OPEN SOURCE BUSINESS LAW: CREATING A LOW-COST SUSTAINABLE LEARNING RESOURCE

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I.   INTRODUCTION

The leading business law textbooks are expensive and provide more information than necessary for an undergraduate course. At the same time, they are unable to keep up with the latest laws and judicial precedents. This paper describes a classroom project to replace the traditional textbook with a low-cost, digital repository of Open Educational Resources (OERs) that students maintain and update each semester. Students find material for the repository using the GALILEO virtual library system,[1] as well as government websites and other freely available Internet resources. The authors implemented this project over five consecutive semesters of a Legal Environment of Business class and then, through quantitative and qualitative methods, assessed the impact of the project on student learning outcomes.

II.   PROJECT GOALS

The project goals were three-fold: (1) to reduce the student costs of a Legal Environment of Business ("LENB") course by replacing a traditional textbook with low-cost, publicly available learning materials; (2) to teach students how to research and analyze business law issues using low or no-cost, publicly-available resources; and (3) to develop business law educational materials that are sustainable and current with minor institutional effort and expense.

A.   REDUCING STUDENT COSTS

The high price of textbooks presents an educational barrier for many students. The U.S. Government Accountability Office estimated that the average student spends $1,207/year on books and supplies.[2] In Georgia, the state-funded HOPE scholarship covers a significant amount of tuition costs for students who maintain a certain GPA and enrollment level. However, due to changes made by the Georgia legislature in 2011, HOPE no longer covers textbook costs. Students faced with an expensive

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[1] *See* University System of Georgia, *Welcome to GALILEO*, http://www.galileo.usg.edu.

[2] *College Textbooks: Students Have Greater Access to Textbook Information* (June 6, 2013) U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-13-368.

textbook may choose to go without, despite the potential negative impact on their grades.[3] The cost of course materials also can affect a student's decision to take or remain in a particular course.[4] The authors' experience corroborates this research. Prior to initiating this project, the authors found that, overall, students did well on test questions that related to concepts explained in class, even if those concepts were not covered in the textbook. Students did poorly on questions that related to material that was in the assigned textbook reading but not covered in class. This led the authors to believe that students either were forgoing the textbook or did not find it to be an effective educational resource.[5]

B.   TEACHING STUDENTS EFFECTIVE RESEARCH SKILLS

Cost reduction alone is a compelling reason to eliminate a textbook in favor of open educational resources.[6] But, cost aside, the authors often found textbooks to be a barrier, not a boon, to teaching business law. Lawyers rarely reference textbooks in their court briefs and when businesspeople are faced with a legal issue, the last thing that comes to their mind is – where is my LENB primer? Modern lawyers and businesspeople do the majority of their research on the Internet.   And while subscription services such as LexisNexis and Westlaw can be very effective, and are ubiquitous at major law firms, it is increasingly common to find valuable legal resources that are free-of-charge.[7]   Most primary sources of law, such as federal and

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[3] Ethan Senack, *Fixing the Broken Textbook Market: How Students Respond to High Textbook Costs and Demand Alternatives, U.S. PIRG (Jan. 2014),* http://uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/report s/NATIONAL%20Fixing%20Broken%20Textbooks%20Report1.pdf at 11.

[4] *Id.*

[5] A Sept. 24, 2014 editorial from the Chronicle of Higher Education highlighted the connection between unnecessary reading (information) and the abandonment of the assigned textbook by the student. *See* David Gooblar, *They Haven't Done the Reading. Again,* VITAE (Sept. 24, 2014), https://chroniclevitae.com/news/719-they-haven-t-done-the-reading-again.

[6] Victor Lopez's article on the effect of legislation on lowering textbook prices suggested that "more radical solutions," including open educational resources, needed to be studied in case the legislation reduced competition even further among publishers. See Victor D. Lopez, *Legislating Relief for the High Cost of College Textbooks: A Brief Analysis of the Current Law and its Implication for Students, Faculty and the Publishing Industry*, 15 J. OF LEGAL STUD. IN BUS. 35, 52 (2009).

