



Innovations in First Year Curriculum

Friday, March 21, 2008

9:00 am – 5:00 pm

**American University Washington College of Law
4801 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Room 603
Washington, DC 20016**

Registration required (no charge)

To register, please go to www.wcl.american.edu/secle/registration

**For further information, please contact: Office of Special Events & Continuing
Legal Education,**

American University Washington College of Law

Phone: 202.274.4075; Fax: 202.274.4079; or secle@wcl.american.edu

Innovations in First Year Curriculum

We live in a moment when positive, thoughtful, and exciting change in the nature of the first year legal education is not only possible, it is essential. Affirmation of the importance of rethinking the first year is evident in the Carnegie Foundation Report issued in 2007, the Best Practices for Legal Education project, and most recently in the Session at the Annual Meeting of the AALS in January 2008 (Reassessing Our Role As Scholars and Educators in Light of Change).

The systematic study of legal education did not begin with the Carnegie Report, the Best Practices project, or the AALS effort. In 1992, the MacCrate Commission of the ABA released a report on the interrelationship between legal education and the practice of law, finding that while schools were succeeding in teaching legal doctrine, the pedagogy was not sufficiently connected to the practice of law. Since that time, we have come to realize that innovations in the upper level curriculum will fall flat if built on an outdated foundation, particularly when the first year curriculum is hauntingly familiar to that offered a century ago.

On March 21, 2008, the American University Washington College of Law will continue the inquiry with a program, "Innovations in First Year Curriculum." This event will bring together academic leaders to discuss some of the dynamic changes in theory and pedagogy related to the first year experience.

Our panelists will discuss the extent to which first year programs have and can change. How do the innovations at various law schools break down barriers between first year courses or provide exposure to foundational concepts that have been missing from conventional first year offerings? What has been the experience of those who have interjected into the first year various fields or disciplines to enrich the first year experience, such as international law, law and economics, experiential learning, and legal history? What is the role of electives and other innovations in the first year?

What are the options and obstacles affecting the process of achieving change in the first year curriculum? How have law schools dealt with resistance to change from various constituencies including faculty, alumni, and the bar? What steps have been taken to ease the transition away from a century-old curriculum?

Distinguished Panelists

Jane H. Aiken, Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center

Bernard W. Bell, Professor of Law, Herbert Hanoach Scholar, and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Faculty, The State University of New Jersey Rutgers School of Law

Susan Bryant, Professor of Law and Director of Clinical Programs, The City University of New York School of Law

Fernando Carrillo-Flórez, Chief Advisor, Inter-American Development Bank

Carol L. Chomsky, Professor of Law, Coordinator of the Early Career Teaching Program, University of Minnesota Law School

Robert D. Dinerstein, Professor of Law and Director, Disability Rights Clinic, American University Washington College of Law

Mark A. Drumbl, Class of 1975 Alumni Professor of Law and Director, Transnational Law Institute, Washington & Lee University School of Law

Christine Farley, Professor of Law, Associate Dean for Faculty and Academic Affairs, American University Washington College of Law

Paul Figley, Legal Rhetoric Instructor, American University Washington College of Law

Thomas M. Franck, Murry and Ida Becker Professor of Law Emeritus, New York University School of Law, and Visiting Professor of Law, American University Washington College of Law

Amanda Frost, Assistant Professor of Law, American University Washington College of Law

Carolyn Grose, Associate Professor of Law, William Mitchell College of Law

Claudio Grossman, Dean and Raymond Geraldson Scholar for International and Humanitarian Law, American University Washington College of Law

Nienke Grossman, Fellow and Instructor, Georgetown University Law Center

William Henderson, Associate Professor, Indiana School of Law

Rosalie Jukier, Associate Professor of Law, McGill University, Faculty of Law

Michael Millemann, Jacob A. France Professor of Public Interest Law, University of Maryland School of Law

John B. Mitchell, Professor of Law, Co-Director of Faculty Development, Director, Seattle University School of Law

Gregory S. Munro, Professor of Law, University of Montana School of Law

Andrew Popper, Professor of Law, Director, Integrated Curriculum Program, American University Washington College of Law

Mathias Riemann, Hessel E. Yntema Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law School

Lauren Robel, Dean and Val Nolan Professor of Law, Indiana University School of Law

James V. Rowan, Associate Dean for Experiential and Community-based Education and Research and Professor of Law, Northeastern University School of Law

