service and educators' self-protection, and to a lesser degree with professional self-protection. They do not portray a system that primarily protects or informs the public. Unfortunately, the most often voiced praise for the current system, that it is effective in moving resources from other parts of the university to the law schools, is an appeal to brute force rather than reason and right.

Perspectives on the accreditation process: views from a nontraditional school
R A. Matasar
45 *J Legal Ed* 3, September, 1995, pp 426-430

As we enter an era of scarce resources and diminished demand for legal education, accreditation must serve the end of assisting the fittest and cleverest law schools to survive. It must encourage experimentation and maximise the efficient use of resources. In my experience, however, it is punishing innovation and efficiency and is so tied to the past that it prevents seeing the future. I became the dean of Chicago-Kent a few months after the law school received its site visit. Several letters later, Chicago-Kent received a clean bill of health. During the nearly three years of communication with the ABA, I came to understand the accreditation process as a rite of passage.

Chicago-Kent is a can-do law school which has been able to fulfill its wish list through creative solutions to resource problems. It frequently does things differently. It has established a fee-generating clinic that grows with little or no cost. It has adopted a large visiting assistant professor program staffed by those wanting to become tenure-track faculty members (but paid lower salaries). It has created computerised first-year courses and has organised several curricular concentrations.

The accreditation process, however, suggests that the ABA has adopted a no-you-can't attitude. The ABA Accreditation Committee has been obsessed with our inadequate 'resources' - i.e. our poor student-to-teacher ratio. Apparently, under the worst possible method of counting our faculty, our ratio was slightly above the magical 30:1 ratio required by ABA interpretations. To reach the 30:1 ratio, the ABA excluded all administrators regardless of whether they taught full teaching loads. When our visiting assistant professors and other excluded staff are counted, our ratio approaches 22 to 1. I carefully drafted each letter to the ABA to make this point, to each of which I received the same response, to the effect that Chicago-Kent devoted insufficient resources to teaching 'because of an inadequate student to teacher ratio'. There was no explanation as to how the Committee reached its conclusion. Finally, in frustration, I called the consultant's office and was told that the reason our ratio was bad was simply that our response to questions on the annual ABA questionnaire demonstrated the inadequacy of our teaching resources. We came up with different answers and we now have full accreditation, produced by answering the spirit of questions rather than their literal wording.

These experiences have given me a new appreciation of the accreditation process, which I believe must become a vehicle for change to reflect the changes in the world around us. Law school applications are declining; salaries and the demand for recent graduates are stable or declining; law schools are downsizing. In short, we are living in times of scarcity where innovation and effective resource utilisation are economic necessities. Yet accreditation remains a process of accretion, calling for more buildings to be built, books to be bought etc. Accreditation has become a parade of non-negotiables.

Change in legal education is coming. At the moment, one would have the impression that the Accreditation Committee believes its mission is to find out what is wrong with a school. I have a simple guideline for accreditation. If a school's program is working, if its graduates have jobs, if its faculty are productive scholars and good teachers, leave the school alone. Accreditation must recognise success as well as failure; it must separate what is necessary in a program from what is desirable.

Modest proposals to improve and preserve the law school accreditation process
J A. Sebert
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In June 1995, the ABA and the Department of Justice entered into a consent decree that terminated the latter's investigations into alleged anti-trust violations in connection with the ABA's accreditation of law schools. The consent decree requires the ABA to appoint a special commission to review the ABA's accreditation process of American law schools and to determine whether there should be any revision of the standards, interpretations or rules regarding a number of topics.

On balance, both the ABA accreditation process and the membership review process of the AALS have helped produce dramatic improvements in legal education over the past quarter century. However, there are some ABA standards and interpretations and AALS membership