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# **PRISON-BASED EDUCATION AND ITS NEW PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Sabrina Germain**

## **Abstract**

This article presents how unconventional teaching environments, such as the prison system, can participate in the elaboration of new pedagogical methods and, in the process, reveal the diverse responses of marginalized groups to the study of the law. Over the course of this article I provide valuable insight about underexplored teaching techniques to academics seeking to open up their approach beyond traditional methods.

Through this partially reflective piece I relay my experience as a law instructor in a maximum security prison, and demonstrate how those who have bore the brunt of the law can still think critically about legal topics. I also support the idea that by taking in the perspectives of peripheral groups, legal educators will be led to use innovative methods to deliver legal knowledge.

Essentially this article explores the intersection between legal pedagogy and the prison system to uncover a site previously neglected by conventional work on criminology and education. Pointing out how experiencing the law differently can

shape individual interpretations of legal knowledge, I hope to situate learning within a larger criminological process.

## **1 Introduction**

Prison is thought to house the abandoned, angry, and the marginalized, but it can also spark the talent and creativity of inmates enrolled in education programs. Unfortunately, the impact and benefits of prison education has always been questioned due to the controversial nature of the initiative (Corcoran, 1985, p.49-52). Thus, in the mid-1990s the educational potential of the imprisoned was stifled by the American government in an effort to appear “tough on crime”. Taxpayer-funded college programs were then terminated with a vote of Congress and subsequent state legislation (Wetherbee, p.2).

In 1999, despite the lack of funding and the stigma associated with correctional facilities, Cornell University took the plunge and started offering, free of fee and tuition for credit college-level courses in upstate New York prison facilities (Cornell Prison Education Program, Our Mission). Cornell, alone among Ivy League Universities, understood the great learning potential these unconventional environments could offer (Wetherbee, p.4-7).

To this day the Cornell Prison Education Program (CPEP) continues to bring together faculty and graduate students to teach courses in liberal arts to groups of inmate-students at a maximum security correctional facility (Auburn) (Cornell Prison Education Program.). Over the years the goals of the program remain the same: contribute to the successful re-entry into society of incarcerated persons by supporting their academic ambitions (Cornell Prison Education Program) and provide scholars with an invaluable teaching experience.

In the spring of 2011, entering my second semester as a doctoral candidate I had the desire to invest myself in a meaningful project and confront a different academic reality. It was then that I decided to take part in the CPEP as a law instructor. This experience inevitably triggered a personal reflection on legal education outside the classroom, and revealed that people who had endured the brunt of the law are capable of making an important contribution to legal education.

Indeed, teaching at Auburn I realized that legal studies within the prison setting create a “quasi-Platonic” dialectic where the traditional law school paradigm collides with the inmate-student’s untraditional interpretation of the law to constitute a whole new perspective. This perspective, I suggest, can provide a unique learning and teaching experience for both parties. The unusual “synthesis” made me realize that the often criticized Socratic method applied in American law schools could

have a greater educational impact if it were to be supplemented with other, more unconventional, teaching techniques. Thus this article aims to reveal, through a narrative of my own personal teaching experience at Auburn, what these techniques may involve.

The abundant scholarship supporting prison-based education programs as a way of reducing rates of recidivism (Dewey, 2004; Harer, 1995; Vacca, 2004; Western et al., 2001) significantly influenced my teaching. Developing my lesson-plan and planning my course objective I tried to fit, as closely as possible, the aims of this body of literature. While this article does not have the goal of establishing a direct correlation between education and successful reinsertion, the conclusions I draw nonetheless support the findings of other empiricists on the topic.

Finally this semester of teaching also led me to reflect on the very entrenched and deep-rooted effect law has on all social-strata. I wondered whether the claim often made that those who have committed violations against the law are incapable of contributing to its teaching was well founded. I quickly understood that while my students' reflections and behaviors were somewhat unexpected, they were also pleasantly surprising, and showed that inmates-students are able to provide a novel and valuable perspective on legal studies. I had myself walked into this role wanting to take something out of the experience, and had left with the conviction that unconventional teaching environments can provide a new perspective to legal

educators. A perspective worth building on to develop innovative teaching strategies for the traditional classroom.

