



# SELF STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FEBRUARY 2014

## **1. History and Background**

The University of North Dakota School of Law is a small public law school, located on the main campus of the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. The School of Law is at the campus's center, between the Chester Fritz Library, housing the University's core collection, and the Memorial Union, the "Heart of UND." It is a relatively small law school, with a current target enrollment of 85 students for each incoming first-year class, and a current total enrollment of approximately 240 students. There are 19 authorized tenured or tenure-track full-time faculty lines and approximately 20 part-time and adjunct faculty. The School of Law is the only law school in North Dakota.

Founded in 1899, the School of Law was the first professional school to begin operation within the University. The American Bar Association initially approved the School of Law in 1923, and it has been continuously accredited since then. The School of Law joined the Association of American Law Schools in 1911 and the Order of the Coif in 1925.

In addition to the J.D. degree, the School of Law offers certificate programs in Indian law and aviation law, and two joint degree programs (J.D./M.P.A. and J.D./M.B.A.) in partnership with the University's College of Business and Public Administration.

The School of Law has occupied the same historic building on the main campus of the University almost since its establishment at the turn of the century. The last major addition to the School of Law occurred in 1973, with the addition of a four-floor library, which currently houses the Thormodsgard Law Library. During the 2013 North Dakota legislative session, the School of Law received funding for the construction of a major addition to the main building. The approval of this funding followed years of discussion and planning by the School of Law and the University, in response to both the report of the ABA site visit team in 2007 and the faculty's recognition that our physical space limited our ability to provide the best education possible to our students.

The School of Law has educated many of the leaders of the profession in the State of North Dakota. Included among our alumni are four of the five current justices of the North Dakota Supreme Court, both of the active judges of the United States District Court for the District of North Dakota, and the Attorney General of North Dakota. Three of the six attorneys in the state legislature are graduates of this School of Law, as is the president of the State Bar Association of North Dakota and the chair of the North Dakota Bar Foundation. Of the approximately 2,700 lawyers licensed in North Dakota, roughly 1,450 are School of Law alumni (1,200 of the 1,500 lawyers licensed in North Dakota who have an office in North Dakota are School of Law alumni).

The School of Law's general mission statement, as amended in August 2000, is as follows:

The University of North Dakota School of Law seeks (1) to educate students for professional service in the law and law-related professions, (2) to explore legal issues of special significance to North Dakota and the region, (3) to attract a well-qualified and diverse student body and to assist students in making career decisions, (4) to promote

improvements in the law and legal systems, the legal profession, and the administration of justice, and (5) to further the overall goals and objectives of the University of North Dakota.

The School of Law also has a specific Diversity Mission Statement:

The University of North Dakota School of Law is committed to the principle of equal opportunity in legal education for all persons. Further, the School recognizes the educational richness that results from including human experience from diverse perspectives. A law school community that welcomes, promotes, and respects diverse viewpoints enhances the quality of educational experiences for all those within that community, and enhances the legal profession and communities outside of the law school by preparing students to be more culturally respectful, professionally competent, and civically responsible leaders. The University of North Dakota School of Law is, therefore, committed to achieving a diverse law school community in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, and socioeconomic status.

Most recently, the School of Law adopted a Curricular Mission Statement:

The curricular mission of the University of North Dakota School of Law is to produce well-rounded legal professionals with the necessary skill set to serve as effective, innovative, and ethical leaders. Our distinct character as one of the smaller public law schools in the nation informs our program of legal education, which is designed to produce competent and ethical lawyers with entry-level proficiency and professional self-sufficiency in any setting, and reflects a cooperative and collaborative approach to teaching and learning. Our curricular goals are to facilitate each student's professional and personal development and to promote the highest professional standards, critical thinking, self- and other-awareness, creative problem-solving skills, life-long learning, and a commitment to serving society.

## **2. Strategic Planning & the Self Study Process**

The content of our Self Study has been shaped by direct input, information, opinions, and perceptions of students, faculty, staff, and the broad range of external constituencies that care deeply about the success of our program. The School of Law's re-accreditation presents an opportunity to connect with these external constituencies to share the School of Law's achievements and challenges and to engage them in discussion over the changes we hope to make to our program. Our external stakeholders take pride in our accomplishments (many of those accomplishments are facilitated by the generous financial and other support of our alumni and friends) and, to their credit and our debt, have offered to assist the School of Law in myriad ways to meet the challenges that we face. We have been particularly humbled recently by the strong support we have received from throughout the state as we sought and secured funding to improve our physical space.

After the 2007 site visit, the School of Law began the process of planning to meet the goals identified in the 2007 Self Study. After the experience of developing the School of Law's 2005 Strategic Plan using a more traditional approach, we decided this time to adopt a more organic approach of strategic planning that calls for constant review of the goals as new elements for achieving those goals are introduced and as the results of our efforts become apparent.

The following means were employed to gather input from faculty members, staff members, students, alumni, employers, and others for use in drafting the Self Study:

- a. *Regular Meetings of the Faculty.* Beginning with the faculty retreat in August 2012, topics related to the Self Study were regularly added to the faculty meeting agendas. Beginning with the two-day faculty retreat in August 2013, and continuing through January 2014, the Faculty also held monthly meetings solely dedicated to in-depth discussions of the contents of the Self Study and to review draft portions.
- b. *Regular Meetings of the Deans and Directors, Deans' Forums, and the Law School Assembly.* Beginning in September 2012, topics related to the Self Study were added to the meeting agendas of the School of Law's Deans and Directors. The Deans and Directors were assigned the task of reviewing the standards applicable to their respective areas of responsibility. Beginning in Fall 2012, topics related to accreditation were regularly included in both the monthly Deans' Forums (open meetings geared toward keeping students informed about the law school) and the Law School Assembly (the once-a-semester school-wide meeting required under our governance policy) to help advise and prepare the broader School of Law community as to the process and importance of the ABA Site Visit and the self-study process.
- c. *On-Line Surveys.* In Fall 2013, both students and staff were asked to complete separate on-line surveys that replicated surveys conducted for the 2007 Self Study, with some additional questions designed to gain input on current issues. On-line surveys were also sent to regional employers and a sampling of alumni. The surveys again started with the questions that had been asked of the same groups during the 2007 Self Study, with some additional questions.

A complete draft of the entire Self Study was completed in December 2013. In early January 2014, the Faculty reviewed the Self Study during meetings devoted to the review. These meetings ended with the Faculty voting unanimously to approve the final draft of the Self Study. After the adoption of the Self Study by the Faculty, we also used it to gather additional input that could be used as part of our strategic planning generally, through two internal "town hall" meetings in January (one for students and one for staff) as well as several key external constituency briefings by the Dean, including with the North Dakota Supreme Court and the SBAND Board of Governors. To reach the broader community of alumni, friends, and others interested in the School of Law's reaccreditation process, we posted information on the School of Law website.

