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Infusing Leadership Competencies into 1L Professional Identity Formation

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Recommended Citation

Aric Short, *Infusing Leadership Competencies into 1L Professional Identity Formation*, 62 Santa Clara L. Rev 113 (2022).

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INFUSING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES INTO 1L PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FORMATION

Aric K. Short*

Law schools across the country are beginning to address the growing need to incorporate leadership training into their curricula; however, very few explicitly cover leadership in the 1L year. This article argues for the value of providing leadership training to 1Ls as part of a required course on professional identity formation. Because foundational leadership concepts overlap in meaningful ways with core lawyering competencies, such integration is both practical and efficient. Beginning leadership in the 1L year allows law schools to build on that foundational material in later clinics, externships, upper-level classes, and other experiences, creating deeper leadership skills in their students. In addition, providing 1Ls with competency-focused leadership training can also provide a number of benefits to both students and the institution, including helping students improve their academic performance in their first year and reframing their experience to emphasize the development of skills that will help them interview most effectively for the jobs they want. In addition, leadership training can help 1Ls better process and deal with the normal challenges and pressures of law school that create mental health problems for many students. In fact, emphasizing those related benefits of 1L leadership training—specifically, helping students improve their grades and more effectively identify careers that are a good fit for them—may be the strongest selling points of such a program to many students.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Law schools are graduating students into a world of escalating complexity. Although somewhat familiar, we face wider political and societal problems in areas like health care, immigration, race, national security, and poverty,¹ the ongoing global pandemic, with its myriad challenges, is sobering. This crisis has emphasized how interconnected

1. See DEBORAH L. RHODE, LEADERSHIP FOR LAWYERS 3 (Rachel E. Barkow et al. eds., 3d ed. 2020).

the world is, both in the problems we share and in the value of understanding, collaboration, and cooperation across cultures to deal effectively and equitably with those problems. The pandemic has also revealed the importance of anticipating and quickly responding to emerging hazards. And beyond all of this focus on simply surviving and conquering threats to our well-being, we have a desperate need to identify paths that allow each of us to thrive and reach our full potential. In short, we have never required effective and skilled leaders more than today.²

The United States has always turned to lawyers for a large share of its leaders.³ In government, lawyers serve in disproportionate numbers as members of Congress and elected and appointed officials at the state and local levels.⁴ They have led countries and this country, in particular, during times of crisis and upheaval.⁵ They also occupy executive suite positions in companies, run non-profit boards, and lead community initiatives.⁶ And, of course, lawyers lead our delivery of legal services,⁷ an endeavor that faces various pressures, disruptions, and questions⁸—including how to provide access to justice for those who

2. Donald J. Polden, *Educating Law Students for Leadership Roles and Responsibilities*, 39 U. TOL. L. REV. 353, 359 (2008) (observing that law schools can and should be educating their students for the leadership roles they will be playing in an increasingly complicated global profession, because our communities and societies need greater leadership manifested in business, government, public policy, and in the legal profession).

3. See Deborah L. Rhode, *Leadership in Law*, 69 STAN. L. REV. 1603, 1605 (2017); Donald J. Polden, *Symposium on Leadership Education for Lawyers and Law Students*, 52 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 685, 685 (2012) (stating that leadership is a “core component for ethical engagement and success in the work of lawyers”); Ben W. Heineman, Jr., William F. Lee & David B. Wilkins, *Lawyers as Professionals and as Citizens: Key Roles and Responsibilities in the 21st Century*, HARV. L. SCH. CTR. ON LEGAL PROF. 9-11 (Nov. 20, 2014), https://clp.law.harvard.edu/assets/Professionalism-Project-Essay_11.20.14.pdf (discussing the traditional roles of lawyers as including that of leader).

4. See RHODE, *supra* note 1; Leah Witcher Jackson Teague, *Training Lawyers for Leadership: Vitally Important Mission for the Future Success (and Maybe Survival) of the Legal Profession and Our Democracy*, 58 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 633, 635-36 (2018).

5. See Heineman, Lee & Wilkins, *supra* note 3, at 10-11.

6. See Teague, *supra* note 4, at 635.

7. See Heineman, Lee & Wilkins, *supra* note 3, at 10 (including leading as judges, attorneys general, and heads of law firms, bar associations, and law schools).

8. See generally Carrie Menkel-Meadow, *Crisis in Legal Education or the Other Things Law Students Should be Learning and Doing*, 45 MCGEORGE L. REV. 133 (2013).

cannot afford it.⁹ In short, our students will lead—whether they currently think they will or not.¹⁰

Although society expects lawyers to serve in important formal and informal leadership roles, and despite the fact that leadership has been described as “one of the few existential purposes of law school,”¹¹ law students have not historically received any coherent training in leadership theory or practice.¹² Because of this omission, our graduates have been forced to learn leadership on the job, often as a secondary matter, while focusing primarily on establishing their law practices.¹³

Law schools were slow to recognize this training deficit, but they are now moving in the right direction.¹⁴ On a national level, various symposia, in addition to this one, have been dedicated to leadership education in law schools.¹⁵ In 2017, the Executive Committee of the Association of American Law Schools approved the creation of a new section on leadership.¹⁶ Law schools have also begun adding leadership electives to their curricula and offering related certificates and other leadership programming.¹⁷ Leadership courses in law school have gone from an elective at one school in 2003 to over twenty-six schools with leadership courses in 2018.¹⁸ Reflecting this increased attention, twelve

9. See AM. BAR ASS'N COMM' ON THE FUTURE OF LEGAL SERVS., REPORT ON THE FUTURE OF LEGAL SERVICES IN THE UNITED STATES, 8 (2016), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/abanews/2016FLSReport_FNL_WE_B.pdf.

10. See Heineman, Lee & Wilkins, *supra* note 3, at 11 (“[L]eadership is a station to which many lawyers may aspire—and in which many will find themselves whether they aspire to be there or not.”).

11. See Scott A. Westfahl & David B. Wilkins, *The Leadership Imperative: A Collaborative Approach to Professional Development in the Global Age of More for Less*, 69 STAN. L. REV. 1667, 1705 (2017).

12. See Heineman, Lee & Wilkins, *supra* note 3, at 13-16; Westfahl & Wilkins, *supra* note 11, at 1707 (noting that traditionally, law schools provide leadership training “much more by chance than by design and without the consistency of instructional quality that law schools demand for the teaching of legal doctrine”); Faith Rivers James, *Engaging Law Students in Leadership*, 30 ST. LOUIS U. PUB. L. REV. 409, 411 (2011) (“Traditionally leadership has not been part of the law school curriculum.”).

13. See James, *supra* note 12, at 411.

14. See Neil Hamilton, *Leadership of Self: Each Student Taking Ownership Over Continuous Professional Development / Self-Directed Learning*, 58 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 567, 567-68 (2018) [hereinafter Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*] (noting positive trends in leadership courses and learning objectives in United States law schools).

15. See *Lawyers and Leadership: Raising the Bar*, STAN. L. REV. (2017), <https://www.stanfordlawreview.org/symposium/raising-the-bar/>; see also *2020: Vision for Leadership Conference*, BAYLOR U. L., <https://www.baylor.edu/law/index.php?id=966106> (last visited Aug. 16, 2021).

16. See Teague, *supra* note 4, at 652-53.

17. See *id.* at 654-56 (tracing the development of leadership programs and courses in United States law schools).

18. See Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 567-68.

United States law schools have specifically listed leadership as part of their programmatic learning outcomes as of this publication.¹⁹

Although some law schools expose their students to leadership training of some sort, many more do not. Among those that are, few make leadership courses mandatory, and an even smaller number require leadership training for 1L students.²⁰ This is a lost opportunity. A required leadership-related course for 1L students would provide significant benefits to both students and the institution,²¹ which would likely exceed any structural challenges and implementation costs associated with the program. Most directly, a required 1L course that addresses leadership could lay the foundation for a step-wise development of leadership competencies across three years of law school, connecting 1L courses with upper-level courses, and those courses with extra- and co-curricular activities offered by the institution.²² If well-chosen, that content would also provide additional benefits to students, including helping them more effectively navigate the academic challenges of law school, as well as focus and drive their career search from their first weeks as a law student—essentially learning to effectively lead themselves. The result of more focused attention on leadership training, beginning in the 1L year, would likely be more successful and more satisfied law students who, upon

19. See *Learning Outcomes 302(c) and (d)*, U. ST. THOMAS, <https://www.stthomas.edu/hollorancenter/learningoutcomesandprofessionaldevelopment/learningoutcomesdatabase/learningoutcomes302c/> (last visited Aug. 24, 2021).

20. Among the schools with 1L required courses that focus explicitly on leadership are Elon University School of Law and the University of Tennessee School of Law. See James, *supra* note 12, at 417, 419; Douglas A. Blaze, *Law Student Motivation, Satisfaction, and Well-Being: The Value of a Leadership and Professional Development Curriculum*, 58 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 547, 556 (2019).

Mercer University School of Law also offers a related 1L course entitled, “The Legal Profession.” See *First Year Curriculum*, MERCER U. SCH. L., <https://law.mercer.edu/academics/registrar/course-descriptions/first-year-curriculum.cfm> (last visited Aug. 24, 2021).

21. This is an especially important time to consider a 1L leadership course. The American Bar Association’s (ABA) Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar is in the final stages of adopting a new § 303(b)(3), which would require law schools to provide “substantial opportunities to students for . . . the development of a professional identity.” Memorandum from Scott Bales & William Adams to Interested Persons and Entities (Mar. 1, 2021) (on file at https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/20210301-notice-and-comment-standards-303-and-508-rules-2-and-13.pdf). This proposed language, and the related proposed Interpretation, as well as the relationship between leadership and professional identity, are discussed more fully in Part III.

22. See James, *supra* note 12, at 417, 419 (outlining Elon University’s step by step leadership curriculum throughout law school).

graduation, would be better positioned to begin leading and serving their clients.

Part I addresses what “leadership training” might mean in a required 1L course, focusing on goals a school could pursue in planning and executing such a course, as well as course content and logistics. To provide one example of how to incorporate leadership competencies in this setting, Part II describes the core content areas of Professional Identity, a required 1L course at Texas A&M University School of Law. This section includes a discussion of self-directedness, emotional intelligence, resilience, well-being, and networking—each of which is foundationally important for the development of effective leaders and effective lawyers. This section also addresses how our law school implements Professional Identity. Drawing on the competencies laid out in Part II, Part III addresses additional reasons to include a similar 1L course beyond those related directly to leadership and lawyering development. As discussed in this section, coverage of leadership and professional identity competencies can be tailored to also address two of the main focus areas for most 1Ls: improving their grades and finding meaningful employment. As described more fully in this article, a required 1L course integrating these competencies provides a wide range of benefits for students and the institution, including providing students with a valuable step toward becoming the most effective advocates, counselors, and leaders possible within a rewarding and satisfying career.

