



2015 STRATEGIC PLAN  
For  
Experiential Learning  
**With Incorporated**  
**Implementation Recommendations**

*Approved, March 9, 2015*

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Based on the College’s mission statement, the charge to the committee, the committee’s research and discussion, a town hall with students, and faculty workshops, the following principles or working assumptions have emerged and been embraced by the committee. These are reflected in the specific recommendations that follow.

**Guiding Principles**

- The college should maintain curricular uniformity in the 1L year across the entire student cohort
- Research, writing and legal analysis remain the foundational skills that inform legal education
- As enrollment in individual courses declines, opportunities to introduce skills training and other interactive teaching methods in the classroom increases, as should the expectation that these will be utilized
- Academic advising and career counseling go hand in hand and should begin early and occur often
- All students should be provided a robust suite of experiential learning opportunities that prepare students for a wide array of career options
- Employment demographics for UF Law graduates are unlikely to return to the pre-“great recession” distribution where “Big Law” represented UF Law’s strongest employment category.

- Employer expectations concerning the skill set expected of new graduates have changed to reflect a greater interest in graduates who are “practice-ready”
- In the absence of exceptional circumstances, future faculty hiring should be driven by priorities identified by the faculty through the strategic planning process
- Strategic planning is an ongoing, iterative and adaptive process

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **REC. 1.0 BUILD BASIC SKILLS IN THE ADMITTED STUDENT COHORT PRIOR TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 1L YEAR.**

Rec. 1.1 **[Pre-Law Legal Writing Prep]** The College should offer a preparatory program in legal writing for admitted students.

Action 1.1.1 A team of faculty shall design a multi-unit on-line grammar exercise to be implemented as part of the mandatory 1L Orientation, overseen by a designated faculty member from the design team and the Office of Student Affairs. All first semester law students will be required to successfully complete the exercise. Units can be retaken until the student achieves the requirement. Completion of the test shall be monitored by the Dean of Student Affairs, in consultation with the designated instructor. The Dean of Student Affairs, in consultation with the designated instructor may waive the requirement under exceptional circumstances.

Action 1.1.2 The grammar exercise will be conducted as a pilot for two years. The designated instructor will prepare a report to the faculty that describes the results of year one no later than the end of the Fall term of year one, and again for year two, including completion rates on a unit by unit basis (e.g. number of times each unit was taken until successful completion is achieved). The faculty design team may make changes to the test before the second administration of the exercise based on the experience in year one.

Action 1.1.3 At the end of the two-year pilot, the faculty will consider whether to make the exercise permanent, taking into consideration the recommendation of the designated instructor, the design team and the Dean of Student Affairs.

Rec. 1.2 **[Undergraduate Legal Training]** The College should explore opportunities to further enhance pre-law education at UF, including courses or opportunities that provide skills training, while targeting the students most likely to matriculate at UF Law.

Action 1.2.1 The College shall develop and staff an “Introduction to the Legal Profession” undergraduate (3000 or 4000 classification) course that is taught by law faculty.

Action 1.2.2 The Admissions Committee shall serve as the standing Committee on Undergraduate Education and Outreach and may charge a sub-committee with developing and bringing forward further opportunities for law school faculty and staff to engage with undergraduate programs on the UF campus.

## **REC. 2.0 BUILD SKILLS AND PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN THE 1L YEAR**

**Rec. 2.1** **[Small Section Doctrinal Pilot Course]** As a two-year pilot project, for 2015-17, the College should offer three small sections of one doctrinal course offered in the first semester for each of the three 1L sections.

Action 2.1.1 The College should initiate a pilot project for Fall 2015 that creates 2 small section courses of 50 students per 1L section, one of which is introduction to lawyering (ITL).

Action 2.1.2 If practicable, by the Fall of 2016 the doctrinal small section course (not ITL) shall be further reduced to create 3 small section of 35 students each.

**Rec. 2.2** **[LR&W Synergies]** The small section program should include as a goal facilitating coordination between the doctrinal small section instructors and the legal research and writing instructors.

Action 2.2.2 The proposed further reduction in Fall 2016 to three 35-student sections in the doctrinal course should include consultation among the doctrinal, research and writing skills professors teaching the same students and administrative support to facilitate collaboration initiated by these professors.

**Rec. 2.3** **[Small Section Teaching Expectations]** A set of common expectations should be developed for all instructors assigned a first year small section to capitalize on the opportunity afforded by the smaller size.