Although the Self Study and ABA reaccreditation visit served as the primary impetus for many of the meetings listed above, the primary focus for the meetings was continuing short- and long-term strategic planning for the School of Law. The process of identifying, prioritizing, and publicizing goals for the School of Law has allowed us to connect with internal and external

stakeholders and receive valuable feedback. Many of our stakeholders additionally volunteered ways in which they could participate in making some of our goals easier to attain, as well as ways the School of Law could use to provide assistance to the legal profession across the State of North Dakota.

### **2.1. Assessment by External Constituencies: Alumni & Regional Employer Surveys**

We surveyed alumni about their assessment of their education at the School of Law. We selected a sample of alumni for which the School of Law had email addresses. Of the 363 alumni contacted, 111 completed surveys were returned. We asked a number of questions similar to those asked in surveys conducted in 1999 and 2006. Key results were:

- 82% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at UND School of Law provided them with a *solid foundation in basic doctrinal areas of the law*.
- 85% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at UND School of Law provided them with a *solid foundation in understanding of professionalism and the ethical practice of law*.
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at UND School of Law provided them with a *solid foundation in commitment to serving the public* in various roles and settings.
- 58% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at UND School of Law provided them with a *solid foundation in basic skills related to technology* used in law practice.
- 75% agreed or strongly agreed that if they had to do it all over again, they *would choose UND School of Law* without hesitation.
- 73% agreed or strongly agreed that they *would recommend UND School of Law* without hesitation.

Alumni were asked to comment generally on whether their School of Law education adequately prepared them for the practice of law, which garnered more than 50 responses. Many took the opportunity to reiterate their satisfaction with the quality of their legal education. Others highlighted areas in need of improvement, especially with regard to instruction in the “nuts and bolts” of law practice, including the “business” side of a law office, and skills course offerings, including courses focused on transactional work. We also asked alumni to assess the School of Law’s role within the legal community. Responses were mixed, with many praising the School of Law’s relationship with the bench and bar, and others urging the School of Law and its faculty to do more, especially in the western part of the state and in rural communities.

As in 1999 and 2006, we surveyed regional employers about their assessment of the School of Law and its graduates. We had a lower response rate than in 2006, with only 23 out of 70 returning completed surveys. Over 81% had hired one or more lawyers who had graduated from the School of Law in the last five years. Those respondents were asked to assess the performance of our graduates in a number of areas:

- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that UND School of Law graduates demonstrate a *solid foundation in basic legal writing skills*.
- 92% agreed or strongly agreed that UND School of Law graduates demonstrate a *solid foundation in basic legal research skills*.

- 85% agreed or strongly agreed that UND School of Law graduates demonstrate a *solid foundation in basic analytical and advocacy skills* necessary “to think and act like a lawyer.”
- 81% agreed or strongly agreed that UND School of Law graduates demonstrate a *solid foundation in basic doctrinal areas of the law*.
- 92% agreed or strongly agreed that UND School of Law graduates demonstrate a *solid foundation in understanding of professionalism and the ethical practice of law*.
- 77% agreed or strongly agreed that UND School of Law graduates demonstrate a *solid foundation in commitment to serving the public* in various roles and settings.
- 81% agreed or strongly agreed that UND School of Law graduates demonstrate a *solid foundation in basic skills related to technology* used in law practice.
- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that they *would hire a UND School of Law graduate* without hesitation.
- 81% agreed or strongly agreed that they *would recommend a UND School of Law graduate* without hesitation.

Respondents also were asked to comment generally on graduates’ preparation for the practice of law. Many responses found the preparation to be adequate for entry-level lawyers, while others indicated that students need to expand their participation in activities outside of class to have a complete education. Regional employers also were asked about the School of Law’s role in the legal community. Responses indicated that although the School of Law has fostered many positive relationships, we can do more, especially in the area of faculty involvement with the bar.

The input from our external constituencies mirrors much of the School of Law community’s own self-reflection: There are many things that we are doing well, especially in light of scant resources, and there are areas in which we need to improve. Areas for improvement include fostering commitment to public service, increasing skills instruction and experiential learning opportunities, developing additional specialties related to state and regional legal issues, maintaining our commitment to effective teaching and a positive learning environment, and enhancing the School of Law’s relationship with the bench and bar.

### **3. Program of Legal Education**

The School of Law's curriculum is "designed to produce competent and ethical lawyers with entry-level proficiency and professional self-sufficiency." We strive to instill in our students an appreciation of the special responsibilities that accompany the professional status they will occupy by virtue of their legal education. Beyond the required curriculum, the School of Law offers upper-level courses that include not only the standard School of Law subjects, but also specialized subjects that draw on the expertise of our faculty.

The School of Law's general requirements for the J.D. degree are set out in the School of Law's Policy Manual (available on the School of Law website). Students must successfully complete a minimum of 90 credit hours with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 (the requirement for "good standing"). A minimum of 76 credit hours must be in courses involving attendance at regularly scheduled class sessions. All first-year courses are required, including a course in Professional Foundations which the Faculty added starting with the Spring semester 2014. After the first year, students must successfully complete Constitutional Law II, which is a mandatory course for Fall semester of the second year, and Professional Responsibility, which can be taken any time after the first year. After the first year, students must complete a rigorous writing project, as well as the Upper-Level Skills Requirement.

The School of Law began a comprehensive review of the academic components of first-year orientation in 2012. In particular, we conceived the primary academic objective of orientation as being to provide new law students, from the outset of their professional education, with a broader context for the study of law and lawyering. This concept debunks the notion that a student's legal education "really starts" when traditional classes begin. Our re-envisioned orientation program is designed to facilitate learning outcomes in three basic areas: (1) the distinctive goals of legal education, the basic responsibilities of students in the teaching-learning partnership, and the various approaches to legal pedagogy, which are the primary concerns at this preliminary stage of the law school experience, (2) personal and professional identity, and (3) lawyering, which is in purposeful contrast to the study of law and legal principles.

The Faculty adopted a working draft of the Curricular Mission Statement in January 2010. The Faculty met for a curriculum "mini retreat" in April 2010. The purpose of that meeting was to expand on the Curricular Mission Statement by identifying a more comprehensive statement of learning objectives. At a Faculty retreat in August 2010, the Faculty produced a Draft Working Curriculum Strategic Plan. The draft versions of both the Curricular Mission Statement and the Strategic Plan formed the basis of discussions that led to curricular changes for the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 academic years. The Faculty formally adopted the Curricular Mission Statement at its "mini retreat" in December 2012.

In Spring 2012, the Faculty adopted a policy that requires each course at the School of Law to include both an assessed writing assignment and an assessed ethics/professionalism assignment. The policy specifically identified this requirement as being in partial fulfillment of the School of Law's Curricular Mission and the specific objective of producing graduates with strong writing skills. Although not technically a curriculum change, the Faculty decided as part of the 2012-2013 hiring cycle to hire additional faculty members who would focus on teaching Lawyering

Skills. We now have three tenure-eligible Faculty members who teach Lawyering Skills in the first-year curriculum. Additionally, each of them will teach one other course each semester in the upper-division curriculum.

