?

**Faculty interest generated the changes. Increasing student interest fueled the changes.**

IV. Next Steps

1. What information would you like to receive about curricular reform?

**What are other schools doing particularly in the upper division? What additional degrees and certificates do others offer? What are the certificate requirements?**

2. Would you be interested in presenting any curricular reform(s) that you are undertaking in a special session at an AALS annual meeting? Which one(s)?

**I would be willing to present on our comparative law classes or our dual degree programs. Of course, our Director of International and Comparative Law Programs (Linda Smiddy) is the expert on the international issues.**

If so, would you be interested in doing so at the next (2007) meeting? It will be held in San Francisco, and spec

**yes**