



RAISING THE BAR

A publication dedicated to the exchange of evidence-based thinking about the bar exam

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From the Director

I have long held that bar exam preparation is a “village” responsibility, and that the exam itself should not be viewed as a disconnected afterthought to legal education but as one of the key steps in a continuum of professional identity formation. Viewed through this lens, law faculty, staff, administrators and students themselves, as well as bar examiners, legal organization leaders and the practicing bar all have roles to play in preparing law graduates for the exam and for careers as ethical, engaged professionals.

We started *Raising the Bar (RTB)* one year ago as the realization of my dream to create a thoughtful and respectful forum for all stakeholders interested in the bar exam to share and learn together. In that short time, readership has climbed to over 1,600. Leaders from various backgrounds have contributed columns, updates and profiles, considering how to help today’s students pass today’s exam and how to re-imagine a new and more effective professional licensing process. We have highlighted impactful law school bar success programs. We have featured pieces exploring effective teaching, learning and training methods, and highlighted recent publications that explore law student success from dozens of different angles. We have included updates from legal education and professional organizations, including the NCBE, NALSAP and the ABA Commission on the Future of Legal Education.

I am delighted that Dean Daniel Rodriguez, Professor Greg Sergienko, and attorneys Dacey Cockrill and Meghan Hammond, as well as the Institute for Law Teaching and Learning (ILTL) have contributed pieces to this issue. Thank you!

I am also pleased to report in this issue preliminary findings of the first phase of research that will:

- broadly identify bar passage barriers (or, as I prefer to call them, “challenges”);
- identify interventions designed to mitigate or eliminate those barriers;
- evaluate the efficacy of those interventions; and
- share those findings in order to help improve our collective understanding of the bar passage experience.

You will find on page 9, a list of Bar Passage Barriers assembled with “village” input. The list can be used by law schools to engage in institutional reflection and as a checklist for law students to self-assess and identify those areas that might pose challenges.

In an upcoming issue, we will publish a list of interventions that students and law schools can use to remove or mitigate barriers, and we will profile some of the studies measuring the relationships (or lack thereof) between certain interventions and bar passage. And we will continue to keep the community involved in identifying additional barriers and assessing corresponding interventions.

Encouraging passionate, smart and committed individuals to attend law school—and preparing them for the bar exam and for successful careers—is vital to ensuring we remain a society governed by the rule of law. The pipeline to the profession contains too many leaks: many people who once aspired to be lawyers decide the pursuit is no longer worthwhile; others start law school but, for various reasons, are not completing their education; and too many earn their law degrees and find themselves unable to pass the bar. It is up to this village, our village, to ensure those who can contribute to society as members of the profession do so, thereby helping to make our country and our world a better place.

So, happy first birthday, *RTB*! Readers, please contribute to future issues, subscribe if you have not already and help us continue the conversation together, as a village.



Sara Berman, Esq.

Director, Programs for Academic and Bar Success
AccessLex Center for Legal Education Excellence®

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Visit the AccessLex [SSRN page](#)

In Memoriam

This issue is dedicated to IAALS Senior Director, Alli Gerkman, who passed last month after a long battle with cancer. We, and the world, lost Alli far too soon. As her IAALS friends and colleagues noted, “Alli never saw obstacles; she only saw opportunities. And she was tireless in their pursuit.” In ongoing and future studies, including the research program described on Page 11, we will do all that we can to continue supporting the research Alli was so passionate about, and continue to create opportunities for the generations to come who will benefit as a result of her pursuits.

Distinguished Thinker Commentary:

**Daniel B. Rodriguez, Harold Washington
Professor and former Dean (2012–18),
Northwestern University Pritzker School
of Law**

Legal education in the United States stands at a place both precarious and exciting. True transformations in pedagogy and purpose are underway in American law schools, and bold innovations are becoming the norm, rather than the exception. We can and should assess these changes against the broader landscape of dynamic change in how new lawyers are performing as they enter the profession and how the legal ecosystem is adapting in the face of important challenges.

