

Most organisations also sponsor events discussing current topics. These events are also useful in helping GLB organisations to connect with other minority group organisations. Most of the GLB organisations also listed professional goals among their priorities.

The survey reflects the difficulty in maintaining an ongoing, active student group at most schools. Of the 40 schools responding to the question about membership, nearly a quarter reported membership of 10 or fewer students. It appears from the surveys that most of the successful organisations have strong support from their school's administrations. Among the positive factors are financial and psychological support. Apart from lack of institutional support, the single factor that most groups noted as a hindrance to their functioning was apathy among GLB students.

It now appears that a law school may have an affirmative duty to support GLB student organisations if a school wishes to remain in compliance with American Law Schools Association by-laws and regulations. Such affirmative institutional support is long overdue at many law schools and all schools can benefit from a new or renewed focus on the quality of their GLB students' educational environments.

FACILITIES

Leveling the floor: classroom accommodations for law students with disabilities

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In enacting the Education for All Handicapped Children Act over two decades ago, Congress cleared a path for students with a broad range of disabilities. That path has led many of them to law schools in the 1990s. The number of students with disabilities is growing rapidly. Law schools' legal tussles with

admissions and testing issues involving students with disabilities have enjoyed much press in recent years, but perhaps the most overlooked aspect of disability accommodation is the most obvious: the need to make legal education, in all its many forms, possible on a day-to-day basis for those who must shoulder so much more than the ordinary burdens of law study.

Law schools must make a concerted effort to educate administration, faculty, and all members of the student community about the needs of students with various disabilities and about the school's obligations to them under federal law. While accommodations, such as extended time for taking examinations, may easily address the needs of some students with disabilities and create a minimum of disruption and expense for the school, other students will require greater support, sometimes at a much greater expense.

This article examines the provision of disability accommodation in the classroom setting, starting with the crucial threshold task of establishing a durable and flexible accommodations policy and educating the law school's administration, faculty, and student body. While the author proposes general outlines that may help a law school to identify useful accommodations for students with various disabilities and to put in place an accommodation system, federal law requires that schools analyse the needs of individual students on a case-by-case basis.

As essential first steps in addressing its obligations, a law school should formulate a comprehensive and flexible disabilities policy handbook and engage in regular faculty education. A handbook performs the obvious function of putting students on notice of their rights and obligations. In addition, it educates faculty and administrators about their obligations under the law and sensitises them to the everyday needs of those with

particular disabilities. Of course, the careful formulation of procedures and especially the institution of a clear grievance procedure, may prove invaluable if litigation results from a dispute. Perhaps one of the most useful aspects of assembling a handbook and updating it regularly is that it stands as a visible commitment by the law school community that the school includes, acknowledges, and welcomes persons with disabilities.

The entire law school community should understand that federal law mandates strict confidentiality, and that even severe disabilities are not always apparent. A clear policy statement outlining the obligations of the school, the requirement of strict confidentiality and the rights of the disabled student could go a long way toward educating the community and integrating students with disabilities, who are often marginalised in a largely nondisabled society. A teacher should announce during the first class period that she will welcome a chance to speak with any student who requires classroom accommodations. Such an invitation may decrease a student's anxiety about self-disclosure. Especially in the case of a first-year student, the coordinator should remain in touch with both student and teachers during the first several weeks of classes to determine whether accommodations are adequate.

Sometimes minor adjustments to the classroom environment to improve communication and comfort will suffice to accommodate, posing only a small threat to an established seating plan. Also, the faculty and the disabilities coordinator should be aware of any acoustical problems in the classrooms. Advance planning (by both teacher and student) and regular communication are particularly important for the blind student.

The development of information databases, CD-ROM, and the Internet has revolutionised the research process for many with disabilities, making a broad

range of information available without the often insurmountable problems of using print sources.

Teachers are not legally obligated to make radical alterations in their teaching styles as 'reasonable accommodations', but the growing awareness of the different ways in which people best acquire and process information should counsel the wise teacher to address many learning styles to engage as many students as possible – both disabled and nondisabled.

The single fastest-growing disability group in higher education is students with the 'invisible disability', that is learning disabilities (LD) encompassing a broad range of neurological impairments that can effect various brain processing functions. LDs go far beyond reading problems and plague students with a bewildering variety of information-storing and processing deficits. The typical Legal Research and Writing (LRW) curriculum, which requires mastery of a great variety of processing, communication and motor skills, is likely to be the focus of frustrations during the first year of law school. Some students may discover only after beginning law study that they suffer from neurological deficits that make them unable to process information with efficiency and sophistication. The attentive LRW teacher will provide the kind of personal attention that is key to an LD writer.

Only with great care and sensitivity should a school attempt to organise a support group for the disabled law students. According to the author, individual, informal mentoring among students with disabilities is perhaps the best method of increasing their comfort level. And certainly it can go a long way to easing the marginalisation of students with disabilities in a setting that is particularly threatening.

Law schools should prepare for a rapidly rising incidence of requests from students with disabilities and have a

system in place to ensure that students document their requests with great care and that the school provides proper accommodations to deserving students. Federal law has mandated that persons with disabilities be welcomed into our social fabric and made a fully functional part of it. To that end, law schools must be sensitive to special needs and committed to levelling the playing field.

INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS/ AREAS OF LAW

Theory, gender and corporate law

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Explicitly teaching theory is vital to all areas of law. Theory, whether in the general sense of jurisprudential, philosophical or political theories or in the more specific sense of theoretical analysis of particular areas of law, is an integral part of law and learning.

The purpose of this paper is to emphasise the importance of explicitly teaching theory in corporate law. Traditionally, corporate law has been taught without much reflection upon theory. Whatever the reason for this, the fact remains that theorising about corporate law, either generally or specifically, has not only been a neglected area of legal scholarship, but also a neglected area of teaching.

Gender analysis of corporate law is one area of theoretical reflection that has been particularly slow to develop. Including an explicit reflection upon gender, just as including a reflection upon political and economic theory, can enhance the way students learn about and understand corporate law.

Incorporating theory in our teaching (or research) is not optional, for theory influences and defines what corporate law is and what we think it should be. Our only choices are whether to talk about theory explicitly, which in the

context of teaching means informing our students about the theoretical underpinnings and assumptions of the law we are teaching, and whether to go beyond the dominant ideas of liberalism and positivism that so strongly influence corporate law.

There is still a preference in Australia for corporate law research that is doctrinal, practical or focused on specific reform. Whilst this is not always the case, it seems there is no ongoing 'mainstream' discussion on the issues of theory that underlie our approaches to corporations or corporate regulation or upon the fundamental assumptions and values upon which corporate law rests.

We often believe that what our students need most are a solid understanding of corporate law principles and concepts and the ability to reason and argue well from the applicable cases and rules. Yet, when we make decisions such as these to limit the discussion of theory in our teaching, we limit other possibilities. For example, we limit our students' intellectual skills and deny them an essential opportunity to understand and contextualise corporate law. Unless we consider the theoretical underpinnings of what we research, teach and learn, we unconsciously commit ourselves to promoting the same corporate structure and system of corporate regulation we currently experience. Once our students understand that there is no way to extricate law from broader issues and values they will better understand how corporate law has developed and how legal arguments are constructed.

We have been encouraged to see corporate law rules and decisions as somewhat inevitable; as valid and justifiable choices between a limited number of available options. We have not readily seen corporations as intertwined with liberalism, economic values and male power. The liberal claim to judicial and legal neutrality is impossible.