## **2 The Need for a New Perspective in Legal Education**

Present debates on legal education primarily focus on the training new generations of lawyers should receive when facing harsh economic times (Muir-Watt, 2012; Ribstein, 2010; Thies, 2009, p.598). Unfortunately, more elevated discussions on the capacity of legal educators to offer this preparation is left in the background.

The legal industry and thus indirectly law schools, have been greatly affected by the recent economic downturn. Curricula have been adapted and it is expected that the composition of the student body will become less homogeneous (Thies, 2009-2010, p.611). Unfortunately legal education is not properly equipped to face more diversity as current teaching methods tend to silence and ignore alternative perspectives (Dueker, 1991-1992, p.102). It is now time for law schools to reach out to unconventional environments in order to adopt new methods.

### *A. Revisiting the Widely Criticized Socratic Method*

Christopher Columbus Langdell imagined the teaching of the law as a thinking process. Inspired by the Socratic dialectic he believed multiple inferences drawn from concrete cases could teach curious Harvard law students the essence of the

law. Through a series of queries he would challenge young legal minds and help them to properly ‘think’ like lawyers (Stropus, 1996, p.449-450). The professor would entice the student to distill a rule from legal cases and apply the same reasoning to various subsequent factual scenarios (Neumann, 1989).

Despite being the object of abundant controversy as early as from its inception, the method has been the most predominant teaching method in law schools across the country (Stropus, 1996, p.456). Its outstanding endurance is due to a multitude of factors, but most likely it is its aptitude to raise some critical thinking skills in certain students that made its popularity (Bateman, 1997, p.405). Many academics have argued that while it certainly needs to be improved and supplemented by other teaching techniques, it should nonetheless remain a component of the law school teaching process (Bateman, 1997; Kearney & Beazley, 1991; Powell, 1994-1995).

Indeed, many are the issues raised with regard to the Socratic method. Among the most cited criticisms is its failure to prepare students to the practice of the law. The important disconnect between the method’s highly theoretical inductive analysis and the practical reality of law firms and courtrooms has young lawyers struggle to adapt when entering the job market (Stropus, 1996, p.456).



Also, the negative psychological impact of the approach on students constitutes a major drawback (Stropus, 1996, p.456). Even though not all professors intend to intimidate their students the result of this “metagame” is often humiliating. Underprepared or nervous student are ostracized and become the Professor’s intellectual scapegoat (Dallimore, 1976-1977, p.182). Of course the method is not the only source of distress in law school, among other stress triggers described by students are the institutional environment, competitiveness, family and financial pressure. However, the method certainly constitutes one of the greatest contributing factors (Lustbader, 1998, p.403). The growing anxiety generated by the traumatic line of questioning makes students feel alienated and ends up isolating them from the learning process (Bateman, 1997, p.398).

The rigidity of the Socratic method also does not allow students to creatively resolve problems. A significant amount of information needs to first be assimilated in order to produce a good ‘legal’ answer (Bateman, 1997, p.409). The frenetic dialogue in which the student engages with the professor does not give enough for time to the student to ‘play’ with the ideas and concepts; a necessary step to create a thought process (Bateman, 1997, p.399). In fact, the method only addresses the generic law student and does not account for the creative thinking resulting from diverse backgrounds or personal experiences (Lustbader, 1998, p.403).

The method has adverse effect on diverse groups of students. Diversity encompasses differences in racial and religious backgrounds as well as sexual orientation, but also in learning styles (Bateman, 1997, p.399). Students with ‘non-traditional law school background’ need to think about answers using their own referencing system having morals and normative frameworks that most oftentimes vary from the Anglo-European masculine ideology dominant in the classroom (Dueker, 1991-1992).

In the light of these criticisms, one may wonder not only whether current American law schools fulfill their role when it comes to the education of young lawyers, but also with regard to the training of its academics. Having been educated in the Socratic tradition law professors are rarely inclined to change their ways and seek alternative methods. Currently only a minority of educators are using other teaching approaches (Bateman, 1997, p.398). Therefore it is time to put forward diverse voices in the classroom and understand that diversity extends to individual experiences of the law (Rhee, 2010, p.312).

*B. Prison-Education Not A Means to An End But An Active Contributor to A New Approach*

This article does not suggest that prison-based education programs objectify inmate-students nor resign them to training tools. Prisoners are eager and capable of deriving significant benefits from prison education. Indeed, although three out

of four prisoners have no post-secondary schooling when entering prison facilities (Harlow, 2003); the great majority of inmate-students that starts by completing their GED exams go as far as acquiring an undergraduate degree while serving their sentence (Cornell Prison Education Program).