II. WHAT DOES LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR 1LS EVEN MEAN?

The topic of “leadership” is vast—including different systems for classifying leadership and defining that term²³—and there are countless lists of important skills, personalities, traits, characteristics, and qualities of effective leaders.²⁴ One well-respected leadership and law text, for example, covers a daunting range of topics, including definitions and styles of leadership; challenges to leadership; the relationship between leader and follower; organizational learning; ethical decision-making; implicit bias; group decision-making; forms of influence; conflict management; communication strategies; accountability; managing versus leading; and leadership paradoxes, among others.²⁵ Clearly, a 1L

23. See PETER G. NORTHOUSE, *LEADERSHIP: THEORY AND PRACTICE* 5 (8th ed. 2016) (noting approximately sixty-five “different classification systems have been developed to define the dimensions of leadership”).

24. See Teague, *supra* note 4, at 647-48 (describing the high number of classification systems within leadership, as well as the challenge of defining the concept, at all).

25. See RHODE, *supra* note 1.

course, particularly one limited to a credit or two, could not fully cover the vast waterfront of leadership.

As a starting point, introductory material defining leadership and explaining why this training is important for law students would seem an obvious choice for inclusion. Beyond that, schools will have to make choices about what to cover. In addition, they will have to make decisions about various structural and logistical issues for the class, including scheduling and how to assess student learning. The following two subsections briefly address those issues.

A. Leadership-Related Content for a 1L Course

With a long list of valuable leadership sub-competencies to choose from,²⁶ each school will have to select and evaluate over time its own leadership themes based on institutional and other considerations.²⁷ In doing so, various criteria may help guide their selection.

Certain leadership topics might complement the mission or identity of the institution. Some schools might want to emphasize, for example, servant leadership or leadership in the public sphere, if they have other programs, centers, and areas of curricular concentration that complement those topics. Schools with required pro bono programs could fall into this category, as well. Other schools might have institutional reasons for emphasizing leadership skills in the context of diverse or multi-cultural groups, where diversity, inclusion, and implicit bias might be a focus. And some law schools have strong university-related values or core identities, such as religiously affiliated institutions, that the law school could address in the 1L course. Designing a 1L leadership experience to intentionally connect with larger institutional values may help students appreciate the broader purposes of their education, as well as potentially generate support from the central university administration.

The creation of a required 1L course addressing leadership competencies could provide an effective springboard to wider institutional planning related to the development of lawyering skills. If a set curriculum in the 1L course could be established, then other

26. See Teague, *supra* note 4, at 656-61 (discussing a number of possible topics for coverage in a law school leadership course, including the role of lawyers in society, self-assessment, ethical decision-making, wellness, and strategic planning).

27. The University of Tennessee School of Law offers a required 1L course entitled "Lawyering and Professionalism." Dean Douglas Blaze teaches the course and has written about it. See Blaze, *supra* note 20. In that article, Dean Blaze identifies the following topics that he typically covers in that class: (1) promote maintenance (or restoration) of the students' sense of purpose; (2) support the students' sense of autonomy and control; (3) reinforce the relevance of what is being taught and learn to promote the need for mastery; and (4) directly address the students' well-being challenges. See *id.* at 557.

courses—such as clinics, externships, and legal writing classes—could intentionally build on those competencies to develop more advanced skills in students.²⁸ For example, students in the 1L course could be exposed to various interpersonal competencies, such as active listening and intercultural awareness. When those 1L students move into externship and clinical courses in later years, their professors could provide a brief review of that material and then move quickly into how those competencies would play out with clients in the experiential setting.²⁹ The school could avoid wasteful duplication of coverage and treat the 1L course as providing foundational building blocks for more powerful student experiences later.³⁰

This springboard approach would allow the school, as a related matter, to incorporate leadership-related competencies into its institutional learning outcomes. Many schools have already done so, specifically listing leadership, as well as related sub-competencies like active listening, judgment, integrity, and cultural competence as learning outcomes for their J.D. programs.³¹ More and more law schools are likely to undertake this broader planning and weave similar sub-competencies into their learning outcomes in light of newly proposed law school accreditation standards, discussed in Part II.³²

28. Beyond curricular offerings, schools should curate existing leadership and professional identity resources within the law school in areas like admissions, career services, academic support, and student affairs to leverage their expertise in leadership and professional identity development. See Louis D. Bilonis, *Professional Formation and the Political Economy of the American Law School*, 83 TENN. L. REV. 895, 905-06 (2016).

29. A related tiered approach would be to require focused leadership classes in each year of law school. See generally James, *supra* note 12, at 417 (describing Elon's program that requires leadership classes that focus on self, others, and the profession).

30. The same theory applies to co- and extra-curricular activities in later semesters. For example, students participating in mock trial, moot court, or pro bono work later in law school could be expected to draw on the foundational knowledge from their 1L leadership or professional identity course.

31. See *Learning Outcomes 302(c) and (d)*, *supra* note 19.

32. These proposals are discussed *infra* Part II and accompanying notes. The current version of the proposed Interpretation of Standard 303(b)(3) states that students' exposure to topics related to professional identity "should not take place solely in one course but should be varied across the curriculum as well as in co-curricular and professional development activities . . ." Memorandum from Scott Bales & William Adams to Interested Persons and Entities, *supra* note 21; See COUNCIL OF THE ABA SECTION OF LEGAL EDUC. AND ADMISSIONS TO THE BAR, AM. BAR ASS'N, ABA STANDARDS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR APPROVAL OF LAW SCHOOLS 2020-21, 18 (2020), https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/legal_education_and_admissions_to_the_bar/standards/2020-2021/2020-21-aba-standards-and-rules-for-approval-of-law-schools.pdf; Memorandum of The Standards Committee to The Council (Aug. 16, 2021) (on file at <https://taxprof.typepad.com/files/aba-council.pdf>).

B. Logistics of a Leadership-Related Course

It is also worth considering how a required 1L course integrating LPI competencies might be structured—in particular, whether it would be condensed or spread across one or two semesters and what kinds of assessments it would include.

When it comes to scheduling a 1L course related to leadership, there are multiple options that could make sense. If the course is limited to one or two credit hours, it might be possible to schedule it for several weekends during the semester. Or it could be taught as an intensive week-long course the week before Fall classes begin or as an intersession class before the start of the Spring term.³³ Courses with more than one or two credit hours would likely need more traditional scheduling. However, schools would need to decide whether to teach these courses in either the Fall or the Spring of the 1L year. Courses centered in the Fall might reinforce the foundational importance of this subject, while those occurring in the Spring might take advantage of the 1Ls' school-related experiences in the Fall. Good reasons justify either approach.

Assessment in such a course presents similar options, as well as a few challenges. 1Ls learning this subject matter are probably not best assessed using traditional midterms and finals. Instead, this material lends itself to reflective exercises, journaling, hands-on work, group projects, and individual meetings. Designing thoughtful assessments of these types is time-consuming, but actually reviewing and commenting on student work product takes even more time. Depending on the teaching resources available, schools offering these types of classes might consider utilizing teaching assistants to help provide students feedback throughout the course.

Along with deciding how to measure student learning in such a required course, each school will need to determine whether to assign traditional letter grades or use pass/fail grading. There are advantages and disadvantages to each system, but schools that usually grade along some type of a required curve in the 1L year might be more comfortable with pass/fail grading in a leadership-related course. One reason justifying that choice is that most students will likely complete the required assignments in a way that demonstrates reflection, growth, and development of the covered competencies.³⁴

33. See James, *supra* note 12, at 420 (describing Elon's two-week required leadership class for 2L students over the winter break).

34. See *supra* Part II and accompanying notes (discussing in detail the Professional Identity course at Texas A&M University School of Law). However, on the point of grading, we have utilized both traditional grades and pass/fail grading in the past, and we have settled

III. PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AT TEXAS A&M LAW SCHOOL

To offer one concrete example of a leadership-related 1L course, this section provides some details about the Professional Identity course taught at Texas A&M University School of Law, both in terms of content and design.

A. Leadership and Professional Identity Competencies

Out of the various topics available,³⁵ we have settled on the competencies below as the central themes in our Professional Identity class at Texas A&M University School of Law.³⁶ The primary reason for choosing these topics is our judgment that they represent some of the most important foundational competencies of leadership. If our students move on to learn more advanced leadership theories or concepts later in law school, they are best served by having internalized and developed this foundational set of competencies first. In addition, our University has adopted and is guided by six Aggie Core Values,³⁷ which we believe are well-reflected in our chosen Professional Identity competencies. Consciously connecting with those University values helps underscore the importance of these competencies for our students.

1. Self-directedness

Effective leaders must be able to identify their goals, strategically establish a plan to achieve them, execute, and then learn from any

on pass/fail grading going forward. During the one year of letter grading, it was impossible to conform to the school's traditional grading structure for 1L classes, which imposed a mandatory maximum class grade point average.

35. See Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 572–76 (discussing various leadership sub-competencies that have been identified by other scholars). While these are currently our core themes, we incorporate other topics and related assignments as complements each semester. For example, we usually partner with our Office of Career Services to provide information and training on interviewing, culminating in a mock interview, with written and oral feedback, that we provide for each 1L through Professional Identity. We also require our Fall 1Ls to draft a cover letter to employers, which they receive written feedback on, that can be fleshed out as they develop their personal narrative. And we partner with our local bar associations for student-focused networking events with local lawyers and judges.

36. Selecting the “right” mix of topics in a professional identity and leadership course is challenging for various reasons, including the fact that students come from diverse backgrounds and bring a broad range of development in these areas. See Neil Hamilton & Jerome M. Organ, *Thirty Reflection Questions to Help Each Student Find Meaningful Employment and Develop an Integrated Professional Identity (Professional Formation)*, 83 TENN. L. REV. 843, 876 (2016). Coming up with this set of competencies has required trial, error, and a great deal of humility. See *id.* at 876.