*Note: These expectations should include:*

- *Collaboration with the ITL instructor for the section to achieve synergies*
- *Consultation with the LR and LW instructors for the section and coordination where appropriate*
- *Assigning at least one written exercise during the semester and providing individualized feedback to the student(s) on the assignment*

- *Providing students with structured guidance and practice on developing a strong answer to an essay exam*

**Rec. 2.4**     **[Intro. to Lawyering Course Enhancements]** During the Fall 2014 semester, The Dean should consult with the Director of Lawyering and Professionalism Programs and instructors teaching Introduction to Lawyering to determine priorities for additional resources (if any) that would enhance the Introduction to Lawyering course (such as providing adjunct small group leaders to facilitate discussion and enhance the feedback on role plays or simulations) and to estimate the cost of these enhancements.

**REC. 3.0**     **ENHANCE CURRICULUM COHERENCE AND INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATIVE FACULTY ENGAGEMENT**

Rec. 3.1     **[Operationalizing Practice Areas]** Guided by curriculum maps, the College should encourage tenure track, non-tenure track, and adjunct faculty to collaborate (or enhance collaboration) around practice areas (and certificates where these exist).

Rec. 3.2     **[Incentivizing Collaboration]** The College administration should provide incentives to faculty members or groups who develop new practice-area based collaborations

**REC. 4.0**     **ENHANCE SKILLS TRAINING IN SELECTED SMALL ENROLLMENT DOCTRINAL ELECTIVES**

Rec. 4.1     **[Small Enrollment Practicums]** The faculty should formally recognize a category of courses known as “practicums” that bridges traditional doctrinal pedagogy and skills training. For the purposes of this Plan and its implementation, skills training is defined as *“the actual practice or performance of the skill coupled with instructor evaluation, feedback and constructive criticism.”*). The term practicum refers to a doctrinal course in which some agreed-upon level of skills training is conducted as part of the course. For the purposes of the course catalog, practicums shall be defined as: “A category of course where theory and practice are integrated through skills training and experiential learning.”

Action 4.1.1     Taking into consideration available resources and other priorities, the Dean’s Office shall provide incentives for the development of new practicums, for repurposing existing courses, and for encouraging faculty to self-organize into “curriculum innovation incubators” for the purposes of promoting new pedagogical approaches.

Action 4.1.2     The Dean’s Office shall charge the Associate Dean for Faculty Development, advised by a doctrinal faculty member and a skills faculty

member, with developing a faculty enrichment series organized around the theme of curricular innovation.

Rec. 4.2 **[Skills Training Incentives]** The Dean should provide incentives for incorporating skills training into small enrollment doctrinal electives, especially newly created or converted practicums.

*Note: Solicitation of proposals and selection of the proposals to receive support for developing a skills training component (such as a curriculum development grant or professional development support) should be done through an open process coordinated by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Collaborations that include tenure-track faculty, non-tenure track skills faculty, practitioners, and faculty from other disciplines should be emphasized.*

Rec. 4.3 **[Maintaining a Diverse Curriculum]** In developing the College's global course schedule, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs should consider the inclusion of a diverse and robust array of courses offering skills training as a value.

Rec. 4.4 **[Future Skills Faculty Hiring]** Future skills faculty hiring practice should consider candidates' interest and experience in practice areas where greater skills/substantive collaboration has been identified as desirable or a priority.

Rec. 4.5 **[Non-Traditional Course Formats]** The College should encourage faculty to experiment with non-traditional course formats such as in-session and inter-session modules where these may provide educational benefits to students.

## **REC. 5.0 BUILD EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

Rec. 5.1 **[Clinical Priorities]** The College should expand its clinical offerings in the area of transactional law, and should explore opportunities in areas that diversify the substantive focus of the clinics and match student interest and likely career paths.

*Note: An urgent hiring priority should be given to a transactional clinic in the area of business law (entrepreneurship, innovation, intellectual property).*

Rec. 5.2 **[Externship Programming]** The College should encourage externship programming that integrates substantive course-work with substantively similar externships, which could take the form of "clinical externships" or externship clinics, something a number of other law schools do.

## **REC. 6.0 FACILITATE THE TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT: INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO INTEGRATED EXPERIENTIAL AND DISTANCE LEARNING**

Rec. 6.1 **[Semester-Away Program]** The College should create a “Semester Away” program to create opportunities to enhance teaching and experiential learning in urban employment centers.