Deborah Schmedermann, Co-coordinator, Writing & Representation: Advice & Persuasion, William Mitchell College of Law

Ann Shalleck, Professor of Law, Director of the Women and the Law Program, Carrington Shields Scholar, American University Washington College of Law

Alice M. Thomas, Associate Professor of Law, Carnegie Scholar, Howard University School of Law

Anthony Varona, Associate Professor of Law and Director of the S.J.D. Program, American University Washington College of Law

Robert Vaughn, Professor of Law, A. Allen King Scholar, American University Washington College of Law

Program

- 9:00-9:30 **Registration**
- 9:30-9:45 **Opening remarks, *Claudio Grossman*, Dean, American University Washington College of Law**
- 9:45-10:30 **Morning plenary: The Content of Curricular Transition:** Taking stock of curricular change, from MacCrate to Best Practices to Carnegie.
- What options and experiments are underway to transform the first year experience? (Reflections on experiences at individual law schools are invited.)
 - What is integrated and transcurricular teaching?
 - How does the renewed and provocative interest in narrative intersect with curricular reform?
 - What issues of race and gender affect the first year?
 - What has been the experience with first year electives, particularly international and comparative law?
- 10:30 **Coffee Break**
- 10:45-11:30 **Division into breakout groups, each led by a different speaker.**
The topics:
- What shortcomings, if any, exist in the conventional first year curriculum and do the innovations (existing and proposed) address those issues?
 - There are those who believe deeply that the first year works well. Why tamper with success?
 - First year electives address interests of students and faculty but both require a foundation of conventional doctrine and in many instances introduce complex and challenging subject matter not necessarily related to traditional first year offerings. Do electives facilitate or frustrate the goal of integration?
 - Non-traditional sequencing in the first year is interesting—but could be disruptive. What has been the experience with inter-terms, bridge week programs, and similar innovative developments?
- 11:30-12:15 **Reconvening of the whole with reports from the breakout sessions.**
This session will provide an opportunity for a dialogue including open-ended questions and answers.
- 12:15 **Lunch**
- 1:30-2:15 **Afternoon panel/plenary: Looking Forward: The Process and Potential of Curricular Transition**
- What are the options, obstacles and opportunities affecting the process of achieving change in the first year curriculum?
 - Assuming some level of resistance to change from various constituencies including students, faculty, alumni, and the bar, what strategies are effective?

- What steps have been taken to ease the transition away from a century-old curriculum? Which have been successful? What should be the goals, both from a substantive and process perspective, for the next ten years?
- How do we provide law teachers with opportunities for meaningful professional development in both developing new types of classes and learning new pedagogical skills?
- How do we create a sense of a collaborative project among first year teachers that transcends the isolation of standard classroom teaching?
- Can curricular innovation be used to help achieve the goal set out in the Model Rules of Professional Responsibility that lawyers should function as “public citizens having a special responsibility for the quality of justice”?
- From the perspective of implementation, as opposed to substance, what changes are underway to integrate more fully legal writing programs into the substance, doctrine, and theory of first year offerings?

2:15-3:00

Division into breakout groups, each led by a different speaker.

The topics:

- Curricular innovation allows us to think broadly about how people learn. What could be done through curricular innovation that helps us capitalize on our knowledge about the way in which information, ideas, theories' and strategies are understood?
- What lies ahead for legal writing programs in terms of curricular integration? What are the options, alternatives and likely outcomes if and when legal writing programs are fully integrated in conventional first year substantive courses?
- Innovation in the first year requires an investment of time and resources by deans and faculty. Should innovation be recognized or rewarded or is it a fundamental obligation of faculty? Is there anything to the critique that the time involved could be so substantial that it compromises critical doctrinal inquiry in specific subject matter areas and, therefore, undermines legal scholarship? What are the ways that a scholarship of curricular and pedagogical innovation can be more fully integrated into the scholarly endeavor?
- Part of the excitement inherent in curricular innovation involves introducing students to material taught historically in upper-level courses. There is a risk, however, that those fields will be diluted for first year students or cut into small pieces and distributed in portions of existing first year courses. How real is that risk?

3:00-3:45

Reconvening of the whole with reports from the breakout sessions.

This session will provide an opportunity for a dialogue including open-ended questions and answers.

3:45-4:00

Closing remarks

4:00-5:00

Reception