Unfortunately the harsh reality awaiting former inmates outside the prison walls is most likely to be one of unemployment. Their ability to retain work is significantly reduced by their criminal record, low literacy skills and anti-social behavior (Bushway, 1998; Western, Kling, & Weiman, 2001). Periods of incarceration accentuate the inmate's inability to cope with the outside world or to establish a sense of belonging because of the conflicting values and social norms ingrained in prison life (Bloom, 2006; Walters, 2003).

Inmate-students certainly understand that getting any type of certification in prison is a necessary and crucial first step towards a successful re-insertion (Karpowitz et al., 1995, p.6). Indeed inmate-students have shown greater potential for successful reinsertion after having been enrolled in a carceral program for at least six months. The Federal Bureau even goes further and draws the conclusion that recidivism rates are inversely proportional to the participation of inmates to a prison education program (Karpowitz et al., 1995, p.6).

Also, in prison, intellectual qualities elevate inmate-students to a distinct class. Even though prisoners live in a place where much is beyond their control, education gives them power over their lives, and the ability to imagine what their future can entail. It represents the change in lifestyle they wish to operate in and outside the walls. The classroom environment also promotes “pro-social” behavior, and helps inmates to part with their anti-social dispositions (Dewey, 2004; Vacca, 2004, p.298). In a majority of cases, education can help the inmate combat the stigma associated with incarceration (Western et al., 2001, p.335-359).

For academics, much can also be learned from those who have experienced the law differently - not as “law-abiding” citizens, but as law-contravening ones. The legal perspectives of those who have been most violently affected by the law should also be heard in the conventional law school environment. By experiencing the criminal justice system, young scholars will get a fresh and unique outlook that they will later bring to the conventional classroom.

Varied teaching approaches are more likely to reach a greater number of students (Bateman, 1997, p.399). Legal educators trained through unconventional environments will be better able to prepare future lawyers to complex work environments and raise their awareness to a set of skills they need to develop as future counsels, among others: team work, global perspective, analytical skills and team and client relationship management.

It is now time for Professors to change their outlook on the teaching of law, and change their audience to feel challenged again. For this, prison provides the ideal microcosm to challenge young lecturers. Diversity in the student body as well as the unusual setting of the facility provide the most unconventional and best training environment.

### **3 Reflections on Unconventional Teaching Environments as Tools For a New Pedagogical Methodology**

Comparative law being one of my main research interests, I offered to teach a weekly seminar on *Comparative Legal Traditions* at the Auburn Correctional Facility. The class was designed to give students a basic understanding of some key legal traditions: Talmudic law, Civil law, Islamic law, Common law and Asian legal traditions. Similarities and differences between these legal traditions were put forward through the examination of their historical backgrounds, constitutional systems and interpretation.

My 22 male students, with a rough age range of 21 to 55, coming from diverse social, cultural, economic, religious and educational backgrounds offered me a new perspective on legal education. Traditionally perceived as the privilege of an upper-

middle class, my students convinced me that legal education should open up its ranks to more diverse voices that are susceptible to supplement the legal discourse.

#### *A. New Teaching Methods*

After a semester at Auburn I wondered what had made my experience so deep and beneficial. The training acquired during this seminar had certainly shaped my teaching style and hopefully made me a better and less conventional educator. Of course the increased security of the facility created an unusual work environment, however I believe it is the exceptional student-body with its ability to approach legal topic in a completely novel manner that made the experience truly extraordinary.

Thanks to in class discussions, the presentations and essays of my students I was able to adapt to this unconventional environment. I believe that within my first weeks of teaching I had undergone something very close to what the literature describes as an “Inside-Out” experience. Professor Lori Pompa founder of the celebrated “Inside-Out” program (Shay, 2012, p.207) explains that the goal of this project is to provide a “transformative” experience, focusing on an “embodied” method of teaching (Pompa, 2011).

Simply, the “Inside-Out” program promotes teaching law to “inside” and “outside” students simultaneously within the prison environment. Law school and inmate-

students develop a relationship around their understanding of the legal topics and get to experience each other's point of view and realities. Law school students are provided with a "shock" therapy to spur questions about prison life to hopefully inspire them to contribute to the improvement of prison facilities and become better legal practitioners (Shay, 2012, p.208).