[7] A recent survey found that over 60% of responding attorneys used free internet resources "frequently" or "very frequently." *See* ALL-SIS TASK FORCE ON IDENTIFYING SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE FOR LEGAL PRACTICE, A STUDY OF ATTORNEYS' LEGAL RESEARCH PRACTICES AND OPINIONS OF NEW ASSOCIATES' RESEARCH SKILLS 32 (2013), *available at* http://www.aallnet.org/sections/all/storage/committees/practicetf/final-report-07102013.pdf. The use of free internet resources by attorneys may be a response to increased pressure from clients for attorneys to absorb their research costs. *See* Rachel M. Zahorsky*, Firms Wave Goodbye to Billing for Research Costs*, A.B.A. J., Nov. 14, 2012.

state statutes and regulations, are in the public domain and freely available on the Internet. Federal case filings are available at a low cost through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) database. [8]   The websites maintained by legislatures and regulatory agencies provide helpful guides to understanding the legal issues that fall under their purview. In addition to being free, these resources offer something no textbook can – they are constantly updated to reflect the frequent changes in the law.

Business law professors must prepare students to anticipate and respond to the legal issues they will encounter upon graduation. These students will operate in an increasingly online environment, an environment where access to current information can be the difference between success and failure.[9] The best way to prepare them for this environment is to teach them the information literacy skills of accessing and evaluating the latest information on a particular legal issue – not to require memorization of principles and rulings that may well be obsolete upon their graduation.[10]

C.   DEVELOPING A CURRENT AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS LAW RESOURCE

At the beginning of the semester, the authors train students in basic research skills contextualized to the legal environment of business. The class meets for two consecutive class times at the library with the librarian. Course goals for the training focus on various components from the ACRL Framework.[11] First, students are asked to identify sources of information, whether they be government entities, journalists, researchers, or lawyers, and how those sources of information could influence the authority and bias of the information. Students also are trained in developing a research strategy by using library databases and database subject terms to formulate terminology and exploring different variations of terms and various sources of information.[12] During the training, the librarian also uses an active learning exercise to introduce key information literacy concepts to the students, with a special focus on

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[8] U.S. Courts, *Public Access to Court Electronic Records,* https://www.pacer.gov.

[9] A June 26, 2015 report from the Pew Research Center documents how "the internet has become an integral part of everyday life across diverse parts of society." *See* Andrew Perrin & Maeve Duggan, *Americans' Internet Access: 2000-2015*, PEW RES. CTR. (June 26, 2016), http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/06/26/americans-internet-access-2000-2015.

[10] *See* David B. Brown & Elizabeth M. Simpson, *"Packaged" Information: How Are New Means of Delivering Information Affecting Students' Information-Seeking Behavior?* 18 NEW REV. OF ACAD. LIBRARIANSHIP 43 (2012).

[11] ACRL Board, *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education*, ASS'N OF COLL. AND RES. LIBR. (Feb. 9, 2015), *available at* www.ala.org/acrl/standards/ilframework.

[12] *Id.*

Web searches.[13] Students are given a real-world topic relevant to the course outline (for example, commercial use of drones for small businesses).   Students then are tasked with researching the topic, choosing and evaluating a source, summarizing the source, explaining their evaluation, and capturing a persistent link to the source.

Over the course of the semester, the students practice these skills by finding and vetting publicly available or low-cost legal resources. Rather than having the basic information on civil procedure, torts, contracts, etc. provided to them in textbook form, the students must educate themselves using open Internet sources as well as materials available through the college library's subscription services. The professor's role is to facilitate discussions among the students as to the information they have found, and correct any misinformation or misinterpretation. This is a popular engaged learning technique called the "flipped classroom" – where the professor ceases to be a "sage on the stage" and becomes a "guide on the side."[14]

The authors hypothesize this technique will help the students in each semester-long class achieve their learning objectives, but, also, over several years, the authors anticipate a broader, collaborative impact. Using this technique, professors potentially can harness the significant effort expended by the students and use it for the benefit for future students, as well as the general public. When the students move on to the business world, they can continue to use this repository as a starting place for research. To achieve this broader goal, in addition to collecting a broad range of useful resources on each topic covered by the LENB course, teams of students review the collected resources and choose the clearest and most effective ones to be added to a resource repository for the course. The next semester of LENB students can use this repository for their coursework and will be tasked with updating and improving it. After a few semesters, the courses will have developed a resource that has been thoroughly vetted and could be shared with other LENB students in the USG system, as well as the general public.   In other words, the students create their own open source, publicly available "textbook" of low and no-cost materials, and new groups of students update it each semester as part of their LENB coursework.

