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Foreward

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This volume contains ten articles. The first three articles focus on student attitudes and learning behaviours. Melissa Castan, Jeannie Paterson, Paul Richardson, Helen Watt and Maryanne Dever report on their study into commencing law student expectations and career aspirations, where they observed a high level of optimism amongst both male and female law students, in marked contrast to the reported levels of depression and stress in the legal profession. They make recommendations as to the need for law schools to address the preparedness of students to negotiate the realities of legal practice. Lillian Corbin, Kylie Burns and April Chrzanowski report on their research into the link between student attendance, engagement, and performance. They indicate that class attendance and class size are inversely proportional, and identify a 'U effect' in attendance, with lowest rates of student attendance occurring mid-semester. They identify that, whilst students are aware of the learning benefits of attending class, they engage in cost-benefit decision making to determine whether to attend or invest their time elsewhere. Nikki Bromberger focuses on the use of a 'nurturing' teaching philosophy to reduce student stress and confidence issues which can act as barriers to effective learning.

Each of the following four articles focuses on a particular area of law. Des Butler proposes an innovative, engaging, and practical approach to the teaching of legal ethics using blended learning, where real-world scenarios are presented in computer-generated modules. Paula Gerber demonstrates the value of teaching construction law as a mainstream part of the law curriculum and offers a model syllabus which blends the theory and practice of this complex and challenging subject. Brenda Midson's article focuses on criminal law, specifically the difficulty many students face in dealing with policy-based judicial reasoning on causation. She proposes a teaching pedagogy that enables students to develop their reasoning skills through articulating these 'invisible factors' in judicial decision-making and harnessing them in problem-solving. The article by Jennifer Yule, Judith McNamara and Mark Thomas focuses on mooting in law school, particularly student perceptions on the benefits of using online technologies such as *Second Life*, *Elluminate* and videoconferencing. They make recommendations as to where each platform may be best used in mooting by legal educators.

The final three articles concern topics of general interest to legal educators. Pauline Collins, Toni Brackin and Caroline Hart present academic perspectives on assessment in law, identifying a significant divide between sound pedagogical values in assessment and the impact of institutional and professional demands placed on academics. They raise the alarm bells on the effect that necessitated academic compromises may have on quality learning outcomes for law students. Grant Morris and Kimberley Lewis bring together legal pedagogy and legal fiction, arguing that fictional literature depicting law students and classroom settings can usefully expose issues in legal education in need of attention. They use fictional literature in New Zealand to illustrate this approach. Finally, Marina Nehme focuses on e-learning generally, identifying ways for legal educators to construct their online learning environments to foster student motivation using the Keller ARCS model of interaction and collaboration.

Each issue of the *Legal Education Review* involves the efforts of many people, mainly academics, who volunteer their time and expertise with little thought of reward or recognition. Special thanks needs to go to the Faculty of Law at University of Technology, Sydney, the School of Law at the University of Western Sydney, and Professors Rosalind Mason and David Barker for support provided through the Australasian Law Teachers Association (ALTA).

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All articles in the *Legal Education Review* are double blind refereed. Our referees spend many hours of their own time reading and providing insightful feedback on the papers. Their efforts are always respected and genuinely appreciated. We also appreciate the support and advice of our Editorial Advisory Board.

Submissions of articles for inclusion in the 2011 edition (Vol 21) are due by 30 April 2011. In addition to our general issue, we will have a special issue focusing on law student wellbeing. The *Review* follows the *Australian Guide to Legal Citation* (Melbourne University Law Review Association, 3rd ed, 2010). Please refer to the *Review* website for details: www.ler.edu.au.

While we continue to enjoy a very strong reputation internationally we are deeply concerned about the Australian journal rankings. We are now in our 20th year of operation, and prior to the recent ranking process in Australia, we enjoyed an A* ranking in the Education List (the highest ranking available). The re-ranking under the Excellence

in Research Australia process placed us as a C in the Law list (the lowest ranking available). Despite our efforts with the Australian Research Council to correct this error, we have been told to wait until the next ranking period which is highly disappointing and unsatisfactory given the impact that journal rankings have on the publishing decisions of academics. It would be ironic if a process aimed at research quality had the exact opposite effect, particularly in the very important area of legal education research. We are fortunate that our reputation is such that we have been able to maintain the quality of articles, and we trust that Australian law academics will continue to not be deterred from publishing in the *Review* because of a ranking error, and will lobby their law deans for this error to be corrected through the Council of Australian Law Deans. Another irony would be a leading international legal education publication produced out of Australia with only international authors.

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Editor-in-Chief