

# University of Pittsburgh School of Law

## Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes



# Our process ... so far ...

- work began with Dean, Associate Dean, and group of faculty “consultants” (volunteers) and directors of our LLM & MSL programs
- in early 2007, we surveyed faculty to identify most important SLOs – from 8, chose 5
- in late 2007/early 2008, we chose 1 SLO for assessment for each degree program (but ended up with 4 being assessed for JDs)
- in 2008-09, we are studying assessment in legal education & refining our philosophy/approach in response to . . .

# Issues we're facing

- a period of big changes in legal education – curricular reform and introduction of assessment of outcomes
- faculty skepticism
- faculty desire for greater involvement/input into assessment
- resource allocation – assessment is hard work!

# SLOs for JD program

- 1) Legal Analysis and Reasoning \*
- 2) Problem Solving \*
- 3) Communication \*
- 4) Knowledge of Substantive Law
- 5) Professionalism and Ethics

\* = also chosen for MSJ & LL.M programs

# Assessment methods used so far

- Pennsylvania bar examination – essay portion
  - external evaluation applying objective criteria
  - >70% of our graduates take as their 1<sup>st</sup> bar exam
  - examiners use a combined, scaled score; we used results to evaluate 4/5 SLOs
- Rubrics applied to assess student papers or exams (for LLM and MSJ students) – based on UVA model; faculty librarians (who are JDs) applied the rubrics

# Next steps and ideas

(under consideration by faculty)

- establish standing faculty committee on assessment
- integrate assessment and curriculum, curricular reform
- study developments in legal education research
- consider pre- and post-tests based on bar exam questions
- consider student surveys, evaluation of videotaped performances

# Questions

- How to create incentives/rewards for faculty participation?
- Is IRB approval needed for use of some assessment methods?
- How to assess “soft” skills that are increasingly being recognized as important to professional development and success?