



1-1-1962

A Research and Writing Program for Small Schools

George J. Alexander

Santa Clara University School of Law, gjalexander@scu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/facpubs>



Part of the [Law Commons](#)

Automated Citation

George J. Alexander, *A Research and Writing Program for Small Schools*, 14 J. LEGAL EDUC. 377 (1962),
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.law.scu.edu/facpubs/138>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at Santa Clara Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Santa Clara Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact sculawlibrarian@gmail.com.

A RESEARCH AND WRITING PROGRAM FOR SMALL SCHOOLS

GEORGE J. ALEXANDER *

The large or affluent schools that can afford the luxury of instructors as small-group mentors have a decided edge in the rather onerous but necessary task of initiating fledgeling students to the mysteries of legal research and the demands of legal writing standards. The small schools are faced with the same problems but must rely on the already harassed faculty to accomplish this orientation. The following remarks, regrettably, do not explain how to teach writing and research to the whole first-year class utilizing one half of one professor's time without some diminution of result. They do, however, review the writer's experience in attempting to find the type of short-cuts that will mitigate the damages.

I

PROGRAM GOALS

It is, of course, imperative, in establishing a writing program, to structure it to fit well-conceived goals. Unfortunately, some instructors appear to wade into legal writing with no better definition of objectives than obtaining an acceptable memorandum of law. Aside from the fact that the single-goal program may be incomplete, it often also suffers from confusion in the tutorial conferences en route. The student may have difficulty using the research material; the instructor may be interested in stressing writing style. Both address themselves to the adequacy of the end result: the paper that the student has submitted. Actually, the paper combines several quite distinct aspects of the student's training. Isolating them, to the extent possible, throughout the program, makes it far easier for the student to grasp and identify his difficulties and for the instructor to assist him in overcoming them.

Of the goals in the program, the least questionable is that of familiarizing the student with the research tools available in the library. The writing instructor need vie with none of his colleagues for an exclusive dealership in the requisite information; it does not creep, even tangentially, into any other course in the curriculum.

The next goal, still rather uncontroversial, is that of sensitizing the student to the demands of legal literacy. This is probably the best recognized of the legal writing goals. Again, the task is left primarily to the introductory program. The student's writing will probably be subject to later criticism in seminars and other courses, but, almost of necessity, those

* Assistant Professor of Law, Syracuse University.