

Report of the Wisconsin Law Alumni Association Board of Visitors

Introduction:

On October 25-26, 1981 the Board of Visitors of the Wisconsin Law Alumni Association conducted its annual inspection of the University of Wisconsin Law School. The Board has responsibility to review the School's "... facilities, curriculum, placement, admissions and public relations ..." To this end, during our visit we met with faculty, staff and students as well as visiting many of the regular classes in the School. In this, our 12th annual report, we will present our current observations and recommendations.

Observation:

Classroom teaching. Our collective impression of the quality of instruction remains extremely high. In fact, we facetiously asked if the classes we have been seeing were "staged" for our benefit. Experienced teachers appear to have lost none of their zeal and new professors are fulfilling the promise which brings them to our Law School.

Along this line we continue to see the value of a balance between large lecture classes and the small sections available to all students. The obvious economics of the large lecture should not be allowed to outweigh the academic advantages of small sections.

We learned that as a continuation of the recent self-study, a curriculum review is underway. The purpose is to assess all aspects of scheduling and course offerings. We commend this effort and offer some specific recommendations later in this report.

We note that progress has been made in correcting scheduling problems noted by students. The staff is now scheduling courses for two semesters at a time, significantly increasing predictability for students. We recognize the problem of scheduling teachers a semester in advance in light of the necessarily liberal leave policy but hope that the students' interests can be accommodated as far as possible.

Last year we noted a good deal of criticism by students of sign-up procedures in the placement office. We were happy to learn that a new system has been instituted and appears to have solved the previous problems.

We note also that there is a generally high level of student satisfaction and school spirit. While the many improvements in the Law School undoubtedly play a part in this spirit we pay tribute to the students themselves for taking more interest in their school and ours. Last spring's Convocation was indicative of the change in students' interests over the last five years.

Recommendations:

Our first recommendation is to increase the visibility of the Board of Visitors. While we have no reason to believe that criticisms are unheard because the critics do not know whom to address, we are concerned that students are not well enough informed of the existence and function of the Board. More publicity, we feel, is in order and we urge consideration of the addition of the Student Bar president or his/her designee to our Board.

We find great and obvious value in clinical and simulation courses. While recognizing the expense of such courses we are concerned that these programs may suffer from their uncertain financial status. We urge that they be given permanent budget status even if this means at a somewhat reduced level from their current funding.

We remain concerned with the part-time evening program enacted by the legislature three years ago. The number of entering students is low, but we are particularly troubled by the even smaller number who continue in the program beyond the first year. The cost and inconvenience of scheduling second and third year courses for such small numbers may well outweigh the benefit to this handful of students. We think that the need for part-time study may be served by early morning, noon and late afternoon scheduling. We suggest that this program be watched closely, with prompt recommendation of legislative repeal unless the number of students served increases or other irreplaceable benefits are demonstrated.



We recommend that the faculty develop a student advisor program. We are not suggesting that each student be assigned an advisor, but rather that the existence of certain advisors be made known to the student body. We are concerned that students may not know presently whom to turn to for course selection advice.

We urge an increase in the number of visitors who present guest lectures at the Law School. We feel that visitors from law practice, business or government service can be valuable in the student experience. While substantive topics abound, we also believe that mere exposure is of sufficient value to warrant the trouble of increasing these programs.

Finally, while we commend the on-going curriculum study and the improvements already made in class scheduling, we urge that further refinements be introduced in scheduling to the end that popular courses are spread out.

Students wishing to take several popular courses may find that they are all scheduled at conflicting times. Courses which are logical sequences of complements may likewise be impossible to take because of time or semester conflicts. We sympathize with the desire of some students and faculty to free up afternoons or create long weekends. Nevertheless, the abundance of courses seems to dictate that more days of the week and hours of the day be used to schedule classes.

Conclusion:

We find that despite lingering problems and obvious budget pressures the University of Wisconsin Law School is strong, indeed perhaps as strong as it has been in many years. The quality of faculty and students continues to climb, together with their satisfaction with the activities of the School. The adoption of our recommendations, we believe, will add to an already strong school.

Finally, we note with sadness the passing of Professor George Young. Throughout his career as a faculty member and as dean he exhibited an abiding interest in the well-being of our school. This interest was complemented by a keen sense of humor and a sincere warmth for the bar, the student body and the entire Law School community.

Submitted by:

Roy B. Evans, Chairman
Thomas E. Anderson,

Vice-Chairman

Lloyd A. Barbee

Henry A. Brachtl

Kirby O. Bouthilet

Peter C. Christianson

Glenn R. Coates

Susan Wiesner Hawley

Justice Nathan S. Heffernan

Howard A. Pollack

Judge John W. Reynolds

William Rosenbaum

Attending the State Bar of Wisconsin Spring Convention in Madison, April 21-23?

You are invited to a cocktail reception to be held at the
Law School, Thursday, April 22, from 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Shuttle bus service from the Concourse to the Law School.

Tours of the Law Building.

Relaxation and the fellowship of friends.

Hope you can attend!