



## Gaze into the Future of Legal Education: Pace Law School Overhauls Curriculum, Revolutionizes Future of Law School

[By Heather Jung]

Later this month, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching will publish its findings from a two-year study in a report entitled *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law*. According to a press release from the foundation, the study looked at 16 legal institutions in the U.S. and Canada in order to examine “the way that law schools develop legal understanding and form professional identity.” While the report acknowledged that law schools are capable of imparting the ability to think like a lawyer, they are in need of “innovation and improvement.”

“The calling of legal education is a high one—to prepare future professionals with enough understanding, skill, and judgment to support the vast and complicated system of the law needed to sustain the United States as a free society,” said William Sullivan, one of the report’s authors. “Unfortunately, despite some very fine teaching in law schools, often they fail to complement the focus on skill in legal analyses with effective support for developing ethical and practice skills.”

In order to avoid remaining stagnant with regard to their methods, many law schools, such as Pace Law School, are looking at ways to overhaul their curricula and create programs that will make graduating law students more effective lawyers in the future.

Stephen Friedman has been the dean of Pace Law School since 2004 and believes legal education “would benefit from being more purposeful [...] by trying to answer the question ‘What is it we are trying to produce, and what do we want our students to know about?’”

Before becoming Pace’s dean, Friedman practiced law in several fields; he was a senior partner at New York law firm Debevoise & Plimpton, worked in government sectors, and was general counsel for companies such as E.F. Hutton and Equitable. Upon taking his position at Pace, he was shocked to find that legal

education had not changed much since he graduated from Harvard Law School in 1962.

“Perhaps because I have been a practicing lawyer I was deeply impressed by the fact that there seemed to be no greater connection between the structure and nature of legal education and law practice,” Friedman said. “In fact, there was astonishingly little dialogue between the legal profession and law schools about what lawyers and judges thought our students should know about when they graduate and the extent to which the current curriculums were satisfying that.”

According to Friedman, one of the main issues at hand is whether or not students would benefit from having more focus in their legal education. With the current curricula employed by most law schools, students take classes on a broad range of legal topics in order to gain exposure to the many facets of the legal system. Friedman and other legal educators believe that students should continue taking some of these broader classes but should also have focused areas of study.

“You end up knowing a little about a lot of things, but you don’t have an integrated or holistic view of any area of the law,” Friedman said.

In an article in the *Toledo Law Review* (“Why Can’t Law Students Be More Like

Lawyers?”), Friedman says that “law schools need to align legal education more closely with the realities of law practice or the gap will be closed by other institutions, such as the growing number of CLE providers. Those law schools that are able to take this step, particularly those other than the elite schools, will gain a competitive edge in attracting students and placing them in good jobs.”

To achieve the goals set forth in his article, Friedman and the rest of the administration at Pace are in the process of overhauling the school’s curriculum. While many schools offer basic J.D.s, Pace offers several concentrations for students to choose from, including a nationally renowned real estate and land use program. Students who specialize in a given area will take four or five classes, starting in their second year, geared toward that specific area of study.

“We are not trying to make them experts. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, what we seek is not the end (specialization). It is not even the beginning of the end, but it is perhaps the end of the beginning: an effective new lawyer prepared to begin practice in a broad area of the law,” Friedman said in the law review article.

According to the article, specializations would be designed to “combine substantive law and skills in a meaningful way,” which would require offering groups of courses in



the later years of law school covering topics such as litigation, taxation, and labor and employee benefits.

"We are not going to make them experts, but I think we can make young lawyers much more effective beginning lawyers, beginning associates, than they are now," Friedman said.

Similarly, the authors of the Carnegie Foundation's report call for law schools to utilize a three-part curriculum: "(1) the teaching of legal doctrine and analysis, which provides the basis for professional growth; (2) introduction to the several facets of practice included under the rubric of lawyering, leading to acting with

responsibility for clients; and (3) exploration and assumption of the identity, values, and dispositions consonant with the fundamental purposes of the legal profession."

According to Friedman, other law schools across the country, such as George Mason, Harvard, and Stanford, are realizing the same thing he realized: the need for a new way of teaching law students and equipping them for their future careers.

"Training lawyers to 'serve the needs of a complex, democratic society' is exactly what American legal education should be aiming for," Friedman said in his article. "The question is 'How well are we doing it?'"

To order a copy of the Carnegie Foundation's study, visit [www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-078798261X.html](http://www.josseybass.com/WileyCDA/WileyTitle/productCd-078798261X.html).

#### ON THE NET

Pace Law School  
[www.law.pace.edu](http://www.law.pace.edu)

"Why Can't Law Students Be More Like Lawyers?"  
[www.utlaw.edu/students/lawreview/volumes/v37n1/Friedman.htm](http://www.utlaw.edu/students/lawreview/volumes/v37n1/Friedman.htm)

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching  
[www.carnegiefoundation.org](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org)