



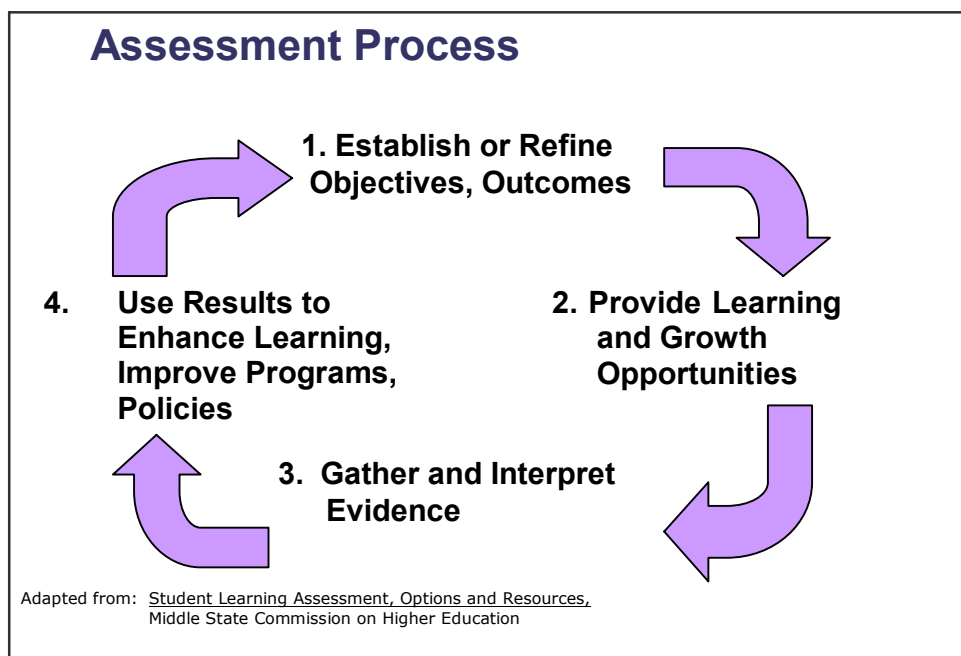
Widener University

Commitment to Ongoing Assessment of Student Learning

Widener University's commitment to ongoing assessment of student learning began as part of a coordinated effort to fulfill regional Middle States accreditation standards. The Task Force for Assessment of Student Learning (TASL) was established in 2005 to develop a framework for assessment, identify current practices and assessment gaps, and provide necessary resources. All schools and colleges as well as co-curricular programs were represented on the task force. The task force presented the following recommendation in the *Widener University Self-Study Report for Re-Accreditation* (September 2006):

To ensure continuity of the cycle for assessment of student learning, a university-wide Student Learning Assessment Implementation Committee will be appointed by the Provost in the fall 2006 with the following responsibilities: review on an annual basis the completeness of assessment plans; discuss the implementation of assessment plans; identify assessment issues across the institution; provide information and documentation to the Assistant Provost for the Assessment of Student Learning. (p.133-4)

To fulfill the Task Force recommendation, the Implementation Committee for Assessment of Student Learning (ICASL) was established in October 2006. The Committee is charged to coordinate ongoing assessment of student learning and to address university-wide assessment issues. The committee members are designated by their school/colleges/supervisors as persons in their unit with responsibility for the systematic implementation of the unit's assessment plan. The School of Law is represented on this committee. ICASL completed a review of assessment developments at Widener during spring 2007 and prepared a set of recommendations for implementing an ongoing assessment cycle, to include documentation related to institutional learning objectives. Since then, all programs have participated in robust cycles of annual assessment reporting. Also, Widener has transitioned to an assessment planning and management system to facilitate electronic assessment reporting and closing of assessment loops.



Vision Statement

Widener aspires to be the nation's preeminent metropolitan university recognized for an unparalleled academic environment, innovative approaches to learning, active scholarship, and the preparation of students for responsible citizenship in a global society.