Beginning with Fall 2013, the School of Law has significantly restructured its first-year curriculum and made corresponding changes to the upper-division curriculum. The most significant change is the addition of a new and innovative course in Professional Foundations. The course description is:

This course introduces students to concepts of professional role, identity, and practice for lawyers. A key objective of the course is to assist students in beginning to cultivate a reflective mindset about professional life in the law and to develop the habits needed to exercise sound professional judgment as lawyers. Students will be provided with repeated opportunities to take on the role of the lawyer in realistic situations that require them (1) to act as a fiduciary responsible for the welfare of others and (2) to define what it means to reconcile personal and professional values. Students will develop the skill of practiced self-reflection in legal settings and, in exploring the kind of lawyers they want to become, deepen their ability to apply these professional values. This course is graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis, with strict enforcement of policies requiring regular and punctual attendance and satisfactory completion of all assignments.

The Professional Foundations course is being team-taught by a broad cross section of the Faculty. The hope is that the course will build on the professionalism lessons first learned during orientation, demonstrate the Faculty's collective commitment to professionalism across the curriculum, and serve as a bridge to the upper-division curriculum.

The addition of a new course to the first year was accompanied by changes to other courses:

- Constitutional Law I, which had previously been taught in the Fall of the first year as a two-credit course, was moved to Spring and was increased to three credits;
- Constitutional Law II, which had previously been taught in the Spring of the first year as a three-credit course, was moved to Fall of the second year (where it remains a required three-credit course);
- Property, which had previously been taught in two parts over the first year as a three-credit Fall course and two-credit Spring course, became a single four-credit course taught in the Fall;
- Torts I, which had previously been a two-credit course in the Fall, became a three-credit course in the Fall; and
- Torts II, which had previously been a three-credit course in the spring, became a two-credit course in the Spring.

The Faculty has not adopted any major changes to the upper-division curriculum in recent years, but will be considering changes as part of the ongoing curricular review. The School of Law continues to maintain the core of its upper-division curriculum and to continually work to align



upper-division courses with the Curricular Mission Statement and Working Curricular Strategic Plan. We also will consider the information that is now available to us from the State Board of Law Examiners regarding the performance of our graduates on the bar exam.

### **3.1. Experiential Learning Opportunities**

The School of Law is committed to the principle that an important component of a student's educational development occurs outside the traditional classroom. By integrating theory and practice in real-world settings, students assume the roles of lawyers (with appropriate "safety nets") and gain first-hand experience with substantive law, lawyering skills, and professional ethics.

***The Clinical Legal Education Program.*** The Clinical Legal Education Program offers a seven-credit, graded course that immerses students in a direct exploration of the skills and values of the profession. Client representation is used as a teaching vehicle, so the learning takes place in context, with students assuming the role of the lawyer. The Law Clinic course includes casework, case-supervision sessions, a seminar class, and a community project. Students enrolled in the Law Clinic course are expected to spend approximately 20 hours per week, on average, on Law Clinic course work, including class preparation and class time. All litigation activities performed by students are closely supervised and assessed by two full-time faculty.

***Northern Plains Indian Law Center.*** Students also may gain real-world experience through employment and other opportunities in the Northern Plains Indian Law Center. For example, the Tribal Judicial Institute employs student law clerks to research issues related to tribal and federal Indian law, including domestic-violence prosecution in Indian country, tribal court development, drafting tribal ordinances, and researching a variety of issues addressed by tribal judges.

***Externships and Internships.*** Objectives of the various intern and externship programs (including legislative, state, military, and federal) are to provide law students with instruction in professional skills, legal writing, research, strategy, and professional responsibility. Students are given various opportunities to develop skills in interviewing, client counseling, drafting, negotiation, information gathering and investigation, witness preparation, trial preparation, and trial and appellate advocacy.

The School of Law currently offers the following placements: the Legislative Internship Program (10 to 12 students are placed in the legislative and executive branches in Bismarck during the biennial session of the North Dakota Legislature); the State and Military Externship Program (during the academic year, 10 to 12 students are placed with the state trial court judges in the Northeast Central Judicial District, State's Attorneys' offices in Cass and Walsh counties, Legal Services of North Dakota in Cass County, the Indigent Defense Office in Grand Forks County, and the Grand Forks Air Force Base Judge Advocate General's Office); North Dakota Supreme Court Externship Program (one student is placed with the Court in Bismarck); and the Federal Externship Program (during the summer session, 11 students are placed in federal offices in Fargo and Bismarck, including the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota, and the U.S. Attorney's Office).

In furtherance of our Curricular Mission, we have undertaken efforts to expand the externship opportunities available to students. Recent additions include the placement in the Governor's office during the legislative session, a placement with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe through the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the Rural Justice Program, which places students in judicial externships with state judges in rural counties. We currently are exploring placements with the state Indigent Counsel and the Federal Public Defender, as well.

It is worth noting that all students have substantial opportunities to observe court proceedings at the School of Law. In the past few years, the School of Law has hosted hearings and sessions of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota, the Inter-Tribal Court of Appeals, and the Turtle Mountain Court of Appeals, as well as the North Dakota Supreme Court, which holds a session annually.

Students also have opportunities to engage in pro bono activities through activities of University and School of Law organizations. Of particular note is the Public Interest Law Student Association, which started a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site to help taxpayers prepare and e-file their returns. Current pro bono activities are ad hoc, rather than the result of a comprehensive effort on the part of the School of Law. The School of Law is committed to making current opportunities more visible to students and to expanding pro bono opportunities for students. We currently are exploring possible options with the assistance of SBAND, so that additional pro bono supervisors can be identified and so that more innovative ways of overcoming the challenges of our geographic location can be developed. We have recently identified student pro bono opportunities with Legal Services of North Dakota and the Community Violence Intervention Center.

### **3.2. Reflections on the Program of Legal Education**

The Faculty has made considerable adjustments to the curriculum in recent years. In addition to the numerous systemic changes discussed above, faculty members have also made changes, both large and small, to their individual classes. The process of curricular review has given the Faculty multiple opportunities to consider what we want to teach, what our students need to learn, and how best to accomplish our goals. The completion and implementation of our assessment plan in the near future, as well as the more detailed data regarding bar passage rates should provide us with considerable information that we can use to examine and restructure our curriculum in the coming years.

#### **4. Faculty**

The School of Law has a highly qualified and dedicated faculty. Faculty members hold law degrees from Berkeley, Boston College, Columbia University, University of Chicago, University of Denver, University of Florida, George Washington University, Harvard, Hofstra, Lewis & Clark, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Oregon, University of San Francisco, and William & Mary. Three faculty members hold LL.M. degrees and two hold Ph.Ds. School of Law Faculty have published books with university and commercial presses and articles in numerous scholarly journals, including peer-reviewed journals and law reviews. Our Faculty members are engaged in significant service to the bench and bar and other organizations at the local, state, national, and international levels.