37. The Aggie Core Values are excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service. See *Core Values*, TEX. A&M U. ASS'N OF FORMER STUDENTS, <https://www.aggienetwork.com/theassociation/corevalues.aspx> (last visited Aug. 24, 2021).

shortcomings to recalibrate and refocus on their goals. This, fundamentally, is the process of leading oneself, but it applies equally in the context of leading others. For law students, the quality of being self-directed is also an overarching competency that allows them to effectively navigate law school, acquiring the skills and training that will help them achieve their personal career goals.³⁸ In large part, this involves students moving from passive observers to engaged learners as they take ownership of and responsibility for their education.³⁹ Being self-directed is also critical in the practice of law. In particular, this competency has been identified as a distinguishing characteristic of lawyers who excel in practice.⁴⁰

2. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional or social intelligence is the ability to recognize and manage one's own emotions and recognize and take into consideration the emotions of others.⁴¹ Emotional intelligence is a core component of effective human interaction, and it is central to effective leadership.⁴² Appreciating the emotional motivations of a group allows a leader to more effectively chart a collective path forward and generate support for those choices. Leaders who are tone-deaf to the emotions of others may be able to demand allegiance or respect in the short run, but they will

38. See R. Lisle Baker, *Designing a Positive Psychology Course for Lawyers*, 51 SUFFOLK L. REV. 207, 217 (2018) (“[T]o be successful, law students need to take responsibility for these varied aspects of their future legal careers while in law school.”); Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 579-91.

39. See Baker, *supra* note 38 (noting that students in higher education should “change from thinking like students – learning and applying routine techniques to solve problems – to accepting and internalizing responsibility for others”).

40. See William D. Henderson, *Talent Systems for Law Firms*, PD Q. 5, 13 (2017).

41. DANIEL GOLEMAN, WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, 317 (reprint ed. 2000) [hereinafter GOLEMAN, WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE]. Emotional intelligence has been broken down in various constituent parts, most recently by Daniel Goleman into twelve competencies: emotional self-awareness, emotional self-control, adaptability, achievement orientation, positive outlook, empathy, organizational awareness, influence, coach and mentor, conflict management, teamwork, and inspirational leadership. See Daniel Goleman & Richard E. Boyatzis, *Emotional Intelligence Has 12 Elements. Which Do You Need to Work On?*, HARV. BUS. REV. (Feb. 6, 2017), <https://hbr.org/2017/02/emotional-intelligence-has-12-elements-which-do-you-need-to-work-on>.

42. Daniel Goleman has described emotional intelligence as “the sine qua non of leadership.” Daniel Goleman, *What Makes a Leader?*, HARV. BUS. REV. 3 (Jan. 2004), <https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader> (“[W]ithout it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won’t make a great leader.”).

have a harder time long term.⁴³ Emotional intelligence is also critical to lawyering, given how emotionally difficult many legal issues are and how important interpersonal skills are in the practice of law.⁴⁴ While lawyers graduating from law school and passing the bar exam can be expected to all possess a minimum level of intelligence and knowledge about substance and skills, they vary widely when it comes to emotional intelligence.⁴⁵ The good news is that it can be developed.⁴⁶

3. *Well-being*

Wellness, health, and balance are important for leaders and for the groups they lead. Short-term success may be possible without taking care of the individuals involved, but serious problems arise over time as we ignore or discount physical and mental health, as well as our need for rest and meaningful connection with others. The high rates of depression and anxiety in law students and lawyers are well-documented,⁴⁷ and they suggest that law schools may not be doing all they can to lay a strong foundation for well-being in their students.⁴⁸ Many of the responses to this epidemic have been to provide counseling and other tools for students and attorneys who are struggling.⁴⁹ As valuable as these efforts are, they may not address the underlying causes of the problems. Instead, approaching well-being as a foundational concept in law school would frame a student's eventual law career as just one part of a broader, healthy life that includes other meaningful components. Family, friends, volunteer work, and outside passions, for example, may ground and

43. See RHODE, *supra* note 1, at 30 (noting research concluding that emotional intelligence allows leaders to “find resonance with wide groups, identify common ground, build rapport, and move people toward a common vision”).

44. See MARJORIE A. SILVER, *Emotional Competence and the Lawyer's Journey*, in THE AFFECTIVE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL: PRACTICING LAW AS A HEALING PROFESSION 5, 9 (Marjorie A. Silver ed., 2007) (“An inability to understand the emotional undercurrents among our adversaries is [] likely to limit our skill at negotiating and resolving controversies.”). In fact, it may be that when it comes to predicting lawyer success, intellectual and professional skills are overrated, and emotional intelligence is underrated. See Alexia Brunet Marks & Scott A. Moss, *What Predicts Law Student Success? A Longitudinal Study Correlating Law Student Applicant Data and Law School Outcomes*, 13 J. EMPIRICAL LEGAL STUD. 205, 217 (2016) (describing that lawyering work, including interacting with clients, persuading, and exhibiting resilience when confronted with stress, likely draw on emotional intelligence competencies).

45. See Kenneth J. Kleppel, *Emotional Intelligence is Key to Success*, OHIO LAWYER 1 (2007).

46. See Marks & Moss, *supra* note 46, at 217.

47. See Pamela Bucy Pierson et al., *Stress Hardiness and Lawyers*, 42 J. LEGAL PROF. 1, 17-23 (2018).

48. See *id.*

49. See, e.g., *Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs*, AM. B. ASS'N, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/ (last visited Aug. 1, 2021).

center an attorney, which, in turn, may help that person be the most healthy and effective attorney possible.⁵⁰

4. Resilience

Resilience, or the ability to achieve positive outcomes despite adversity and challenge,⁵¹ is a core life competency, but it is particularly important for leaders.⁵² They must be able to work through difficult problems, as well as setbacks and failures, as they help their organizations ultimately succeed. Lawyers face adversity on a daily basis as well, and they often fail. Successful lawyers learn from those experiences and adopt a mindset that allows them to constantly grow and improve. Learning the importance of this competency in law school can help students manage the law school experience more effectively and better prepare them for later work.⁵³

5. Networking

While some may see “networking” as synonymous with cocktail party schmoozing,⁵⁴ it is fundamentally about relationship-building.⁵⁵ The larger and more diverse a leader’s network, the more power she can potentially wield.⁵⁶ Being able to effectively navigate relationships with

50. Others are approaching this important subject in a similar way. *See, e.g.*, Blaze, *supra* note 20, at 555.

51. Resilience is positive outcomes despite difficult circumstances. *See* David Scott Yeager & Carol S. Dweck, *Mindsets That Promote Resilience: When Students Believe That Personal Characteristics Can Be Developed*, 47 EDUC. PSYCHOLOGIST 302, 303 (2012) (explaining that a behavior or response is “resilient” if it is “positive and beneficial for development (such as seeking new strategies, putting forth greater effort, or solving conflicts peacefully)”).

52. *See* Paula Davis, *What Resilient Lawyers Do Differently*, FORBES (Sept. 26, 2017, 5:04 PM), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/pauladavislaack/2017/09/26/what-resilient-lawyers-do-differently/?sh=7575d1423495>.

53. *See* Megan Bess, *Grit, Growth Mindset, and the Path to Successful Lawyering*, 89 UMKG L. REV. 493, 507-520 (2021) (summarizing and reviewing research and scholarship demonstrating the importance of growth mindset to success in law school and the practice of law).

54. *See* NEIL W. HAMILTON, ROADMAP: THE LAW STUDENT’S GUIDE TO MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT 143 (2d ed. 2018) [hereinafter HAMILTON, ROADMAP].

55. *Id.*

56. *See* RHODE, *supra* note 1, at 75-76 (discussing the value of diverse networks to aid in leadership development and execution); *id.* at 143 (“Networking is the formation of professional, ideally long-term, relationships of trust with others; it is a critical skill for a student to develop in order to be an effective lawyer.”) (quoting Steven Tourek, Senior Vice President & Gen. Counsel, Marvin Windows and Doors); Bilonis, *supra* note 30, at 908 (noting the importance of networking training for students to learn how to navigate their professional environments); Westfahl & Wilkins, *supra* note 11, at 1703 (“Developing rich internal and external networks creates opportunities for lawyers to leverage their technical and

a wide range of people also requires related interpersonal skills that are important to lead groups. Similarly, lawyers benefit their clients by being connected through relationships to a wide range of experts, influencers, and decision-makers. Learning how to develop these relationships takes time and practice and can begin in law school. Beyond being important to their eventual clients, law students benefit from networking as they begin to explore the transition from student to professional.⁵⁷

These short descriptions highlight an important point in conceptualizing a 1L leadership-related course: There is tremendous overlap between the foundational competencies for effective leadership and those for effective lawyering. In fact, each of the topics above has been included on listings of the most important competencies for both lawyers and leaders.⁵⁸ At more advanced levels, of course, lawyering training and leadership training diverge in their details and areas of focus. But both lawyering and leadership have at their core self-awareness, strong interpersonal skills, and the ability to achieve challenging goals despite setbacks and adversity. As a result, instruction on self-directedness, emotional intelligence, wellness, resilience, and networking helps 1Ls lay a strong foundation for effective leadership while at the same time giving them valuable tools they can use in their eventual law careers. And because lawyers frequently lead as a part of their daily work, there is a strong synergistic reason to address these concepts together in a course for 1Ls. Because of the overlapping and interconnected value of these topics for 1Ls as students, leaders, and future lawyers,⁵⁹ I will refer back to this list of “leadership and professional identity” (LPI) competencies.

professional skills in new, interdisciplinary ways, especially as leaders and connectors of ideas, people, and possibilities.”).

57. See Westfahl & Wilkins, *supra* note 11, at 1689 (“In order to build satisfying and successful careers, lawyers have always needed to develop three overlapping sets of competencies: technical legal skills and expertise, professional skills that are adaptable to any professional context, and opportunity-creating professional networks.”).

58. See, e.g., ALLI GERKMAN & LOGAN CORNETT, FOUNDATIONS FOR PRACTICE: THE WHOLE LAWYER AND THE CHARACTER QUOTIENT 1, 26-27 (2016), https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/foundations_for_practice_who_le_lawyer_character_quotient.pdf; Teague, *supra* note 4, at 649; Rhode, *supra* note 3, at 1609-12.

