JD-Next Exam Faces Scrutiny as ABA Consultant Recommends Caution

The ABA (American Bar Association) has issued a memo cautioning against placing undue reliance on the JD-Next exam, a prelaw school assessment administered by Aspen Publishing. The memo, written by Nathan Kuncel, a professor of industrial-organizational psychology at the University of Minnesota, underscores the need for a careful approach to incorporating JD-Next scores into law school admission decisions.

Background

The JD-Next exam, designed to address disparities in law school preparation, received approval from the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar for use by 47 out of the 196 accredited U.S. law schools. However, the recent memo suggests that the exam should be considered a supplementary tool rather than the primary factor in admission decisions.

Want to know if you're earning what you deserve? Find out with LawCrossing's salary surveys.

Validity Concerns

Kuncel's memo acknowledges the JD-Next exam as a reliable predictor of early law school grades. Still, it highlights several concerns and caveats that currently lack sufficient research and data for evaluation, potentially posing threats to its operational validity for high-stakes decisions.

Recommendation for Limited Use

The report recommends that law schools while accepting JD-Next scores, should primarily rely on well-established criteria such as undergraduate grades and traditional testing scores for admission decisions. According to the memo, JD-Next should play a lightly weighted role in the decision-making process.

Stay up-to-date without the overwhelming noise. Subscribe to JDJournal for a curated selection of the most relevant legal news.

High-Stakes Considerations

Emphasizing the need for caution, the memo suggests that using JD-Next as the primary information source in admissions decisions could threaten its validity. Additional research is necessary to evaluate the potential risks associated with high-stakes decisions for admission to prestigious law schools.

Accommodations and Data Validity

The memo also addresses concerns related to data validity and the need for accommodations for students with disabilities during the instruction and administration of the JD-Next test. These issues must be resolved before the exam can be considered a reliable predictor of success.

Response from JD-Next Researchers

Christopher Robertson, the founding principal investigator of the JD-Next research, expressed delight at the consultant's report. Despite the identified caveats, he highlighted the memo's conclusion that JD-Next is a valid and reliable test for law school admissions. Robertson emphasized the ongoing commitment of JD-Next researchers to studying the test results.

Future Prospects

The memo suggests that once data validity issues are resolved and further evidence establishes JD-Next as a reliable predictor of success, law school administrators could potentially assign more weight to the exam in admissions decisions.

ABA Council Review

The ABA council plans to review the consultant's report and any resulting comments at its February meeting, as indicated on the ABA website. This scrutiny reflects the ABA's commitment to ensuring that any alternative to traditional entrance requirements meets rigorous standards.

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.