



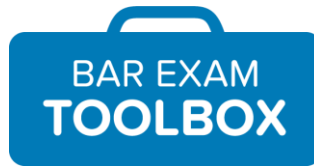
Alison Monahan: Welcome to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to welcome Chris Chapman, CEO of [AccessLex](#), to the podcast to talk about a new bar prep product they've released, and a study they've conducted recently on who is most likely to pass the bar. Today, your Bar Exam Toolbox host is Alison Monahan, and typically, I'm with Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the bar exam experience, so you can study effectively, stay sane, and hopefully pass and move on with your life. Together we're the co-creators of the [Law School Toolbox](#), the [Bar Exam Toolbox](#), and the career-related website [CareerDicta](#). I also run [The Girl's Guide to Law School](#). If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on your favorite listening app, and check out our sister podcast, the [Law School Toolbox podcast](#). If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the [contact form](#) on BarExamToolbox.com, and we would love to hear from you. And with that, let's get started.

Welcome back to the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast. Today, we're excited to welcome Chris Chapman, CEO of AccessLex, to the podcast to talk about their new bar prep product, and a study they've conducted on who's likely to pass the bar. Welcome, Chris.

Chris Chapman: Welcome, thanks for having me.

Alison Monahan: Oh, it's definitely my pleasure. To kick things off, would you mind giving us just a quick overview of AccessLex and of your own career path, so people have a little bit of context here?

Chris Chapman: Sure, I'd be delighted. So AccessLex Institute is now in its 39th year as a national non-profit focused on advancing legal education for the betterment of the aspiring professionals who go to law school and graduate from law school. We focus on everything from admission to law school through admission to the bar. We're a membership organization, which is comprised of all of the American Bar Association law schools that are state affiliated or non-profit. That total is about 194 these days. And while we have a formal mission statement that I could read and talk about, I think really our tagline best encapsulates what we're doing here, and that's empowering the next generation of lawyers. And we seek to achieve that through actions that leverage the resources we have, which create measurable change and positively impact our various focus areas, mainly to increase access to legal education for underrepresented minorities in socioeconomic groups and increase the affordability and value of the JD for all. We work towards these goals in various discrete, yet overlapping ways, and that includes through applied research, through grant programs, through public policy and issue advocacy, through convenings, professional development and partnerships, public education and communications, and the creation and



distribution of educational and informational products and services. From my end, I've been CEO of AccessLex Institute for more than 14 years. Prior to that, my career was spent in various roles where the world of education, finance, law, regulation, public policy, and the provision of quality non-profit products and services intersected on a regular basis. During and immediately following law school, I jumped into the public policy work on both the municipal and federal level, helping to shape policy and legislation to assist those most in need. I practiced law for a short time at a large law firm, focusing on public finance, higher education, and the non-profit tax areas, but most of my career prior to AccessLex was spent as a leader in two large multibillion dollar non-profit entities focused on higher education finance, including seven years as a CEO immediately prior to my tenure at AccessLex. While I would like to say I had a master plan to create just the right mixture of experiences for my current position, there certainly was not.

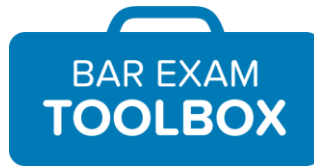
Alison Monahan: I hear that a lot.

Chris Chapman: Yeah. All I can say about it is that I always looked to use the skills and resources I acquired along the way in the best way I could, and that's something that's not so different from how we approach the world at AccessLex.

Alison Monahan: Great. Well, tell me a little bit about this report you've recently done, which I found pretty interesting, called [Approaching the Bar: An Analysis of Post-Graduation Bar Exam Study Habits](#). What was the study about and what did you learn?

Chris Chapman: Well, the study's interesting and it's just one component of the various studies we do across the spectrum of things we're interested in, including bar success. But this study is the first, that we know of anyway, and we've looked, to provide a time-diary analysis of the bar exam preparation period to understand how candidates spend and structure their time in the weeks leading up to the exam. We had study participants report their time in 30-minute increments for seven weeks leading up to the July 17 bar exam. And we found some interesting things, but some obvious things too. But again, at AccessLex, what we like to do with all of our work is try to quantify what is known as the conventional wisdom or the common sense of things, so that it becomes actionable data to improve the way people study, improve the way people approach various things, including the bar exam. What we found here is, on the obvious front, is the more time spent studying, the higher likelihood of bar passage.