59. When schools develop programs or courses in this area, they often use labels of leadership, professional formation, or professional identity. See Bilionis, *supra* note 30, at 901-02 (“Transmitting the core values of the legal profession, strengthening essential personal leadership capacities, deepening cultural awareness of the profession and the forces shaping its future, and pressing the importance of personal responsibility for ongoing development as a professional are just some of the targeted objectives.”).

Most law students appreciate the value of learning about these competencies when their value in both leadership and lawyer development is explained. But, a small percentage of students inevitably resist this coverage, particularly in a required 1L course, believing that their scarce time is better spent in “traditional” law school classes.⁶⁰ One way to address that resistance is to “go where [1Ls] are” in their first year of law school⁶¹ by framing LPI competencies as valuable in addressing the two primary concerns that occupy the minds of most 1Ls: jobs and grades.

Although they come from different backgrounds and have varied study habits and personalities, first-year law students are usually similar in two respects: (1) their primary goal is to acquire meaningful employment;⁶² and (2) they quickly become overwhelmed with the work and pressure of law school, often struggling because of the first grades and feedback they receive.⁶³ In Professional Identity, our coverage of the LPI competencies emphasizes their value by addressing these common areas of focus. As described more in Part II, our treatment of these topics is designed to help students more effectively identify strengths and passions, evaluate potential career options, and create personal narratives that may resonate with employers in fields that are appealing to them.⁶⁴ And it helps students develop the ability to work strategically to improve their academic performance while putting the importance of grades into a realistic context that varies based on their life and work goals.

60. See Hamilton & Organ, *supra* note 38, at 876 (noting that a required professional formation class will get “some student pushback” and that experimentation and “a great deal of humility” is required when selecting and covering the various topics).

61. See Hamilton & Organ, *supra* note 38, at 876 (explaining the authors’ breakthrough in teaching professional formation as being the point where they focused course topics on the students’ goal of finding meaningful post-graduation employment); see also Blaze *supra* note 20, at 555-56 (arguing that a leadership curriculum will help meet the psychological needs of law students by addressing their need for mastery, autonomy, and purpose).

62. See Neil W. Hamilton, *Connecting Prospective Law Students’ Goals to the Competencies that Clients and Legal Employers Need to Achieve More Competent Graduates and Stronger Applicant Pools and Employment Outcomes*, 9 ST. MARY’S J. ON LEGAL MALPRACTICE & ETHICS 260, 266 (2019) (concluding based on available data that “the most important goal of undergraduate students considering law school is meaningful post-graduation employment with the potential for career advancement that ‘fits’ the passion/motivating interests/strengths of the student and offers a service career that is both helpful to others and has some work/life balance”).

63. See Blaze, *supra* note 20, at 548 (“Student perspectives have narrowed to an almost exclusive attention on exam results, grades, and job interview prospects.”).

64. Whether students realize the connection in law school or not, development of leadership competencies will directly improve their performance as lawyers. See Westfahl & Wilkins, *supra* note 11, at 1709 (“The greatest potential multiplier of student opportunities and career impact is to help students understand and build their leadership capabilities.”).

B. Organization and Execution

Although there are many ways of organizing a 1L course on LPI competencies, in Professional Identity, we choose to spread the one-credit class across the Fall and Spring—one-half credit in each semester. Although this is an unusual format, it allows us to maintain contact with the 1Ls from the beginning of their first-year experience to the end. As described below, the LPI competencies we have chosen to cover are ones that may resonate with students more significantly at different parts of the academic year. In addition, spreading the class across the full year allows us to introduce certain ideas early and then reinforce them periodically over the following two semesters. Because our class is one credit hour, we plan for six classroom hours in the Fall and six in the Spring. We choose to mostly front-load those hours each semester, so 1Ls complete all of the required readings, videos, classes, and assessments before they begin to focus heavily on final exams.

To gauge student progress in the course, we have settled on a series of assessments that are designed to meaningfully probe the specific topics we cover. For example, after our initial module on lawyering competencies and the importance of both self-awareness and self-directedness, we ask students to write a reflection on what their specific goals are in attending law school. As a part of that reflection, we ask students to reflect on what they want their lives to be like in ten years and how law fits into those plans. Another reflection comes after we cover the importance of thoughtfully crafted personal narratives. In that assignment, we ask students to identify their strongest lawyering-related competencies, and at least two specific examples from their work, educational, or family past that illustrate those competencies. After a module on effective interviewing strategies, we require each 1L to engage in a mock interview, and we provide both oral and written feedback. And after we conclude the Fall semester with a discussion on well-being, we typically ask students to complete a “PI Check-In,” which asks a number of questions related to the students’ stress and happiness levels, what factors are most negatively affecting their mental health, and what specific steps the students are taking to address those factors.

To implement a course like Professional Identity for all of our 1L students, we have relied heavily on teaching assistants. In its current iteration, our Professional Identity class currently utilizes twelve upper-level TAs to supervise small groups of 1Ls. Those TAs receive training in assessment, peer mentoring, and academic advising prior to the start of the year. During the course, these TAs assess student writing against rubrics that have been created by the professor and provided to

everyone; hold weekly office hours for their students; meet one-on-one with each student each semester for a well-being discussion; conduct mock interviews; participate in academic advising of 1Ls; and help facilitate networking activities with local attorneys. Our Professional Identity TAs have been an invaluable part of the program and frequently go beyond the explicit boundaries of their jobs to help students navigate the difficulties of the first year of law school.

IV. VALUE TO STUDENTS AND THE INSTITUTION OF INTRODUCING LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES IN A REQUIRED 1L COURSE

LPI competency training for law students prepares them to serve in leadership roles within or outside the practice of law. And because lawyers, in strategizing, advocating, and counseling, lead as part of their daily work,⁶⁵ these competencies can help students become more practice-ready and effective in the work they will be called to do, both formally and informally, as lawyers.⁶⁶ Introducing this training to 1Ls begins this process early and allows students to develop leadership skills across three years of education. But a curricular change in law school can be difficult and slow, particularly when dealing with the 1L year. Furthermore, adding a 1L leadership-related course does come with various institutional and opportunity costs. As a result, this section provides further reasons to implement a required 1L course addressing LPI competencies beyond the direct benefit that this training would have for students' leadership and lawyering development.

A. Equip Students with Strategies for Academic Success That Can Be Applied Immediately

Grades are students' most common source of stress in law school.⁶⁷ So anything we can do to help them take control over their academic experience and perform more effectively—quickly— is useful.⁶⁸ We know that first-year success signals likely strong performance across the

65. See Neil W. Hamilton, *Ethical Leadership in Professional Life*, 6 U. ST. THOMAS L.J. 358, 359 (2009) (“The responsibility to persuade and influence pursuant to a lawyer’s independent professional judgment is a form of leadership.”); Donald J. Polden, *Leadership Matters: Lawyers’ Leadership Skills and Competencies*, 52 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 899, 903 (2012) (describing both leadership and lawyering to be fundamentally about relationships).

66. See Teague, *supra* note 4, at 648-49.

67. See Lawrence S. Krieger & Kennon M. Sheldon, *What Makes Lawyers Happy? A Data-Driven Prescription to Redefine Professional Success*, 83 GEO. WASH. L. REV. 554, 576 (2015) (“Grade performance is likely the single greatest concern for law students as a group.”).

68. See Blaze, *supra* note 20, at 555-56 (discussing the autonomy that a leadership and professional development program can provide 1L students, thereby “increasing student engagement, motivation, and well-being”).

remaining two years of law school.⁶⁹ But in a recent study, about twenty percent of the variance between students' 1L and final GPAs was determined by factors other than their 1L GPA.⁷⁰ As a result, implementing effective learning strategies and adopting the most productive mindset for improvement can help students boost their academic performance. By introducing these concepts mid-1L year, we connect with students early enough to make a meaningful difference in their GPAs before they reach the Fall 2L semester, which is frequently the busiest interviewing season. In addition, introducing them early in the law school experience capitalizes on the time when students are most receptive to learning how to improve. Two LPI competencies are most relevant in this effort: self-directedness and resilience.

The characteristic of being self-directed may be the most important over-arching competency for leaders and lawyers.⁷¹ For law students, it is critically important as students begin law school and respond to professor feedback and early formative and summative assessments.⁷² A self-directed learner will follow a general process with four steps. First, what does the student want to achieve?⁷³ In the context of grades, this is usually straightforward: improvement from the Fall to the Spring of her first year. The student then must identify the specific steps she should take to achieve those goals.⁷⁴ What daily, weekly, and monthly work should be completed? The student should focus not just on what she can do directly to help achieve her goal, but what resources she can draw on to assist in the process.⁷⁵ For example, seeking out available academic

69. Marks & Moss, *supra* note 46, at 229 (“[T]he data support the finding that students who do well in their first year do well overall . . . students who do not do well in their first year do not do well overall.”).

70. *See id.*

71. *See* HAMILTON, ROADMAP, *supra* note 56; Neil Hamilton, *A Professional Formation/Professionalism Challenge: Many Students Need Help with Self-Directed Learning Concerning Their Professional Development Toward Excellence*, 27 REGENT U. L. REV. 225, 225 (2015).

72. *See* Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 589 (“Student growth toward later stages of a commitment to continuous professional development will lead to improved academic performance in general . . .”) (citing others).

73. In the context of grades, this may be a relatively simple goal: improvement. In the context of career choices, it is much more complicated. At the core of this inquiry, however, is self-awareness: what does the student want, and what is she willing to sacrifice to succeed? These are core leadership questions, as well. *See* Rhode, *supra* note 3, at 1611 (“The first step on lawyers’ paths to leadership, then, is understanding what they want, what capabilities and experiences are necessary to achieve it, and what stands in the way.”).

74. *See* Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 578-79. Although this is a process that often does not come naturally to most 1Ls, first-generation students often seem to struggle with it initially.