The School of Law is proud to have a talented and dedicated group of adjunct faculty, many of whom have considerable teaching experience. In the last year or two, our adjunct faculty members have included a federal magistrate judge, a state prosecutor, the Director of the University's Conflict Resolution Center, the Chief Justice of the Turtle Mountain Tribal Court of Appeals, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Air Force, a former Tribal Attorney for the Spirit Lake Nation, and a retired North Dakota District Court judge, as well as the leading practitioners in the state in bankruptcy, criminal procedure, and oil and gas law. The practicing bar's desire to contribute to the School of Law's legal education program is strong; each year, we receive several expressions of interest in teaching full courses or guest lecturing.

#### **5. Students**

Our students are the most important part of the School of Law. They are on the whole bright, conscientious, and highly motivated. Faculty and staff members know students as individuals and care about their success. Our small size fosters an intimate learning environment with a cooperative and collegial character. Relationships formed during the first year of law school survive well beyond graduation. We are consistently and justifiably proud of our student body.

##### **5.1. Assessment by Students**

In Fall 2013, we surveyed the current student body about their experience at the School of Law, asking many of the same questions put to alumni and regional employers. A total of 90 students completed the survey.

As to whether the education received from the School of Law improved specific skills, students' responses were as follows:

- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at the School of Law has improved their *basic legal writing skills*.
- 97% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at the School of Law has improved their *basic legal research skills*.
- 90% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at the School of Law has improved their *basic analytical and advocacy skills* necessary "to think and act like a lawyer."

- 94% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at the School of Law has improved their *understanding of basic doctrinal areas of the law*.
- 79% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at the School of Law has improved their *understanding of professionalism and the ethical practice of law*.
- 58% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at the School of Law has improved their *commitment to serving the public* in various roles and settings.
- 69% agreed or strongly agreed that their education at the School of Law has improved their *basic skills related to technology* used in law practice.

As to their satisfaction with School of Law student services, student responses were as follows:

- 46% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, they were satisfied with the School of Law's student services related to *academic advising*.
- 48% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, they were satisfied with the School of Law's student services related to *career counseling and job search assistance*.
- 27% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, they were satisfied with the School of Law's student services related to *financial aid advising*.
- 86% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, they were satisfied with the School of Law's student services related to *library resources and services*.
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, they were satisfied with the School of Law's student services related to *computer technology and support*.
- 49% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, they were satisfied with the School of Law's student services related to *personal counseling* (another 20% indicated that they had no basis for response).

Comments on student services indicated that several areas are in need of improvement. Several students indicated that although individual professors were willing to give informal, one-on-one academic advice, there is a need for more comprehensive academic advising for all students, something which has already been identified as a priority issue by the Faculty. Since the last self-study, the School of Law has purposely moved away from providing direct financial aid assistance, relying instead on centralized University financial aid services. The shift has allowed the School of Law to focus its resources on debt management and increased career counseling for students, but it appears that, with increasing national attention to student debt and career services, the School of Law's available services may not be aligned with student expectations. The results of the survey indicated to the administration the need for more comprehensive information gathering to determine the sources of student frustration and appropriate steps to address student concerns.

In their assessment of the Faculty, the students provided responses as follows:

- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, their professors at the School of Law *communicate ideas and information clearly and effectively*.
- 83% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, their professors at the School of Law *connect real world situations to course topics*.
- 76% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, their professors at the School of Law *keep students interested and engaged*.

- 93% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, their professors at the School of Law *are available outside of class for student questions*.
- 89% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, their professors at the School of Law *treat students with respect*.
- 89% agreed or strongly agreed that on the whole, their professors at the School of Law *are effective in promoting learning*.

We asked students whether, if they had to do it all over again, they *would choose UND School of Law* without hesitation. 76% agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, 75% *would recommend UND School of Law* without hesitation. Comments reflected similar satisfaction and concerns.

## **5.2. Admissions and Educational Requirements**

Students entering the School of Law come from a variety of academic backgrounds. While there is no prescribed program of pre-law studies, the Faculty expects that students will possess the skills necessary for effective oral and written communication. Any undergraduate program developing those skills and providing for rigorous training in analysis and problem-solving within an academic discipline can constitute a satisfactory pre-law education. The School of Law encourages applications from candidates of diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

The number of applications received by the School of Law peaked in 2007 at 699. In 2013, the School of Law received 383 applications. Although significant, the drop in the number of applications has been less severe than that suffered by many other law schools, including in our region.

Two members of the Admissions & Probation Committee (currently, comprised of three tenure-eligible faculty members, one of whom only participates in the making of probation decisions) personally review the completed file of each applicant. The Admissions & Probation Committee has adopted a “holistic” approach to admissions decisions. It does not employ presumptive denials in the form of a minimum Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score or undergraduate grade point average (UGPA). Instead, all factors which indicate reasonable prospect for success in law study and in the profession are considered, including the applicant’s undergraduate record, LSAT score, recommendations from those in a position to judge an applicant’s potential for the study and practice of law, personal statement, and work experience.

The School of Law targets approximately 85 for its entering class size and works to ensure that the same number graduates. The retention rate for matriculated students is relatively high: each year, no more than one or two students are academically disqualified. The School of Law receives a number of highly qualified transfer applications each year and admits those students as appropriate to maintain the target class size.

Even with the new space to be added to the building with the completion of our addition, immediate growth beyond a student body of about 250 is unlikely. Current practice is to limit the first-year class to a number that can effectively be taught in single section classes (although Lawyering Skills I & II are taught in three sections). As a practical matter, the size of the School of Law’s largest classroom imposed this cap. The Faculty’s review of the School of Law’s

curriculum has made it clear that even if a larger physical space were available, effectively teaching a larger first-year class would require the breaking of the class into sections, and sectioning would also likely be required for high-demand upper division classes. Significant growth in the student body would, therefore, require additional resources, particularly in the areas of faculty and student services.

### **5.3. Reflections on Admissions Challenges and Opportunities**

At the end of the first-year orientation program, students are asked to evaluate the different components of the orientation program and also to tell us why they chose the School of Law. In past years, answers have included low tuition, ties to the state, and the positive experiences of a friend or relative who graduated from the School of Law. For the Class of 2016, cost of tuition was cited by the greatest number of students, followed by proximity to family, and academic reputation. Students also indicated that the size of the student body, placement rate, and academic quality led them to choose the School of Law. Students also were asked about information sources that influenced their decision. Campus visits and alumni topped the list, followed by friends, parents, the School of Law website, the Office of Admissions and Records, independent publications, and current law students.

Our biggest challenge in maintaining a student base is North Dakota demographics. Despite some recent overall population growth in our state, projections continue to point to a period of fewer high school and college graduates in North Dakota. The number of high school graduates in the state dropped below 7,000 in 2011 and is expected to drop to near 6,000 by 2018. Additionally, a very low unemployment rate in the state, along with highly lucrative job opportunities for the decreasing number of high school and college graduates, may lessen local interest in law or other graduate studies. For the past few years, the number of North Dakota residents taking the LSAT has been fewer than 80 per year. This means that the School of Law, like the rest of the University, needs to draw students from outside the state in order to have a sufficient number of students to offer a full curriculum.

