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Spring 2011, Symposium

ENGAGED LEARNING IN THE LAW

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Introduction

This special law review symposium owes its existence to the national “Teaching for Engaged Learning” conference held at the Elon University School of Law on April 10, 2010. That conference attracted a capacity crowd of more than 50 law teachers from around the United States. In addition to creating a space in which to exchange ideas and information on teaching and learning, the conference also created the momentum and motivation to produce this law review edition on the scholarship of teaching one year later.

The conference was co-sponsored by the Institute for Law School Teaching and Learning (Institute) and the Center for Engaged Learning in the Law (Center). The Institute, co-directed by Professor Gerry Hess at the Gonzaga Law School and Professor Michael Hunter Schwartz at the Washburn School of Law, with consultant, Professor Sophie Sparrow of the University of New Hampshire, and the Center for Engaged Learning in the Law (Center), directed by Steven I. Friedland of Elon’s Law School, joined forces to create a full day of reflection and renewal on teaching and learning. From its inception, the conference was designed and implemented by a group of enthusiastic law teachers who cared deeply about their craft and profession. The group combined its background, creativity and breadth of knowledge to create an intensive and thoughtful experience.

The Teaching for Engaged Learning Conference Presenters

The decision of who would present at the conference was an initial and important one. Instead of presentations by attendees, a prior successful format used elsewhere, the determination was made to have the conference planners also be its primary presenters. Consequently, the presenters included the sponsoring professors as well as Professor Roberto Corrada of Denver University’s Sturm School of Law.

Everyone brought something different to the table. Professor Corrada had been using engaged learning techniques at Denver University for many years, bringing experience and wisdom and considerable success about using active learning techniques in the labor law classroom. Professor Hess had been a primary school teacher prior to attending law school, had made presentations on teaching and learning at law schools and programs too numerous to count in the United States and on other continents, and hosted law professors from as far away as Af-

ghanistan and Chile. He used his unique perspective to found the Institute two decades ago. Professor Schwartz also had been a prolific presenter throughout the United States offered keen insights on instructional design, expert versus novice learning, and self-regulated learning techniques. Professor Schwartz's perspective included his position as dean for faculty development, meaning he had considerable practice in administering faculty programs in an efficient fashion. Professor Sparrow had done many faculty presentations as well and had written about using rubrics for assessment, an area in which more and more law teachers had become interested. Professor Friedland was very interested in experiential education and routinely assigned his classes field work and regular tasks culminating in a written product. Professors Sparrow, Schwartz, Hess and Friedland also were in the process of editing a book on law teaching, *Techniques for Teaching Law 2* (Carolina Academic Press) (forthcoming), which had a synergistic effect on how the conference could be framed.

The Conference Planning

The planners divided the conference into four segments: Course and Class Preparation; Teaching Methods; Assessment and Exams; and Development as a Teacher. As we prepared a design and set of objectives, several conference calls helped shape what we were going to include in each session and provided some thought-provoking ideas that challenged our own views of teaching and learning.

The Conference

The conference began with students stationed at the Greensboro airport, a local hotel, and Elon Law School to offer a welcome and answer questions. A buffet on Friday night introduced participants to Greensboro, Elon, and the other participants. This welcome served the dual purposes of initiating efforts to create community and to feed hungry attendees who were tired of airplane snacks. On Saturday, the conference went off without a hitch, with a swarm of activity, food, and lively conversation, both inside the conference room and outside of it during breaks. Conference attendees reflected the goals of the program. Professor Luellen Curry of Wake Forest University School of Law noted, "I've taught law school for 20 years, and I wanted to come to this conference because there is always room to grow. That's what I like about teaching – you can always do better and improve." Professor Katherine Trisolini of Loyola Law School added, "Teaching is a skill, not a trait."

Sitting together at a restaurant after the conference was over, the planner-presenters all agreed that the conference had seemed to work

in advancing the idea of engaged legal education. Less than one month later, as day-to-day classes took hold of our attention and the conference receded into our memories, the germ of an idea was raised and cultivated—to follow-up the conference with articles about legal education, using the conference as a springboard. The idea was met with enthusiasm. While Professor Corrada unfortunately had other commitments, the other presenters have etched their thoughts for the *Elon Law Review* in the pages that follow.

The Articles

Professor Sparrow advances the position that multiple-choice quizzes can be a versatile learning tool. Not only can such quizzes facilitate student learning of doctrinal rules and offer feedback to both teachers and students, among other benefits, it also can be used as an effective means of developing the ability of students to engage in critical analysis and problem-solving. The article explains how to do so in a one-semester course.

Professor Schwartz opines that a particularly fertile avenue for improving legal education involves modifying the typical casebook. He has authored a casebook on Contracts embodying this approach, and suggests fourteen different ways to enhance the casebook and through that, the educational process.

Professor Hess advocates organizing teaching and learning around the value of variety. He stresses how variety can be a preferable operational principle in several educational areas, from methods, to materials, feedback and evaluation. The incorporation of variety has many positive outcomes, especially in regards to how students learn professional knowledge, skills and values.

Professor Friedland suggests that a blueprint for engaged education exists, based on the seminal work of undergraduate scholars. Utilizing this work, Friedland applies the blueprint to revamp and energize legal education.

With Appreciation

For those who attended the conference, thank you for creating and providing us with the positive momentum sufficient to lead us to participate in the scholarship of teaching. We hope to continue on the journey of advancing the quality of the legal education process.

Steven I. Friedland