As a legal educator and, for many years, a law school dean, my perspective on these transformations is on one hand bullish (let a thousand flowers bloom, as a former president said) and on the other hand cautious. Let me briefly expand on both ends of this spectrum. We see existing institutions—including law firms, the civil and criminal justice system, the regulatory process and such—evolving in directions which require lawyers to have new skills and, even more importantly, the capacity to adapt to new conditions, expected and unexpected. Law schools are expected to adapt rapidly, and this means interrogating anew our curricula, our teaching processes, our business models and indeed our very mission. Big changes in the profession demands big, bold changes in our educational models and in the mechanisms through which we implement modern models. We are in a period of serious experimentation. It is great to see diverse minds putting their attention to these major innovations.

Why then caution? We suffer from a lack of adequate data, both from within law schools and from bar authorities and other key stakeholder groups, which would assist us in making data-driven, evidence-based reforms. Innovation without assessment is of little use and, indeed, can sometimes be worse than sticking with the status quo. When Justice Brandeis, in speaking about American federalism, famously called for “laboratories of experimentation,” he had in mind the scientific method as the key analogy. How can our law schools be such laboratories without attending to a social scientific analysis with adequate data and methods?

We need to put our collective heads together to figure out how best to collect data and examine educational innovations. This is the less flashy part of the reform project to be sure, but it is essential to frame, analyze and ultimately implement meaningful reform. Heed the call for collaboration around data and method! So much important work lies ahead of us in transforming our law schools into the incubators and accelerators for a truly new legal profession.

Organization Updates

We thank the Institute for Law Teaching and Learning for contributing the following important update.

The Institute for Law Teaching and Learning, as the name suggests, is committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in legal education. In furtherance of that goal, the Institute supports the research, development and sharing of materials about effective teaching and learning in law schools.

The Institute hosts an annual conference with presentations from professors across the country, as well as plenary sessions from Institute Co-Directors and Consultants, each of whom is an expert in some aspect of teaching and learning. Institute faculty members also bring training workshops to law schools to address specific challenges faced by a particular institution. And the Institute maintains a website and blog to make available teaching resources for professors.

In addition to conferences and workshops, Institute faculty members create scholarship and publish books and articles on topics such as teaching strategies, assessment, classroom management techniques, rubrics and experiential learning.

This work, designed to improve performance of both professors and students in law school, necessarily enhances the learning experience of students, which translates to better academic achievement and a more solid foundation for bar exam preparation. In addition to supporting students in substantive knowledge and skills, the Institute's work fosters effective study skills for students that will help their bar exam work.

For more information about ILTL, visit their website at <http://lawteaching.org/>, and to subscribe to their listserv, email simpsons@gonzaga.edu.

Please email Success@accesslex.org with bar-related updates from your organization.

Conference Corner

Upcoming conferences with bar-related sessions:

- [AASE Bi-annual Diversity Conference](#)
- [Society of American Law Teachers \(SALT\) Teaching Conference](#)
- [8th Annual West Coast Consortium of Academic Support Professionals](#)
- [Accesslex Legal Education Research Symposium](#)
- [LexCon '19 – Financial Capability and Student Success Conference](#)
- [New England Consortium of Academic Support Professionals](#)

Please email Success@accesslex.org about upcoming bar-related conferences and conferences with bar-exam related sessions that may interest *Raising the Bar* readers.

Perspectives on Student Success

We are pleased to present a perspective from the profession on attorney licensure. Meghan Hammond, an associate at the Washington DC office of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, offers a first-hand account of the experience of test anxiety and the bar exam.

Exam Anxiety: No one is Immune

The process of taking any bar exam can seem daunting, but especially so for the Virginia Bar—whose Board of Bar Examiners require you wear “court appropriate attire” (i.e. a full suit) throughout the exam and tout the twenty-four possible subject areas that could be covered on the exam’s essay portion.