75. Drawing on available resources with the belief that they can help the student improve academically is an important dimension of a growth mindset. *See* Sue Shapcott, Sarah Davis

support resources, attending office hours, asking questions, and working practice problems with a study group. Third, she has to execute and actually undertake the steps identified. Fourth and finally, after executing—in the academic setting, taking her final exams and receiving grades—she has to evaluate whether she achieved her goals. If not, what changes will be implemented going forward? Effective reflection at this stage requires related competencies, including self-awareness, humility, and a belief that improvement is possible.⁷⁶ It involves unpacking both what worked well and what needs to be changed as the student then refocuses on a new goal for the coming semester and begins the process again.⁷⁷

A lack of self-directedness in 1Ls manifests in a number of different but obvious ways, all usually demonstrating that they often do not prioritize high-value work that could directly improve their final grades. First-year students frequently run out of time during the semester and do not complete their outlines; they have inadequate time to work practice problems; if they do, they rarely get professor feedback on their practice answers; and they often do not attend office hours to ask questions and discuss murky areas of law. These omissions can flow from not having a clear idea of exactly which tasks are important and necessary to maximize students' chances of success on exams.⁷⁸ Notably, students who excel early in law school often represent the exceptions to these rules.⁷⁹

In Professional Identity, we discuss the importance of self-directedness early and often. In our first Fall class, students are introduced to the topic in the context of careers: identifying practice areas and settings that are a good match for each student's passions, strengths, and life goals; laying out a plan to acquire the competencies over three years that will best prepare them for career success; and developing a personal narrative that articulates their passions and

& Lane Hanson, *The Jury is In: Law Schools Foster Students' Fixed Mindsets*, 42 LAW & PSYCHOL. REV. 1, 10-11 (2018).

76. See *id.* at 9 (“Students with growth mindset persist at challenging tasks embrace mastery goals, ask for help, and learn from their mistakes.”).

77. *Id.*

78. See Jennifer M. Cooper & Regan A. R. Gurung, *Smarter Law Study Habits: An Empirical Analysis of Law Learning Strategies and Relationship with Law GPA*, 62 ST. LOUIS U. L.J. 361, 367 (2018) (concluding that “passive learning strategies like reading and rereading without practice applying the law is negatively correlated with law school academic success, while active learning strategies like retrieval, self-testing, and elaboration that involve practice applying the law are positively correlated with law school academic success.”).

79. See *id.* at 375 (noting study behaviors for high performing students).

strengths in a way that resonates with potential employers.⁸⁰ But in the early Spring, the skill of self-directedness allows us to strategically—and in a healthy manner—address Fall grades and how to improve students’ performance in the Spring. While “being self-directed” may seem like an abstract concept to some students, “improving my grades” is a very practical one, and students pay attention. As we discuss how to strategically approach improving their grades, students, we hope, absorb the larger value of being self-directed in other aspects of law school, as well as their eventual legal practice.

As we consider Fall grades and how to respond to them in the Spring, we drill down into strategies to help students identify what specific steps they can take to get closer to their academic goals. When we discuss how grades are determined and what tasks they spent their time on in the Fall, students frequently conclude that they allotted more time than was necessary preparing for class, with the result being inadequate time devoted to digesting what happened in class, working practice questions, and soliciting professor feedback.⁸¹ When students explain why they spent hours poring over the casebook for a third or fourth time, they usually say they wanted to avoid being embarrassed by a professor if called on.⁸² We discuss how that is an understandable feeling, but that it may be holding them back from a stronger academic performance.⁸³ Preparation for a class is obviously important, but class participation usually plays a small role, if any, in the student’s final course grade. As students get comfortable with the idea of going through the reading just once or twice (if that is enough to understand the reading), they begin to realize how they could use those extra hours in ways that would be more strategically directed to improving their course grade, like working practice problems and getting feedback from their study group, teaching assistant, or professor.⁸⁴ This is a very

80. See generally HAMILTON, ROADMAP, *supra* note 56 (describing a process for exploring career interests that match students’ interests and strengths, as well as laying out a strategy for acquiring meaningful employment).

81. See generally Sarah J. Schendel, *What You Don’t Know (Can Hurt You): Using Exam Wrappers to Foster Self-Assessment Skills in Law Students*, 40 PACE L. REV. 154, 155 (2020) (addressing students’ frequent inability to accurately self-assess their work).

82. This is a very common response. Okianer Christian Dark, *Principle 6: Good Practice Communicates High Expectations*, 49 J. LEGAL EDUC. 441, 441 (1999).

83. Intertwined in these discussions is the importance of being self-aware and recognizing our motivations. Recognizing the power of our emotions in these contexts can help students plan more effective strategies for the future. See GOLEMAN, WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, *supra* note 43, at 4-6; James, *supra* note 12, at 412-13.

84. Daniel Schwarcz & Dion Farganis, *The Impact of Individualized Feedback on Law Student Performance*, 67 J. LEGAL EDUC. 139, 171 (2017) (concluding in an empirical study that providing individualized feedback to law students improves their ability to generate high quality exam answers).

straightforward application of “work smarter, not harder,” and it provides an illustration of the value of being self-directed that 1Ls seem to appreciate.

A second LPI competency that positions students for academic success is resilience.⁸⁵ Millennial law students may suffer from a resilience deficit to begin with.⁸⁶ But this competency tends to resonate most with 1Ls at the beginning of the Spring semester, as they make sense of their Fall grades and class ranking. At that time, many 1Ls struggle with doubt about their identity,⁸⁷ whether they are smart enough for law school, and whether they will be able to achieve their career goals. Mental health issues also frequently arise or are exacerbated at this time, as well.⁸⁸

In the early Spring, we talk about the importance of resilience, but we approach it as a competency that will be important to their success as lawyers, given the failures, pressures, and difficulties that permeate the profession.⁸⁹ Lawyers achieve success by persisting through these challenges, remaining resilient, and strategically adjusting course.⁹⁰ If students are able to effectively develop resilience, it will be a competitive advantage for them later as attorneys.⁹¹ We discuss the fact that although resilience would seem to be a critical competency for lawyers, there is some reason to believe that lawyers, as a group, are actually less resilient than the average person.⁹² We discuss why that

85. See George S. Everly, Jr., Dennis K. McCormack & Douglas A. Strouse, *Seven Characteristics of Highly Resilient People: Insights from Navy SEALs to the “Greatest Generation”*, 14 INT’L J. OF EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH 137, 139 (2012) (identifying the following core characteristics of resilient people: calm, innovative, and non-dogmatic thinking; decisive action; tenacity; interpersonal connectedness; honesty; self-control; and optimism).

86. See Kimberly R. Kass, *Millennials, Deliberate Learning, Motivation, and Resilience*, LEARNING CURVE (forthcoming Jan. 2018), <http://ssrn.com/abstract=3113603>.

87. In one candid conversation with a Spring 1L who was disappointed with his Fall grades, I asked him why higher grades were important to him, in particular. After pausing, the student told me that he honestly did not know who he was without high grades.

88. NAT’L TASK FORCE ON LAW, WELL-BEING, THE PATH TO LAWYER WELL-BEING: PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE 35 (2017), <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/images/abanews/ThePathToLawyerWellBeingReportRevFINAL.pdf> (“Law students start law school with high life satisfaction and strong mental health measures. But within the first year of law school, they experience a significant increase in anxiety and depression. Research suggests that law students are among the most dissatisfied, demoralized, and depressed of any graduate student population.”).

89. See Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 9.

90. See *id.* at 2-3.

91. See NAT’L TASK FORCE ON LAWYER WELL-BEING, *supra* note 90, at 13 (describing students’ resilience as a competitive advantage in the job search process and in the practice of law).

92. See Larry Richard, *Resilience and Lawyer Negativity*, WHAT MAKES LAWYERS TICK? (Sept. 19, 2012), <https://www.lawyerbrainblog.com/2012/09/resilience-and-lawyer->

might be the case—for example, lawyers have often excelled in school and may not have been challenged academically, so they may not have needed to develop resilience in that setting.⁹³ We then talk about ways to cultivate resilience, including being honest with themselves about the details of what has happened, focusing on what they can control, and adopting the mindset that growth and improvement are always possible with adequate strategic planning.⁹⁴ As we talk about resilience from a lawyer’s perspective—weathering and growing from disappointing results to be more effective later—we occasionally draw parallels between what lawyers often have to deal with and what students are experiencing with discouraging grades and rankings, but grades are not the focus.

The power of adopting a growth mindset⁹⁵ early in law school is critical. Somewhere from mid-Fall to the first week of Spring, many 1Ls appear to lose the enthusiasm and spirit that were so pronounced during the first weeks of class.⁹⁶ These students, particularly if they receive Fall grades that are disappointing to them, seem to resign themselves to trudge through the rest of law school, weighed down by the burdens and stress of school and without confidence that things can or will get better. This perception is supported by empirical data, which show that law students’ mindsets become increasingly more fixed⁹⁷ from the first to the third year of law school.⁹⁸ In other words, students may lose confidence in their abilities to improve and grow as they move through law school. If we are going to counteract that troubling pattern, we need to intervene early with a message about resilience that resonates with 1Ls. For students adopting a growth mindset, disappointing Fall grades do not

negativity/; Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 7 (opining that the high stress of both law school and the practice of law are negatively associated with resiliency).

93. Kaci Bishop, *Framing Failure in the Legal Classroom: Techniques for Encouraging Growth and Resilience*, 70 ARK. L. REV. 959, 978 (2018).

94. Pierson et al., *supra* note 49, at 40 (discussing the importance of control in determining overall happiness and stress hardiness among lawyers). All of this work relates directly to being self-directed. See Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 10-11 (noting that students with growth mindsets “are more likely to persist at challenging tasks, embrace mastery goals, ask for help, and learn from their mistakes”).

95. Students with a growth mindset are more likely to “persist at a challenging task, embrace mastery goals, ask for help, and learn from their mistakes.” See Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 9.

96. See Blaze, *supra* note 20, at 548.

97. Students with a fixed mindset are “motivated by a need to demonstrate their intelligence,” which is apparent in their tendency to avoid challenges, disregard feedback, and blame others for their disappointing performances. See Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 9.

98. See Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 23 (“Between the first and the third year in law school, participants’ reported a significantly lower growth mindset.”).

define their abilities in law school or the later practice of law.⁹⁹ Instead, grades provide a snapshot in time form of feedback to students on how effectively they are moving towards their goals.¹⁰⁰ Showing 1Ls mid-year how they can strategically reorient to perform better academically will help them appreciate the value of resilience. Hopefully, this will also help counteract the shift to increasingly fixed mindsets that they would otherwise experience.

