

Each academic discipline has some counterpart within the labor movement. Consider all the roles unions and their members play in society: whatever people do for work, as a result of work, and in reaction to work has a close connection to unions and can be a focus for academic study. There are a range of issues available for study, from union involvement in local political questions to workplace health and safety to trial practice and representational opportunities. Law students can do legal research, represent grievants, learn dispute resolution techniques and put into practice other lawyerly skills.

Formal labor-academic connections can have many practical and academic benefits for students. Not all law students want to work for law firms or do corporate law. They may want a job in which they can 'do justice'. Classes or programs that focus on unions and work with unions can meet the political and educational needs of such students.

Programs need to be structured in a way that gives students the feeling they are respected. This may mean ensuring that students have ownership of the work they do on projects and get a chance to have meaningful input. While some students may enjoy meeting diverse people, others may find that they are dealing with a culture clash between academia and labor or even class conflict.

Unionists, quite naturally, may be reluctant to be mere objects of study. There may be a basic resistance to working with people who they feel might not understand and sympathise with unions and workers. They may worry that academics and students will feel superior and will talk down to them. Unless unions have something to gain, they will not make themselves available to faculty and students.

Not only will those directly involved learn about unions, but studies, articles, papers, and work through internships can provide unions with powerful re-

sources. These can be disseminated to a wider audience that might have no other way of learning about unions and issues that concern working people. If unions are actively involved in proposing topics and identifying areas of need, they are much more likely to end up with materials they can put to practical use.

In response to a proposal made to the Central Labor Council and behind-the-scenes lobbying, early in 1997 the San Diego–Imperial Counties Labor Council established a Student Internship Program with a part-time staff person. This new program, from the Labor Council's point of view, has had two main purposes: to mobilise increased resources that enable local unions to organise; and to reach out to community members who share union goals of economic and social justice. Law students are both a ready resource and good allies on these justice issues.

Along the way the authors have encountered pitfalls and hurdles. Unions have to be organised enough to plan an internship assignment. Employer outsourcing and downsizing means that many unions in turn have had to reduce their own staffs. Local unions have their own internal priorities that may not include organising internships when others are ready to do so. Unions simply will not be involved with interns who treat them merely as objects of study and who do not share their values.

The authors claim that all participants have gained from the internship experience. One student spent most of her time in negotiations seeing the real give-and-take of the process in an informal setting. Other students have represented workers in agency appeals and helped draft handbooks explaining legal rights. Unions found the experience valuable enough to continue using interns. The work done was not necessarily dramatic or irreplaceable, but its value in each case was evident.

Academics involved commented on the impact that even a small number of these students can have on their classes and the larger school community. The returning interns have contributed their firsthand experience to the classroom and have recruited other students just by their enthusiasm for the internship. Labor-campus collaboration offers great benefits to students, faculty, and workers in the community. An internship program will open at least one door to that collaboration; it is a stepping stone toward expanded connections.

ENROLMENT POLICIES

Results from a survey: gay, lesbian and bisexual students' attitudes about law school

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Among the purposes of the Law School Admission Council's (LSAC) Gay and Lesbian Issues Work Group was to explore ways in which it could address some of the concerns specific to gay, lesbian or bisexual (GLB) applicants, and to assist law schools in understanding those concerns and developing responses. Members of the LSAC decided that a survey of student attitudes and beliefs should inform their advice. In addition, they planned to survey GLB student organisations, as a way both to learn more about them and to assist law schools in supporting them.

In the spring of 1997, the work group surveyed GLB students and GLB organisations, covering such matters as coming out in the application process and in law school, coverage of GLB issues in the classroom, the law school environment for GLB students and institutional support for GLB organisations. Questionnaires went to the 194 LSAC-member law school in the United States and Canada. In all, the work group received responses from 313 stu-

dents at 93 schools and from 41 student organisations.

This article summarises survey results and provides conclusions and recommendations in three broad subject areas: the admission process; the climate for law students; and issues relating to student organisations. However, it is important to state that these results do not represent the views of all GLB law students. Students who are completely closeted in law school, or who attend a school with no GLB student organisation, had no practical way of receiving the survey. However, 94 percent of respondents said they were attending a law school with a GLB organisation, and 91 percent said they were members of that organisation. Among the students responding to demographic questions labeled as optional, the gender mix was comparable to the overall composition of US law schools, as was the racial and ethnic distribution.

Most survey respondents were out of the closet before entering law school. When it came time to apply to law school, however, the group was somewhat more reticent. Asked whether they had self-identified as GLB in their law school applications, 37 percent responded “no, not in any applications”, 33 percent answered “in some applications but not others”, and 29 percent answered “yes, in all of my applications.” The student questionnaire asked respondents to explain those decisions. Many were out in general and saw no reason not to be out in their applications. Others described their sexual orientation as a central part of who they are and several said that they wanted their sexual orientation to play a part in the selection process for good or ill. Among the 113 respondents who chose not to self-identify in their applications, 33 stated that it was not relevant to the application process. Other respondents

feared that self-identification would hurt their chances for admission.

Respondents were invited to share any advice they might like to give to future GLB law school applicants. On the question of self-identification, some cited the importance of being honest with a school from the very beginning, others expressed concerns about possible anti-gay bias in the admission process or questioned the relevancy of sexual orientation to that process. Other advice focused on the need to learn as much as possible about a law school and encouraged applicants to supplement the usual sources of information, citing current students as a possible alternative source of accurate information.

In summary, the question whether GLB applicants should identify themselves in the admission process seems to be largely a personal one. There was no clear pattern of self-identification, nor any consensus about how future applicants should resolve this issue. LSAC’s advice to GLB applicants on this question was that, if you have significant accomplishments that relate to your sexual orientation, or significant work experience in a gay related organisation, it almost certainly pays to discuss those accomplishments in your application. In general, the more gay-friendly a school’s recruitment materials, the more likely a GLB applicant is to trust all of the school’s marketing efforts. The school’s non-discrimination policy should include sexual orientation and be featured in recruitment materials. Also, schools that have a GLB organisation should consider providing the names of self-identifying GLB applicants to that group. Finally, recruiters should be aware of the actual climate at their schools for GLB students and be prepared to discuss it honestly and openly.

With respect to the law school climate for GLB students, a student panel reported 12 years ago that women be-

came disempowered in law school, that issues of race were not handled well in the classroom, and that gay and lesbian students felt invisible. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents reported that GLB issues had been addressed in at least one of their classes. Visibility alone, however, does not necessarily improve the comfort level for GLB students. Respondents complained about the way certain GLB topics were covered in class and spoke of their own hesitancy to discuss such questions. However, the fact that a majority of the students responding feel comfortable about talking about GLB issues in class is a positive sign. Many of the students reported that their comfort level was primarily affected by the individual teacher or the subject matter of the class. Thus, those who teach and who have contact with students should become aware of the general climate for GLB students in the law school building.

Classroom discussion of GLB legal issues can be fraught with worry for some GLB students. Teachers can reduce some of these worries by raising GLB-related issues themselves in class or in their choice of materials, and by raising them in a manner that suggests they are serious and substantive. Faculty and administrators, both gay and straight, must be as visibly supportive as possible; such support can provide a great deal of comfort to students in the face of peer homophobia.

The 41 student organisations responded to a separate questionnaire. A student organisation can provide what GLB students perceive to be the only safe environment on campus in which they can be themselves. Furthermore, GLB student organisations have a continuing role to play in ensuring that students, faculty, staff and administrators are informed of the issues GLB students face. Many surveys said that one important function of these organisations is simply to publicise their own existence.

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