Alison Monahan: I guess that's not super shocking.



Chris Chapman: No, no, and probably not super shocking either, although maybe in my college days, I may have disagreed. But those who study more hours in the morning and do multiple sessions per day also are more likely to pass than those who do more studying in the evening and fewer sessions per day. But the one interesting thing I found is there are diminishing returns to studying more than 10 hours per day. The likelihood of bar passage begins to level off at that point. And further, those who study more than 10 hours per day are more likely to report running out of time on their exam sections and feeling that they studied the wrong materials. And again, back in the "obvious" category, working during the bar prep period is negatively associated with bar passage. The more hours working, the lower the odds of bar passage and things like that. Again, this was a very interesting report, and we'll probably do follow-on in the future on it. But these and other things like it really, as an entity with a large research component, help us understand what works, what doesn't with respect to bar passage, and allow us to apply it to our work with [Helix Bar Review](#).

Alison Monahan: Yeah, we're going to talk about that in a minute. I thought that the 10-hour finding was interesting. Was there anything in there that particularly surprised you? I'm not sure I would say that was surprising exactly, but I think definitely a challenge for me is sort of the conventional wisdom people sometimes have of just, "More study is better." Was there anything else in there that was kind of surprising to you?

Chris Chapman: No, not really. I think that again, almost in hindsight, I can say, "Well, of course, it's not surprising. There's only so much you can study in a day before you stop gaining from it." There's also a risk, I think, amongst many Type A types who are over-represented in law school, who think that they can study long and hard without regard to the efficiency of how they study. And sometimes it's just the number of hours you put in. The number of hours you put in will produce a result, and that's not true in many areas and it certainly isn't true in the bar exam. And we'll probably talk about it a little later. The key to passing the bar exam is not only studying enough, but studying in the right way, in the right material for the right amount of time. And again, it's very interesting to see how all these factors apply against a diverse population, and it's certainly grounds for further study.

Alison Monahan: Definitely, I thought it was a super interesting study. I absolutely agree with you, I think it's definitely a quality over quantity type of thing that we always encourage. We definitely hear from a number of students who say, "I've never failed anything in my life. I don't understand how this happened. I was studying 14 hours a day." And the answer is really, they over-studied and they weren't focusing on the right material, which is super unfortunate.



Chris Chapman: I agree.

Alison Monahan: Alright, well, let's move on now to talk about this Helix Bar Review, which is your new bar prep product. Tell me a little bit about this and what was the motivation for creating it? I mean, this is already a pretty crowded space, right?

Chris Chapman: It is, but it's crowded with legacy players who primarily were created decades ago in a world that was very different than today. And while there's a number of players in the market, the market share of the top players is very high, creating almost an oligopoly of the market, which allows two things that happen – one, pricing can be established at an oligarchic rate, which means you can charge much more than the marginal cost to deliver the product; and two, there's not a lot of pressure to get better. As we looked out at the market and looked out at what our role could be to further our mission, that was the basic pretext for us looking into this space. Then we looked into what it really costs to deliver a full-service product and invalidated that our expectations about the profit margins of commercial vendors was accurate, and that we could do better, both in terms of price – much better, and in terms of quality – much better as well. As an aside, I will say that it had nothing to do with the fact that I've had very little money when I graduated from law school and felt I had to spend my last penny buying a commercial bar prep course, and was not able to do the supplemental MBE course because I truly went to negative \$20 in my checking account with that.

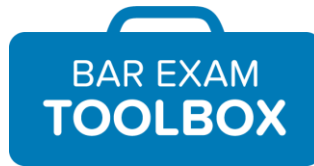
Alison Monahan: Oh, the memories.

Chris Chapman: Yes. So there is no bitterness there, of course.

Alison Monahan: Right, no. Not that you're even remembering that 20 plus or whatever years later.

Chris Chapman: I remember. It was fun going to the ATM and seeing I had negative \$20 in my bank account.