When we discuss how to actually be resilient in Professional Identity, we identify the importance of grit.¹⁰¹ We also emphasize the importance of strategic pivoting, or adjusting focus or strategy to more effectively pursue a goal. Fundamental to strategic pivoting is the idea of quitting. Not big-picture quitting, like dropping out of law school, but “micro-quitting,” or abandoning strategies and techniques that, upon reflection, have not proven successful in generating the success the student wants. Grittiness and being determined have been hallmarks of these students’ lives so far. Quitting, for the most part, has not been. Sometimes law students need explicit permission to abandon a study habit or an allocation of time that is not yielding the desired results. Giving up in that context is not a big-picture failure. Instead, it is a rational and growth-minded reaction to what is essentially a dead-end, and a commitment to identify and then grittily pursue more productive paths to success.¹⁰²

Finally, self-directedness and resilience are only as good as the inputs that students consider.¹⁰³ Many students do change strategies and implement new techniques to improve grades in their 1L Spring, but they

99. See generally Carrie Sperling & Susan Shapcott, *Fixing Students’ Fixed Mindsets: Paving the Way for Meaningful Assessment*, 18 LEGAL WRITING 39 (2012) (providing suggestions for alternative forms of instruction and feedback that would help students develop growth mindset, leading to deeper learning and better performance).

100. Goals are near the heart of growth and fixed mindset theories. Individuals with fixed mindsets are performance-oriented, and their goal is to outperform everyone else in the assessment; growth mindset individuals are focused on learning and developing the skill in question. See Carol S. Dweck & Ellen L. Leggett, *A Social-Cognitive Approach to Motivation and Personality*, 95 PSYCHOL. REV. 256, 259 (1988).

101. Grit is “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” and involves “working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress.” Angela L. Duckworth et al., *Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals*, 92 J. PERSONALITY & SOC. PSYCHOL. 1087, 1087-88 (2007); see generally, CAROL S. DWECK, MINDSET: THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS (updated ed. 2016); Katherine R. Von Culin, Eli Tsukayama & Angela L. Duckworth, *Unpacking Grit: Motivational Correlates of Perseverance & Passion for Long-Term Goals*, 9 J. POSITIVE PSYCHOL. 306 (2014); see generally Bess, *supra* note 55 (discussing the concept of grit as applied to law school and effective lawyering).

102. See Duckworth et al., *supra* note 103, at 1092 (“Moving on from dead end pursuits is essential to the discovery of more promising paths.”).

103. See Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 571.

do so haphazardly, without much evidence of exactly what happened in the Fall or why their new strategies are likely to yield better results. In considering how to be effectively self-directed and resilient, students need to gather granular data on exactly how they performed in each of their classes and then look for patterns across the board. “I made all Bs in the Fall” is of limited value for Spring pivoting. If, instead, for example, a student knows that she consistently scored above average on multiple choice questions and below average on essays and in legal writing in the Fall, that tells her something useful about where she might direct more focused effort in the Spring. When explained in this way, 1Ls appreciate the importance of gathering accurate and useful information as a first step in the process of strategically pivoting towards their academic goals. And we signal for them that the same dynamic will exist later in life as they evaluate ways to pursue their clients’ goals or those of their employer in the face of adversity and setback. Once again, we have circled back to being self-directed.

B. Reframe Law School to Prepare for a More Effective Career Search

Perhaps the most powerful benefit flowing from 1L coverage of LPI competencies is helping students rethink the purpose of law school early in their first semester. We do that by introducing a conversation about career goals, as well as what skills and competencies legal employers will be looking for when they interview and hire. That discussion leads us to the relative importance of grades. Understanding why employers hire certain applicants can help 1Ls more usefully allocate their time and energy across the remainder of law school. And having those discussions early in the 1L year takes advantage of the fact that students are more malleable than they will become later.¹⁰⁴

In Professional Identity, we discuss why students have come to law school. The quick response: to get a job. That allows us to start a conversation about the difference between a job and a rewarding career that will be impactful for their clients and society. Although students are sure about their larger goal, they have trouble with follow-up questions: How do they plan to get the first job to begin their career? What will differentiate them from other applicants—students who are just as smart as they are? How will they use their law school experiences to prepare themselves most effectively to enter the job market? These questions allow us to then integrate data on what legal employers value in the

104. See *supra* notes 99, 100 and accompanying text; Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 23 (“Between the first and the third year in law school, participants’ reported a significantly lower growth mindset.”).

hiring process, as well as the value of self-awareness and self-directedness, particularly as they relate to making choices about extra-curricular activities and course planning in law school.

After years of surveys and studies, we have enough data to confidently say that legal employers across the board highly value a set of traits, characteristics, and skills that are referred to with various unsatisfying labels like “soft skills,” “interpersonal skills,” or “non-cognitive skills.”¹⁰⁵ As others have explained and listed over the years, these traits and competencies include things like working well on diverse teams, taking initiative, developing and using emotional intelligence, engaging in effective listening, receiving feedback well, managing deadlines effectively, and practicing good judgment.¹⁰⁶ These are the competencies that help a person work effectively with and for others, and law is a profession centered on human relationships.¹⁰⁷ Legal employers from prosecutors’ offices to solo practitioners to large law firms have confirmed that these lawyering competencies are extremely important to them when they hire and when they later promote attorneys.¹⁰⁸ As a general matter, employers want new attorneys to come preloaded with interpersonal skills, diligence, integrity, good judgment, the ability to effectively communicate, and strategic problem-solving skills.¹⁰⁹ Employers will then build onto that foundation and train the new attorney in the lawyering tasks that are valuable for their clients.¹¹⁰

When we discuss what legal employers value in Professional Identity, our conversation inevitably turns quickly to grades. Counterbalancing students’ perception that grades are the sole determinant of success on the job market is a tough slog. But for the purposes of this article, we can limit our focus to a few uncontroversial points. Many legal employers, across a wide range of practice areas, settings, and geographic locations, do not prioritize grades. In fact, a

105. See generally Hamilton, *supra* note 64, at 269-89 (summarizing the data related to what skills and competencies legal employers and clients value); HAMILTON, ROADMAP, *supra* note 56, at 17-35; GERKMAN & CORNETT, *supra* note 60, at 9-10. These skills and competencies dovetail with those valued in leaders. See Rhode, *supra* note 3, at 1609-10.

106. See, e.g., GERKMAN & CORNETT, *supra* note 60, at 9-10.

107. See Polden, *supra* note 67, at 903.

108. See HAMILTON, ROADMAP, *supra* note 56, at 17-35 (discussing studies of various types of employers and the convergence of lawyering competencies that they value).

109. See Westfahl & Wilkins, *supra* note 11, at 1671 (describing the traditional model of lawyer training in which legal employers and clients want new lawyers to know how to “think like a lawyer” and be interdisciplinary problem solvers before they are trained in hard legal skills by the employer).

110. The practical training that law students receive in school is a valuable step in their development of both hard and soft lawyering skills. But recent data suggests that legal employers do not prioritize a student’s ability to perform lawyering tasks in the initial hiring process. See GERKMAN & CORNETT, *supra* note 60, at 9-10.

large number of legal employers do not list grade requirements or preferences at all in their hiring notices.¹¹¹ Instead, these employers look primarily for the interpersonal skills and lawyering competencies discussed earlier, as well as experience in certain areas, passion for the subject matter, and other non-grade attributes.¹¹² The employers that do care about high class rank are mostly large law firms, and those employers also care about this same set of competencies that is unrelated to grades.¹¹³ Anyone with experience in large law firms or in counseling students about employment knows various examples of students with high grades who interviewed poorly and did not receive an offer or did not receive a return offer from a large law firm because of a deficit in interpersonal competencies.¹¹⁴

Part of this initial introduction to lawyering competencies should be to ask students to reflect deeply on why they came to law school in the first place. This requires honest reflection and self-awareness.¹¹⁵ What goals do they have at this point? How do they see themselves fitting into the practice of law? What life do they want to live outside of law, and how does law further those life goals? What are their passions and strengths? Formulating answers to these kinds of questions can be challenging for many 1Ls, but providing them information about and exposure to various legal jobs, settings, and practice types—including general comparative information about salaries, required hours, flexibility of schedules, and other factors—can help students begin to identify possible answers.¹¹⁶ Through this process, with adequate guidance, a student can decide for himself how important grades are in

111. ALLI GERKMAN & LOGAN CORNETT, FOUNDATIONS FOR PRACTICE: HIRING THE WHOLE LAWYER: EXPERIENCE MATTERS 10 (2016), https://iaals.du.edu/sites/default/files/documents/publications/foundations_for_practice_hiring_the_whole_lawyer.pdf (highlighting top hiring criteria for legal employers) [hereinafter GERKMAN & CORNETT, HIRING THE WHOLE LAWYER].

112. See HAMILTON, ROADMAP, *supra* note 56, at 17-35 (discussing studies of various types of employers and the convergence of lawyering competencies that they value).

113. Clearly there are other post-graduation employers that do prioritize high grades, such as judges, public interest fellowships, and honors programs within various governmental agencies.

114. See GERKMAN & CORNETT, HIRING THE WHOLE LAWYER, *supra* note 113 (noting employers, including those hiring top students with law review experience from top schools, are dissatisfied with the preparation of new lawyers).

115. See James, *supra* note 12, at 412-13.

116. Another important component of this process is helping students recognize their own strengths and passions. Personality tests and practice area assessments can be useful tools in this effort. In addition, individualized counseling or coaching can help students identify in their past education, work, extracurricular, and volunteer experiences various values and priorities that might illuminate the search for the right career fit.

the overall effort of preparing to enter the student's chosen career path.¹¹⁷

Once grades are put into context, students can reframe the potential of the next three years. Law school then becomes, to a large extent, an opportunity to develop specific lawyering competencies that will help each student be a more compelling applicant for law jobs and more effective later in the practice of law,¹¹⁸ rather than just a blind chase for the highest grades possible. Classes become ways for students to explore potential practice areas they had not considered; deepen an existing area of knowledge; expose them to an adjunct professor who works in an area of interest; build valuable practical skills in externships or clinics; or hone oral presentation or group collaboration skills. Serving in a leadership capacity on a journal or for a student organization can provide experience leading diverse teams, resolving conflict, juggling multiple responsibilities, and working under tight deadlines. Participating in mock trial, moot court, and alternative dispute resolution competitions helps students learn how to communicate more effectively orally and in writing. Working as a teaching assistant can provide training in interpersonal areas, including emotional intelligence, navigating difficult conversations, and learning how to enforce rules and consider exceptions to them. Pro bono opportunities allow students to explore or deepen their commitment to service, help them learn how to work effectively on teams, and present an opportunity to practice active listening and empathy.

