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Boulder Conference on Legal Research and
Education

2009

Boulder Statement on Legal Research Education

Legal Information Conference Attendees

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Introduction

The *Conference on Legal Information: Scholarship and Teaching* was attended by legal research professionals who gathered at the University of Colorado Law School in Boulder, Colorado on June 21-22, 2009, to discuss legal information scholarship and instruction. The following **Boulder Statement on Legal Research Education** was developed at that Conference and reflects the consensus of the conference participants on the theoretical foundation of a signature pedagogy for legal research education.

The Statement is based on the model proposed by the Carnegie Foundation's *EDUCATING LAWYERS: PREPARATION FOR THE PROFESSION OF LAW* (2007). Generally referred to as the "Carnegie Report," *EDUCATING LAWYERS* calls for a systemic revision of legal education. In particular, the Report advocates moving from the present signature legal pedagogy of the Socratic method to a manner of teaching that incorporates practical education with theoretical and doctrinal instruction and that emphasizes professional responsibility. The Report suggests that the most effective legal education occurs through three inter-related "apprenticeships"—practical; cognitive or intellectual; and identity and purpose—which, experienced together, encourage students to explore all aspects of a legal problem and allow for contemporaneous feedback

Building on this recommendation, the *Legal Information Conference* attendees focused on defining a pedagogy of legal research instruction that recognizes the fundamental nature of legal research in legal education and law practice. The Statement expresses a comprehensive approach to legal research instruction that, when implemented, will significantly improve the preparation of law students for their legal careers.

The Boulder Statement on Legal Research Education

Legal research education teaches the resolution of legal problems through an iterative and analytical process. Students will experience a practical apprenticeship of identifying significant facts; determining legal issues and problems; and locating, evaluating, and manipulating research authorities.

Students will experience a cognitive apprenticeship by learning the importance of understanding the legal system in which their question arises and evaluating available legal resources. Through this apprenticeship the student will synthesize information about legal systems and resources to identify the best research plan for a given question. The students will also learn to continually re-evaluate their progress and results to arrive at the optimal answer to the legal problem.

Throughout the process, students will learn to apply the professional and ethical norms implicated by their research, which will reinforce their

apprenticeship of identity and purpose. For legal research instruction, this includes an ongoing examination of professional standards including the identification of ethical responsibilities, the avoidance of plagiarism, and the fulfillment of the ethical duty to conduct adequate and thorough research.

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June 22, 2009

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