Alison Monahan: Oh, that's unfortunate. Yeah, I didn't actually use any of the big companies when I graduated because I just sort of looked at them and thought, "I'm not sure it's worth the money and I'm not sure that I need this." But that's a really hard choice to make for a lot of people. I think there is was so much pressure to do it one way. So yeah, I thought it was really interesting that you guys kind of came in and have done this in a different way that I think in a lot of ways, comports with at least my understanding of learning science and what works for

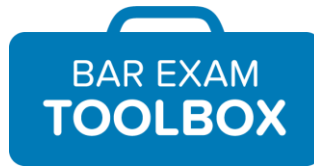


people. So, tell me a little bit more about how this was done, and what type of people did you have working on it?

Chris Chapman: Well, so we built this from the ground up. Truly from the ground up. And we did it basically as a membership organization of all of the law schools. We have pretty good access to experts in every area of law, people who know us from all of our years of service in other areas. They know we do things with quality. So we started with going to the law schools. We did focus groups and surveys with more than 2,500 students, faculty, and administrators from over 100 law schools. And we focused on what are the issues surrounding bar exam prep, from the financial investment to their wish list for design. And as we built Helix, we shared what we were thinking about. We asked what they thought, what they liked, what they didn't, and we listened. Beyond those things, in the building of this, we've contracted with over 100 law professors and other experts to craft the material, craft the substance, craft the questions, craft the reading grids, craft all of the work that goes in to be the backbone of this material. We have a team of 10 in-house attorney editors who are professional editors, who then take that work and make sure it's all coherent with... When you mix 100 law professors' work together, it has to have one voice eventually. And then also in-house, we have veterans from both the bar preparation industry and also from NCBE, including the former MBE program director at NCBE who was in charge of their question drafting. We hired and she created all of our custom MBE questions in the program design more broadly. Also, we have a team of veteran academic success and support professionals who are handling our ongoing review, grading, management, and all other aspects of making sure the program itself and the ancillary parts of it, including our past classes and our other supplemental activities are all aligned both with our program and with the latest learning science. And we have a state-of-the-art LMS partner, and obviously, we hired instructional design. So, the nice thing about building here at AccessLex, as a non-commercial entity, is this is our mission, and so our top focus was quality, and we did not have to worry about cutting corners anywhere, which is a good place to be.

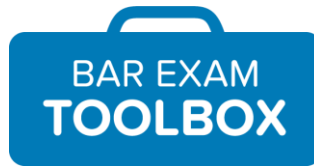
Alison Monahan: Right. No, that's a great place to be. I signed up for the sneak peek, which had cover some Torts topics, and I will say it's got some pretty interesting elements in it. So, tell me a little bit more about how this is structured and what you guys are trying to do and what you're incorporating in terms of active learning.

Chris Chapman: Sure. Well, again, what you saw in the sneak peek and what you'll see is a really good slice of what the program in full looks like, and if nothing else, this whole program is a little more robust than even the sneak peek showed. But the core concept behind the program is really, it's an integrated learning approach. That



integrated learning approach is designed on the advice of experts in learning science, and what it does is integrated content with active learning to help you efficiently use your study time to effectively prepare for the bar exam. And what that means is, rather than spend two hours reading about torts, then spend another hour reviewing, and then spend some time on practice question, and then watch a two-hour long lecture, our program is structured in such a way everything is sliced into smaller parts. So, you'll read about intentional torts, then you'll do some what we call "building block" questions, which are really black letter law type review questions, then you'll watch a video, then you'll do a unit test, and then you'll move on to defenses to intentional torts, and so on and so forth. And so by chunking it out into smaller parts, we, one, expect that we'll be able to keep a learner's attention better, and two, we believe that, again, the science behind it is that that type of repetition, repetition doing different activities, helps people learn better and recall it better later. Even our videos, which in my mind the videos are the very definition of passive learning. They're designed to be active in regard... At least act as a bridge between active pieces. They're short, they're five to seven minutes. Perhaps you can zone out, but you're less likely to zone out because they're very targeted and crisp. Again, you just learn about that very specific sub-topic, you're seeing it kind of hearing it verbally, and you're either seeing somebody talk to it with various graphics behind them, or you're seeing one of our scripted videos, which is more animated type videos, and then you move on to the next part. Again, we're designed to do that, designed to really make the program active. You get knowledge points along the way for our activities, which kind of goes towards your course completion, and the active components give you more knowledge points than the passive components. A lot of it depends upon who you are and how you like to learn, but we determined in our study and in our design that this was the best way.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, there were a couple of specific things that I thought were really great and that I'm not sure I've necessarily seen a lot of places. One was that you let people rank their, I guess confidence level of their knowledge on certain things, which is something we also do with our students when they're doing MBE questions, as we have them do a grid. And one of the questions on that grid is, "How confident did you feel?", because if you don't feel confident and you got it right, you're probably guessing. And if you do feel confident and you got it wrong, that's a great learning opportunity to figure out, "Whoa, what happened here?" So I thought that was really great. And I also like this sort of gamification that you had – a lot of different games that people could do and get points – and I feel like that would probably be motivating to a lot of people in today's world.