III.   BUILDING THE RESOURCE REPOSITORY

The resource repository is hosted by the authors' college library on a publicly available webpage called a "LibGuide."   For the first semester of the project, the

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[13] Students are required to analyze web sources using the "CRAAP test," a common checklist of source reliability involving the elements Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose. For a sample checklist, *see The CRAAP Test Worksheet,* JUNIATA C. BEEGHLY LIBR., http://services.juniata.edu/library/instruction/handouts/craap_worksheet.pdf.

[14] Allison King, *From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side*, 41 COLL. TEACHING, Vol. 41, 30 (1993).

authors "primed the pump" by uploading a few basic no-cost resources that related to each course topic. These resources serve as exemplars for the additional sources students will find, and help students understand how the repository should look and operate. Over the course of the semester, the students improve the repository by collecting and vetting additional learning resources. To build the repository, the authors begin with Desire2Learn's (D2L) course management system, utilized on the Georgia College campus and throughout the University System of Georgia. Students are responsible for uploading, as discussion posts, content that relates to the course's weekly topics. Via D2L, the students have the chance to view and comment on one another's submissions. The D2L system only is visible to the students and faculty members in the class.

As described above in Section IIC., the students meet early in the semester with the librarian for training on how to research using GALILEO, and specifically LexisNexis Academic. They are not simply taught to find information; they receive instruction on evaluating the reliability of information. [15] As the semester progresses, the students use their research skills to locate court documents, relevant laws, topical news stories, and more via GALILEO and other online resources. In this way, students develop skills that are applicable well beyond this specific LENB course.[16]

To focus their research, the authors provide the students with a list of topics to be covered in each class. Students are responsible for researching each topic prior to class and uploading to D2L the content they find most interesting and useful. The students also are required to include a short explanation on why they found the resource useful and reliable. [17] The professor then discusses each topic in class, with an emphasis on student participation.

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[15] One of the dangers of the unprecedented availability of information is "information overload," which requires modern teachers to educate students in selecting and vetting information based on its applicability and reliability. *See* Martin J. Eppler & Jeanne Mengis, *The Concept of Information Overload: A Review of Literature from Organization Science, Accounting, Marketing, MIS, and Related Disciplines*, 20 INFO. SOC'Y: AN INT'L J., 1-20 (2004).

[16] Faculty from Indiana University East conducted a survey of business faculty to assess what critical skills were most necessary for business students to succeed. Critical thinking ranked first and searching for information ranked seventh of the 16 listed skills. *See* Marsha Jance & Anita Morgan, *Critical Learning Skills for Business Students*, 6 AM. J. OF BUS. EDUC. 25 (2013).

[17] Modern businesses prize information literacy, which is not just the ability to collect useful information, but the ability to present and communicate that information effectively. *See* Todd Quinn & Lora Leligdon, *Executive MBA Students' Information Skills and Knowledge: Discovering the Difference Between Work and Academics*, 19 J. OF BUS. & FIN. LIBRARIANSHIP, 234, 236-37 (2015).

Near the end of the semester, the students are assigned small groups, one for each major topic covered in the class (civil procedure, torts, intellectual property, etc.). Students meet in their small groups; review, in D2L, the resources that the whole class collected on their assigned topic; and choose the most useful resources with the best explanations. They then make these "best" resources available in a special folder on D2L and give a short class presentation where they summarize the resources they selected, explain why they found them useful, and show the class where the resources were located. These presentations occur before the comprehensive final exam, so students can use the vetted resources to prepare for the test.

IV.   SHARING THE RESOURCE REPOSITORY

After the semester ends, the authors review the resources that the student groups determined to be the most useful. The authors then add those resources to the LibGuide. As the project continues over multiple semesters, the students and authors are developing a robust business law resource that will be helpful for small business operators in their community and beyond. Certain resources are restricted, such as copyrighted material students obtain from GALILEO. The authors still post these resources, but do it using the student-provided GALILEO permalink so that future LENB students can access the materials without making them available to the general public. In the future, the authors may be able to share these resources with other USG colleges that have similar GALILEO access and copyright licensing.

V.   ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED

The authors assessed the project's efficacy using two different techniques. They performed a qualitative assessment by conducting a focus group with students in the class and asking them to volunteer their input on the project's successes and challenges. Students provided additional qualitative input as comments on end-of-semester course evaluations. The authors also performed a quantitative assessment by comparing class average grade point average (GPA) and drop / fail / withdrawal (DFW) rates for five semesters pre-implementation versus five semesters post-implementation.

A.   QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

During the focus group, the authors read students a prompt and then asked them five questions (Attachment A) and recorded their responses. Some students

provided additional feedback after the focus group concluded and as comments on end-of-semester course evaluations. Below is a summary and examples of the qualitative feedback students provided.

