

Curricular Changes in Legal Research Instruction: An Empirical Study

By Caroline L. Osborne & Stephanie C. Miller. 37 Legal Reference Services Q. 97 (2018).

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Reviewer's Summary:

Osborne and Miller begin by providing a brief summary of the Socratic method as an educational tool in U.S. law schools, of recommendations contained in the Crampton, Carnegie, and MacCrate Reports on legal education, and of approaches to the typical present-day legal research curriculum. They then describe the subject of their study: the evolving legal research curriculum at Washington & Lee University School of Law. From 2006 to 2012, a group of 3L students selected by the faculty taught the research component of the 1L legal writing course, though during that time, the director the law library made substantial changes to the curriculum to bring greater rigor and consistency to the program. In 2013, the director convinced the administration to create a stand-alone, for-credit research class taught by librarians, with assistance from the 3L student aides. The authors evaluate student outcomes for standard exam questions assessed over the period of curricular change.

Summarized by: Meredith Capps, Vanderbilt University Law School, in 2020.