Action 6.1.1 The College shall pilot an application-based “Semester Away” program that will launch in three cities (Washington D.C., Tallahassee and Miami/South Florida). The pilot will be offered in the Spring of 2016 and the Spring of 2017. (The pilot program will be Spring semester only).

Action 6.1.2 The Program’s minimum requirements will combine a placement for a maximum of 20 hours (extern or compensation-based) and 1 mandatory course.

- i. The mandatory course will be a 1-2 credit location-specific course designed to provide a “bridge to practice,” such as “Advanced Topics in Professionalism, coordinated by a faculty member who has a physical presence on-site for some part of the semester.
- ii. Students with externship-based placements may take no more than 12 credits total and those with compensation-based placement may take no more than 7 credits total during the Semester Away. In either case, students may take a maximum of 5 distance education credits beyond the mandatory practice course, assuming they don’t otherwise exceed the cap.

As a transitional matter, students in the pilot program may seek a waiver of the 6 credit externship cap, to obtain up to 9 such credits over the course of their law school career. In addition students in the program may take up to 6 externship credits, instead of the 5 credit limit currently imposed on Fall and Spring externs.

Action 6.1.3 The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs shall develop a process for monitoring and evaluating of the pilot program, including a report to the faculty at the end of each pilot year.

Rec. 6.1.1 **[Distance Education for Off-Campus Learning]** The College should prioritize developing and offering a set of distance education courses during every fall and spring semester that are available to students who wish to take advantage of the semester-away program.

## **REC. 7.0 UTILIZE DISTANCE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY AND OTHER REVENUE GENERATING MECHANISMS TO CAPITALIZE ON EXISTING STRENGTHS AND INVESTMENTS**

Rec. 7.1 **[Faculty-Generated Revenue Streams]** The College should support faculty initiatives to explore the feasibility of offering revenue-generating certificates and

degree programs for non-lawyers, and continuing legal education programs using distance technology in fields where the law school has faculty expertise.

**REC. 8.0 STAFFING SKILLS TRAINING ADMINISTRATION**

Rec. 8.1 **[Experiential Learning Administrator]** The College should create and staff an administrative position focused on experiential learning to serve as the point person and advisor to the Dean in this area. This position would be charged with coordinating, facilitating and serving as a resource to faculty and programs, and with advising the Dean. Experiential learning encompasses legal skills instruction, clinics, and hybrid instruction, such as practicums.

Rec. 8.2 **[Experiential Learning Committee]** The College should create a committee to coordinate experiential learning initiatives at the College, review the clinical, skills, and externship curriculum on an ongoing basis and work with the administrator created in Recommendation 9.1 to coordinate the experiential curriculum and develop new experiential learning initiatives.

**REC. 9.0 CATALYZE STUDENT RESOURCES THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP FUNDING AND FACULTY- PRACTITIONER COLLABORATIONS**

Rec. 9.1 **[Scholarship funding priorities]** The College should continue to increase the pool of funds available for scholarships to enable students to defray tuition and related expenses, and to provide stipends for off-site experiential learning opportunities such as externships.

Rec. 9.2 **[Support Student Practice Area Organizations]** The College should encourage stronger relationships between faculty, student bar affiliate organizations and the practicing bar.

*Note: Incentives could be provided to both the student affiliates and the faculty to encourage these relationships, such as student and guest speaker travel and conference scholarship support.*

**REC. 10.0 CAPTURING AND CELEBRATING WHAT WE ALREADY DO**

Rec. 10.1 The College should capture and communicate its curriculum in a clearer manner that assists students and prospective students and accurately reflects the College's leadership in legal education.

**REC. 11.0 FOSTER ADAPTIVE LEARNING THROUGH ONGOING STRATEGIC PLANNING**

Rec. 11.1 **[Standing Strategic Planning Committee]** The College should maintain a strategic planning committee and a robust planning process at all times. The

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charge to the strategic planning committee and the committee's progress towards its goals should be reviewed annually.

Rec. 11.2 **[Periodic Strategic Plan Review]** At least every three years, the administration and the committee should undertake a review of all initiatives undertaken pursuant to the most recent strategic plan and evaluate the success of these initiatives in light of stated goals and the College's mission statement.

Rec. 11.3 **[2015-16 Strategic Planning Charge]** In light of the ongoing challenges in the admissions and employment context, their attendant budget implications, and the anticipated faculty retirements over the next decade, the 2015-16 Strategic Planning Committee should be given a broad charge to develop recommendations that address these challenges and opportunities.