I sat for the Virginia Bar in July of 2016. Initially, I was unfazed. I had done well in law school and had managed to become Editor-in-Chief of the Northwestern University Law Review. As harrowing an experience as the bar exam may have seemed to many, I felt I was well-equipped. Not so.

After a brief period of easing into bar study, the progress monitor on my bar exam prep course began to rule my life within just a few weeks. The magic number was 75% completion. The passage rate for exam takers who had completed at least 75% of the prep course materials was 70%—more than a fighting chance. But I am a slow studier. I was already staying up late and getting started early for the sake of the progress bar—not considering whether I retained any of the information. I became obsessed with benchmarking my performance against others, which was difficult to do in an online, self-study environment. I called my friends from law school to see where they were in their bar study, though everyone seemed light-years ahead of me, no matter where they were. Indeed, by the time the exam was two weeks away, I had not reached 75% and—by my own calculations—it would take a herculean effort to get there.

There have been several studies conducted on the upside-down parabola of stress levels as compared to actual performance. A certain level of stress correlates with an increase in performance, but as the level of stress and anxiety crosses over the vertex, the level of performance drops precipitously. In my rush to reach the magic number, I was dangerously close to crossing the vertex.

Indeed, I felt I was so behind, I was seriously considering rescheduling the exam and called my bar prep provider for a sanity check. When they returned my call, the person on the other line was the company’s President, who had jumped in to help his staff as they received an influx of panicked calls, just like mine, before the bar exam. He listened to my 75% obsession and pulled up my test taking information. Then he asked: “How much sleep are you getting?”

Barely any, I admitted.

He then instructed me to take the rest of the afternoon off and get some sleep. I am not sure what it was but having an authority figure tell you to take a break—even a small one—does wonders to quell anxiety. This small gesture in the middle of my bar prep panic kept me on the left side of the stress parabola. I reset myself and went on to pass the Virginia Bar.

We welcome submissions for future Perspectives on Student Success columns at Success@accesslex.org.

Bar Success Program Profiles

We are grateful to Greg Sergienko, Professor of Law, Concordia University School of Law, for writing about a first-semester intervention, and how it impacted students three years later.

In this article, I'll talk about how first-semester outreach helped create a cumulative bar-pass rate of 100%.

The cohort was Concordia Law's 2016 bar takers. It started with a median LSAT of 152. Many promising students, more than a fifth of the class, transferred. Only 4.5% were academically dismissed or otherwise left. Yet all passed, most on the first time, despite a UBE cut score of 280.

How?

The Outreach Program

Many students don't do as well as their abilities would let them. This usually results from too little studying, which in turn often results from too many outside obligations.

Addressing such challenges is important to our diversity mission because under-privileged students tend to have a lot of these commitments: they substitute social capital for financial capital.

The key is identifying struggling students very early.

Midterms are not enough. By the time they're returned, the semester is mostly over, leaving little time to improve. And, at least at our school, midterm grades come to students anonymously, so their return lacks human outreach and a context for improvement.

Accordingly, our first-year faculty and academic support people met regularly to identify students who seem to be facing challenges.

For those students, we sought to identify who could best reach out to the student. This is usually not the academic dean, dean of students or an ASP person. A meeting with someone students don't regularly see can come across as threatening, which inhibits a candid discussion.

At the meeting, we make clear that Concordia honors students' important non-law-school commitments, such as caring for sick family members. When students see our respect, it's easier for them to identify a

realistic approach, whether reducing a course load to accommodate outside commitments or explaining to family and others the commitments law study demands. And, the supportive environment formed early helps students heed our bar advice.

Acknowledgment

This idea originated at North Carolina Central University School of Law, which performed beyond what its students' predictors and attrition rate would suggest. Its then-dean, Raymond C. Pierce, shared this approach, which hasn't received the public attention it deserves. I thank Dean Pierce for discussing the program in preparing this article, but errors and infelicities are mine. Individuals who are interested in more details may [contact me](#).

The purpose of this feature is not to endorse particular programs but to cultivate a community dialogue and share ideas about bar success programming.