Mission Statement

As a leading metropolitan university, we achieve our mission at Widener by creating a learning environment where curricula are connected to societal issues through civic engagement. We lead by providing a unique combination of liberal arts and professional education in a challenging, scholarly, and culturally diverse academic community. We engage our students through dynamic teaching, active scholarship, personal attention, and experiential learning. We inspire our students to be citizens of character who demonstrate professional and civic leadership. We contribute to the vitality and well-being of the communities we serve.

Institutional Learning Objectives

1. Students will demonstrate the knowledge, skills and scholarship that are appropriate to their major field of study.
2. Students will be able to think critically and communicate effectively.
3. Students will demonstrate attributes associated with professional and civic leadership.
4. Students will demonstrate characteristics of responsible citizenship.

Widener School of Law

Vision Statement

Widener University School of Law aspires to be a synergy of diverse and highly qualified students interacting with dedicated scholars, teachers, and practitioners in a vibrant, student-centered environment. Through specialized institutes and innovative teaching methods that connect theory, doctrine, and practical skills, Widener Law strives to produce outstanding and reflective lawyers. In law practice, scholarship, and civic engagement, the Widener Law community will advance the state of the art in law, justice, and ethical professionalism in the regional, national, and global communities it serves.

Mission Statement

Widener University School of Law offers students a vibrant and dynamic environment from which to enter the legal profession. We encourage students to be lifelong learners who are actively engaged in the development of the law. Widener Law gives students a strong foundation in the fundamental theories and principles of law, and then provides opportunities for students to concentrate in specialty areas and to hone their legal and writing skills through individualized, hands-on experience in the classroom, in clinics, in externships, and through public service. Widener Law fosters and encourages creative and innovative faculty scholarship that contributes to the improvement of the law. We promote service to the legal community and the public by our faculty, students and staff for the betterment of the communities we serve.

J.D. Program Learning Objectives and Outcomes

The School of Law accomplishes its educational mission through the following **Student Learning Objectives**:

- A. Students will understand fundamental principles of law and legal process utilized in the practice of law.

- B. Students will understand the need for, and learn skills to facilitate, lifelong learning of the law.
- C. Students will demonstrate an understanding of effective and responsible participation in the legal profession and communities they serve.
- D. Students will demonstrate effective skills, both written and oral, to succeed in the practice of law.
- E. Students will demonstrate minimum competencies to successfully pass the bar examination.

Graduates of the J.D. program must demonstrate knowledge and/or behavior aligned with the following **Learning Outcomes**:

1. Students will demonstrate minimum competency in core legal subjects commonly tested on bar examinations, including multistate and essay topics, and the written performance tests.
2. Students will conduct reliable and substantive legal analysis based on independent legal research, and prepare written legal work product in support thereof.
3. Students will represent clients and their concerns through effective written and oral advocacy.
4. Students will pass the bar examination at or above the state passage rate.
5. Students will pass the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE).
6. Students will engage in simulated and clinical law practice without incidents that would generate disciplinary consequences.
7. Students will engage in legal, civic, and educational projects, including but not limited to pro bono activities, in an effort to enhance the communities in which they serve.

References

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (2007). *Student learning assessment, options and resources*. Second ed. Philadelphia, PA: Author.

Widener University (2006). *Widener University self-study report for re-accreditation*. Chester, PA: Author.

Outcomes-Based Legal Education at William Mitchell College of Law

Spurred by anticipated changes in accreditation and new thinking about professional education, American legal education is undergoing dramatic transformation. Rather than focusing on educational inputs (what is taught by professors), legal educators are increasingly holding themselves and their students accountable for educational outputs (what is learned by students). Although at first blush this sounds like little more than a change in semantics, renewed attention to results, or outcomes, is profoundly reforming traditional legal education. This changing landscape provides William Mitchell with a unique opportunity to build on its historic strengths in the provision of practical legal education.

