



RAISING THE BAR

A PUBLICATION DEDICATED TO THE EXCHANGE OF
EVIDENCE-BASED THINKING ABOUT THE BAR EXAM

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

We started *Raising the Bar* in 2018 to be a space in which evidence-based ideas about the bar exam could be exchanged and discussed. We wanted the newsletter to be a useful resource to anyone with a role or stake in the bar exam success of law graduates. A wide array of contributors has shared their thoughts, research, ideas, and expertise – all to help broaden our collective knowledge about important bar-related topics. Readership of the newsletter has increased consistently since its launch, providing heartening evidence that the newsletter is serving its intended purpose.

While many people have contributed to the success of *RTB*, Sara Berman deserves credit for laying out its vision. If you are reading this newsletter, you very likely know Sara. She served as my colleague here at AccessLex for almost four years, leading our academic and bar success initiatives. Sara left us in September to join Touro Law. But her presence and impact still loom, including in the pages of this newsletter.

In this issue of *RTB*, we provide updates on some AccessLex projects, including our new, innovative bar prep program, [Helix Bar Review by AccessLexSM](#). As we move into a new publication year, our commitment to using the pages of *RTB* for the collective betterment will remain. We will continue to ask you, the readers, to share your ideas and expertise. Sara often invokes the notion of a village when describing the collective efforts needed to foster student success. *RTB* exists to aid the transmission of knowledge among members of this village. We will continue to publish in that spirit and continue to learn together.

A — *. TJC

Aaron N. Taylor

Executive Director

AccessLex Center for Legal Education Excellence®

Visit the Director's [SSRN author page](#)

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HELIX BAR REVIEW BY ACCESSLEXSM

As you've probably heard, we recently launched [Helix Bar Review by AccessLexSM](#), the only national nonprofit bar prep program. And now that it's available to students, one of the most frequently asked questions we get is about the educational approach we've taken. How can we be sure this course is going to work? Although we don't claim to have pixie dust, we do have confidence in what we've created. Here's our story.

The Fundamentals

All bar review companies first look to the National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE), the organization that administers the Uniform Bar Exam, to determine the scope of their content. Using the provided subject matter outlines and skills-tested documentation, companies then build out their exam review materials. Most bar review companies also use prior exam materials licensed from the NCBE, including Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) multiple-choice questions, Multistate Essay Exam (MEE) essay prompts and Multistate Performance Test (MPT) prompts.

In this regard, the Helix UBE course is no different than the commercial offerings. We looked to the NCBE for the subjects eligible for testing. We reviewed testing frequencies to ensure appropriate coverage of highly tested topics. We contracted with the NCBE to provide licensed materials for all three components of the UBE. And we used that information as the foundation for building our core educational components.

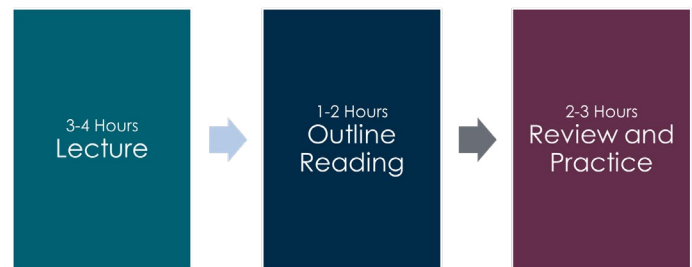
So, What DOES Make Helix UBE Different?

Let's start with the questions we just mentioned. Yes, Helix Bar Review uses NCBE-licensed questions. But, we also offer additional NCBE-like questions crafted by our panels of law professors. Helix MBE-style question development efforts were led by the former director of the MBE program at the NCBE — and created under the same conditions and in the same design established by the NCBE. And

that's special. So, what does this mean for students? They can be confident that every question in their Helix course will prepare them for what they'll experience on test day.

In creating a brand-new bar exam course, we also had the opportunity to base our approach on bar exam research and current knowledge around learning science. When it comes to preparing for the bar exam, motivation, determination and effort — specifically in areas related to time and mindset — are critical. And these are the areas in which Helix has the biggest impact. Let's take a look.

