Would You Recommend This Teacher to a Friend?

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A shocking number of good (highly rated) instructors are not teaching “bar

Chris Michael

Would You Recommend This Teacher to a Friend?

by Charles K. Belhasen

A Teacher evaluation was conducted by the Evening School this year. As many of you know, teacher evaluations have been done in the past. They were always long, complicated, ambiguous and, it seems, totally ignored by the teachers, the students, and most of all, the administration.

In the past, so they say, teacher evaluations were done so that a teacher would be able to recognize his short-comings and do better next year. A growing consensus among evening students shows not only no tangible increase in teacher performance, but a stark decline in over­all teacher competence over the past few years. This had a lot to do with our decision to modify our approach to teacher evaluation, both in form, and in the use to which the results were put.

This year’s evaluation forms were vastly simplified. Instead of a multi-page monstrosity with forty or fifty questions, the students were asked to forget all that junk and just grade each teacher on his over-all teaching ability. The possible grades were given on a numerical scale of from 1 to 5, with 5 being the best possible mark. Additionally, 2 questions were asked:

1. Should the teacher be retained?
2. Would you recommend this teacher to a friend?

You are not going to be surprised by the results of this evaluation. It shows that we have some incredibly lousy teachers at the University of Baltimore School of Law. It also shows that we have some very competent teachers on the faculty, with many others falling somewhere in the middle.

The range of ratings runs from a low of 1.9 to a high of around 4.6, with an average teacher scoring about 3.3. A number of teachers had a clear majority of their students vote not to retain their services for the future. An even greater number had a majority of their students saying that they would not recommend the teacher to a friend. One thing is abundantly clear: students are generally dissatisfied with the quality of instruction here and want improvement.

This being the case, the next logical question is, “what can be done with this new information that will benefit the school and its students?” The answer to that now is in the hands of the adminis­tration. It can no longer be said that those in control of this law school do not have an accurate account of just what the level of instruction is in many courses.

With proper application of the new in­formation now available to the adminis­tration, one can easily see ways in which the level of instruction can be raised. It is unfair, on the basis of just one evalua­tion, for students to demand that all teachers with below, say, a 2.5 rating be discharged. But it is not at all unreason­able for students to demand that the administration look at the evaluations, and utilize this valuable tool in making teacher assignments.

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exam” courses, while a shocking number of lousy ones are. The best in­structors could be assigned to the most important and most difficult courses. Conversely, the weaker communicators could be assigned to elective or less dif­ficult courses.

Does the quality of instruction really have an effect on student success with the Bar Exam? Let’s take a look at the University of Maryland School of Law (heaven forbid) for a possible answer. In his 1975 report on the status of Mary­land Law School, Dean Kelly discussed Maryland’s evening division, which makes ours look pale by comparison, not so much for its program, but because of the all important Bar Exam passage rate.

“My predecessor as Dean was consist­ent in his public and private opposition to continuance of the evening division. I have been outspoken in support of it. I do not mean to minimize the difficulties of providing part-time students with the extensive training, both in theory and in research, writing and clinical skills that the school believes is critical to the de­velopment of first-rate lawyers. But I feel that the evening program permits the Law School to train some highly qual­ified people who would not ordinarily be able to afford three years of full-time education. The quality of the evening di­vision students is reflected in part in their paper credentials and results: The aver­age Law School Aptitude Test score of the evening class is some twenty points higher than the average test score of the day for the class entering in the fall of 1975; the Bar exam passage rate of the evening students has been consistently higher than that of the day students for some years, even reaching 100 percent in two of the last five years.” (emphasis added)

Dean Kelly went on to point out that, “the basic element of a quality education is the teaching staff.” Of course a com­parison between the Baltimore Law School and the Maryland Law School would be unfair at this time. However, it is incorrect to simply say that the Mary­land Bar Exam is unreasonable, or “too difficult.”
LEGAL EXAMINATION

Contributed by Charles J. Iseman

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS
Q. Mention some of the principal law books which you have studied? - A. Hoyle's Laws of Whist, Cribbage, &c. The Rules of the Cricket Club; ditto of the Jockey Club.
Q. Have you attended any, and what law lectures? - A. I have attended to many legal lectures, when I have been admonished by police magistrates for kicking up rows in the streets, pulling off knockers, &c.

COMMON LAW
Q. What is a real action? - A. An action brought in earnest, and not by way of a joke.
Q. What are original writs? - A. Pothooks and hangers.

EQUITY AND CONVEYANCING
Q. How would you file a bill? - A. I don't know, but would lay a case before a blacksmith.

CRIMINAL LAW AND BANKRUPTCY
Q. What is simple larceny? - A. Picking a pocket of a handkerchief, and leaving a purse of money behind.
Q. How would you proceed to make a man a bankrupt? - A. Induce him to take one of the national theatres.
Q. How is the property of a bankrupt disposed of? - A. The solicitor to the fiat, and the other legal functionaries, divide it amongst themselves.

A NEW CONCEPT IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE...
Community Correction Centers Involve Citizens and Inmates
This New Concept Maybe The Last Before Suspension of the 8th Amendment

BY LEONARD A. SIPES, JR.

“Those people are crazy, that’s all. Crazy. Please tell me why anyone would want to put the criminal back into the area when the citizens and police have tried so hard to keep him out. Yea, sure I oppose the idea.”

This remark from a resident in Waverly, represents the feelings of many in the Baltimore area when the question of community correction is brought up. But it seems that one cannot escape the feeling that he is also saying something else.

It is a feeling of fear and confusion that often surfaces when one talks to a community resident who lives in an area where crime is a significant problem. It is indeed difficult for anyone to understand just why “new” and “liberal” ideas in crime fighting are put forth as answers when the solution seems so simple “lock ‘em up and throw away the key,” or “bring back the death penalty and use it,” or “get the soft judges off the bench and get people who will get tough with these people. “This is the common plead heard when one attends a community meeting dealing with local crime problems.

The crime rate in the city of Baltimore has decreased while it continues to rise in the counties and the nation, but there is still a dominant theme of frustration, anger and confusion in the minds of many.

So this is the setting for the introduction of a new idea, one that is hailed by some as the greatest breakthrough in criminal justice in this century, and an idea that is cursed by others. Just what is community corrections and how is it to effect us?

The dominant theme is the fact that within the next year well over four thousand ex-offenders will return from the prisons and go back into the communities. Naturally, the vast majority of these people will return to the Baltimore area. Knowing that our prisons are often schools of crime in themselves, and noting the fact that the majority of these ex-offenders have no skills to enable them to make it in our urban society, they will probably return to crime. The community suffers again and again until the person is caught. The criminal is returned to prison again, only to wait out his time to return again to his community where this vicious cycle continues.

For those wondering why we do not end this cycle simply by placing these people in jail forever, the 8th Amendment of the Constitution states that “excessive fines” or “cruel and unusual