The project appeared to save students a significant amount of money. The redesign of the LENB course was part of a larger initiative by Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG) to replace textbooks with OERs. After the first two rounds of the grant, students across the University System of Georgia saved over $9 million in fiscal years 2015 and 2016.[18] New books for a typical LENB course easily cost over $200, and the book this course was using previously cost over $300 new. As approximately 380 students have taken the LENB course post-implementation, this represents potential student savings of over $114,000 over the course of the project. Students were pleased with the reduced cost of a textbook-free course. Also, after replacing the textbook with student-initiated research, students reported gains in their research skills and increased familiarity with GALILEO. Students reported very positively on the experience, saying that it helped them learn about real-world applications of their classroom knowledge. The following are quotations and summaries of student feedback.

- "In a world where things change constantly, being able to locate legal information quickly is a valuable skill - particularly in a legal environment. I also appreciate that there were no texts to purchase, carry, or become outdated."
- "Course material was more memorable" due to it coming from personal research rather than reading it out of a textbook.
- "I really enjoyed this type of learning experience because it helped me to become more familiar with the material. By doing my own research and finding examples related to the material, I feel that I was better able to understand the topics we learned about in class."[19]
- The students were allowed to direct their research on the course topics towards applications that interested them. One said the research allowed them to find "material I'm not bored by."
- Another student found that they were "more engaged" in the classroom because of their outside research and lack of a textbook.[20]

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[18] Jeff Gallant, *Librarians Transforming Textbooks: The Past, Present, and Future of the Affordable Learning Georgia Initiative,* 52 GA. LIBR. Q. 12 (2015).

[19] Such student comments reflect basic information literacy principles like those described by the ACRL Board. Under the heading "Searching as Strategic Exploration," the Board notes that "information searching is a contextualized, complex experience that affects, and is affected by, the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of the searcher." ACRL Board, *supra* note 9.

[20] Student engagement gains are commonly reported benefits of the project's "flipped classroom" approach. *See* Zamzami Zainuddin & Siti H. Halili, *Flipped Classroom Research and Trends from Different Fields of Study,* 17 INT'L REV. OF RES. IN OPEN AND DISTRIBUTED LEARNING, 313, 329-330 (2016).

- "I thoroughly enjoyed this class and using no-cost learning materials to learn about different topics throughout the semester. I found the information online relevant and useful, and I could tailor my online research to my interests revolving around the topic covered in class."[21]
- "Definitely helped me learn about how it works in the real world."
- "The assignments helped me better understand the topics."
- "It can be a challenging course and you do have to do a good bit of outside research, but in the end it only helps you learn more."
- "[The] homework and research assignments . . . helped me to develop skills that will extend far beyond [this] class."

At the same time, some students found this new way of learning to be unfamiliar and challenging. One common negative response was that the open source nature of the class made it difficult for students to know exactly what they would be responsible for on tests. Many students feared their sources may not have been credible. At the beginning of the semester, during research instruction, the librarian conducted a workshop on evaluating source reliability, but it appears not all students put these techniques into practice, or were not confident that the techniques were effective. Several students expressed concern about the lack of a common text to use while studying.

- "Difficult without a textbook however it helped to go to class and take notes. I appreciated not having to pay for the expensive and heavy book."
- "I thought that not using a textbook helped us think hard about what we were actually doing research on, which would ultimately help us recall the information better. But, at the same time, it was a great deal of information to search through, leaving us with the sky's limit of different definitions making it a little more difficult at times."
- Another student felt that the format of the class had potential, but questioned whether they would know if they were finding "the right information."[22]

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[21] This statement corroborates findings on Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Because of the dynamics of independent investigation, students "achieve higher levels of comprehension, develop more learning and knowledge-forming skills…." Gary Coombs & Max Elden, *Problem-based Learning as Social Inquiry-PBL and Management Education,* 28 J. OF MGMT. EDUC. 523, 528 (2004), *quoting* James Rhem, *Problem based learning: An introduction.* 8 NAT'L TEACHING & LEARNING F. 1 (1998)

[22] Harley related this fear to the current student-research paradigm: "They simply want the information required for their course assignments. Students' superficial approach to research is reinforced every time they use Web-based resources." Bruce Harley, Megan Dreger, and Patricia Knobloch, *The postmodern condition: students, the Web, and academic library services,* 29 REFERENCE SERVICES REV. 23, 25 (2001).