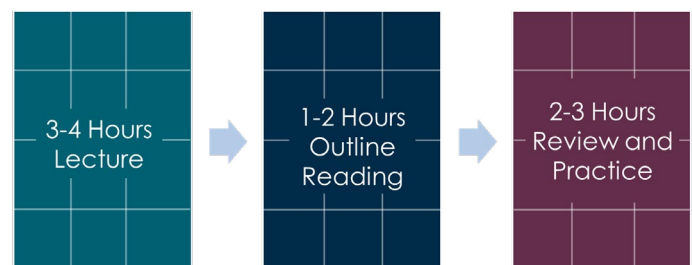
Traditional bar review looks something like this:

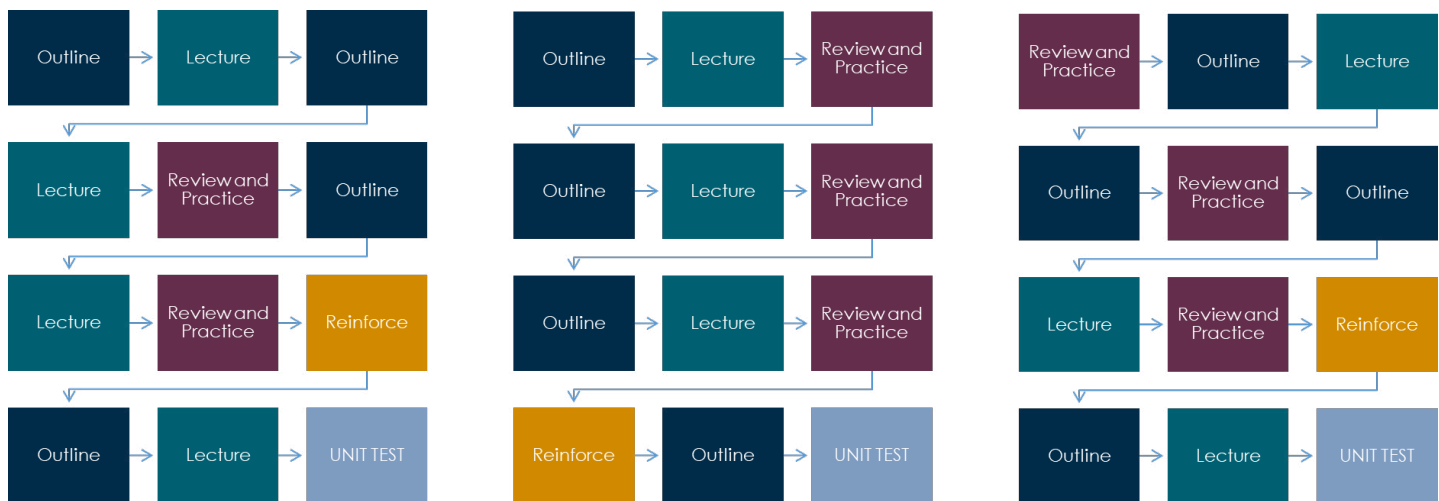


In many courses, the daily structure is: watch hours of lectures, read hours of outlines, and then finally get to practice, which might include multiple-choice questions, essay drafting or creating review materials.

While this conventional approach may get information into a student's head, those big blocks of work can be overwhelming, uninspiring and leave students feeling adrift. Helix has reimagined this traditional process to help increase engagement and better connect content with practice — the most effective part of the study equation.

Consider those same three blocks of study activities. Now break them up into smaller pieces:





Long lectures turn into short 5 to 7-minute spotlights on targeted pieces of content. Outlines are reconceived to operationalize the law, driving students to read core bar inquiries and utilize checklists and stepped analyses with examples and tips. Multiple-choice questions are separated into question sets that help them see whether they are having trouble knowing the law or applying it to contextual scenarios (as required by the MBE).