Please contribute to the collective and growing body of knowledge about academic and bar success efforts by submitting a profile of the programming at your law school to Success@accesslex.org for future inclusion in issues of *Raising the Bar!*

Publications, Posts and Podcasts

Below are selected, recent bar-related publications. Readers will also find timely bar-related articles in the following two publications: [The Learning Curve](#) and [The Bar Examiner](#).

Publications

- Catherine Martin Christopher, Normalizing Struggle (2019). Arkansas Law Review, Forthcoming. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3378829>.
- Jordana Alter Confino, Where Are We on the Path to Law Student Well-Being?: Report on the ABA CoLAP Law Student Assistance Committee Law School Wellness Survey (April 19, 2019). Journal of Legal Education (Summer 2019, Forthcoming). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3374976>.
- Judith A. Gundersen, The Bar Examination: Three Fundamental Principles, 91-FEB N.Y. St. B.J. 34 (2019). Available at: http://www.nysba.org/Sections/Women_in_Law/PDF/Journal.html.
- Joan W. Howarth and Judith W. Wegner, Ringing Changes: Systems Thinking About Legal Licensing, 13 FIU L. REV. 383 (2019). Available at: <https://ecollections.law.fiu.edu/lawreview/vol13/iss3/6>.
- Jessica Santangelo and Jennifer A. Gundlach, Teaching and Assessing Metacognition in Law School (April 1, 2019). Journal of Legal Education (Forthcoming). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3371946>.

Posts

- Benjamin Madison, [How Practice Tests Reduce Anxiety in Bar Preparation and the Exam](#) (Best Practices for Legal Education).
- Benjamin Madison, [New Rubrics Available to Help Law Schools that Have Adopted Learning Outcomes Related to Professional Identity Formation](#) (Best Practices for Legal Education).
- Paula Schaefer, [Examples of How Law Schools are Addressing Law Student Well-Being](#) (Best Practices for Legal Education).
- Louis Schulze, [Dear Practicing Attorneys: Please Stop Giving Our Bar Students Bad Advice](#) (Law School Academic Support Blog).

Podcasts

- [Amped Up: ADHD med abuse in the legal profession](#).
- [Puzzle Rush](#) (Speededness on the LSAT).
- Path to Law Student Well Being, [Episode 6 Part 1 – “Practice Makes Passing \(Bar Exam\)”](#) and [Episode 6 Part 2 – “Practice Makes Passing \(Bar Exam\)”](#).

Please email Success@accesslex.org with recent and forthcoming bar-related publications, posts, and podcasts to be included in future issues of *Raising the Bar*.

Resources for Legal Educators

Using Data to Inform Decisions: Where to Begin?

More schools are using data to gain insights into how better to prepare their students to succeed in law school and on the bar exam. But, even exceptional teachers, academic support professionals and administrators can feel challenged by statistics and regression analyses. How does a school start the data journey? The following questions and steps are designed to provide a structure for beginning that conversation and taking the first steps toward becoming a data-savvy institution.

We thank Mike Barry, President and Dean at South Texas College of Law Houston; Isabel Freitas Peres, Director of Bar Studies at Seattle University School of Law; and Zoe Niesel Executive Director of Law Success and Assistant Professor of Law at St. Mary's University School of Law for contributing the following resource.

Next Generation Data Analytics and Individualized Interventions for Bar Takers: 10 Questions / Steps to Consider in Developing a Data Analytics Program

As Presented at the AASE Annual Conference (May 2019, Seattle, WA)

