

FOREWORD*

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In *The Bramble Bush*,¹ published in 1930, Karl Llewellyn provided a thoughtful introduction to the life of a law student in the United States. Many of the senior law professors and deans of contemporary law schools read *The Bramble Bush* at some point in their law school studies and drew useful insights from Llewellyn's work as they negotiated through the unfamiliar terrain of legal education.

In 1930, less than 7000 students in the United States were enrolled in law schools that required more than five academic years of post-secondary training (including undergraduate work).² The Socratic method of parsing judicial decisions was widely used in law school classrooms, and the principal teaching tool was the casebook, a collection of judicial decisions, primarily of appellate courts. Many states continued to allow admission to the bar without the benefit of formal university training in the law. Most law schools had very liberal admission standards at the time, but the academic attrition rate was high. The attrition rate became even higher during the 1960s and 1970s, and many who began the journey through legal education never reached graduation. By modern standards, the relationship between student and teacher was often distant, and the classroom environment was not only tense, but it was often cruel.

Legal education and law practice both have changed dramatically in the past seventy years. By 1998, the total enrollment in Juris Doctor programs in the 181 ABA-accredited law schools had risen to more than 125,000.³ The academic credentials of students admitted into law schools also has risen significantly, and the aca-

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1. K.N. LLEWELLYN, *THE BRAMBLE BUSH* (1930).

2. ALFRED Z. REED, *CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING, REVIEW OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA FOR THE YEAR 1930*, at 54 (1931).

3. AMERICAN BAR ASS'N, *GUIDE TO APPROVED LAW SCHOOLS* 449 (2000).

demographic attrition rate generally has dropped to the low single digits. The old “casebook” approach to law study has yielded to the use of a wide variety of teaching materials to supplement appellate court decisions. Although the Socratic method (or a drastically modified version) continues to be used by some law professors, many are experimenting with new and innovative teaching techniques, including various forms of computerized instruction and distance learning.⁴ Technology has entered the law school classroom (and law practice) to the extent that no student can afford to graduate from law school without a firm grounding in computer skills. Clinical legal education, whereby students gain practice experience in live cases under the supervision of experienced lawyers, is embraced by most law schools.

The law school experience today is much more diverse, complex, and exciting than ever before. With law and lawyers providing a common theme in television shows and movies, there is widespread popular interest in law study. With more than 180 accredited law schools from which to choose, law school has become more accessible than ever before. Very clearly, there is a need for a contemporary guide to assist those considering going to law school, and for those students already engaged in the study of law.

In 1983, the *Stetson Law Review* published a symposium issue titled *Maximizing the Law School Experience*.⁵ Written in the tradition of *The Bramble Bush*, the *Law Review*'s 1983 symposium issue offered a series of essays designed to demystify the law school experience. This current symposium issue continues this tradition, offering a rich variety of perspectives on the challenges and issues facing today's law student. The essays contained in this issue are authored by legal scholars, recent law school graduates, and seasoned lawyers who provide candid assessments of the law school experience.

This issue is more than a guide for law study. It is an introduction and orientation to the profession of law. Most lawyers look back upon law school as a transforming experience during which they not only gained an enormous amount of knowledge, but also developed analytical and intellectual skills that serve them well in any en-

4. For more about the Socratic method, see James Jay Brown, *Forging an Analytical Mind: The Law School Classroom Experience*, 29 STETSON L. REV. 1135, 1135, 1143 (2000).

5. 12 STETSON L. REV. 551 (1983).

deavor. Most would agree that law school made them think differently about life, society, and themselves. The transformation process is part of an exciting journey that begins the first day of law school. This volume is the perfect companion for those who are considering that journey.