

# **The University of Idaho and Planning for Legal Education**

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## **I. State Board of Education Charge to the University of Idaho**

In June 1999 the State Board of Education charged higher education to evaluate professional education needs in the state of Idaho in the fields of Law and Legal Education, Engineering and Technology, Health Professions, and Teacher Preparation. The University of Idaho was assigned to lead the evaluation of Law and Legal Education needs.

## **II. Establishment of Study Panel**

To initiate a statewide review of legal education needs and recommendations for future program direction, President Hoover appointed a blue ribbon panel of nationally prominent legal educators.

### **A. Membership:**

Don Burnett, Dean of the Louis Brandeis School of Law, University of Louisville

Betsy Levin, former Dean of the College of Law, University of Colorado

Frank T. Read, Dean of the South Texas College of Law

### **B. President Robert Hoover's charge to the panel:**

- Review the strategic alignment of legal education resources and services at the Juris Doctor (JD) level in Idaho.
- Make recommendations for long-term strategies best calculated to maximize the quality and competitiveness of JD education and continuing legal education provided by the University of Idaho College of Law over the next several decades.
- Assess the resource issues associated with the long-term strategies recommended for consideration.

### **C. Review Panel Steps:**

1. Review of background information on Idaho (demographic data and characteristics of the legal community), and the UI College of Law (demographics of applicants and graduates, the faculty, comparative analysis with peer law schools, the curriculum, accreditation reports).
2. Site visit by the team October 26-29, 1999, to Pocatello, Boise, Lewiston, Moscow and Coeur d'Alene including meetings with members of the State Bar, community leaders, faculty, students and university administrators.
3. Report of findings and recommendations.

### **D. Report Organization**

1. **Legal Education Today (and Tomorrow):** Broad overview of legal education and an analysis of historical trends and future challenges facing law schools. The review highlights types of curricula typically associated with urban and residential law schools. It also notes the increasingly important second mission

of law schools to provide advanced training to the practicing bar and legal background training to professionals in other disciplines.

2. **Idaho's Dilemma:** An assessment of Idaho's unique geographic and demographic circumstances, UI College of Law programs and services, and future demand for legal education. This section describes critical challenges for the College of Law to maintain a quality educational experience. It articulates the need for the College of Law to provide programs in other parts of the state.
3. **Idaho's Choices:** This section describes the advantages, disadvantages and implications of three options (1) an enriched status quo, (2) relocation of the College of Law to the Treasure Valley area, and (3) development of a new model of legal education to match the uniqueness of the state. The creative third alternative matching the strengths of both residential and urban models included as strategies:
  - Establishment of graduate-based programs in Boise and other areas of the state.
  - A model of two years in Moscow and the third year in either Moscow or Boise. This would give students broad flexibility to emphasize either an interdisciplinary experience strengthened by College's presence on the Moscow campus, or adjunct-taught specialties with clinical opportunities in a metropolitan capital of state government.

It is suggested that this model would fit the diverse interests for legal education in Idaho, and would provide unique opportunities for students and the legal profession.

### III. College of Law Planning

As a second major planning step President Hoover charged the College of Law faculty to study the Blue Ribbon Panel report and

“submit recommendations for activities in Boise, and around the state, consistent with preserving and strengthening our Moscow base.”

- Target date for a College of Law Action Plan – June 1, 2000
- Faculty as a whole have met frequently as a planning committee
- Solicited input from the bench, bar, alumni, and university
  - Meeting in Boise with the Board of Advisors – April 15, 2000
  - Meeting in Moscow – April 26, 2000
- Focus recommendations on activities consistent with current American Bar Association (ABA) and Association of American Law Schools (AALS) standards.

### IV. College of Law Draft Recommendations

#### A. Immediate Actions Off-campus

1. **Extern Program:** Establish a College of Law full semester extern course (12 credit hours) in Boise. Students would work 36 hours per week for 15 weeks in public law offices and judicial chambers.
2. **Additional Course for JD Students:** Seek permission from the ABA for externs to take one additional College of Law course originating from Boise.

3. **Professional Development Courses:** Open current College of Law distance education courses originating from Boise to lawyers, other professionals, and graduate students in Boise. With planning such course offerings could be expanded and made available at locations throughout the state through distance education.

**B. Longer-term Options Off-campus**

1. **Professional Development Programs:** As course offerings expand and markets are identified, courses could be packaged in certification or advanced degree programs (LLM). Topic areas for example include: advanced advocacy, intellectual property, and employment law.
2. **Two Semester Program in Boise:** The College of Law proposes to continue to monitor the costs and benefits of expanding to a two-semester program in Boise for JD students.

**C. Strengthening the Moscow Base**

The College of Law is committed to a high quality residential academic experience on the UI Moscow campus.

1. **Size and Quality of the Student Body:** More attention needs to be given to increasing the qualifications, competence, diversity of the student body. There is need to bolster scholarships and financial aid (including scholarships) to support recruitment and admissions efforts.
2. **Concurrent Programs:** The college will continue to develop interdisciplinary programs (such as the current JD/MS in Environmental Science), and other curriculum and living options (e.g. residential facility for law students) to enrich the educational experience for faculty and students.
3. **Cooperative Programs with Washington State University:** The college and university should explore further partnerships with WSU to address student recruitment and diversity issues, and to expand joint/concurrent degree programs.