We are a public law school and the state's only law school. The Faculty is mindful that our recruitment efforts targeting out-of-state students should not compromise our role as a public law school and our service to the state. Within our target class size, the School of Law makes every effort to admit all qualified North Dakota residents. At the same time, though, we believe that our recruitment of out-of-state students can serve the state. For example, out-of-state residents with ties to North Dakota could be a target group, such as the prospective applicant who graduated from a North Dakota high school, but left for college or career, or an out-of-state resident currently enrolled in a North Dakota college or university. Moreover, bringing out-of-state residents into the state for three years can benefit North Dakota, as they can serve the state during their time in law school, and some students will choose to make their careers and homes in the state.

Program enhancements also could help us in the recruitment of students. Our joint J.D./M.B.A. and J.D./M.P.A. programs have produced several recent graduates. Our recently adopted certificate programs in Indian Law and U.S. Air Transportation Policy have also drawn attention to areas of special expertise at the University. Other areas ripe for future expansion include oil

and gas law, coordinating our efforts with the significant work being done at the College of Engineering and Mines, and the possible development of a dual-degree program with a law school in Canada.

Our holistic admissions process, in which admissions decisions are made on a review of the entire application, is a strength. Without minimum UGPA or LSAT requirements, we open our school to a wide range of experience and talent that other schools might miss. It is an “open door” policy that welcomes applicants. Our admissions policy also reflects what we think is the spirit of our institution – that we treat and respect students as individuals. This begins with our application process and continues through admissions, our program of legal education, and after graduation. It is important to communicate the quality of our school without being tied to the usual proxies for quality, such as student UGPA or LSAT scores.

Our relatively low tuition also is a strength in terms of marketing and student recruitment. “Bang for the buck” is a better description than “bargain,” as the School of Law provides a high quality education for a relatively low price. Price frequently is mentioned by students as one of the reasons they chose the School of Law.

We have made excellent progress since the time of our last site visit. Unfortunately, the current climate in legal education means that more efforts will be necessary to hold on to the gains we have made.

#### **5.4. The Student Body**

Our current student body number is 241 (as of October 5, 2013). Students hail from Canada, 20 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin), and 14 tribes (Turtle Mountain Chippewa, Cherokee, Red Lake Anishanaabe, Gros Venture Assiniboine, Three Affiliated Tribes, Spirit Lake Dakota Sioux, Assiniboine Sioux, the Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation, Blackfeet, Red Lake Chippewa, Washoe, Eastern Cherokee, Hopi, and Cheyenne River Sioux).

In the last two years, total enrollment has stabilized at around 240 students. Since the time of the last Self Study, the entering first-year class has consistently included a greater number of minority students. Despite the great challenges associated with drawing students from a shrinking pool of law school applications, we have maintained strong median LSAT scores and undergraduate grade point averages.

#### **5.5 Reflections on Student Services**

The results of the student survey, as well as our own sense of our student culture at the School of Law, indicate the need to examine student services from the perspective of students. Two examples highlight possible disconnects between what we believe is best for students and what students perceive is best for them. The first example is financial aid advising. We purposely shifted the focus of School of Law services away from technical financial aid advising (including providing assistance to students in completing the necessary forms) to debt management.

Because the University's Financial Aid Office should be able to provide technical financial aid advising to law students, we believed that our efforts should focus on assisting students with developing individualized strategies for minimizing borrowing, living within a student's budget, and realistically repaying loans. Although it appears that students may be less interested in the programming and services we've created related to debt management, and may perceive that they are better served through in-house financial aid services. The second example is career services. Students rightly demand that we facilitate job opportunities for them, and we are fortunate that legal employment opportunities exist in North Dakota—we are one of the very few states with a lawyer shortage. Yet many of our students do not apply for openings in our area, including with regional law firms and with state and federal judges. We have been befuddled by empty on-campus interview slots, leading some employers to cancel scheduled visits. It is clear that we need to better understand students' perspectives on their needs. Toward that end, the Assistant Dean for Student Life will gather more detailed information from students to inform our thinking about how best to improve our student services.

## **6. Administration**

### **6.1. School of Law Administrative Structure**

The School of Law is led by Kathryn R. L. Rand, Dean of the School of Law. Prior to becoming Dean, she served on the faculty at the School of Law, holding positions as Associate Dean, co-director of the Institute for the Study of Tribal Gaming Law and Policy, and Interim Director of the Northern Plains Indian Law Center. Dean Rand is a tenured member of the Faculty and teaches courses when the rest of her schedule makes it possible. The Dean devotes full professional time to the School of Law. Because of the School of Law's position as the only law school in the state, the Dean serves as a member of the Board of Governors of the State Bar Association of North Dakota, a member of the Board of Directors of the North Dakota Bar Foundation, and a member of the Judicial Conference of North Dakota. These positions increase the visibility of the School of Law in the professional communities in the state, and provide an opportunity for advancing the interests of the School of Law.

Dean Rand appointed Associate Professor Bradley Myers to the position of Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, with primary responsibility for coordinating the various aspects of the School of Law's strategic planning process and the scheduling of classes. This year, the principal administrative role of the Associate Dean has been coordination of the Self Study for the re-accreditation process. The Associate Dean also chaired the Admissions and Probation Committee in each of the last three years and serves as the School of Law's liaison with the University's research offices and committees. Dean Myers is a member of the State Bar Association of North Dakota and serves on the Editorial Board for its publication, *The Gavel*. The Governor appointed Dean Myers to serve on North Dakota's Uniform Law Commission and he has served on three of the ULC's drafting committees. Dean Myers is a tenured member of the Faculty and teaches a full load of four courses per year in addition to his decanal duties.

The School of Law's Assistant Dean for Student Life is Brad Parrish. Dean Parrish is a 2005 alumnus of the School of Law who practiced in the local community for six and a half years before accepting the position as Assistant Dean. He received a master's degree in Counseling



and Student Personnel from Oklahoma State University in 1997 and brings nine years of graduate-level and professional work experience in student affairs to the Assistant Dean position. Dean Parrish has primary responsibility for student affairs, including coordination of operations between the Office of Student Life, Career Services, and the Office of Admissions and Records. He also serves a key role in general administrative policymaking and implementation. Dean Parrish administers the School of Law's externship programs (including teaching the one-credit classroom component). He is active in the profession, serving as a member of North Dakota Association for Justice, the Randy H. Lee American Inn of Court, State Bar Association of North Dakota, and the Greater Grand Forks County Bar Association.

The School of Law administration includes five administrative Directors (other than the Director the Law Library, included in Section 7). Those positions are Director of Career Services (Trish Hodny); Director of Alumni & Public Relations (Rob Carolin); Director of Admissions & Records (Ben Hoffman); Director of Finance & Administration (Julie Simon); and Director of Development (Mark Brickson, through the UND Alumni Association & Foundation).

