

University of Michigan Law School

University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository

Articles

Faculty Scholarship

1912

The Four Year Course in the Department of Law

Henry M. Bates

University of Michigan Law School

Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/articles/1342>

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/articles>



Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bates, Henry M. "The Four Year Course in the Department of Law." Mich. Alumnus 19 (1912): 116-8.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Scholarship at University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact mlaw.repository@umich.edu.

THE FOUR YEAR COURSE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW

The present year has witnessed the final step in the establishment of the new entrance requirement to the Law Department which was undertaken by the Faculty and Regents several years ago. This, in effect, provides that every student in the Law Department from now on shall have had at least one year in the Literary Department, or its equivalent elsewhere, and places the course of the Law Department practically upon the four year basis of the other schools in the University.

Notice of this impending change undoubtedly brought a number of students to the University last year who wished to enter under the old rule, and a corresponding decrease was expected this Fall in the number of men entering. Nevertheless, while this falling-off in registration took place, as shown in the following report from Dean Henry M. Bates of the Law Department, presented to the Regents at their meeting of November 15, the decrease was not as large as the department had reason to expect.

An analysis of the new men in the Law Department shows that 110 colleges are represented in the Freshman class, as well as 44 states and 4

foreign countries, indicating something of the sweep of the Department's field.

The report as presented to the Regents follows:

Our new entrance requirement of one year of college work went into effect this fall, and I wish to report briefly to your Board concerning its effect and operation. I may say in the first place that I endeavored to administer this entrance requirement with discretion and yet with sufficient rigidity to keep out undesirable students. A large number of applications from students whose work nominally included one year of college work, but which in reality was not the fair equivalent of such work, or who came from colleges whose standards were so poor that we could not recognize them, were excluded. It would have been very easy to keep nominally within our rule and yet have had a much larger class.

One hundred and sixty students were admitted on this basis to the first year class as candidates for a degree. Last year the number of first year men admitted was two hundred and eighty-one. This shows a falling off of one hundred and twenty-one, much less than I had anticipated. The following table shows the number of first year men admitted for the last five years:

| YEAR | NO. OF STUDENTS |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 1907-1908 | 309 |
| 1908-1909 | 293 |
| 1909-1910 | 274 |
| 1910-1911 | 274 |
| 1911-1912 | 281 |

This loss will probably be made up gradually by increasing numbers each year. The effect of the new requirement, in my judgment, has been wholly good. I call your attention to the following facts:

1. A large number of students were forced by this requirement to enter the Department of Literature, Science and the Arts last year, and the same is of course true this year. I have heard the number estimated at not less than one hundred for the present year. This represents an attendance which the Literary Department otherwise would not have received.

2. All of our Faculty who are teaching first year classes report that it is unquestionably the best prepared and ablest class we have had. This has permitted a raising of the standard of class room discussion and consequently has improved the mental disciplinary processes which our students are subjected to.

3. The class, in the matter of attention and earnestness, is exceptionally good.

4. The fact that practically all of the leading law schools had increased their entrance requirements before we did, was beginning to draw college graduates to those schools and away from us. A great many dull and superficial students survive a high school course, but most of these are cut out by the college year required. Consequently our present class is almost totally lacking in the dull, unintelligent students who do so much to depress standards of class room work and to drive to other law schools bright, well trained and ambitious students.

5. While from one point of view a decrease of attendance is regrettable, yet it is to be said that our classes have been too large, and that the reduction in size of the first year class is resulting in more efficient instruction.

6. The history of every good law school, in which the requirements for admission have been advanced with discretion, shows that professional students appreciate merit and quality and in large numbers seek the school in which they find these things. The fact that the Harvard Law School now leads all first class schools in attendance is undoubtedly due to the fact that it early increased its entrance requirements and its standards of work. We are already finding evidence that our increase in entrance requirements is attracting to us a strong type of students.

Finally, I feel positive that this law school will achieve the best results, including reputation, numbers and power for good, not only in the profession, but in the community, by catering to students capable of strong work and of leadership at the bar rather than by seeking large numbers of students through low standards of admission. There is every evidence that our present student body is appreciative of these facts and heartily approves of the advance in requirements. Numerous letters from alumni bring messages to the same effect.

HENRY M. BATES.