

## Legal Studies

A department in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences offering the B.A.

### ■ The Review Process

This was a standard AQAD review. Reviewers were:

Doris Marie Provine, chair (Arizona State University)  
Valerie Hans (University of Delaware)  
Leonard Riskin (University of Missouri, Columbia)

### ■ Main Issues

The visiting team found the Legal Studies department to be “a well-run, successful undergraduate teaching program ... with a significant research and teaching component,” and described it as “not a program with major problems that need fixing.” The team noted that the UMass Amherst program was one of the first in the country, and “remains one of the most successful programs of its kind.” Specific strengths cited were in dispute resolution (especially with respect to its “pathbreaking” work in on-line dispute resolution) and in law and society studies.

The team commended the department for its leadership in the field, and observed that “for such a small faculty, it has been extraordinarily creative.” The department was also described as “an efficient unit for high-quality teaching.”

The team did identify a number of areas in which improvement is possible:

- The team found the major “very loosely structured,” with only a single common, pre-requisite course. The members urged consideration of greater structure through additional prerequisites or pre-major core courses. They also suggested consideration of concentrations within the major.
- The team was concerned that the new on-line registration system may have complicated access to courses for non-majors.
- The department was urged to do more to reach out to its alumni, including alumni of its clinical program with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.
- It was suggested that consideration be given to development of a certificate program in civil rights enforcement.
- The team observed that “the program works well with a strong but modest sized core of tenured faculty and carefully selected adjunct faculty,” and suggested that hiring a few more adjunct faculty might be beneficial. The team was clear, however, that retiring tenure-system faculty should be replaced in kind, and that additional adjunct hiring not come at the expense of tenured faculty.
- The team observed that the Five College course interchange “did not seem to be working very well,” with relatively few students from the different institutions taking advantage of the many law-related courses available.

- Given the department's established strength in conflict resolution, and the strong growth in interest in the topic, the team urged consideration of a concentration or certificate in that area.

The team also discussed at some length the idea of developing a Center for Law and Society to be housed in the department. The team argued that such a center would promote sponsored research and draw together faculty from a number of departments around socio-legal topics. A center might be especially useful as a vehicle for bringing together faculty in the department and those in other departments who participate in the Public Policy and Administration program. It might also help promote the department's graduate focus, and expose undergraduates to relevant research in the field.

## ■ Results of the Review

The Dean concurred with the team's general findings, and endorsed its specific recommendations. She noted, however, that "more thinking needs to be done" regarding the idea of a certificate program in civil rights enforcement.

The department discussed the AQAD team's report at a full-day retreat in June and, while also endorsing the team's findings and recommendations, identified several items as priorities: 1) developing a Center for Law and Society; 2) engaging in a thorough curriculum review to add structure and promote interaction with other departments and institutions; 3) moving ahead with planning for a certificate in civil rights enforcement (which would involve addressing the Dean's concerns); 4) examining the "practicalities" of a certificate in conflict resolution; 5) replenishing the tenure-track faculty; and 6) expanding contacts with alumni.