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SALT - Society of American Law Teachers

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November 7, 2014

Assoc. Dean Joan Howland, Chair
Council on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
University of Minnesota Law School
229 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Assoc. Dean Scott Pagel
The George Washington University Law School
2000 H Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20052

Dear Deans Howland and Pagel:

We write for the Society of American Law Teachers to express our concern about the just-announced plan of the Standards Review Committee to hold a private “retreat” meeting at an unspecified time this month in which the Committee will discuss and plan its 2015-2016 agenda. Our representatives attended every meeting of the Standards Review Committee during the recent seven-year comprehensive review of the Accreditation Standards and we continue to have a keen interest in observing and participating in the ongoing process of review and amendment of those Standards. While the abrupt November 3 announcement of a meeting this month invites suggestions for additional matters the Committee might address this year, the timing of the Committee’s “strategic planning retreat” means the Committee will meet without benefit of having such suggestions, will meet in private, and apparently will not meet again as a group until after its agenda is submitted to the Council.

During the comprehensive review of the Standards, SALT was compelled to write several times to the then-chairs of the SRC and Council to express concern about the lack of transparency in the committee’s work and the exclusion of Council affiliates and other stakeholders from meaningful participation in the process. We expressed concern about the limited efficacy of written comments, often solicited almost immediately before the SRC meetings based on drafts of Standards released only days or at most one or two weeks before the meeting. We expressed concern about the frequent failure of the SRC to respond to or even to acknowledge the concerns and suggestions expressed in the comments and the resulting sense that the Committee was not engaging in the open and inclusive process that is warranted

when considering revisions to the Standards that govern accreditation and operation of the nation's law schools.

The decision to hold a non-public meeting, at which the Committee will plan its agenda for the year, with the opportunity for others to comment only after-the-fact and without knowledge of the Committee's discussions, is a further step in the wrong direction. We request that you provide a rationale for convening this closed-door meeting of a committee that has no confidential business and whose responsibility it is to solicit meaningful input from constituents. We certainly hope that you will reconsider this decision and that you will as soon as possible provide details on the upcoming meeting and invite attendance by interested individuals and representatives of affiliated and other organizations.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Olympia Duhart in black ink.

Olympia Duhart
Co-President

Handwritten signature of Ruben Garcia in blue ink.

Ruben Garcia
Co-President

CC: Barry Currier, Managing Director