Of course the program provides a great stepping-stone these students, but it also gives exceptional learning opportunities to inmates. Traditional law school students contribute to the mutual learning process by helping their inmate comrades nuance their sometimes sharp and counter-intuitive assumptions about the law. In turn, both conventional and unconventional students participate in the instructor's training. The Inside-Out method is certainly not a single-sided learning tool designed to please law schools. Just like many other prison-education programs it has a "multi-directional" dimension.

To structure her class at the Western Massachusetts Correctional Alcohol Center law professor Giovanna Shay also used the "Inside-Out" method. She later transposed the methodology to her lectures at Western New England University School of Law. According to her most recent article she believes that the program enabled her to become more creative with her teaching and more particularly she found that:

(...) [I]n contrast to the traditional Socratic Method in which one student is asked to perform while the others are permitted to tune

out, asking the same question of each student both kept the pressure on by requiring a response from everyone, and took the pressure off by ensuring that no one person was singled out for interrogation (Shay, 2012, p.216).

In a sense she “went back to the drawing board” and simplified her approach. She rethought her class preparation and teaching techniques to adapt to a more diverse audience (Shay, 2012, p.213).

For my part, slowly drifting away from the traditional Socratic method towards a more fluid and organic lecturing style I experimented multiple alternative teaching techniques. The diverse backgrounds of my students and more particularly their varied acquaintance with legal studies required that I use contextualized learning methods.

Early on they showed me that their understanding of comparative law was dependent on their ability to relay the course material to their own experiences, daily lives and personal beliefs. I was to fail trying to make them learn about the law by using rhetorical questions. Most certainly it was because my formulation of questions and problems would betray my Anglo-European perspective, a perspective and context according to and in which I had been educated.

For most of my students the study of comparative law was a novelty. All came in with expectations and preconceived judgments about the topic. I already knew that legal studies could trigger a fair share of struggles but after the first student



presentation it became obvious that comparative legal studies would constitute a greater challenge with a particular set of difficulties. The group struggled to transpose themselves into different legal “universes” to proceed with proper comparative work.

Therefore I started to give them basic examples to illustrate intricate legal paradigms. I was then able to make them understand that although they perceived the fundamental principles of the law as arbitrary, legal traditions came to life in the concrete application of a set of rules, and that in fact for most part these rules were the expression of a democratic majority, or a divine revelation used to provide guidance to followers.

The complexity of comparative law with its methodology and the unique nature of the themes analyzed could certainly be demystified with concrete illustrations. Right from the start it was essential to give the students a basic understanding of what comparative law entails and demands. In order to discover the context in which they were transposing my teachings, I had to initiate a relationship on a different level. Thus I shared trivial details about myself: my passion for cleaning and an early start of the day. This personal information made my students uneasy and left them wondering why I wanted to provide them with such an unusual insight on my life. I went ahead and made them do the same having them share what their favorite food, color, animal, or hobby was, creating even more

confusion, but ultimately making them bond with me and each other. I had made a simple, basic but crucial connection with my group. Using simple examples I created an opportunity to turn the “de-personalized” setting of the prison classroom into a more intimate learning environment. Ultimately I provided them with a human connection rarely present within the prison walls and an expected comparative perspective.

I explained that the purpose of the law is to frame human behavior in order for us to live harmoniously irrespective of our likes and dislikes. Therefore if I were to create disturbance with my habits I may be reprimanded by my peers and subject to a fine for noise violation. This example showed my students that all our choices and preferences, even at the most personal level can impact society, and that law therefore had the potential to regulate the most intimate and personal aspects of our day-to-day reality.

I believe that through this clever rhetorical game my students understood that we are all subjects of the law irrespective of our differences. I also stressed that our study of comparative law and legal traditions through principles and vivid examples would also require that we respect and cultivate our differences, to better understand and compare our diverse outlooks on many legal issues. After the success of this experience I explained almost any other concept by first starting with a concrete relatable example to move on to a greater level of abstraction.

This anecdotic exercise should certainly be transposed in traditional classrooms because it is the lack of meaningful dialogue that leaves law students confused and unable to understand the context and purpose of the cases they are presented with. Never providing the students with the opportunity to share their personal experiences and reveal the context in which they interpret broad theoretical principles, this artificial discussion exacerbates the students' confusion and sense of alienation (Lustbader, 1998, p.402-403).