## **6.2. Law School Governance**

After the last site visit, the School of Law restructured its Governance Policy. The new policy provides that "governing authority within the University of North Dakota School of Law is vested in the dean and the faculty." Under the Faculty Bylaws (and consistent with ABA Standards), "the Dean and Faculty share responsibility for the academic program and for setting educational policies." The School of Law has a number of faculty committees that make recommendations to the Faculty and serve in an advisory or consultative capacity to the Dean. The current standing committees are Academic & Student Affairs, Admissions & Probation, Bar Passage & Academic Success, Curriculum & Assessment, Diversity & Educational Engagement, Faculty Selection, Library & Technology, and Promotion, Tenure & Evaluation.

The School of Law's Governance Policy also recognizes that the "students and staff of the School of Law are vested with the role of providing advice to the dean and faculty on all issues bearing on the institution and its people. Matters may be referred to the Faculty for its consideration by students and staff in accordance with procedures and practices adopted by each group for making such recommendations." Both the staff and the student body have adopted their own bylaws. The staff and students are encouraged to bring matters to the Faculty's and the administration's attention through the governance process; the regular informational meetings (Deans' Forums, Staff Informational Meetings, and School of Law Assemblies) also ensure information sharing and issue raising.

## **6.3. Survey of Professional and Support Staff**

As part of the self-study process, we surveyed the School of Law's permanent staff (excluding temporary positions and the Faculty, the Dean, the Associate Dean and the Assistant Dean) and received 16 responses, a 64% response rate.

- 69% agreed or strongly agreed that their *work environment* at the School of Law feels *comfortable*.

- 69% agreed or strongly agreed that their work environment at the School of Law feels *welcoming*.
- 75% agreed or strongly agreed that their work environment at the School of Law feels *safe*.
- 69% agreed or strongly agreed that their work environment at the School of Law feels *respectful*.
- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that their *job duties are clear*.
- 69% agreed or strongly agreed that their *job duties are reasonable*.
- 81% agreed or strongly agreed that their *jobs are challenging*.
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they have the *support they need* to do their jobs.
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they have *access to the information and resources they need* to do their jobs.
- 73% agreed or strongly agreed that they *feel empowered to make decisions* at work.
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they *feel comfortable sharing their views and suggestions on work-related issues*.

We asked staff whether they were *comfortable sharing their views and suggestions on issues related to various aspects of the School of Law's operation*:

- Their *job duties*: 73% agreed or strongly agreed.
- The *staff*: 87% agreed or strongly agreed.
- The *students*: 80% agreed or strongly agreed.
- The *faculty*: 60% agreed or strongly agreed.
- *Alumni*: 67% agreed or strongly agreed (another 27% had no basis for response).
- The *bench and bar*: 33% agreed or strongly agreed (another 47% had no basis for response).
- The *Dean's Office*: 67% agreed or strongly agreed.
- The *program of legal education*: 21% agreed or strongly agreed (another 43% had no basis for response).
- *Admissions and student services*: 67% agreed or strongly agreed.
- The *law library*: 40% agreed or strongly agreed.
- *Technology and computer services*: 60% agreed or strongly agreed.
- *Facilities*: 67% agreed or strongly agreed.
- The *general operation and governance* of the School of Law: 33% agreed or strongly agreed (another 47% were neutral or had no basis for response).
- The *strategic goals* of the School of Law: 33% agreed or strongly agreed (another 47% were neutral or had no basis for response).

We also asked staff whether their *views and suggestions were valued* at the School of Law:

- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that their views and suggestions were valued by their *coworkers*.
- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that their views and suggestions were valued by their *immediate supervisors*.

- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that their views and suggestions were valued by the *Dean's Office*.
- 60% agreed that their views and suggestions were valued by the *faculty* (another 20% had no basis for response).
- 53% agreed or strongly agreed that their views and suggestions were valued by the *students* (another 27% had no basis for response).
- 33% agreed that their views and suggestions were valued by the *University* (another 40% had no basis for response).

We asked questions about their work:

- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that *professional development opportunities* are made available to them (only 14% disagreed).
- 73% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel that they are *part of an effective team* at work.
- 87% agreed or strongly agreed that they *are encouraged to do their best work*.
- 67% agreed or strongly agreed that their *successes are recognized and rewarded* (25% were neutral and another 20% disagreed).
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that there is *more they could contribute* to the School of Law.

We asked staff to complete two sentences: “The best thing about my job is \_\_\_\_\_” and “If there were one thing I could change about my job, it would be \_\_\_\_\_.” These questions elicited the greatest number of written responses. Among the “best things” were people and students. Among the things staff would change were salary, office space, and less time spent completing reports.

Overall, 87% of the staff agreed or strongly agreed that *the School of Law is a good place to work* (only one person strongly disagreed with the statement).

The results of the staff survey give us confidence that we continue to have strong relationships among our School of Law community, and that we have made some significant improvements in faculty-staff relations (in 2007, only 30% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that their views and suggestions were valued by faculty). The Administrative Strategic Plan, intended to directly involve and invest staff in the curricular mission and goals of the School of Law, reflects the value we place on our entire community, all of whom are critical to the success of our students and our law school.

## 7. Information Resources – Law Library

The Thormodsgard Law Library is an integral and indispensable component of the University of North Dakota School of Law. The priority of the Law Library is to provide the services and collections necessary to support and strengthen the teaching, scholarship, research, and service programs of the School of Law’s students and faculty. The Law Library also serves as a vital resource to the legal community of North Dakota.

The position of Director of the Thormodsgard Law Library is a tenure-eligible faculty position and is hired through the School of Law's faculty selection process. The current Director is Dr. Rhonda Schwartz. The Law Library has an experienced, dedicated and hardworking staff who work to support the educational programs of the School of Law. The senior staff include Heads of Student Services, Faculty Services, and Bench and Bar Services (the last position is a new one added in 2014).

### **7.1. Law Library Collection and Access to Information**

The library collection is maintained in accordance with the Law Library's mission, the School of Law curricular mission, and the University mission. The collection is developed principally for law students and faculty, our primary patrons. The collection is also developed to serve as a source of legal information for the North Dakota bench and bar, the University of North Dakota community as a whole, and the public. The current collection contains 36,122 print titles; 94,616 microform titles; 26,442 electronic titles (owned); and 555 other non-book titles for a total title count of 157,735. The volume count (excluding microforms) is 164,366; the volume equivalent microforms count was 171,443, for a total volume and volume equivalents count at the end of the fiscal year of 335,809.

The most recent Collection Development Plan was developed in 2007. The goal of the plan was "to provide guidelines for the development of the law library collection, including the selection, preservation, retention, and deselection of information resources." In 2010, in what was referred to as an "addendum" to the 2007 Collection Development Plan, a journals and periodicals review, treatises review, and code and reporters review were presented to the Faculty. With Faculty approval, several print journals and periodicals not meeting certain criteria for retention were cancelled.

In 2013, as part of the planning for the building project, the Director and library staff were tasked with "culling the collection" in order to ensure users' needs are being met, to shift to a focus on user services, and to free up library floor space related to the evolving needs of the building project. It is anticipated that the primary method of freeing up floor space will involve changing some of the resources from print to electronic media.

