University of North Carolina School of Law
Student Bar Association

1L Report

Prepared by the 1L President and Representatives, Student Bar Association
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# Table of Contents

Introduction

**Recommendation 1: 1L Faculty Reception** ................................................................. 1

**Recommendation 2: Revitalize the Alumni Mentorship Program** ................................ 2

**Recommendation 3: Appoint a Student Facilities Coordinator** ................................. 3

**Recommendation 4: Establish a Single Grade Post Date** .......................................... 4

**Recommendation 5: Student Involvement in Recruiting** ........................................... 5

**Conclusion** .................................................................................................................. 6
Introduction

Class of 2015,

I ran for class president last fall on a pretty simple premise: As 1Ls, we were in prime position to take a look at the Carolina Law experience and come up with some ways to improve it, for ourselves and for the future. As a result, I promised that if I were elected, I’d gauge the class sentiment, generate ideas for improving our experience, and compile this information in a report that presents tangible recommendations for future improvement. That’s exactly what this report is—some concrete ideas that your class representatives and I believe can have a positive impact on Carolina Law.

The report consists of five recommendations. After spending a semester discussing your experiences and receiving formalized feedback from our class survey, I believe these ideas represent some of the best opportunities to address your concerns and amplify the strengths of our great institution. You’ll see as you go through the report that we’ve identified the central concern we think the recommendation addresses and sketched out the basic parameters of our solutions.

At this point, I should reiterate that these are simply recommendations. The exact means by which any of these ideas come to fruition are going to involve discussions between a variety of student, faculty, and administrative stakeholders. On the one hand, that may take some time. On the other hand, that’s great news for our class—you’ll be the ones with the opportunity to shape these proposals.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this report, and if you have any questions or concerns about any of the recommendations you find, I hope that you will not hesitate to contact either myself or one of your class representatives.

John Harris
President, Class of 2015
Recommendation 1:
Host a 1L Faculty Reception

Concern:

In receiving feedback from students, a consistent theme emerged with respect to what they enjoyed the most about Carolina Law—the “accessible,” “kind,” and “quality” professors. Thus, this recommendation does not so much address a concern as attempt to amplify a strength. While students get to know Carolina’s exceptional faculty in the academic setting, we also recognize that many students would appreciate the opportunity to get to know faculty on a more personal level.

Solution

To that end, we recommend hosting a 1L Faculty Reception. The faculty teaching first year courses, as well as the entire first-year class, would be invited to attend.

The 1L Faculty Reception serves three beneficial purposes. First, it allows both students and professors a chance to get to know one another outside of the typical classroom setting. This not only allows students to get to know their professors on a more personal level, but it also allows them to meet quality professors who will be teaching a variety of courses that they might be interested in taking in the coming semesters.

Secondly, there is also a consistent theme among members of the first-year class lamenting the division that the colleges naturally create. Outside the weekly Bar Review, there are not that many facilitated opportunities for students across sections to socialize. With a reception for the entire class, purely for the purpose of getting to know one another and our professors, we can continue to build class unity.

Finally, the event is a great recruiting resource. Our school no doubt has professors of the highest quality, and demonstrating Carolina Law’s commitment to facilitating relationships between the faculty and the students outside the classroom is sure to be a big draw for prospective students.

While there are a variety of logistical options left to be explored, it is our hope to host such an event this Spring semester, and to invite the first-year professors from both the Fall semester and current semester to attend.
Recommendation 2: Revitalize the Alumni Mentorship Program

Concern:

Carolina Law has a thriving alumni base, many of which remain in the Triangle after graduation. These Carolina Law alumni are an incredible resource in offering guidance for law students. Unfortunately, however, most students—especially in the first year—do not get a chance to interact with very many Carolina alumni outside of a handful of official events sponsored by the Law School.

Solution

One way to utilize this expansive alumni base is to offer an Alumni Mentorship Program. Carolina Law has had such a program in the past, but, according to our office of Alumni Relations, it has faded into near non-existence. Revitalizing the program would provide a useful resource to current students, a great marketing opportunity for the school, and a way for alumni to stay connected with their alma mater. The office of Alumni Relations has already voiced their support for investigating what kinds of opportunities such a program might offer.

We envision such a program operating as a collaborative effort between the Alumni office and an appointed student board tasked with developing and managing the program. After the Alumni office performs an initial out-reach to alumni to gather volunteer mentors, the student board could then invite students to sign up and match them with an appropriate mentor. Depending on the variability of the numbers, the board could use a lottery system or an application process to match the students with available mentors and, as more potential mentors become available, match students on a rolling basis.

Once a program like this is initiated, the students and mentors would be free to develop whatever kind of mentorship program they see fit. Moreover, if students opt not to sign up for the program early in their law school careers, as their interests evolve, they will have a resource to help them seek out an alumni mentor in their interest area.
Recommendation 3: Appoint a Student Facilities Coordinator

Concern:

In discussions with a variety of first-year students, an issue that almost universally arises is the state of the law school's facilities. Classmates often bring up issues of cleanliness, something being broken, or temperature control. Obviously, students’ comfort level with respect to the state of the facilities will vary from student to student; that being the case, we see the problem as one of having a proper outlet through which students can voice concerns.