- 1. What are your significant questions/concerns/problems/persistent urban legends that can be addressed by data?**
 - Identify a burning platform.
 - Formulate questions and hypotheses.
 - Identify potential independent variables.
 - Identify potential dependent variables.
 - Think broadly.
- 2. Is there an appetite for change? Is there a willingness to accept the implications of the data? Is there support among the faculty and the administration?**
 - Identify champions.
 - Investigate past efforts.
 - Enlist support from other parts of the university.
- 3. What data have you? In what format is it? Who owns or controls it? Can you get it?**
 - Multiple years of data is better than one year.
 - Seek electronic data (Excel, for instance), rather than hardcopy (PDF).
 - Look for identifying characteristics that link datasets (e.g., a unique student identifier).
 - Think broadly—admissions, registrar, financial aid, clinic, academic support, law journals, career services, student services.
 - Ask for assistance from the BLE equivalent.
 - Identify systems experts—those who know the nuts and bolts of the reporting systems.
- 4. Identify a data scientist / analyst.**
 - Look within the university.
 - Look beyond the university.
 - Ask for help from others who have done this before.
- 5. Run preliminary analyses.**
 - Use these to calibrate and educate the data scientist.
 - Find gaps in the data and fill them.
 - Reframe the questions and approach.
- 6. Share preliminary results.**
 - With faculty.
 - With administrators.
 - With other stakeholders.
- 7. Refine the approach and analyses.**
 - Develop second-level and third-level questions.
 - Identify and acquire additional data to answer those questions.
- 8. Identify conclusions and action items.**
 - Be bold—but realistic.
 - Identify champions for each action item.
 - Consider policies, curriculum, standards, etc.
- 9. As appropriate, develop a predictive model.**
 - Identify who will use the model, and how.
 - Test the model as appropriate.
 - Keep accurate records.
 - Track progress.
- 10. Lather, rinse, repeat.**
 - Keep refining the data elements.
 - Keep refining the questions.
 - Keep updating the information.
 - Don't stop—there are always new insights.

Bar Passage Barriers

Below is the list of selected barriers to first-time bar passage described in the Director's column at page 2. The list consists of barriers identified by many stakeholders, including those who attended the 2019 AccessLex Bar Exam Research Forum. We invite readers to contribute additional barriers to the list by emailing Success@accesslex.org.

This list may be used for a variety of purposes—for example, as a springboard for discussion in faculty bar success committees and law school bar passage task forces or as a checklist for faculty and for student-facing law school administrators to promote awareness of the myriad reasons certain graduates do not pass the bar on their first attempt. The list can also be adapted to serve as a guide for proactive self-reflection for students, so they may effectively plan for bar success by avoiding or mitigating these barriers.

Time Barriers

- Insufficient time spent studying (due to work obligations, caretaking responsibilities, lack of support network to free up study time, etc.)
- Inadequate time management (i.e., not knowing how to manage one's time, or not using a calendar or other system to adequately manage time commitments)
- Failing to anticipate how much time is needed for bar preparation
- Insufficient focus or discipline when studying

Knowledge Barriers

- Insufficient knowledge of legal rules and doctrine
- Insufficient understanding of how to apply legal rules
- Learning and/or being taught in ways that do not align with the bar exam assessments
- Self-assessing and/or being tested in ways that do not align with the bar exam assessments
- Misinterpreting or failing to understand instructions for the bar exam

Skills Barriers

- Insufficient foundation in critical reading, writing and thinking skills prior to law school
- Insufficient development of analytic/logical reasoning skills
- Insufficient bar exam writing skills (due to inadequate practice testing, insufficient analysis of practice tests and sample/model answers, failure to thoroughly understand mistakes made and/or how to remedy them or starting the process of taking practice tests too late in the preparation period)

- Slow and/or inaccurate typing skills
- Insufficient or inefficient memorization skills
- Inflated sense of skills on self-assessments (Dunning-Kruger effect)
- Undiagnosed or unaccommodated learning disabilities

Financial Barriers

- Insufficient funds for a bar review course
- Insufficient funds for living expenses
- Financial stress associated with financial dependents
- Insufficient funds for bar exam registration fees, travel to and expenses at bar exam testing site
- Anxiety around financial insecurity (e.g., the fear of not getting a job and being unable to repay student loans)
- Unexpected expenses (emergencies) during bar prep