At a later stage during our seminar it became important for me to have the students “own” the class materials. I did not want them to accept nor be convinced by the readings, but to internalize the information in order to inductively, deductively reason and apply the theoretical concepts to a more concrete set of facts.

Role-playing was key in having my students argue different positions and adapt rules to exceptional cases. Among many exercises I had them defend a woman in divorce proceedings under two different legal traditions and compare the outcomes. Not only was this asking them to choose and adopt the perspective of an unfamiliar legal tradition, they also had to step in a woman's shoes to appreciate her situation and criticize the effect the law at different stages of the proceedings.

Having reached a certain point and having perfected their analytical skills it became natural for my students to coin their own hypotheticals and explain difficult or confusing principles to their fellow classmates. Ultimately critical legal thinking came from within without probing. No student being the target of a line of questioning, they all worked collaboratively to help one another embark on the same educational journey. Adding their perspective to my explanations they found their voice individually and as a group.

The use of legal paradigms and citation of authorities did not resonate with my students. I had to prove assumptions and accept that the most fundamental statements of law would always be challenged. Clearly teaching legal traditions in prison was not about laying down the law. It was about opening my eyes and their horizon to new found language with the help of a different dialogue.

I should not understate my students' exceptional qualities. I was blessed to teach an outstanding group of students, who were not only interested in sharing their work through original presentations, but also very eager to give their opinion on a variety of legal issues. At times, the debate had to be refocused, as the desire to drive the discussion towards philosophical and quasi-metaphysical questions, rather than adopting legal reasoning was very strong. More than anything they were craving interdisciplinarity and pushing for justifications and more accurate explanations.

They understood that law is not a stand-alone topic and that it needs to be relayed to other social sciences.

For my part I understood that their diverse group had various learning styles and consequently that I needed to adapt my teaching to cater to their educational needs. Using concrete and simple examples, role-playing exercises, in-class presentations, discussions and charts, I used creative techniques to have them, once a week, evade in a different legal tradition.

#### *B. New Perspective on Legal Education*

During the course of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century legal education was the privilege of white Anglo-Saxon males. Harvard's 1887 ranking system designed to exclude the masses and leave diversity out of its law school had the grading system, membership to law reviews and the legal profession organized around students' social origins. Women, immigrants, African American and Jewish applicants were directly excluded from the hierarchical structure (Jewel, 2008, p.1186). Today, law schools no longer segregate specific categories of applicants, nonetheless socio-economic status remains an indirect mode of exclusion. In fact, upper-middle class codes and mannerism still influence the ranking of law schools, the evaluation of law students and the entry to the profession through the bar exam (Jewel, 2008, p.1186-1187).

Although portrayed as “fair” and solely based on merit and hard work, the ranking system fails to capture students’ personal circumstances. Having had the chance to attend competitive secondary and undergraduate institutions and thus acquiring superior analytical skills and greater cultural capital certain groups of students are *de facto* favored by this self-reinforcing system (Jewel, 2008, p.1187).

In order for law schools to stop replicating these exclusionist schemes and account for a more diverse audience, peripheral groups need to be heard. Unconventional students are interested in participating in the improvement of legal education by providing their unique perspective derived in part from their personal experience with the law. Therefore we should provide an appropriate platform for them to be heard.

Contrary to popular belief prisoners are willing to acquire skills and perfect their knowledge. Perhaps their initial fascination with legal studies stems from a desire to understand their own dealings with the law, but as they acquire the basic principles their interest rapidly turns to more intricate legal topics.

My students were also animated by the desire to perfect their analytical skills and to participate in the development of legal education. In a venue where the law is an underlying theme and part of their daily life, the classroom provided them with an ideal social outing, free from any pressure from their family members or peers. In

many ways I found that prison was a more fertile ground for legal education than the hostile setting of law school classrooms.

Indeed, in prison, education is non-excludable. The success of an inmate-student is in no way detrimental to the accomplishments of a classmate. Competition remains at healthy level since students are not being ranked in comparison to their peers but according to their own progression. All the more grateful for the volunteers that come and provide them with the precious gift of an education they believe that through this process they finally have the potential to radically change their lives.