- "Sometimes there are thousands of different definitions, which ones do you want us to know?"
- "Challenging when you find websites that contradict themselves; not exactly sure what would be asked on test."
- "Wish we could have touched on almost every topic that we were tested on, hard to know an answer, without a textbook, and trusting the internet."

While students appreciated the value of not having a textbook, many were not aware before they signed up for the class that a textbook was not required, and therefore it did not influence their decision to take the course. Students also noted that the savings were not as great as they might have been in the past, due to the availability of cheaper resources such as e-textbooks and the online availability of old textbook editions that contain much of the same information as a new edition.[23]

- "Don't save as much money as you used to."
- "Yeah, you save money but… would have been more useful years ago."

B.   QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT

The authors chose two quantitative metrics (Average Grade Point Average and Drop/Fail/Withdraw rate) and examined their change between five semesters of a standard textbook-based course (Summer 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Summer 2014 and Fall 2014) and five semesters of a course implementing the project (Spring 2015, Summer 2015, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, and Summer 2016). The sample size was approximately 400 students pre-implementation and 380 students post-implementation.

- Average GPA decreased from 3.22 (pre-implementation) to 3.06 (post-implementation).
- DFW rate increased from 2% (pre-implementation) to 7% (post-implementation).

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[23] Eric Gorski reported back in 2010 on new measures to increase textbook options and reduce cost. Eric Gorski, *Tracking Trends: More Choices Alter College Textbook Landscape,* CMTY. COLL. WEEK (2010), http://ccweek.com/article-1958-tracking-trends-more-choices-alter-college-textbook-landscape.html. Gorski notes the availability of textbook rentals, e-copies, and even open source materials. Still, Gorski says that there is a "dearth" of open source titles, and some students are resistant to e-books. The fact that Senack, in 2014, is still concerned with the rising costs of textbooks and the challenges of textbook alternatives indicates that Gorski's concerns may persist, despite some students' perceptions. *See* Ethan Senak, *supra* note 3.

Therefore, based on these ten semesters of data, with all other factors being equal, students involved in this project had a lower average GPA and a higher DFW rate than students in the prior, textbook-based course. At first glance, this seems like a negative result that calls the project's success into question. However, the authors noted that the average decline in GPA was relatively small (0.16, or 5%). And while the DFW rate increased by an average of five percentage points, the average class size of about 35 students means this was only an increase of 1-2 students per semester. Therefore, although the declines in GPA and increases in DFW rates were perceptible and somewhat consistent from semester to semester, they were relatively small. In other words, the implementation of this project made the course slightly more difficult for the average student. As the authors discuss below in the conclusion, this slight increase in difficulty does not necessarily indicate a problem with the project. In fact, these data may indicate that the open-source nature of the project provides an important challenge to students, by rewarding research and writing skills that are not emphasized in other courses.

VI.   CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The authors found that students who participated in the project were much more engaged in the class discussion than their peers in the prior, textbook-based course. When questioned about legal concepts, rather than parroting material from their book that they knew all their fellow students had read (or should have read), students in post-implementation classes had the opportunity to bring up examples that they had discovered in their personal research. Students were more willing to share this information, knowing it would be new to their class (and often to their professor). Students also had the freedom to find examples in their field of interest, whether that be a professional field or a hobby. This kept the lessons fresh and freed the professor from having to anticipate which examples students might find interesting. The students' qualitative assessment of the class corroborates the authors' observations. Students not only enjoyed the class more than a textbook-based class, but felt that they were learning more material with a real-world application. They believed the project strengthened their research skills, which may have beneficial effects across the curriculum, and may be of particular interest to colleges with a liberal arts focus.

At the same time, the authors recognize that the project created anxiety in students as to whether they would know "the right answer" come test time. This open-source method of learning clearly was unfamiliar to them, and many indicated that they would have been more comfortable having textbook definitions they could memorize and then recognize on a test. While the authors sympathize with students' concerns, they question whether such "memorize and recognize" skills are what professors want students to develop, particularly in the field of law, where problem-solving requires

the application of legal concepts to different factual scenarios.[24] One of the reasons the authors implemented this project was to help students break away from memorizing definitions and instead to focus on legal concepts and the various ways they can apply in the business world. The applicable legal concepts may differ by geography, by jurisdiction, and change over time, and therefore the "right answer" may depend on the situation. The fact that students were somewhat uncomfortable and unaccustomed to this style of learning may be a positive outcome, if it helps prepare students for the vagaries of real-world legal problem solving.