Stigma/Internalized Bias (Stereotype Threat)/Test Anxiety-Related Barriers

- Belief that one's low first-year grades, or other indicia, necessarily predict bar failure
- Fear of failure
- Fear of success (e.g., fear of being responsible for others' lives and livelihoods)
- Heavy cognitive load (i.e., feeling overwhelmed by the amount of material to be studied and mastered)
- Perceiving bar performance as a reflection of one's self worth and value
- Failure to identify and manage stress/anxiety issues (e.g., dread of or fear of the exam, test anxiety or belief that one can never do enough to pass the exam)
- Failure to seek help to address mental health issues (due to cultural/familial/peer pressures against reaching out for help, concerns about moral character and fitness applications and/or lack of access to mental health/wellness professionals at the law school)
- Faculty/administration not being aware of where to direct students for help (i.e., students "falling through the cracks")
- Feeling a sense of not belonging (due to minority status, lower law school GPAs, cultural differences) resulting in failure to engage fully in the educational and bar prep process
- Lack of "learned resiliency" among students who have not previously experienced academic setbacks before

Health Barriers

- Insufficient sleep
- Sub-optimal diet
- Lack of exercise
- Poor eyesight
- Illnesses and medical emergencies (for one's self or one's dependents)

Testing Conditions Barriers

- Intrusive, distracting, or discomforting stimuli (e.g., being too cold or too hot during the exam, being hungry or thirsty during the exam, noises at test site, etc.)
- Stress and anxiety associated with knowing (or not knowing) what items are allowed or expected at the testing site, as well as security protocols (e.g., metal detectors and clear bags)
- Insufficient time for bathroom breaks
- Stressful or costly commutes to testing sites
- Challenges associated with the closed book nature of the bar exam
- Ineligibility for disabilities accommodations (i.e., not receiving accommodations on the bar exam that one received during law school)

Bar Review and Preparation Barriers

- Failure to complete the work assigned in a bar review course because of inability to keep up with the schedule or taking on an excessive volume of material (e.g., more than 1 course, excessive supplements, etc.)
- Failure to discern detailed substantive and skills tasks from necessary administrative tasks
- Inadequate pacing of study and study breaks, and/or not maximizing efficiency and learning through timing strategies
- Listening to lectures on double or triple speed and not understanding the material
- Conceptualizing bar review as memorizing black-letter rules (i.e., memorizing without learning underlying concepts)
- Absence or insufficient quantity of quality self-assessment
- Inadequate self-assessment (e.g., untimed assessments, only practice testing with certain subjects or formats, failure to review and/or learn from sample/model answers)
- Inconsistent or irregular review practices
- Relying on a review course that is not pedagogically sound, or not taking a review course at all

- Insufficient accountability (due to some combination of the independent study nature of many courses and insufficient self-directed learner skills)
- Relying on misinformed advice or guidance, for example from those who are not aware of current bar exam practices or formats
- Treating the bar exam itself as a "practice test" with the expectation of passing the second time

Additional Resources for Legal Educators

- AccessLex Resource Collections: [The ARC Bar Success Collection](#)
- Grant opportunity: [American Association of Law Libraries \(AALL\)](#)
- Grant opportunity: [AccessLex Grant Programs](#)

AccessLex Grant Program Updates for Bar-Related Grants

Bar Research Grant Program:

AccessLex-funded project [Building a Better Bar](#) has begun its focus groups in a nationwide effort to define “minimum competence” to practice law. In total, the research team will conduct 60 focus groups in 12 states to inform discussions about the composition and structure of the bar exam. According to project co-leader [Deborah Merritt](#), “We’re off to a terrific start. There is something special about a group of lawyers sitting around the table talking openly about what they needed and how they struggled in year one.” The team is already seeing parallels to another AccessLex-funded project, [Foundations for Practice](#), which is laying the groundwork to remake legal education through empirical data. The *Building a Better Bar* project is a partnership between IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System at the University of Denver, and Professor Deborah Merritt of The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law.