During the 2008-2009 academic year a faculty task force met to consider the implications of adopting explicit educational outcomes for graduates. The task force issued a report which was explored at a faculty retreat and was provided to the Board of Trustees in May, 2009. The report outlines a multi-year process for exploring and implementing an outcomes-based curricular approach.

The task force concluded that outcomes-based learning will enable William Mitchell to more concretely define and execute its vision and mission. For example, among other goals, the College seeks to instill in students the “practical wisdom” to put the law to work. But, what does practical wisdom mean and how do students know if they have acquired it? While Mitchell’s current program certainly provides opportunities for students to gain practical wisdom and experience, an outcomes-based curriculum would enhance this effort by: (1) articulating the core knowledge, skills, and professional attributes that constitute practical wisdom (outcomes); (2) aligning curriculum, teaching, and use of technology with desired outcomes; and (3) requiring demonstrated student proficiency with respect to outcomes at interim points in the curriculum and prior to graduation. Graduates might also demonstrate their competencies to potential employers through online portfolios which would contain writing samples, video-taped skills performances, and other demonstrations of learning.

An outcomes-based curricular approach will help the College to provide more immediate remediation for students who do not meet benchmarks, ensure student preparedness for practice; enhance relationships with alumni and employers, review faculty structure and evaluation, and provide ongoing data to assess the success of the College in fulfilling its mission.

During the 2009-2010 academic year the College’s curriculum committee will undertake two related initiatives. First, based on a set of curricular outcomes proposed by the task force, a curriculum mapping subcommittee will determine where the outcomes are currently taught and assessed. They will identify curriculum gaps, undesired repetition, and sequencing issues for the purpose of curriculum reform. Second, a writing outcomes subcommittee will focus on developing and preparing to implement College-wide writing outcomes. They will articulate writing-specific outcomes for graduates, identify evidence of proficiency, map where in the curriculum writing is taught and assessed, and develop a plan to determine the extent to which students currently achieve the outcomes.

MITCHELL

WILLIAM MITCHELL COLLEGE OF LAW

MISSION AND VISION

OUR VISION

To pioneer a demanding legal education so engaged with the profession that our graduates have an enduring advantage as they meet the challenges of an increasingly complex world.

OUR MISSION

We serve the law.

We teach it, study it, practice it, and work to make it just.

This is our mission.

Our students come to William Mitchell with diverse traits, talents, and experiences, yet they have in common a desire to transform themselves into skilled and ethical legal professionals.

They learn from us and from each other. We challenge and support them, and we are responsive to their family and career commitments. We study law and the legal profession as critical observers and active participants. Our legal education incorporates scholarship and practice, maintains a strong connection to the profession, is intellectually rigorous, and instills an ethic of service to clients and community.

Our students graduate with the **practical wisdom** to put the law to work.



WILLIAM MITCHELL
COLLEGE OF LAW

DRAFT Learning Outcomes¹

“Practical wisdom to put the law to work” means that:

Graduates have basic knowledge.

- Core subject matter (civil procedure, contracts, property, torts, constitutional law, comparative/international law)
- Legal systems, process, sources of law
- Interdisciplinary literacy

Graduates are proficient in the skills of analysis, research, communication, representation, work management, leadership, and self-reflection.

- Analysis & reasoning
- Legal & factual research
- Communication (listening, oral, written)
- Representation (creative problem-solving, strategic planning, counseling, negotiation, advocacy)
- Organization and management of work
- Leadership
- Self-reflection/ learn from experience

Graduates conduct themselves professionally and exercise judgment in use of knowledge and skills.

- Ethical conduct
- Reflection on personal values
- Performance of public service
- Promotion of justice

Amended 8-11-09

¹ This is a preliminary list of learning outcomes for discussion purposes only. Outcomes should be measurable and be sufficiently flexible to accommodate different areas of practice and anticipate new professional roles.