Reframing law school by focusing on the development of lawyering competencies is made easier by other data from legal employers: the best evidence that students have the competencies necessary to be effective in the practice of law is employment experience, including clinical and other experiential work during law school.¹¹⁹ Supervisors and employers have the highest quality perspective on the student's interpersonal skills, integrity, diligence, and ability to work effectively in a professional setting—and their opinion and perspective matter when students interview later. Sharing this data with students early also allows us to

117. Having said this, the reality is that in over fifteen years of counseling students, I have never had to encourage a student to take grades more seriously. The typical problem is just the opposite. Many students prioritize grades over all other concerns, often for reasons they cannot articulate. It is certainly reasonable for a student to want high grades for internal reasons—for example, to show herself that she can compete well with other smart students—or for external reasons—for example, she wants a job at a large law firm. But a drive for high grades comes at a cost. Students should be counseled about that cost, as well as whether that cost is associated with a commensurate payoff in terms of internal and external motivators, including improved job prospects in career paths the student actually wants.

118. See HAMILTON, ROADMAP, *supra* note 56, at 61-185 (discussing the importance of competency development across law school).

119. See GERKMAN & CORNETT, HIRING THE WHOLE LAWYER, *supra* note 113.

emphasize the various benefits of participating in clinics and externships and working as judicial interns as upper-level students. Beyond the valuable transferable skills that students learn in these settings, students also potentially develop trusted references who can vouch for their lawyering competencies. And yet again, all of this information helps students be more effectively self-directed as they chart their course in law school.

This approach to reframing the educational experience has the added benefit of potentially re-igniting students' passions about being in law school and pursuing a career helping clients achieve their goals.¹²⁰ Viewing law school as an opportunity primarily to develop specific competencies that legal employers value and make students more effective in their eventual careers can create additional meaning because that allows students to sharpen their focus on their own individual goals. That new focus allows students to thoughtfully put grades into perspective and develop specific competencies that are a good fit for the student's chosen career direction. Taking control over the law school experience in this way should also help students deal with the emotional and mental health challenges that law school frequently triggers, as well as the common plunge in enthusiasm mid-1L year,¹²¹ discussed earlier.

C. Construct a Personal Narrative and Prepare for Effective Interviews and Professional Development

Exploring LPI competencies can also provide the opportunity for students to create a personal narrative that weaves together the student's strengths, passions, and goals with the competencies that legal employers value. Crafting a compelling narrative can be challenging for students and they may benefit from individualized counseling or coaching in this area.¹²² This time investment may give students a competitive advantage in the market, however, as legal employers

120. An added benefit might be to help counterbalance the "public interest drift" that is typically seen in law school – where a large percentage of students who enter wanting to work as a public interest lawyer abandon that goal during the first or second year. See John Bliss, *From Idealists to Hired Guns? An Empirical Analysis of "Public Interest Drift" in Law School*, 51 U.C. DAVIS L. REV. 1973, 1980-81 (2018).

121. See Blaze, *supra* note 20, at 548 ("Student perspectives [narrow] to an almost exclusive attention on exam results, grades, and job interview prospects" and that many students forget "their own unique reasons for coming to law school or, at least, feel less connected to that original sense of purpose. As a result, student enthusiasm for the process of learning the law and how to use the law fades.").

122. See Susan R. Jones, *The Case for Leadership Coaching in Law Schools: A New Way to Support Professional Identity Formation*, 48 HOFSTRA L. REV. 659, 659 (2020) (describing the professional development benefits that would flow from personalized and confidential coaching of law students in areas that include career choice and strategic job searches).

increasingly look for evidence that applicants have the lawyering competencies and skills they seek.¹²³ This is especially true today, as employers appear less willing to provide training to new hires.¹²⁴

First-year students frequently express pessimism about being able to effectively explain to a legal employer why they should be hired, given that they have no legal experience. But every student has educational, work, family, travel, or volunteer experience that, when framed strategically, can help create a personal narrative that highlights competencies and transferable skills that will be valuable in a law setting. For example, a student might say that her only work experience has been at a coffee shop over the last three summers. But if you dig further, the student might describe that she was promoted from cashier to assistant manager during those three summers. As she was promoted, she was asked to take on additional responsibilities, ultimately juggling several important tasks, including allocating shifts to fellow employees, coming up with a plan to reduce costs for the company, and working through a shortage of ingredients caused by recent bad weather. With a little sharpening, “I worked at a coffee shop” becomes several focused sentences about transferable skills that matter to a legal employer—such as the ability to effectively manage multiple tasks at once, adapting well to changed circumstances, and keeping an eye on the bottom line while doing a job successfully. Framed effectively, the prior work done by the student becomes a series of specific examples that illustrate the competencies she developed.¹²⁵ This concrete evidence of competencies may be even more important to employers in the hiring process than the existence of the competencies themselves, given the increasing use of behavioral questions in interviews.¹²⁶

A personal narrative also allows the unique background and experiences of each student to be thoughtfully considered. Depending on life and family circumstances, some students may not have had the opportunity to work in professional settings—or even outside the home. For example, some students’ primary work experiences before law

123. See Teague, *supra* note 4, at 648-49 (discussing the importance that legal employers place in the hiring process of students demonstrating interpersonal skills and other lawyering competencies).

124. See Westfahl & Wilkins, *supra* note 11, at 1682-83.

125. All of this is important as legal employers recognize that clients are “placing greater emphasis on whether their outside counsel understand their businesses and have a broad range of ‘complementary competencies’ to go along with their technical legal skill.” See Westfahl & Wilkins, *supra* note 11, at 1699.

126. See HAMILTON, ROADMAP, *supra* note 56, at 1-2, 24 (highlighting the frequency of behavioral interview questions and the importance of students having specific evidence of competencies to discuss).

school have been helping to take care of their younger siblings or ailing family members. Sometimes students feel uncomfortable talking about these experiences, believing that legal employers will not find value in them. However, taking family responsibilities seriously through the sustained provision of care and support reflects a great deal about these students' character, work effort, and commitment to values that legal employers do care about. By working individually with these students, schools can help all of their 1Ls articulate the valuable transferable skills and competencies that legal employers value.

While a student's narrative has direct value in networking or interview settings, it also is useful to professional development. An accurate and effective narrative helps a student reflect deeply on her skills, strengths, passions, and areas for future growth. For example, suppose a student says she is passionate about working as a criminal prosecutor but has no experience talking extemporaneously. In that case, that is a potential competency to explore and improve in law school. An honest personal narrative then becomes the linchpin that helps the student connect with specific law school courses and activities to develop lawyering competencies relevant to that student's specific career and life goals. The narrative becomes central to effectively reframing law school and being self-directed in engaging with law school opportunities.

Finally, a student's personal narrative is a snapshot in time, but it should be fluid and develop semester-by-semester. As a student explores and engages in new school and work activities, his interests might change. Different lawyering competencies might become more or less important, and additional evidence of competencies—now more focused in the legal world—should be added. Therefore, while a thoughtfully considered personal narrative should be a powerful way for students to authentically connect their existing passions and strengths to legal employers, it should not cement the student into his current interests and experiences.

D. Address Mental Health Concerns Both Reactively and Proactively

Law school has a significant and well-recognized deleterious effect on the mental health of students.¹²⁷ Experts and scholars have identified

127. See, e.g., Kennon M. Sheldon & Lawrence S. Krieger, *Understanding the Negative Effects of Legal Education on Law Students: A Longitudinal Test of Self-Determination Theory*, 33 PERSONALITY AND SOC. PSYCHOL. BULL. 883, 883-84, 893 (2007) (concluding that law school usually has "a corrosive effect on the well-being, values, and motivation of students, ostensibly because of its problematic institutional culture"); Jerome M. Organ, David B. Jaffe & Katherine M. Bender, *Suffering in Silence: The Survey of Law Student Well-*

a number of contributing factors, including the personality traits of the average student who attends law school, the focus on dispassionate analytical reasoning in law school, the exam-heavy final grade calculation in many classes, and the typical atmosphere of competition in law school.¹²⁸ The pressures students face in law school only increase as they enter the practice of law.¹²⁹ Unhealthy levels of stress and anxiety can be harmful both to students' well-being and their effectiveness as lawyers.¹³⁰ LPI competencies may be one piece of a response to this mental health problem in the first year of law school.

Students frequently complain that they feel out of control in law school.¹³¹ This, combined with the overwhelming focus on analytical over interpersonal development, can dehumanize the experience and help create intense anxiety and depression.¹³² While recognizing that struggle in school and as a lawyer is normal,¹³³ competencies such as self-awareness, self-directedness, and resilience can help students take control over their law school experience. These competencies, particularly when added to related information about what legal employers are looking for in new hires, can empower students to create meaning in their law school choices. With a self-directed and strategic approach to skill development in law school, students can pick the classes and activities they spend time on, with an eye to the professional development they want to achieve, reducing the chances that they will become overwhelmed by law school.¹³⁴ At the very least, they would be more likely to find value in the struggle, which may make them more resilient and growth-minded now and in the future.¹³⁵

Being and the Reluctance of Law Students to Seek Help for Substance Use and Mental Health Concerns, 66 J. LEGAL EDUC. 116, 136-39 (2016).

128. See Pierson et al., *supra* note 49, at 16-18.

129. See Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 4-5.

130. See Jarrett A. Green & Rebecca A. Simon, *Self-Mastery: The Pathway to Peak Performance and Well-Being in the Law*, 48 SW. L. REV. 207, 210 (2019) (“[T]he scientific research unambiguously reveals that stress and emotional struggles are not only *unnecessary* for optimal performance, but in fact *obstruct* optimal performance.”).

131. See Susan Daicoff, *Articles Lawyer, Know Thyself: A Review of Empirical Research on Attorney Attributes Bearing on Professionalism*, 46 AM. U. L. REV. 1337, 1378 (1997) (discussing student's constant feelings of distress throughout law school).

132. See *id.* at 1380-82.

133. See Catherine Martin Christopher, *Normalizing Struggle*, 73 ARK. L. REV. 27, 28 (2020).

134. See Blaze, *supra* note 20, at 554-55 (summarizing available data as supporting “the proposition that a motivating law school environment is one that fosters a student's sense of self-direction, demonstrates the relevance of the material being learned and the process of learning it, and is supportive of the individual interests and values of the student,” resulting in “increased student well-being, engagement, and academic performance”).

