

April 29, 2010

Greetings Alumni & Friends of DU Law,

The February preliminary bar results are in. First time DU takers passed at a rate of 76% before appeals (which are likely to result in some improvement in that rate). This, following our 91% pass rate in July, is good news in at least three respects.

First, this is the highest pass rate we have had on the February bar since 2001. This is even before appeals. And we can expect to see improvement after appeals. (For example, last February, we gained 3% in appeals.)

Second, at this time last year, our preliminary pass rate before appeals was 69%. So this year's result – 76% before appeals – represents a substantial improvement over last year.

Finally, we continue to out-perform our expected pass rate. Based on LSAT scores and undergraduate GPA's (the best pre-admission predictors of bar passage available), Corona Research predicted that the class entering DU in the fall of 2006 would pass the bar at a rate of 80.4%. Based on results for first time takers in July 2009 and February 2010 (a rough estimate of the performance of the class entering in 2006), it appears that this class actually passed the bar at a rate of 88.3% – nearly 8% better than predicted. This suggests that the early parts of our bar passage initiative are having the desired effect.

As I have said in earlier messages on bar passage, this is a work in progress. Some parts of our bar passage initiative are in place, and as noted above, appear to be having a positive effect. For example, preliminary data on our Bar Success course suggests that, all things being equal, those who take the course pass the bar at significantly higher rates than those who do not. However, several key parts of our bar pass initiative first went into place with the 2008 entering class. These key parts include (1) our new admissions policy, which drastically reduces the number of incoming students who are at risk for failing the bar, and (2) our new good standing policy, which raises the law school GPA required to graduate and imposes bar-related requirements on students whose law school grades put them at risk for failing the bar. We expect to see the effect of these initiatives beginning in July 2011, when the 2008 entering class first takes the bar.

We will continue to collect data and adjust courses as necessary. But at this point, we have every reason to believe that our bar passage initiative is working and that, by July 2011, we will regularly see bar passage rates that make us all proud.

For those of you who like numbers, I have created a table that I believe illustrates the data that supports this prediction:

Predicted v. Actual Pass Rates								
Class Entering the Year of...	Total Matriculants	Risk Zone Admits	% Risk Zone Admits	Prediction of Bar Passage Upon Matric. (Overall)	First Year Taking Bar (July of...)	Actual Bar Passage of Class To Date	DU Pass Rate July 3years Following Matric.	DU Pass Rate Feb 4years Following Matric.
2002	359	*141	39.3%	68.6%	2005	67.5%	72.0%	66.0%
2003	362	141	39.0%	73.1%	2006	71.5%	71.0%	58.0%
2004	336	117	34.8%	74.6%	2007	75.9%	80.0%	71.0%
2005	344	76	22.1%	77.0%	2008	86.8%	84.0%	75.0%
2006	339	49	14.5%	80.4%	2009	88.3%**	91.0%	76%***
2007	379	62	16.4%	81.7%	2010	-		
2008	300	18	6.0%	85.9%	2011	-		
2009	298	10	3.4%	87.9%	2012	-		
<i>* There are 85 matriculants whose GPAs are not on the system. This number could be higher.</i>								
<i>** Estimated based on the number of first time takers in both July 2009 and Feb. 2010.</i>								
<i>*** Pending appeals. This number may increase.</i>								

This table illustrates that, for the past two and a half years, since we instituted the first of our bar pass initiatives, our matriculating classes have outperformed their predicted pass rates. It also illustrates how, for each of our recent classes, the predicted pass rate has increased significantly – particularly for the classes matriculating in 2008 and 2009. So there is every reason to believe that (1) our recent results, including our February results and our July pass rate of 91%, represent an improving trend, and (2) with continued hard work, the best is indeed yet to come.

Thank you to everyone who has worked to hard on this important issue. And congratulations to our newest members of the bar.

Regards,



Dean and Professor of Law Martin J. Katz