BRIEF EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY ASSESSMENT/PROGRAMMATIC ENHANCEMENT INITIATIVES:

The Office of Skills and Experiential Learning is charged with three tasks: 1) To administer and modernize the skills curriculum; 2) To expand experiential opportunities through externships; and 3) To provide resources for doctrinal professor to integrate experiential modules.

In the summer of 2012, a study was conducted of the skills curriculum and externships to assess any issue or areas of immediate improvement. The study included review of historic faculty minutes, review of prior skill bulletins and web content, meetings with the Dean, skills instructors, students, prior interim directors, Dean of Student Records, Director of Student Records, Skills Committee members; and review of current trends in skill-based experiential training. The following conclusions were made:

- Loyola’s skills program is one of the most unique curriculums in the country due to its rich history and inclusion of practitioners in an academic setting; a foundation for a Carnegie initiative.

- The instruction provided by dedicated alums willing to volunteer time is one of the most important foundations to the curriculum’s success and long-term endurance. Many alums are interested in teaching solely based on altruistic goals of giving back rather than earning CLE credit. However, the CLE credit is a worthy incentive. There is some inconsistency however on the length of each instructors course and expectations which causes frustration for students.

- At one point in the program’s history, a handbook promulgating rules and policies specifically for skills courses was published to the student body; however, over time the rules were not revised or republished thereby creating inconsistent policies and enforcement. This period impacted the program causing confusion and frustration among students, as well as acceptance of unprofessional conduct. A noticeable lack of respect for the program, instructors and courses is tangible.

- Similar to academic courses, students would enroll for skills courses at the beginning of the semester during the “Add/Drop” two week period. This limited enrollment option created inflexibility for students to pursue skills courses based on interest and other scheduling demands. Also, many classes were offered in large formats so students could satisfy their skills requirement.

- There is confusion among students and attorneys between the different of “internships” versus “externships.”

- Externship offerings at Loyola are limited to enrollment in the L900 Clinical Externship course which students are confused whether this is a clinical course and also how to apply and enroll. Also, the 50% GPA threshold limits many students from participation.

Before the beginning of the Fall semester, the Office of Skills addressed each opportunity for growth in the following manner:

- A mailing database was created and all information updated for skills instructors. A letter was sent under the Dean’s signature, the Director of Clinic and the Coordinator of Skills announcing the new Office, transition and excitement about the future. In response to this letter, skills instructors contacted OSEL and we tracked those instructors interest in future teaching opportunities.

- Similar to syllabus course policies, a list of rules and policies were created for skills courses and published as “Local Rules” to begin indoctrinating students into rule practice. The rules were also published online and govern all aspects of conduct and procedures for skills courses. All skills courses are now published at the end of the student transcript rather than comingled in the academic semester. In accordance with historic faculty minutes, the courses do not receive an academic grade; rather courses receive a skills grade. This lessons confusion for future employers who may see a failing grade for a skills course and not understand the unique curriculum. Now all skills courses are offered in an increment of a three hour course.

- The enrollment process for students in skills courses was moved from LORA to Blackboard. This was a monumental shift in how skills courses are accessed by students. The courses are published online and on Blackboard allowing students to browse the offerings and enroll 24 hours before the course. Student response is extremely favorable and such change has allowed students to engage throughout the semester.
based on interest rather than schedule. Overall, we have seen a shift from dissatisfaction to excitement in the course offerings.

- In the Fall of 2013, the coordinator of skills met with the Skills and CLE faculty committee with a proposal for modernizing the skills curriculum. After several meetings, the proposal was put forth in final form and voted on by the whole faculty in February of 2013. This new proposal includes “practice tracks” in civil litigation, criminal practice, transactional and social justice. Also, effective August 2014 students will graduate with the following skill training: Client Interviewing and counseling; Negotiation, Cross-Cultural competence and Interpersonal skills; and Law office management and professionalism. This innovative proposal has led to national attention, specifically by the National Jurist and PreLaw Magazine.

- In early Fall 2013, the Coordinator in conjunction with the Dean, Clinical Director, and Dean of Academic Affairs, submitted an application to the a new consortium of schools dedicated to legal education reform: Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers. Loyola was accepted as a new consortium member based on this application.

- In January 2013, the Office of Skills organized and hosted a Professionalism Convocation ceremony for the first year class. The ceremony was dedicated to reaching out to first year students after their first semester, when many feel depleted by the impact of grades and the ranking system. The ceremony highlighted career paths and positive aspects about the practice of law specifically as a vocation.

- In Fall of 2013, a Field Placement Manual was created and an Externship Liaison position created to assist with expanding externship offerings at Loyola. The new liaison diligently worked over one semester at publishing the opportunities to the students via the newly create webpage and also the new application procedures. For the first time in the College of Law’s history, we received the most applications for externships for Fall 2013 Spring 2014 placements. Additionally, for the first time in the College of Law’s history we offered Summer externships. The Field Placement Manual, informational sessions, meeting Field Placement Supervisors and publishing via the web has helped clarify the difference between internships and externships.