### **7.2. Financial Support for the Law Library**

Although the state appropriated funding for the library has remained consistently flat for many years and selected cancellations have been made to deal with inflation, the Law Library has received sufficient financial resources. The Law Program Fee has, among other functions, worked consistently to supplement the acquisition budget and to fund a full-time user support position in the technology department. Other than the on-going challenge of keeping up with the inflationary cost of legal materials, there have not been any significant changes to the Law Library's expenditures. Some more routine expenditures saw increases, for instance the increased maintenance fee agreements for equipment (e.g., printers) as the equipment technology advanced.

However, in light of the upcoming building addition and renovation project and the need to recapture library space for other needs, some library expenditures will be reprioritized. A typical example is the transition of the regional reporters (with the exception of the North Western Reporter) from print to digital access, and the impact that will have on expenditures. At the same time, the library anticipates adding “Westlaw for the Public” via a public access computer; this will be a new expenditure.

## **8. Facilities and Technology**

The School of Law building, constructed in 1923, is a traditional redbrick building located on the University’s main campus, between the Memorial Student Union and the Chester Fritz Library. In the mid-1960s, the building was devoted solely to the School of Law; before that, the School of Commerce and other departments had used space in the School of Law building. In 1973, the original building was renovated and significant additional space designed to hold the Law Library was added. Several improvements were made to the Law Library since 2000, including window replacement, installation of additional shelving, remodeling of the computer lab and circulation desk and the addition of movable stacks on the first floor. Other recent renovations include the remodeling of the two largest classrooms, furniture replacement in the two medium classrooms, and the creation of two new faculty offices.

The School of Law also uses space in O’Kelly Hall, located across the street from the School of Law building. Currently, Central Legal Research offices and remote library storage are housed in O’Kelly, as is the Northern Plains Indian Law Center’s Tribal Judicial Institute.

During the 2012-2013 session, the North Dakota Legislature approved a major building project for the School of Law. The project, which includes a 15,000 square foot addition, as well as extensive renovation of the existing building, is expected to break ground in May 2014. In preparation for the dislocation from the School of Law building that will occur during construction, the School of Law has moved student publication (including the *Law Review*) and moot court offices to Carnegie Hall, which is across the main quad from the School of Law building. The School of Law is also slated to occupy additional space in Carnegie Hall, the Strinden Center, Dakota Hall, and Twamley Hall during the period of construction. The School of Law will also utilize classroom space around the eastern portion of the University campus until construction on the School of Law space is completed.

The building project is expected to increase and enhance educational space, including classrooms, a teaching courtroom, and the Clinic space; student work and study space, including commons areas, study rooms, student co-curricular and extra-curricular work space, and library seating; faculty and staff work space, including a sufficient number of faculty offices; and safety and security, including controlled access to the building.

Our last Self Study lamented the fact that the “limited teaching space in the law school constrains our teaching styles.” As the School of Law now considers how to make use of the funds the people of North Dakota have granted us to improve our space, we face the task of making sure that we spend each dollar wisely to further our educational mission. Perhaps most importantly, we need to make sure that our facilities meet our needs not only for today, but for the future, as

well. As legal education has changed, so has the need for varied and adaptable teaching space. Skills courses and activities require space that closely resembles facilities serving the same functions outside of academia—courtrooms, boardrooms, and other professional settings. We need to make sure we have sufficient faculty and administrative office space so that each of the professionals at the School of Law can work effectively. Our students not only need space for quiet study and research, but also space where they can engage with one another.

A particular focus in planning for the building project has been the development of additional space for skills classes and co-curricular activities. This includes not only areas for developing courtroom skills, but also for working on transactional skills, mediation practice, and client counseling. A particular focus in this area has been in making sure that the new space is adequately flexible so that changes in legal practice can be easily transferred into our teaching space.

### **Conclusion: Planning for the Future**

In 2007, the School of Law identified 18 major goals we intended to accomplish. Although we have faced some turnover among the School of Law's faculty and administrative positions since that time, those goals remained the primary focus of our efforts over the past seven years. Although some of the goals presented significant challenges and others changed as we went through the process of meeting them, we are quite proud of the progress we have made.

Our major goals in 2007 were:

1. *Re-thinking our mission and institutional identity, and to work to identify our long-term goals.* Since 2007, we have begun the process of a comprehensive review of our curriculum from orientation through graduation. This review has resulted in the production of a Curricular Mission Statement, a Curriculum Strategic Plan, and an Administrative Strategic Plan. These core products led to restructuring of orientation (a process which began in 2013, and is expected to continue in the coming years); the restructuring of the first-year curriculum, including the addition of the Professional Foundations course; and the addition of assessed professionalism and writing assignments in each course offered in the School of Law.
2. *Considering the restructure of our faculty governance, beginning with examination of the perceived problems encountered through the Faculty Committee.* The first project undertaken after the completion of the 2007 site visit was the restructuring of governance at the School of Law. This included adopting a new Governance Policy, which unambiguously vested governing authority in the Dean and Faculty, and bylaws, which would govern how the Faculty would exercise that authority. We adopted vehicles (i.e., the Deans' Forums, Staff Informational Meetings, and Law School Assemblies) to allow the Dean and Faculty to provide information about governance and decision-making to the School of Law community. Both students and staff adopted bylaws to govern their own procedures for making their concerns known, an effort in which they were encouraged and assisted, though not directed or controlled, by the Faculty.

3. *Considering revisions to the School of Law's committee structure to streamline faculty workload.* The School of Law continues to experiment with its committee structure in the search for the right balance between accomplishing those things that must be done and the recognizing that faculty members have significant research and teaching obligations. Notably, we have begun to use smaller committees, and we have decreased their number.
4. *Considering ways to enhance skills instruction along with experiential and pro bono opportunities through our curriculum and co-curricular activities.* The first and foremost advancement in this area was bringing the School of Law into compliance with Standard 302(a)(4) through the adoption of a mandatory skills requirement for all students. The process of adopting that requirement also gave the Faculty an opportunity to consider how skills were already being taught in existing courses and how new skills elements might be expanded across the curriculum. We have begun, and nearly completed, a comprehensive review of our externship agreements and are now actively in the process of creating additional externship opportunities.
5. *Conducting a careful follow-up on the results of the surveys conducted in conjunction with the Self Study, particularly the results of the Staff Survey reflecting the relationship between the staff and faculty.* We have paid continuing attention to the issue of faculty/staff relations and have made a substantial effort to reinforce the strongly held belief of the Faculty that every person in the School of Law has a role in the education of our students, as reflected in the Administrative Strategic Plan.
6. *Considering ways to enhance our academic success and support programs, including a comprehensive approach to academic advising.* We continue to seek ways to improve our academic success and support programs. We recently added a mandatory academic advising requirement for students whose GPAs fall below 2.67 during the first year, so as to provide early positive intervention. And we now have a standing committee with the mission to review and consider issues related to academic support and bar passage.
7. *Continuing our efforts to increase student, faculty, and staff diversity and to provide a supportive and welcoming environment for the entire School of Law community.* The School of Law has increased its student ethnic diversity, and there are indications that student body diversity will continue above its historically low levels.
8. *Considering ways to enhance and expand career services for students seeking employment outside of our region or in career tracks other than private practice.* The School of Law has added a new Assistant Director of Student Life with the goal of broadening the types of career services that can be offered to students. The Career Services office has moved to an online system for job listings and has increased the number of presentations provided as part of the Professional Success program. With a rapidly changing state economy and continuing national trends, this will require outgoing examination and effort.

