



April 1-4, 2012

Pennsylvania Convention Center

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What Matters in Law School?

Assessing the Impact of Student Involvement on 3L GPA

Presented by: Robert Detwiler, Ph.D.

The University of Toledo

Monday, April 2, 2012 1:15 p.m.

Session ID M4.139

Session Rules of Etiquette

- Please turn off your cell phone/pager
- If you must leave the session early, please do so as discreetly as possible
- Please avoid side conversation during the session

Thank you for your cooperation!

Introduction

- Purpose of the Presentation:
 - Give attendees a background to the LSSSE survey
 - ID specific factors that predict law school GPA
- Key findings:
 - UG GPA and LSAT scores most useful predictors of 3L GPA
 - Student involvement is as useful in predicting 3L GPA as UG GPA + LSAT

Benefits: An Understanding of ...

- Tangibly ID factors that have been shown to impact law students nationwide
- Make a case at your home institution for incorporating student involvement and other factors into a holistic admission review process



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Study Background

Why Did I Choose This Topic?

- I work full time as an MBA Program Director
- Have a JD/MBA program with the UT College of Law
- Lots of friends went to law school (Ohio State, Univ. of Chicago, CWRU, Cleveland State, etc.)
- Practically, I needed a dissertation topic!
 - But, I wanted a topic that could relate to what I do for a living and help me help students more in preparing for law school.

Research Questions

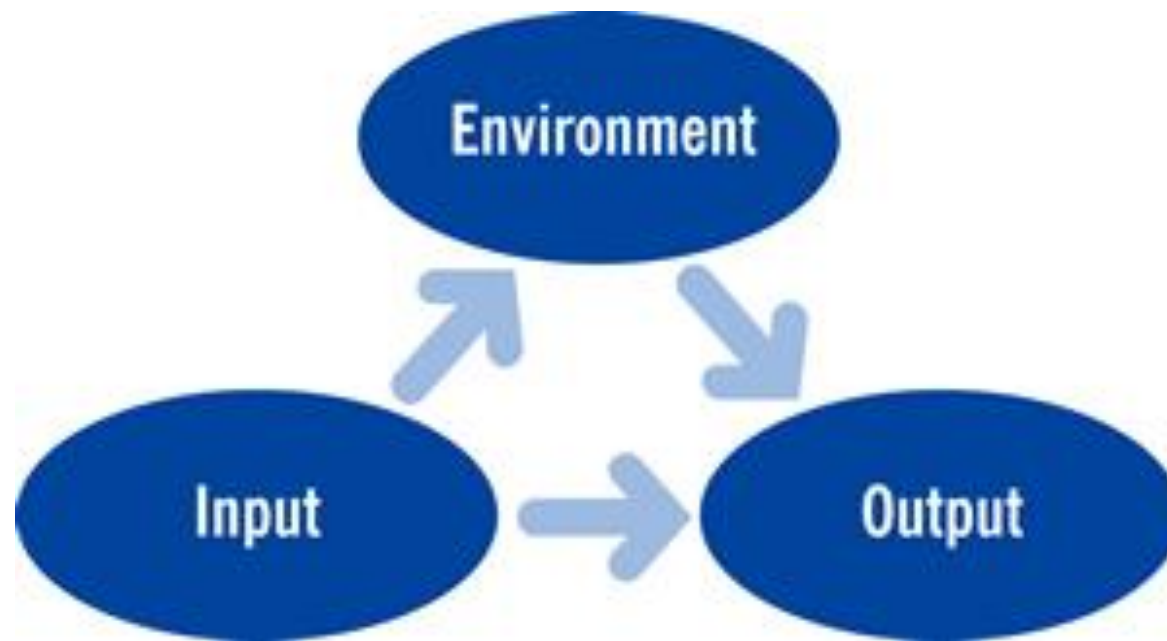
- Does LSAT and Undergraduate GPA predict 3L GPA?
- Does student involvement in law school predict 3L GPA?
- Data Source:
 - Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE)
 - 1,756 3L students from across the country were used for this study

Additional Information

- Most studies of law students examine the impact of LSAT and UG GPA on 1L GPA
- One study (10 years old!) found LSAT/UG GPA was a useful predictor of 3L GPA and bar exam pass rates
- Nobody has ever studied how involvement predicts an outcome in law school
- Why? Because the data had never been there, pretty much.

Additional Information

- Alexander Astin's student involvement theory and IEO Model





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Study Results

Results

- Positive predictors of GPA (16 of them!)
 - Undergraduate GPA
 - LSAT Scores
 - Law journal membership
 - Student satisfaction with the law school experience
 - Law school size (larger the school, better the grades)
 - Participation in moot court



Results



- Positive predictors of GPA (continued)
 - Race (white students did better in law school than minority students)
 - Asked questions in class (frequency) – the more frequent you are participating in class, the better your grades
 - Satisfaction with career services
 - Worked on a legal research project with faculty
 - School’s ability to encourage self-directed learning

Results



- Positive predictors of GPA (continued)
 - Participating in law school-sponsored activities
 - Time spent relaxing and socializing
 - Preparing 2 or more drafts of papers before submission
 - School's ability to add job-related knowledge and skills
 - Transfer student status (transfer students had higher GPAs than students that stayed at one school all three years)

Results



- Negative Predictors of GPA (3 of them)
 - Coming to class without preparing and completing class readings
 - Hours spent working in a non-legal job (more hours, lower GPA)
 - Student loan debt (more debt, lower GPA)



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Implications of the Study

Implications

- GPA and LSAT are the most useful predictors of LGPA
- Makes sense to rely on these factors in the admissions process
- However, encouraging the right kinds of involvement (and staying away from others!) can make a significant difference

Implications

- Look at other factors in the admissions process
- Develop student life programming in career services, job assistance and searches, and have an active student activities program
- The LSSSE could also be used for ABA and regional accreditation purposes (primarily assessment)s

Summary

- GPA and LSAT scores are the strongest predictors of 3L GPA
- Student involvement, however, is as useful in predicting GPA in the 3rd year of law school
- Essentially, what students do while they are in law school is as useful as what happened beforehand...you can admit a lemon, or you could admit a student that performs way above your expectations!

Thank You!

Robert Detwiler

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Connect with me on LinkedIn!



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