However, some of these student complaints may reflect inherent challenges in the project that should be addressed as the authors continue to develop the online repository. One potential weakness in such a repository is a lack of traditional textbook features such as a table of contents, index, and glossary of terms or definitions. Such features make it easier for students to quickly access key pieces of information. The repository has the potential to incorporate these features, perhaps in ways that exceed the capabilities of a textbook (for example, by providing hyperlinks from an index or glossary to key articles on each topic). However, that will require a focus on repository structure and usability that is time-consuming and may distract from the core objectives of this course. The authors will consider ways to improve the repository's usability while still achieving pedagogical objectives, perhaps by collaborating with another course that focuses on management of information systems. The authors also might address some of the problems raised by students by incorporating more sources of "black-letter law" (traditional elements of the law that are well settled in case law). The authors may address this in future courses by selecting, and posting to the repository, specific excerpts from established case law that address some of the central legal issues on each course topic.

Another way the authors might address student concerns and still achieve course objectives is by changing the way the material is tested. Because the authors wanted to be able to compare post-implementation semesters to prior, textbook-based semesters, they retained the pre-implementation testing methods, which primarily consisted of multiple-choice questions. Multiple-choice testing is well suited to a

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[24] The ability to recognize and recall information is the simplest of cognitive categories described by the seminal, and widely-adopted, educational framework "Bloom's Taxonomy." While the ability to recall terminology and specific facts is an important building block in an educational framework, Bloom's suggests that effective curricular objectives must transcend knowledge and move through the more complex cognitive processes of comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. *See* Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, TAXONOMY OF EDUC. OBJECTIVES: THE CLASSIFICATION OF EDUC. GOALS, HANDBOOK I: COGNITIVE DOMAIN (1956); *see also* David R. Krathwohl, *A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview*, 41 THEORY INTO PRACTICE 212 (2002).

textbook-based class, where students can identify the "right" answer as the one they recognize from their reading. But when it comes to real-world legal problems, there is rarely a single "right answer" or even a single "correct definition" for a legal term. Therefore an open-source, research-based class, while less conducive to multiple-choice testing methods, may be more appropriate given the ultimate goal of teaching students to problem-solve in real-world situations. In future semesters, the authors plan to implement more essay or presentation-based testing so that students can display their knowledge of legal concepts without anxiety over whether they have memorized the "right" answer.

Although the quantitative data indicated that post-implementation students, on average, had a lower GPA and higher DFW rates than pre-implementation students, the authors do not see these data as indicative of the project's failure. Based on the student comments, the authors believe the type of learning required by this project can be more challenging for students than a traditional textbook-based course. The project pushes students out of their comfort zone and requires them to take more responsibility for their education. It might be expected that, under these circumstances, average GPA would decline and DFW rates would increase. The authors also note that the average decline in GPA and increase in DFW rates were relatively small, and the post-implementation average GPA and DFW rates are at a level that the authors find acceptable for an advanced undergraduate course.

Based on the predominantly positive qualitative feedback from students, and the anticipation that, over time, this project will develop a helpful low-cost learning resource for the general public, the authors plan to continue this project in future semesters. The authors will reexamine the testing methods so that assessments of student learning focus more on overall knowledge and application of that knowledge to real-world scenarios. The authors also will reach out to professors at other institutions to encourage them to implement a similar project in their LENB classes and help build the knowledge repository. The authors hope that, collaboratively, business law educators and students can develop a new and effective educational model that also serves the public good.

ATTACHMENT A
PROMPTS FOR STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

"This semester, you were part of a course that did not have a textbook. Instead, you were asked to conduct online research to supplement your in-class instruction. Today, we would like to hear about how that experience affected

your comprehension and retention of the course material. We also would like to know if you felt the experience was superior, equivalent, or inferior to the experience of a traditional textbook-based course. Your participation is voluntary and will not in any way affect your grade in this course. Any information you provide will be recorded anonymously – there will be no connection between the information you provide and your name or any other personally identifiable information."

1.   Did you feel that you saved money by not having a textbook? Was that a factor in your choosing this class? How big a factor?
2.   Did you find the research component of this class helped you comprehend the material? How?
3.   Did you find the research component of this class helped you retain the material? How?
4.   Did you feel this experience was superior, equivalent, or inferior to the experience of a traditional textbook-based course? Why?
5.   What recommendations would you make to improve this class in the future?