9. *Examining the support needed by faculty.* After a period of regular turnover, the School of Law has retained its faculty administrative assistant for several years, bringing much-needed continuity and stability to these services. We have also added a work-study position to assist the faculty administrative assistant during the school year. The Burtness Scholar program, which funds student research assistants to faculty members, has been expanded.
10. *Exploring specific physical space needs and wants, especially in light of our program of legal education.* After careful consideration and study on the needs of our program now and in the future, the North Dakota legislature approved \$11.4 million in funding to be used to renovate our existing facility and provide additional space. At the time of this writing, construction is expected to start in May 2014.
11. *Re-examining our student admissions profile and potential in light of our long-term goals.* The Admissions & Probation Committee conducted empirical analysis of the characteristics of our admitted students and created a new “index” score to be used in the process of considering student applications. The information to be made available from the state Board of Law Examiners should provide additional information that can be used in consultation with bar passage and other student success factors to reliably identify applicants who can successfully complete law school.
12. *Considering changes to the academic year calendar to create a shorter semester, which has potential to serve a number of purposes, including (a) concentrated work time for faculty projects (especially research, writing, and class preparation), (b) the possibility for mini-course offerings, (c) the possibility for regional travel in connection with academic offerings, and (d) concentrated work time for faculty meetings.* The School of Law has moved to a 13-week calendar for regular semesters. Additionally, the School of Law has moved to a schedule that includes longer class sessions. These allow both students and faculty longer periods of time for uninterrupted study and work.
13. *Finalizing our promotion and tenure standards and process.* A significantly revised Policy for Faculty Promotion, Tenure, and Evaluation and accompanying Guidelines were adopted in 2009, and subsequently amended in 2011 and 2013.
14. *Examining the School of Law’s various programs and their relationship to the academic program.* The School of Law’s ongoing comprehensive curricular reform has included all aspects of our legal education program.
15. *Considering ways to enhance the School of Law’s relationship with the bench, bar, and other external constituencies.* The School of Law has taken many steps to expand and improve our relationship with our external constituencies in the state. The School of Law and SBAND now have a Joint Committee that considers issues of mutual concern. Faculty have increased their presence and involvement in both the SBAND annual meeting and the meetings of local bar groups. Faculty have taken positions on SBAND and other state-wide committees. The *North Dakota Law Review* recently offered a highly attended Energy Law Symposium in Bismarck.



16. *Exploring, with students, the learning environment and intellectual vibrancy of the School of Law.* The School of Law now has a Diversity & Educational Engagement Committee with a standing charge of focusing on educational engagement.
17. *Considering ways to enhance our co-curricular activities, including student participation in the same.* The School of Law dedicated faculty resources to the enhancement of the Moot Court Board and the *Law Review* and the alignment of those programs with our curricular mission and goals. The Moot Court Board took over responsibility for our internal trial-team competition and increased our presence at external moot court and trial competitions. The School of Law has also added the *Journal of Law and Interdisciplinary Studies* and several other new student organizations based on student interest.
18. *Facilitating cross-curricular dialogue and opportunities.* The Professional Foundations course will allow the Faculty to share ideas from their various areas of expertise, a development that has come out of extensive conversation on curriculum issues. Faculty have also frequently availed themselves of University support for the development of new approaches to teaching existing classes.

### **Planning and Major Goals in 2014**

In many ways the School of Law is in a much better place than it was at the time of our 2007 Self Study. Although we are still a young Faculty, many of us were here for the 2007 Self Study and have been through the considerable reflection required for considering changes to our School of Law's mission and curriculum. As a result, our discussion of current goals is a composite picture of discussions that we have been having over a period of years. Our new Faculty have furthered the discussion by bringing new insights and perspectives, but our basic approach and fundamental direction remains the same.

Our focus then, has been to try to prioritize our goals and set out reasonable expectations for when things can be accomplished. In addition to the long- and short-term goals and strategies identified in each of the sections of this Self Study, the major topics (in no particular order) for our continuing conversations include the following:

#### ***Short-Term Goals.***

1. Work with the Building Planning Committee and the University to ensure that our building project will allow us to meet all our curricular needs. This includes the need for comprehensive planning for how we will serve our students during the period of construction.
2. Complete and assess our changes to the first-year curriculum.
3. Consider the impacts of the discontinuation of federal "earmark" funding for our Native Americans Into Law (NAIL) program. This will include continued pursuit of outside private funding, the pursuit of University funds, and the reallocation of funds within the School of Law's budget.

4. Determine a formal system for identifying pro bono opportunities and making them available to our students.
5. Begin the process of implementing a programmatic assessment plan.

### ***Mid-Term Goals.***

1. Complete our curricular review across the entire curriculum. This is our primary goal in the medium term. Our chief means for meeting this goal is the continued, dedicated work of the Curriculum & Assessment Committee, as well as collective efforts of Faculty and administration to focus on priority substantive areas including oil & gas, practice readiness, experiential learning, and rural practice. As with our curricular review thus far, the participation of the entire Faculty will be necessary and should be informed by student perspectives as well as the perspective of the practicing bench and bar in order to ensure that we align our efforts with the realities of legal practice and student learning styles.
2. Complete an integrated academic advising system for our students. This will involve creating a student-friendly website that will contain general information regarding all aspects of the student experience, and a system for directing students to the right people to handle more specific questions. The process for this goal has already begun with the Office of Student Life giving careful consideration to all the elements that should exist in an advising system. The Academic & Student Affairs Committee will then take over to manage the drafting of new information and oversee the overall content. Finally, the administration will take over the task of integrating the information into our website in a logical, intuitive structure.
3. Complete and implement a programmatic assessment plan. The assessment plan will then serve as the primary method of assessing student learning at the School of Law and will inform the decisions to be made regarding reformation of our curriculum.

### ***Long-Term Goals.***

1. Maintain, expand, and integrate the various aspects of our Indian and tribal law programs.
2. Complete the restructuring of the curriculum.

\* \* \* \* \*

The School of Law faces many exciting opportunities in the coming years. We concluded in our 2007 Self Study that our resources were “simply stretched too thin.” Subsequently, despite a challenging environment, we invested considerable time and effort to deliver a top-notch legal education, nonetheless. We are humbled by confidence that the North Dakota Legislature has placed in us through the approval of the building project. While we will continue to face challenges in the coming years, we are convinced that the quality of our people and the improvement to our facilities will allow us to implement new initiatives and expand our ability to serve our students and the state. In the North Dakota tradition, we will strive to be wise and careful stewards of the resources entrusted to us. The greatest strength of the School of Law has always been the hard work and commitment of our students, faculty, and staff. We relish the opportunity to confirm the trust place in us.