

# **COMMITTEE OF BAR EXAMINERS OPEN SESSION AGENDA ITEM**

**AGENDA ITEM:** June 2018 – O-402

**DATE:** June 12, 2018

**TO:** Subcommittee on Educational Standards

**FROM:** Natalie Leonard, Program Manager, Educational Standards

**SUBJECT:** **California Desert Trial Academy College of Law – Progress Report of the Hybrid J.D. Program**

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## **BACKGROUND**

In early 2017, California Desert Trial Academy (CDTA) received approval from the Committee of Bar Examiners (Committee) to offer a hybrid online/fixed facility J.D. program beginning in Fall 2017. As a condition of the approval, the Committee directed the school to submit a progress report within sixty days after the conclusion of the first year of classes discussing the hybrid program's success, benefits, detriments and any perceived improvements to the program prior to the start of its second year. (See Attachment A). The school's progress report describes a smooth implementation, and the school plans to continue and expand the hybrid program in the coming school year.

CDTA is a registered, unaccredited law school located in the Coachella Valley community of Indio. The law school was registered in 2012 and classes began in Fall 2012. CDTA's current enrollment is 25 students and it has an adjunct faculty of 19 professors.

## **DISCUSSION**

CDTA was very pleased with the results of the first year of its hybrid JD program. They experienced only minor technical issues, and took proactive steps to solve them and prevent future issues.

The hybrid curriculum was offered to six first year students and one second year student. Professors also taught two class sessions remotely.

Students who registered for the hybrid J.D. program attended weekday classes online on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 6:00p.m. to 9:30 p.m., while other students attended those same classes in-person at CDTA's classroom facility. Remote students could participate and the professors could call on remote students. All students attended live classes at the CDTA campus on Saturdays. Whether the students attend

in-person or remotely, all courses were recorded and archived for students who might want to replay them later for study purposes.

Students from the 1L hybrid class may begin to take the First Year Law Students' Examination this June. It will be useful to see the results for remote students compared to the students who attend the fixed facility classes.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the CDTA's attached progress report be received and filed in satisfaction of the Committee's requirement that, within 60 days after the end of its first year, the law school prepare and submit to the Committee a report that provides an analysis of the program and discusses its success, benefits, detriments and any perceived improvements to the program prior to the start of its second year.

**PROPOSED MOTION:**

If the Subcommittee agrees with this recommendation, the following recommendation is suggested:

Move that CDTA's progress report be received and filed in satisfaction of the Committee's requirement that, within 60 days after the end of its first year, the law school prepare and submit to the Committee a report that provides an analysis of the program and discusses its success, benefits, detriments and any perceived improvements to the program prior to the start of its second year.



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May 29, 2018

Erika Hiramatsu, Chair  
Committee of Bar Examiners of  
The State Bar of California  
180 Howard Street  
San Francisco, CA 94105-1617

Dear Ms. Hiramatsu:

On January 21, 2017 the California Committee of Bar Examiners (Committee) approved a major change requested by our California Desert Trial Academy College of Law (CDTA).

The approval authorized CDTA to offer a "Hybrid J.D. degree curriculum taught by using both in-class and remote student participation through effective distance-learning technology."

**We are extremely pleased to report our first-year results.**

As we originally explained to the Committee, CDTA is in a unique geographical position to offer a quality legal education to areas of California that have been traditionally underserved. Access to justice can be significantly reduced when legal education is unavailable to students who live in localities far removed from our historically available California law schools.

A sampling of the areas served by CDTA which represent locations where Superior Courts, institution of higher education, and local legal communities are without a nearby legal education institution includes:

El Centro	-	85 Miles from CDTA
Blythe	-	97 Miles from CDTA
Victorville	-	116 Miles from CDTA
Joshua Tree	-	55 Miles from CDTA
Banning	-	43 Miles from CDTA
San Bernardino	-	75 Miles from CDTA
Ontario	-	92 Miles from CDTA
Hemet	-	63 Miles from CDTA
Murrieta	-	85 Miles from CDTA

And, we serve additional Inland Empire communities of Yucca Valley, Twenty-Nine Palms, Beaumont, San Jacinto, Needles, and the entire Imperial County.

Further, we are now the only California Law School serving the entirety of Riverside County.

This recently concluded 2017-2018 academic year, six of our 1L students were able to attend real time on-line classes during their weekly Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday classes. As agreed with the Committee, all our students attended Saturday Enrichment Classes live and in person.

Additionally, we had one 2L student also participate on-line during this past academic year. During her first year, this student drove over 170 miles each night to attend classes. She could attend on-line or live depending on her work schedule. She did, however, attend all her Saturday classes in person.

Our success with our hybrid program is due in great measure to the leading edge technological infrastructure installed in our classrooms over the summer of 2017.

Our technological infrastructure includes:

The Zoom™ Internet Video Platform allowing our students to attend class online in real-time. The distance learners appear on a 72" video screen in the classroom and participate in the same manner as their in-person classmates. The video picture is clear and real-time in appearance.

Audio in each classroom is professionally installed in the ceilings. The sound is crisp and in sync with the video.

Digital whiteboards are used in each class. These digital whiteboards capture Professor's notes in each class which then can be emailed to all students. Distance learners have a split-screen video on their computer showing the digital whiteboard along with a view of the classroom for ease of participation and retention.

We have incurred minor interruptions in the classroom internet broadcasts. We have learned that the source of the problem, when it occurred, was in the bandwidth of the student's locations.

We have prepared a specifications one-sheet to alert our distance learning students to this potential problem so that they can rectify the situation on their end. We have also designed a contingency plan for audio streaming to offset any video glitches. All our

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classes are archived and promptly posted so our students may review them at their discretion.

On two occasions we were able to reverse the distance learning process and permit our professors to teach their classes remotely. The professors connected to the class from distance while the students participated in the classroom.

Additionally, from time to time we were able to have our Faculty members remote in to participate live in our Faculty meetings.

We are quite pleased with our first-year pilot program and are eager to continue in the 2018-2019 Academic Year.

If you should require any additional information or if any Committee member would be interested in a tour of our facilities we are happy to accommodate.

Sincerely,



John Patrick Dolan, Dean  
California Desert Trial Academy College of Law

JPD:igd

Cc: Amy Nunez  
David Knight