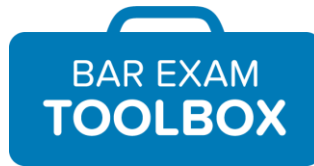


Chris Chapman: Yes, yeah. And that's really fun. And again, it's another example of how we can turn what is a quasi-passive learning activity, which is looking at flash cards, to a more active style activity, and just give yourself a little break. I have to confess, in all of the testing we're doing, I've spent probably more time just playing the games for fun just to see how I can do than I've done anything else. Again, obviously, we try to be different, but everything we do has a reason. And the gamification of that is certainly designed to, again, like everything, help people pass the bar and spend their time wisely.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I have to admit, I did a couple of the games for a while just to see how I was doing, even though I'll admit, I didn't actually read the entire outline. I was like, "Oh, intentional torts, I can probably get some of these right." I was like, "Oh, this is kind of fun." Alright, well, before we move on to a different topic, if students are considering what bar prep products to use, there's this whole universe, I think there's been more and more stuff coming online, lots of different approaches. What do you think they should be considering when they're making this decision?

Chris Chapman: Well, I think the first thing they should consider is, does it have everything you need to pass the bar exam? Again, as you've mentioned, there are lots of people who provide bar preparation out there, but there's only a few that provide, what I would say the full panoply of information and breadth of material and support material needed to pass the bar. A reprint of old questions from NCBE is great, but it's not sufficient. And so, I think that's really important. I think the learning platform itself, how easily can you navigate along the learning platform, how flexible it is for you. We have a program that's structured, if you want to do it another way, you can do it your own way. You can easily go to and pick and choose along the modules, because every person is an individual. Our structured program is the way we believe it works for the broad swath of people, but everybody has a different way of learning and they know themselves better than we necessarily do. But also, has thought been given to the learning science? Has the program thought about what the best way to learn is, and does that align with how it works for you? And finally, is the price rational for the quality of service provided? And look, I had mentioned earlier today where we believe that most of the larger programs, the price is not rational for the quality of service provided. We've priced our product at a price that will be breakeven at some point in the future, but we're far away off from that right now. It's well below the cost, but we can do that because it's our mission.

But one thing I do want to mention that's the flipside of this is, what are the red herrings that others might tell you to look at? Pass rates are the first one. This is