Solution

First, we recognize that the state of our facilities is primarily a matter of personal responsibility on the part of the students. As the primary users of the law school building, it is up to us, individually and collectively, to take care of the basics—throwing away our trash, turning off the lights, demonstrating, in effect, our professionalism in terms of the respect due to our classmates and other users of the building. At the same time, there are some issues that may arise that require attention beyond the scope of the average student.

To that end, we recommend establishing a Student Facilities Coordinator position through the Student Bar Association. This person, who will serve on a volunteer basis, will be an outlet for student concerns and can coordinate with the administrative staff responsible for facilities.

A Student Facilities Coordinator serves two purposes:

First, it can be somewhat intimidating to voice a concern about facilities to an administrator, and, particularly among 1Ls, there may be a tendency to assume that the concern you have might just be the natural state of things. Having a single student coordinator through which to address and resolve concerns will provide an accessible outlet for students.

Secondly, having a single individual working with administrative staff to handle facilities issues will make it easier for both the students and the staff. Currently, student concerns get reported through a variety of avenues—to class representatives, to other law school staff, and sometimes directly to the facilities staff. This makes follow-up and accountability difficult. Having a single student responsible for the task will provide a more direct line for students’ concerns to be voiced.
Recommendation 4: Establish a Single Grade Post Date of January 15

Concern:

Naturally, grades are one of the most stressful parts of the first year experience. That’s just the nature of the beast. Unfortunately, however, this stress is compounded by the current system of posting grades on a rolling basis as professors submit them. This system creates a great deal of angst among 1Ls, as some students’ grades roll in over the course of a month, while others do not post till the final day. Most of the time, students have little to no guidance as to when to expect their grades unless their professor informs them.

This is not just a stress problem, however. Given the timeline of the first year employment process, those students who have their grades earlier have the advantage not only of knowing their grades, but catering their applications and narrowing their options based on their current standing. In this past year, for instance, one small section of one college had all of their grades by January 3rd, while another small section of a college received all three of their doctrinal course grades on the very last posting date three weeks later.

Solution

We recommend moving the grade posting system to a single post date, at least for first-year students. This suggestion has been floated in the past, but has not been implemented up to this point. If logistically and technologically feasible, professors could submit their grades whenever they finish compiling their grades. These grades would be held until the final due date. With all grades in hand, the registrar could post all first-year grades on a single day.

Such a system would eliminate the added stress of uncertainty that the current rolling system creates, particularly in light of the first-year employment search. Students would know exactly when grades were coming out and could provide firm expectations to employers. Moreover, it would eliminate any potential employment advantages created by some students having grades while others do not.

On that note, it would also make sense for such a system shift to include moving up the post date to January 15—before the first round of On-Campus Interview applications. This year, grades were not due until a week after the initial job applications were due. While OCI dates may fluctuate from year to year, an appropriate balance between student and faculty needs could be accomplished by establishing the post date at January 15. At least this year, this was more than 30 days after the final exam offering, but still before the first OCI due date. While these dates will vary somewhat from year to year, such a system eliminates uncertainty and would provide a great benefit to future classes.
Recommendation 5:  
Boost Student Involvement in Recruiting  

**Concern:**

All current Carolina Law students have a stake in the admissions process, as a large part of our degree’s value rests on the continued reputation of the law school and the quality of its future students. In discussions with a variety of current students, they found the most useful part of the admissions and recruiting process to be interaction with the Carolina student body. Unfortunately, however, these interactions are often limited, as student involvement poses some specific challenges, namely privacy concerns and time constraints.

**Solution**

There are a variety of ways to ratchet up student involvement in the recruitment process. In preliminary discussions with the Admissions Office, Carolina Law is heading in this direction already. The following concrete suggestions increase involvement while taking into account the challenges mentioned above:

- **Student Recruitment Calls**  
  Students calling prospective students to answer their questions and talk about the law school application process can go a long way in boosting a student’s connection with Carolina Law. Moreover, a small number of current students can call a large number of prospective students in just a few hours. Using this format, Carolina conducts these types of recruitment calls at the undergraduate level over a series of several weeks, asking their Admission Ambassadors for one two hour block of their time a semester. We believe a similar system could be replicated at the law school.

- **Admitted Students Day**  
  Admitted Students Day is one of the best times to show off students, as the days are scheduled well in advance and prospective students are a captive audience. One way to better showcase the quality of our students and engage aspiring law students is to moot a case for our admitted students. This would involve members of our various Moot Court teams performing a brief oral argument in front of faculty “judges.” Admitted students could watch as Carolina Law’s own 2L or 3L students demonstrate the skills and knowledge they’ve obtained while at Carolina and get prospective students excited not only about the material they will learn, but give them a chance to see first-hand what they can become if they choose Carolina Law.
Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that these five recommendations can improve the Carolina Law experience not only for ourselves, but for the future of the law school. We look forward to discussions with the Class of 2015, as well as other students, faculty, and administrators, as we examine how we can make these recommendations a reality.

We also recognize that all of you are full of ideas that will make this place better. There have been a variety of suggestions brought forward that weren’t included in this report, some of which we’ve already begun working on. It is our hope that you will continue to give us your feedback as our time in law school progresses and our needs evolve. We are eager to hear from you throughout this process, so that all of us can work toward the ultimate goal—making Carolina Law the finest legal institution there is.

John Harris, President, Class of 2015  
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Matthew Henry, Representative, Class of 2015