The carceral environment has been the object of many psychological and sociological studies (Hunt et al., 1993; Schimd & Jones, 1991; Sykes, 2007). Empiricists have been mostly interested in its culture, codes and lifestyle. I too was fascinated with the prison universe. Reading Professor Patrick Glenn's book on *Legal traditions of the world: Sustainable diversity in law* a passage particularly stayed with me. It was his description of "traditions of corruption" depicting them as traditions attracting crimes, narcos and social parasites disturbing the wellbeing of society attracted my attention (Glenn, 2000, p.25).

A few weeks into the seminar I realized that I was wrong to assume that prison was cultivating this "tradition of corruption". With my students coming from such different ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds, it was not fair to put them in a

box and construct a “prisoner stereotype”. However one common feature stood out, they did indeed all belonged to a tradition that was, the “prison legal tradition”.

Indeed, inmate-students at Auburn cultivate a strong tradition continuous within the walls. One that rewards great learning skills, membership and loyalty to a group, and shuns betrayal and arrogance. Although at times questionable, this tradition has its own axes of morality and decency, but also a sense of humility, customs and rites of passage, and it is in no way the corruption of an already existing tradition. It stands on its own and nourishes itself from religion and a conflicted sense of rationality. The multitude of minorities enclosed in its rites of passages and customs brought together diverse and underprivileged voices inexistent in a conventional learning environment.

At that moment my perspective changed and the seminar become comparative on a deeper and different level. Unfortunately my students and I were still not completely ‘in tune’, for I had a hard time understanding their strong and negative reaction to codified law and their fierce dislike of precedent. In their eyes legal systems were unstable and arbitrary schemes. Evidently they had their perspective and opinion but I also understood that their legal tradition had them create their own legal referential, with its rules and ways of transmission.



Religious legal traditions resonated far more with my students than any other western legal traditions. This preference was the reflection of their unconventional comparative approach. I had spent a lot of time theorizing as to why they had more trust in the divine judgment than any of the occidental dispute resolution systems. Perhaps it was because they had received harsh judgments from their peers and trust that, when the time comes, God will be more lenient in his judgment. Also many of my students confided that Islam and its laws give them the rhythm and meaning necessary to carry on with their life in prison. Indeed, statistics show that one out of three inmates converts to Islam upon incarceration.

Irrespective of their motives I understood that inmate-students can enrich the legal discourse with a new and unconventional perspective on the law. In due course their unconventional perspective collided with my traditional vision of the law and took our discussion to a new comparative level. Comparative legal traditions were no more traditional comparative perspectives. The exercise did not limit itself to established and institutionalized traditions; it also encompassed a comparison between individual experiences.

#### **4 A Modest Tribute to My Unconventional Students**

Perhaps prison is not the only environment worth exploring to develop new teaching methods and develop more experiential training tools, but one thing is certain, shifting our perspective on traditional teaching methods is now a necessity. Other unconventional teaching venues are worth exploring to bring in a new perspective inside our traditional classrooms and acknowledge the importance of diversity in legal education. It is our duty as educators to step outside law schools and help contribute to the future of legal education to trigger long lasting change benefiting both our conventional and unconventional students.

Before entering Auburn I only partially understood the place of inmates in the American society. For the general population they are undeserving of playing a part in the social construct and should be excluded indefinitely for the harm they have caused irrespectively of the debt they pay in prison. I now comprehend that, although no longer benefiting from many of their civil rights, they remain imminent and direct subjects of the law. For some, they thrive to redefine themselves no longer along the lines of the crimes they have committed, but as educated students willing to bring in a refreshing point of view.

The contribution of my students and their diverse voices certainly helped me to find my own voice as a legal instructor. This unconventional environment provided me with the most quintessential teaching experience. My students and I built an

authentic relationship around our understanding of the law. For my part I shared my knowledge of western legal traditions and for theirs, they offered me their atypical approach to legal studies and legal education.

Ultimately I wish to pay tribute to my students. Through their eyes I felt freed from my young lecturer's scruples. Entrusting me with their education and never to question my training, week after week they continued to challenge me. Never second-guessing my ability to teach them all that I knew, they helped me to dramatically improve my teaching skills and made me grow as a legal researcher. Auburn has pushed me to thrive to cultivate my ability to think beyond the law school 'walls'. I owe it to my students to acknowledge how much they have changed me, and thank them for never leaving any stones unturned.

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