Engaging Your Academic Audience: Working toward Faculty Zeal

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Finding Faculty

Managing Expectations

Supporting Faculty

Retaining Faculty

Successes and Areas for Improvement

Plans for the Future

Background

- LLM launched in 2014, MSL launched in 2016
- So far, 100% online programs (on-campus to launch fall 2019)
- Majority of our faculty are adjunct professors, most from LA with ties to USC
- Most of our faculty have never taught online before
- Mixed MSL and LLM classes (3:1 ratio)
- 6 optional specialization certificates, many students take within their elective units
- Faculty host a 60-75 minutes weekly virtual meeting with the students
- Dedicated online programs team, 5 full-time staff
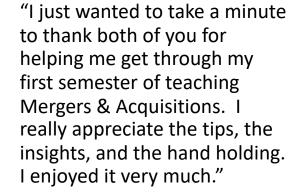- Third-party vendor manages our learning management system, Moodle

"The students were terrific. They had thoughtful and insightful discussion posts and shared some really good insights during the live session. It was fun! I am really excited about this semester and looking forward to next week's live session. Thanks for letting me do this!"

"Love it when students shine! I just went through and graded the case brief portion of Assignment 2. I was very impressed by how much most of the students were able to distill out of what, as we previously discussed, were a couple of very complex cases."

"I just wanted to take a minute to thank both of you for helping me get through my first semester of teaching Mergers & Acquisitions. I really appreciate the tips, the insights, and the hand holding. I enjoyed it very much."

"I definitely enjoyed teaching this spring. My students were so engaged, and the online system worked well."

Hiring Faculty

What do we look for?	Initial conversations with faculty include:
• Experience - both professional and teaching/training • Reasons for wanting to teach • Referrals from other faculty	• Overview and history of program • Syllabus, if available • Describing the degree programs and students

Common questions we are asked:

- Do these students get any 1L training?

- Why are students getting this degree?

- What types of students do we enroll?

- Where are they located?

- How does an online program work?

Time commitment (10-15 hours/week):

- Expectation to reply to student communication within 48 hours

- Expectation to grade assignments within 1 week of submission

- Development of brand-new courses requires significant time commitment

Managing workload:

- Co-taught classes (ask faculty to recommend)

- Help from TAs

Supporting New Faculty

- Training - technology and instruction
- Onboarding website
- Faculty orientation
- Pre-course launch checklist; sample templates and access to prior course announcements, sample answers, and live sessions
- Introductions to section instructors and other faculty
- Teaching Assistants; writing fellows

Supporting All Faculty

- Check-ins
- Student preparation
  - Student Orientation - Law School 101 (in addition to a mandatory orientation course and technology training session)
  - Required classes - more hands-on, teach them foundational skills to help them to prepare for the more advanced classes

Faculty Involvement in Student Retention

Our student support team monitors student progress at every level

Moodle log in data

Grade book

Work directly with faculty to identify students who might be struggling or failing to meet standards

Send to TA

Offer academic support

Retaining Faculty

- Some difficulty, especially early on, in identifying, hiring and retaining faculty semester to semester

- Turnover caused us a lot more work in onboarding faculty, and also does not always provide as great an experience for students

- Identifying candidates with prior teaching experience (on-campus or online) and availability in their schedules to teach is important

- Invest time in the hiring process in order to make good decisions

- Managing expectations of hires from very early on helps

- Providing as much support as possible (team with senior administrators, TAs, plus guidance on how to use them, advice on streamlining grading/feedback process)

- Providing maximum instructor compensation that school can support

Revision Process

- Courses go through a curriculum "revision cycle" every few semesters, which requires a few hours/week of work for a few months leading up to the next time a course is taught

- We ask instructors who've taught a course at least once to take on revision work

- Use instructor feedback, advice from Anitha and information from student evaluations

- Extra/small compensation ("bonus") for revision work

Touch Points, Benefits

- Annual (sometimes semi-annual) dinner meetings with online-only faculty. Buddied with law school's all-adjunct meeting. Connect instructors and provide basic information/updates

- Inform instructors about benefits available to all part-time faculty: discounted tickets to law school CLE events, legal database access

- Ask for involvement for those who wish to participate more – connecting with applicants in the admissions process, writing articles for the law school website

Successes

- Faculty are complimentary of the support we provide
- Faculty like the diversity of our students, and their engagement in live sessions (not lectures, rather discussions)
- Faculty like the simplicity, convenience and creativity of the online format
- Full-time faculty used learning exercises they created online in their on-campus class
- Creating a community where faculty can lean on us or each other
- Faculty enjoy having precedent (what worked for others) to rely on
- Helps when existing faculty share positive experiences with new faculty

Areas for Improvement

- Managing expectations → workload is often just too much for a partner at a busy law firm
- Getting faculty to grade on time. Mid-semester evaluation helps
- Technology - we want to incorporate more in-person training sessions
- Frequency of course updates
- Evaluations - we rely on heavily, Vice Dean uses to ensure quality and in rehire decisions

Key Takeaways

- Showcase your students
- Highlight your support
- Create a supportive and collaborative community that's integrated with the law school (residential)
- Get faculty invested in student retention and success