- In the Fall of 2013, Professor Monica Wallace reached out to the Coordinator to discuss potential experiential modules in her Persons and Donations class. Through a series of sophisticated simulations, experiential modules were added her classes to engage students in learning both theory and practice. In an effort to incorporate Carnegie initiatives, practitioners provided instruction in the classroom reflecting the needed bridge to practice.

- In the Spring of 2013, the Coordinator in conjunction with the Dean and Dean of Academic Affairs held a faculty development workshop with key professors with national reputations to help foster innovation.

2. TOP STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES/GOALS (SLO) OR KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPI) ADDRESSED IN THIS ASSESSMENT PLAN (What are the top SLOs that your department is focusing on for the current year? Example: Students will be able to ... upon completion of the program.)

This upcoming year our five goals include:

- To develop the practice tracks by forming working groups with practitioners dedicated to this area of law and teaching in the skills program.
- To develop the required skills courses with articulable learning goals and objectives.
- To develop assessment tools to determine the effectiveness of skills courses, experiential modules and externships.
- To successfully submit a proposal unlocking the two semester commitment and 50% threshold for externships.
- To create web resource pages for skill development helping students and professors understand important pedagogy of essential lawyering skills.

3. ASSESSMENT (What measures/tools are you using to assess your top SLOs or KPIs cited above, and what are the corresponding target goals?):

In the past two years, there was not a form of assessment for skills courses. Now, utilizing Blackboard we have created a survey generating specific data to analyze this year to help develop the practice tracks and required courses. We also created a student evaluation at the end of the course utilizing experiential modules. For externship, a survey was created to assess the overall experience both the Field Placement Office and classroom instruction. Externs are also required to produce weekly self reflection journals.
4. ASSESSMENT/DATA LOCATION (Where are the assessments/data located, or is the data being generated?):

For skills courses, Blackboard surveys are utilized.

For experiential modules, hardcopies of all surveys are housed in the Office of Skills and Experiential Learning.

For externships, surveys are maintained by the Office of Skills and Experiential Learning and also on the courses Westlaw TWEN page.

5. EVALUATION METHODS (How are the assessment results evaluated, or what criteria/rubrics are you using to determine progress or success or need for improvement relevant to the SLOs and KPIs cited above?):

Currently, for skills courses the results are reviewed by the Coordinator and student feedback is noted for course design next year. Additionally, we seek to perform a two year assessment of skills courses and enrollment figures. We believe we can show a more engaged student body by increased enrollment in skill courses.

For experiential modules, both the professor and coordinator review the results. We would like to track the data in various methods to appreciate whether experiential modules produced more engaged learning. This might be traceable in the LSSE report.

For externships, the student evaluation forms are maintained by the Office of Skills and journals are housed on the course Westlaw TWEN page.

Overall, we also would like to utilize Google analytics to show the uptick in website browsing on our webpages which house much of the information regarding skills courses and externships.

6. SUMMARY OF RESULTS/OUTCOMES (What have you learned from the data, and how have these results informed your enhancement actions?):

In skills, we have learned students favor simulations and appear to be more engaged in practicum style courses. As such, we try to create more in classes exercises based on role-play simulations.

Our google analytic report reflects increased usage and browsing our webpages. Blackboard also tracks the number of student views per course. We would like to use this information to reflect this overall increase in student engagement.

7. USE OF RESULTS [Assessment use CODE: 1. Curricular Revision/Enhancement; 2. Course Revision/Enhancement; 3. Pedagogical Enhancement; 4. Program Review Process Revision; 5. Student Goals Revision & Articulation of SLOs; 6. Assessment Criteria Revision; 7. Assessment Methodology Revision; 8. Other (e.g. Website Updates, Intranet Enhancements, & Source document Uploads); A. New Protocol/Process Implementation; B. New Assessment Methodology Implementation; C. New Policy Implementation; D. Budget Adjustment; E. Faculty/Staff Development/Training; F. Student Academic Support/Services Enhancement; G. Strategic Planning Initiative/Reprioritization of Action Plan; H. Other] Please indicate all that apply:

This assessment year for the Practice Tracks will directly impact our course design and revisions which will enhance student learning.

Right now the Office of Skills operating budget is $12,000.00; similar to the operating budget for a student group. With the increase in workload and expansion of programs the budget may need additional revenue to accomplish the desired goals. Specifically, we would like to begin utilizing technology to ‘flip the classroom’ and record some skills presentation to offer to evening students. The trial courtroom classroom technology is challenging and does not provide for transactional skill demonstrations. We would also like to host working groups for the practice tracks which includes an increase for meals or entertaining expense.

8. RESOURCES/TIMELINE/APPROVALS (Based upon the modifications/adjustments and program/course changes included in the USE OF RESULTS section identify the timeline (implementation dates), resources, and approvals required to implement programmatic changes.):

In late fall or early spring, the coordinator will submit a proposal for externships to the curriculum committee. In early spring, the hope is that the proposal will successfully pass before the first externship application deadline.

In late spring, the coordinator of will submit a proposal to the skills/cle committee to promulgate a standard for earning skills credits in doctrinal courses.