Research and Dissertation Fellows Program:

In a recent [AccessLex sponsored longitudinal research study](#) of law students at two schools, we found that law school grades, combined with LSAT scores, only accounted for about 30% of the variance in bar passage rates. We also found that LSAT scores, when looked at in conjunction with law school grades, added little predictive value for bar passage.

As schools seek to ensure compliance with ABA Standard 316, the revised accreditation bar passage requirement, the study suggests in order to design appropriate bar pass interventions, we need to look at more than just law school grades.

[In part two of the same grant-funded research project](#), we began the process of identifying factors that might play a role in bar passage. We developed an extensive survey that sought information about bar study plans, study methods, including the use of study groups, study environment, financial factors, employment and

familial obligations, study motivation, self-confidence levels, issues associated with first-generation students and general physical and mental health issues.

While our sample size was too small to reach generalizable conclusions, initial observations suggest areas that warrant further research. For example, we found those who failed were less likely to write practice essay questions under timed conditions and less likely to engage with their study groups to actively review essay answers. We also found those who failed were more likely to find the material took longer to learn than anticipated. Another difference was that those who failed self-reported lower self-confidence and motivational levels throughout the bar study period than their colleagues who passed.

The survey research study raises issues ripe for a larger, multi-institutional project. In the interim, the survey is attached to the grant report should schools seek to explore patterns or issues that present bar pass barriers for their students.

Academic and Bar Success Resources for Law Students

- LibGuide: [Texas Tech University School of Law](#)
Future issues of *Raising the Bar* will include a link to a comprehensive guide of law school ASP and Bar Success LibGuides.
- [ABA Guide to Bar Information for Applicants with Disabilities](#)
- The ABA Law Student Division [Grant Program](#) provides support to student organizations to establish first-time programs and other activities.
- Podcast for students: [The Law School Playbook](#)

Mental Health

Our thanks go to Dacey Cockrill, an associate at Eric Buchanan & Associates, PLLC for this summary of mental health and well-being in the profession.

The Bleak State of Mental Health and Well-Being in the Law

“For too long, the legal profession has turned a blind eye to widespread health problems. Many in the legal profession have behaved, at best, as if their colleagues’ well-being is none of their business. At worst, some appear to believe that supporting well-being will harm professional success. Many also appear to believe that lawyers’ health problems are solely attributable to their own personal failings.”

[The Path to Lawyer Well-Being: Practical Recommendations For Positive Change](#)

Research has begun looking at the rates of anxiety, stress, depression and substance abuse amongst attorneys and law students, and the results are far from encouraging. Fortunately though, many schools have begun implementing creative and effective programs to improve well-being for students. Many schools have been adding mental health education into their orientation programs, scheduling mandatory meetings offering mental health advice, posting well-being resources around campus, hosting wellness events, mentoring students who are struggling, training faculty to observe and reach out to students, and providing greater access to professional counseling. In launching and managing any of the above-mentioned programs, schools should be cognizant that “well-being” is not merely the absence of illness. To create mentally healthy lawyers, schools should strive to help students engage in activities, form close relationships, experience a sense of belonging, gain confidence through mastery of law-related tasks, achieve goals they value, find meaning

and purpose in their lives and careers, feel they have control over their lives and accept themselves.

Additional Mental Health Resources

- [Working Group to Advance Well-Being in the Legal Profession](#)
- [The Path to Law Student Well-Being Podcast Series](#)

Please email Success@accesslex.org with additional resources for students for inclusion in future issues of *Raising the Bar*.

Continuing the Conversation

Barriers and Interventions

Please send your thoughts to Success@accesslex.org regarding bar passage barriers, particularly any barriers not listed on pages 9-10. We also want to learn about interventions your school is implementing to encourage student success and to mitigate barriers to first time bar passage.

Please write to us at Success@accesslex.org with questions, comments, columns, publications, conferences or other resources that would be of interest to *Raising the Bar* readers.

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Sara J. Berman, Senior Editor

Ana Cordova, Managing Editor