135. Studies have shown a positive correlation between growth mindsets and overall life satisfaction and happiness. See Shapcott, Davis & Hanson, *supra* note 77, at 22. Adopting a

Students embodying the LPI competencies will also be reflective and thoughtful about aligning their passions, strengths, and life goals with a law career that is consistent with them.¹³⁶ Lawyers are not required to sacrifice all of their non-law relationships and interests for the practice of law. Perhaps those of us in legal education can do a better job explaining the range of employment available in the legal job market, as well as the tradeoffs that exist in any position. Discussing the costs associated with jobs is important, as students often focus solely on what they will earn, receive, or gain from a position. With this in mind, we ask our 1Ls in Professional Identity to reflect on their life goals and how the practice of law might fit into those goals, and we specifically ask students what they are willing to give up for the job and life they value. There is no right or wrong answer. But a student who achieves a work-life tradeoff in the practice of law consistent with his own values is more likely to be more content and satisfied with his career choices long-term.¹³⁷

LPI competencies also explicitly emphasize well-being as an important component of leadership.¹³⁸ Inspiring others to follow through challenging times can be difficult work, both physically and mentally. To be effective over time, leaders should prioritize self-care, not just so they remain effective in dealing with complicated decisions and emotions, but also to model healthy behavior and choices for the people around them.¹³⁹ Well-being can be introduced early in the 1L experience, and it should be revisited at strategic points during all three years. While eating well and exercise are familiar parts of a well-being program, one often-overlooked LPI competency that can be useful in this effort is networking. Practicing lawyers in the community can help share their own experiences working through the challenges of law school, as

growth mindset in law school may also help counteract the tendency of most lawyers to not reach out for help when they need it. *See* Pierson et al., *supra* note 49, at 12.

136. This process of becoming more in-tune with one's passions, strengths, and goals may have broader benefits for law students. *See* SILVER, *supra* note 46, at 9, 11-12 ("Lack of self-awareness takes its toll on lawyers, leading to disproportionately high levels of stress, substance abuse, and depression.").

137. *See* Krieger & Sheldon, *supra* note 69, at 592 ("[D]ata consistently indicate that a happy life as a lawyer is much less about grades, affluence, and prestige than about finding work that is interesting, engaging, personally meaningful, and focused on providing needed help to others."); Pierson et al., *supra* note 49, at 46 ("[E]very lawyer who indicated experiencing no meaning in their practice of law reported high levels of stress.").

138. *See infra* Section II.A.3.

139. *See* RHODE, *supra* note 1, at 82-83 ("Lawyer well-being is a critical leadership issue both because the pressures of their position make leaders particularly susceptible to stress and mental health difficulties, and because leaders bear part of the responsibility for workplace conditions that give rise to such difficulties in others and impair organizational performance.").

well as the efforts they took to remain healthy. In addition, these lawyers can help students keep their law school experiences in perspective, focusing on the longer-term picture of passing the bar exam and starting practice. Beyond individual mentoring or networking experiences, local bar associations would likely be willing to recruit lawyers to serve on panels to discuss mental health concerns, as well as how to effectively prepare for life as an attorney. By prioritizing well-being even in the midst of a busy and stressful year, 1Ls set themselves up for better mental health and success both in the remainder of law school and after graduation.¹⁴⁰

E. Institutional Benefits of a 1L Course Integrating Leadership Competencies

The benefits discussed above have focused on what students gain—apart from focused development of leadership and lawyering competencies—from taking a class integrating LPI competencies in their 1L year. There are also other benefits that flow primarily to the institution. Three of those benefits are discussed very briefly below, but there are others, as well, that may be harder to predict or quantify. For example, students who are introduced early to the idea of being self-directed can develop tools to address mental health and well-being. Furthermore, students who are encouraged to explore career paths that match up with their passions and strengths are more likely to be satisfied and content in the practice of law. To the extent they trace their satisfaction as lawyers back to their law schools, they are likely to be more engaged alumni. However, the following subsections quickly address three additional benefits for the institution that are perhaps more concrete.

1. Improve Employment Outcomes

All schools want to provide their students with the best chance to gain meaningful employment upon graduation. While there are various factors that bear on the employability of law students, most of the LPI competencies relate directly to this goal.¹⁴¹ In particular, 1Ls who

140. This is important given how unlikely lawyers are to take care of their mental health. See Robert B. Thornhill, *Alcohol Abuse and Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys*, 77 ALA. LAW. 199, 199 (2016) (“As a group [] attorneys are among the last to seek assistance, or to even acknowledge a problem.”).

141. A recent study identified the top ten most commonly valued competencies of legal employers when they hire new attorneys. See GERKMAN & CORNETT, *supra* note 60, at 26 (discussing self-direction, resilience, and emotional intelligence, in particular, which are woven throughout those top ten competencies).

develop the beginning stages of a professional network, improve their emotional intelligence, adopt a growth mindset, become more resilient, and, most importantly, internalize a self-directed approach to achieving goals should be well-positioned for the job search.¹⁴² In addition, students who combine development of these competencies with the creation of an effective but fluid personal narrative to articulate those competencies, should improve their employability.

2. Satisfy ABA Standards

Now is an especially important time for law schools to consider required training for 1Ls in LPI competencies because the American Bar Association appears poised to implement related changes to its law school accreditation standards. On February 19, 2021, the Council for the ABA's Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar approved a recommendation from the Standards Committee modifying Section 303.¹⁴³ If these changes are implemented, accredited law schools would be required to provide "substantial opportunities to students for . . . the development of a professional identity."¹⁴⁴ A related draft Interpretation explains that "[p]rofessional Identity includes, but is not limited to, the knowledge, skills, values and morals, goals, and personality traits considered foundational to successful legal practice."¹⁴⁵ The Interpretation goes on to state that students should be provided "frequent opportunities to develop their professional identity" and that those opportunities should be "varied across the curriculum as well as in co-curricular and professional development activities . . ."¹⁴⁶ As discussed throughout this article, the LPI competencies provide foundational training not just in leadership, but also in core aspects of what it means to be an effective lawyer. And they fall within the ambit of the draft Interpretation quoted above.¹⁴⁷ Including these competencies

142. See Neil W. Hamilton & Jerome M. Organ, *Each Law Student Must Take Increasing Ownership Over Professional Development During Law School*, PD Q. 27, 28-29 (2018) (observing that "given that legal employers greatly value initiative, ownership, and a proactive commitment to continuous professional development . . . it makes common sense that a proactive student who is at a later stage of ownership over continuous professional development is also likely to be proactive and effective in the search for post-graduation employment.").

143. Bales & Adams, *supra* note 21, at 1.

144. *Id.* at 2.

145. *Id.*

146. *Id.* at 2-3.

147. As described throughout this article, the LPI competencies provide students with tools for law school success and the creation of a professional identity that that will serve them well in practice. See, e.g., *supra* Section III.A (discussing the importance of resilience to effective lawyering).

as the core pillars in a 1L course like Professional Identity¹⁴⁸ could be the central hub of a professionalism program helping the institution demonstrate compliance with the new Standard 303.

More broadly, however, a 1L course addressing LPI competencies would directly address Standard 302(d), which requires law schools to establish learning outcomes that include student competence in “[o]ther professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession.”¹⁴⁹ Leadership constitutes a professional skill necessary for lawyers, and the development of students’ professional identities should be considered necessary to competently carry out their responsibilities as attorneys.¹⁵⁰ This position is supported by ABA Interpretation 302-1, which states that law schools may determine the professional skills they want to address, but those skills may include topics such as “conflict resolution . . . collaboration, cultural competency, and self-evaluation.”¹⁵¹

3. *Begin a Commitment to Competency-Based Legal Education*

Integrating LPI competencies into a 1L course and then throughout upper-level offerings would also allow institutions to begin planning and adopting true competency-based learning outcomes for their J.D. programs. With the American Bar Association’s 2014 revisions to its accreditation standards, United States law schools are required to provide evidence that their graduates have developed and demonstrated competence in the enumerated learning outcomes, rather than simply that they sat in classrooms for the required number of hours and received passing grades.¹⁵² True competency development will require law schools to create rubrics or similar guides for their learning outcomes

148. As with leadership, discussed *supra* at note 5 and accompanying notes, “professionalism” training in law school has developed over time, despite a lack of agreement on exactly what professionalism means, and takes various forms. *See generally* Alison Donahue Kehner & Mary Ann Robinson, *Mission: Impossible, Mission: Accomplished, or Mission: Underway? A Survey and Analysis of Current Trends in Professionalism Education in American Law Schools*, 38 U. of DAYTON L. REV. 57, 62-67, 69 n.56 (2012) (outlining the history and development of professional education in law school, including different approaches to professionalism training).

149. *See ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools 2020-21*, *supra* note 34, at 17.

150. *See* Teague, *supra* note 4, at 649 (“Leadership strategies and skills meet the requirement in ABA Standard 302 for competency in ‘other professional skills needed for competent and ethical participation as a member of the legal profession.’”) (citation omitted).

151. *See ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools 2020-21*, *supra* note 34, at 18.

152. *See* Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 569-72 (discussing the ABA’s adoption of competency-based standards and some implications for assessment in law schools).

that track student development in these areas from novice learner through mastery, including providing specific milestones that describe each stage of development for each competency.¹⁵³ Beginning this revamped learning outcomes approach with a relatively small set of competencies in the area of leadership and professional identity development, particularly given the need to coordinate coverage between the 1L course and at least certain upper-level experiential offerings, makes institutional sense.

V. CONCLUSION

While law schools have slowly responded to the call to provide leadership training for their students, the time has come to consider and implement required leadership training for 1Ls. Doing so would equip 1Ls with foundational skills that they could build on in upper-level experiential courses and co- and extra-curricular experiences, making them more effective leaders at graduation. Because these leadership topics are also core lawyering competencies, students would be learning tools and techniques that legal employers value. For students, this training may bring a more immediate benefit in the two areas they care about most: acquiring meaningful employment and improving their grades. A required 1L course emphasizing LPI competencies that relate directly both to leadership and professional identity development would bring powerful benefits both for students and the institution.

153. See Lindsey Gustafson, Aric Short & Neil W. Hamilton, *Teaching and Assessing Active Listening as a Foundational Skill for Lawyers as Leaders, Counselors, Negotiators, and Advocates*, 62 SANTA CLARA L. REV. 1, 10-34 (2022) (describing the components of active listening and providing a rubric for assessing that competency in law students); Hamilton, *Leadership of Self*, *supra* note 14, at 571; William D. Henderson, *Blueprint for Change*, 40 PEPP. L. REV. 461, 495-98 (2013) (advocating for the adoption of competency-based education in law schools).