By creating smaller pieces of targeted content and matched activities, students read, hear and practice smaller bites of content in context. In the end, they cover the same bar-tested material – but this approach helps to immediately reinforce learning of that content piece, helping to increase retention and solidify knowledge. The result: active and engaged vs. passive and unsure.

With added opportunities throughout to reinforce prior content and to test larger groups of content together, this iterative process also helps to enhance memory retention and increase activity speed by utilizing short-term and longer-term memory actions with a variety of tasks.

The Modern Way to Prep

With flexible access beginning as early as 20 weeks before the exam, Helix is designed to fit students' schedules and learning styles. And while we provide study plan options for 10, 12, 16 and 20-week study periods, study begins on the day a student is ready and adjusts automatically.

With a state-of-the-art interface, structured and adaptive learning options, live topic-specific webinars and workshops, a Game Center, and so much more – and with its low, no-profit price – Helix Bar Review is exactly what you would expect from the people whose only mission is student success.

[Take our free Sneak Peek, learn about our Free Course Giveaway for 2Ls, and check out our free 1L Mini-Outlines.](#)

LEXSCHOLARS: MORE THAN A PIPELINE PROGRAM

Kelsey Risman is a Senior Evaluation Methodologist at AccessLex Institute.

The saying, “If it walks like a duck...” does not apply to LexScholars. You may be familiar with this legal education diversity pipeline program from AccessLex Institute but look closer and you’ll see that LexScholars is a robust research project investigating the effectiveness of pipeline programming. The pipeline program provides aspiring lawyers with an 8-week LSAT preparatory course, admission counseling, financial education, financial assistance, and other activities that may contribute to admission to law school and award of scholarships. The research project is a quasi-experiment in which participants are systematically exposed to varying program components leading up to and during the law school application cycle. The purpose of the experiment is to identify over time what pipeline program components are most effective in increasing the admission rate of applicants from under-represented racial/ethnic groups. The research design includes a control group – a critical comparison point that is all-too-often missing from studies of pipeline programming effectiveness.

The second year of the LexScholars program is fully underway. As year two of this five-year program launched, the research team took a deep dive into program data from year one. Continuous data collection through the LexScholars application, monthly surveys, pre/post-intervention assessment, and a qualitative interview provide program data that are rich, nuanced, and informative. Here are a few insights we’ve gathered from the data, thus far:

- **Higher LSAT score is the key to getting in the door.** Data from year one of the program affirm the primacy of the LSAT in law schools’ decisions on who gets admitted and/or a scholarship. This was the case even when aspirants applied early, submitted materials that had undergone extensive review by admissions counselors, and had high undergraduate GPA.

- **Admission counseling is the ticket to winning big.** Participants who received admission counseling were more likely to receive big money scholarships. Admission counseling involved highly personalized support leading up to the point of application submission. Counselors reviewed drafts of materials, brainstormed where to apply, and kept participants aware of timelines and due dates. Even with a lower LSAT score, these participants were more likely to receive scholarships that covered a substantial portion of law school tuition, which will make a meaningful impact on the entire law school experience. Knowledge is power.
- **Applying early (before December 1st) may be more important for obtaining scholarships than admission.** The LexScholars research project involved several components designed to encourage early application to law school. For example, half of all participants were randomly selected to receive a cash payment if they took the LSAT and submitted five applications by December 1st. While early applicants were not any more likely to gain admission overall, they were more likely to receive a scholarship. We have a few ideas for why admission rates were not higher among early applicants – perhaps participants took the LSAT before they were ready or rushed to complete applications to obtain the cash incentive. We have, in year two, modified the structure of the incentives offered to accommodate these possible scenarios. Among admitted participants, though, early applicants were more likely to receive a scholarship alongside their admission. That’s an important finding.

Time (and more and more data) will continue to tell the story of LexScholars. This is a five-year research project where iteration and change will be based on the prior years’ findings. The pipeline program will continue to evolve toward a more effective solution as each year builds on years past. We look forward to sharing more about what we have learned.

