

The Complete Lawyer

FOCUS ON



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Needed: A Comprehensive Legal Education

A comprehensive legal education includes interaction with judges, scholars, and clients—the process of “being there”

A TCL Interview: Allyson W. Haynes

TCL Innovation in law school programs often goes unheralded. What single feature of your law school’s program do you believe is particularly innovative and worthwhile? Please describe briefly

Our school’s library (which, like our school, is only 3 years old) has been recognized as innovative and groundbreaking. It is primarily online and contains over 300,000 titles that are accessible to all our students and faculty through the library’s website. The site has comprehensive searching ability and interactive features allowing the reader to highlight sections, cut and paste, bookmark, etc. Technology is a very important part of keeping current with the fast-changing world of information.

TCL Earlier this year, two major studies on legal education were unveiled. The first (Educating Lawyers) was the product of research on teaching and learning by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The second “Best Practices in Legal Education” was compiled under the auspices of the Clinical Legal Education Association

- a. Are you familiar with the Carnegie Foundation study? No.
- b. Are you familiar with the CLEA Best Practices study? Yes.

c. Are you familiar with other studies? If yes, please specify.

The MacCrate Report.

TCL Whether or not you're familiar with these studies, do the core findings and recommendations resonate with your own experience as a legal educator? In your opinion, is there a need for such changes in legal education now?

Yes, I believe these findings reflect the sentiments of the majority of recent law graduates as well as many of us in legal education. A comprehensive legal education is not confined to case law and statutory analysis but includes interaction with judges, scholars, and clients—the process of "being there."

TCL What one change might be made by legal educators around the country that would have the most profound and positive impact on preparing law students for practice?

I continue to believe that one of the most important aspects of legal education is legal writing: students' ability to translate their knowledge into well-written and coherent analytical written material. That is the primary way that most students will be judged by their colleagues and judges. Legal educators could greatly assist students by incorporating some kind of written analysis and feedback across the curriculum. In particular, actual drafting of pleading, contracts, motions and memoranda allows students to contextualize what they are learning and better express their knowledge. In addition, the use of technology in the classroom can greatly facilitate the immersion of students into the "real world" of practice by allowing them to experience situations virtually.

TCL Is it likely that you or your law school will be considering changes in its educational program any time soon?

Particularly as a new school, we are constantly considering ways to improve by analyzing all aspects of our educational program, including externships and opportunities for out-of-classroom experiences. We have also incorporated a "professionalism series" into our curriculum whereby local lawyers and judges share with our students their experiences and advice about the profession of law in a community.

TCL How might the practicing bar or legal educators outside your school help implement these changes?

Our school has a very successful externship program, which allows our students to get meaningful experiences in a wide variety of legal fora, including judicial, governmental, educational and non-profit sites. The extensive participation of individuals in the legal community with our externship program benefits our

students by broadening their education and viewpoint, while benefiting the community in turn.