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## Legal Education I: New Perspectives

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## LEGAL EDUCATION I: NEW PERSPECTIVES

The essays that follow both heed the calls to interdisciplinary study that echo louder and louder within the community of legal scholars. At the same time they recognize that "Law" must, to some degree, assert its autonomy not only as a mode of intellectual inquiry but also as a species of professional training. Professors Laser and Staudt seek to use new insights and technologies developed outside the law schools to enhance the manner in which we practice and transmit the crafts of legal thought and representation.

Professor Laser's essay, *Educating for Professional Competence in the Twenty-First Century: Educational Reform at Chicago-Kent College of Law*, has a familiar, albeit uneasy, starting point. There is a widespread belief that lawyers embark upon their professional lives lacking basic competence in the ethical and technical aspects of their chosen trade. To the extent that this is true, law schools must bear the largest share of responsibility for the situation. Anyone with a nodding acquaintance with the history of our profession will know that the complaints we hear are not new in our time. Laser, on the other hand, focuses on the present and reminds us that in these days almost all professional education, not just Law, is attacked as inadequate to the task of preparing skilled and ethical young practitioners. Harnessing recent research into the theory of professional education broadly conceived, Laser argues that we have not successfully integrated the highground classroom, which emphasizes research, abstract values, and technique, with clinical education, where the student experiences a practical swampland overgrown with uncertainty, unique situations, and the conflict of values. The contemporary law school may have within itself a powerful potential to create an environment in which the complexities and ambiguities of everyday professional life can be confronted by the novice with an appropriate degree of intellectual exercise, discipline, and reflection. The young professional fostered in such an environment might better learn how to think and act properly in practice. Laser describes the efforts underway at Chicago-Kent to achieve these goals.

Professor Staudt's specialty, Computers and Law, also concerns itself both with the way law is taught and the way law is done. Staudt has done valuable work across the whole range of this vast field. In *An Essay on Electronic Casebooks: My Pursuit of the Paperless Chase*, he concentrates primarily on how the computer revolution can improve the aca-

demic experience of the contemporary law student. The revolution moves in two distinct flanks: computer hardware gets smaller, more powerful and cheaper by the month and can now fit both the classroom and the budget; the sophistication of computer software has grown to a point where it can begin to organize the complex analytic apparatus of a well taught law school course. (In the Fall 1992 semester Staudt taught what was probably the first law school course in history in which essentially all written materials were distributed and used electronically.) The work Staudt describes is only just beginning and we can only speculate with him about the possibilities inherent in the efforts to make computers genuinely thoughtful in their interactions with student and teacher alike. "Artificial intelligence" is a wonderfully ironic term for the legal community. The great common lawyer Edward Coke once defended the autonomy of law against royal encroachment by emphasizing that law was "an artificial reason," using "artificial" in its traditional sense as a synonym for "well crafted." (Defending Coke, Sir Matthew Hale later argued that every discipline has its own artificiality.) Appropriately enough, Staudt hails the coming of a new technological era and all the power it will have to deepen our engagement with the traditional intellectual values of our discipline.

*Jacob I. Corré*