CONFERENCE CORNER

- [Association of American Law Schools Annual Meeting](#) (Jan. 5-9, 2022)
- [Mental Health and the Legal Profession](#), University of Louisville, Brandeis School of Law (Feb. 25-26, 2022)
- [Beyond Learning Outcomes: Working the Assessment Plan](#), Institute for Law Teaching and Learning (Mar. 25-26, 2022)
- [Association of American Law Schools Conference on Clinical Legal Education](#) (May 9-13, 2022)
- [Association of Academic Support Educators Annual Conference](#) (May 24-26, 2022)
- [Legal Writing Institute Biennial Conference](#) (July 20-23, 2022)

Please email [**RTB@accesslex.org**](mailto:RTB@accesslex.org) about upcoming bar-related conferences.

PUBLICATIONS AND POSTS

Selected Recent Publications

- Melissa Bezanson Shultz, [*Professor, Please Help Me Pass the Bar Exam: #NEXTGENBAR2025/26*](#), 69 J. LEGAL EDUC. (forthcoming).
- Kris Franklin & Rory Bahadur, [*Directed Questions: A Non-Socratic Dialogue About Non-Socratic Teaching*](#), 99 UNIV. DET. MERCY L. REV. (2021).
- Ben Templin, [*Integrating Spaced Repetition and Required Metacognitive Self-Assessment in a Contracts Course*](#) (T. Jefferson Sch. L., Rsch. Paper No. 3902814, 2021).

Selected Recent Posts

- Joshua L. Jackson, [*While Awaiting and Responding to July 2021 Bar Exam Results, Let's Look and Plan Ahead*](#), ACCESSLEX INST. (Oct. 26, 2021).
- Louis Schulze & Raul Ruiz, [*Does Academic Support Matter? A Brief, Preliminary Response to Blinded by Science and Its Progeny*](#), L. SCH. ACAD. SUPPORT BLOG (Oct. 9, 2021).
- Louis Schulze & Raul Ruiz, [*Does Academic Support Matter? A Brief, Preliminary Response to Blinded by Science and Its Progeny, Part Two*](#), L. SCH. ACAD. SUPPORT BLOG (Oct. 10, 2021).
- Kathryn Shotwell, [*How the Results of a New Study Analyzing First Time Bar Passage on the UBE Will Change My Messaging to Students and My Approach to Teaching Bar Prep Curriculum*](#), L. SCH. ACAD. SUPPORT BLOG (Oct. 17, 2021).
- Stephanie Francis Ward, [*Jurisdictions Are Switching Back to In-Person Bar Exam Starting in February*](#), ABA J. (Oct. 21, 2021).

Please email [**RTB@accesslex.org**](mailto:RTB@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 AND LAW STUDENTS

Information about the Bar Exam

- [AccessLex Resource Collections: Bar Success](#)
- [ABA Bar Information for Applicants with Disabilities](#)
- [ABA Bar Passage Outcomes](#)
- [ABA Statistics](#)
- [Bar Exam Results by Jurisdiction](#)
- [Bar Admission Guide](#)
- [Collaboratory on Legal Education and Licensing for Practice](#)
- [NCBE Bar Exam Fundamentals for Legal Educators](#)
- [NCBE NextGen: Bar Exam of the Future](#)

GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

For Law Students

- [AccessLex Law School Scholarship Databank](#)
- [ABA Grants for Law Students](#)
- [ABA Scholarships and Financial Aid](#)
- [MAX by AccessLex](#)

For Legal Educators and Researchers

- [AccessLex Bar Success Intervention Grant Program](#)
- [AccessLex Bar Success Research Grant Program](#)
- [American Association of Law Libraries \(AALL\)](#)

ASP AND BAR SUCCESS RESOURCES

- [The Bar Examiner](#)
- [The Learning Curve](#)
- [CALI Lessons](#)

Please email RTB@accesslex.org with information about resources for faculty and students in your jurisdiction.

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