our first year so we don't have pass rates, but pass rates are in large part aren't what they seem to be. Pass rates for any provider, they only reflect the mix of students who use the program, even if virtuous calculations are used. It's just simply if you have one entity who only had students who come from schools with a historic 80% pass rate, and another entity that go to with schools with a historic 70% pass rate... The pass rates are really apples and oranges. And so, I think the real question everybody needs to ask themselves when they think about pass rates is, "What's my likelihood of passing as an individual?" The bar exam isn't some random chance event where everybody has an equal chance of winning. Your pass rate is really related only to your personal commitment to study and your ability to perform when it's go time. And that really gets to, do you have all the material you need? Is it presented in a way that you're able to efficiently get through it, learn it, and retain it? And that's, I think, when pass rates come up, what people need to really consider. And also, people need to be wary of all the discount games and the like – buy now, get this price; buy later, get this price. I used to talk about used car dealers, that we aren't used car dealers, but with the app from CarMax and Carvana and the like, I can't even do that anymore. So I think, look, we're transparent, we have one price, that price gets you everything, there are no add-ons, there are no subtractions. And regardless of all the movement around, and this discount, that discount, this special that your friend heard that you can call and get, we haven't found one lower than our price yet, at least of the big ones.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. No, I 100% agree with you on the pass rate issue. People often ask us when they're thinking about tutoring, "Well, what are your pass rates?" It's like, "That is not a meaningful... I can't give you a meaningful answer to that. We work with an incredibly diverse set of people, from someone who went to Stanford and has never failed anything, but got the stomach flu, to someone who went to an unaccredited school and has failed multiple times." I'm like, "Those are not the same people. Whether one of those people pass has nothing to say about what you're going to pass. Let's talk about where you are and what your situation looks like, and then we can kind of make a reasonable assessment." But yeah, it's just sort of funny, "But what is the pass rates?" It's like, "That's not really a relevant question."

Chris Chapman: Exactly. And the nice thing about the work we do too, is because we aren't just a bar review company, we do lots of work with academic support and others during the in-school period, to help them and help the students get themselves positioned to be able to pass come May of the third year. And that's as important to our mission as the back-end piece.



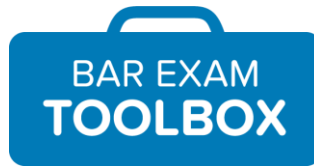


Alison Monahan: Maybe we should do another podcast on that later. Let's shift gears a little bit before we wind up. I want to talk to you about the future of the bar exam, which is obviously speculative at this point, but I think there's a lot of emotion in this space about what's going to come next. What do you see coming down the pipe in the next, say, five to 10 years?

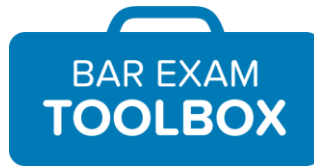
Chris Chapman: I think the bar exam is going to change in some meaningful ways. The NCBE next gen project is going forward, it's going to happen, and for NCBE and really for anything of this, it's going to dramatically alter at least its approach in terms of the substance. There will probably be fewer subjects. In the testing areas, there's going to be a shift to greater emphasis on skills. What that looks like, and in the context of that, remains to be seen, but I think NCBE expects, and everybody seems to expect, that this approach will be largely accepted, at least amongst many going forward. I also think the alternative pathways to the bar will expand, although I think this may be a little more modest than is the attention being given to it now. Oregon's moving in that direction, in I think what would be a fairly middle-of-the-road type approach that balances a lot of the interest most states would have. But over time I think that will be just a fraction of Oregon admittees going forward, and other states may follow, but there's, as you're well aware, very strong resistance of the state and local bar to...

Alison Monahan: I believe that's fair to say. California has had that option for a long time, but it's not very heavily used, so it will be interesting definitely to see. And how do you think the... Your bar prep products, like Helix and things, or other ones, how are people going to adapt if the exam changes drastically?

Chris Chapman: Well, look, depending on what happens we'll be ready for the changes, and we're certainly following the NCBE changes and we'll definitely be ready for those, and any states that want to adapt, we'll be there. In fact, in many states, California included, we're helping them understand how their bar might work and what impacts or what changes might happen in the future. So we'll be ready, but whatever... And I can say that with confidence, because we are the only entity in this space that has both the reason, the resources, and the resolve to keep doing this. It's literally our mission to assist these aspiring attorneys to pass the bar in the most efficient and affordable manner. We've already invested almost \$10 million in the development of these programs and have the ability to continually invest to meet the needs of this next generation of lawyers. And we have the resolve; we've committed to this venture, we're here for the long term. We're the largest charity focused on legal education, we're structured to operate in perpetuity, and if not us, who?



- Alison Monahan: Right. Well, this has been super interesting. I'm definitely glad that I was able to check out Helix, I'm going to possibly send some of our students to take a look at it too, because I think it has a lot going for it. We're about out of time here. Any final thoughts on this topic?
- Chris Chapman: The only thing I would say is for your listeners and your students is, look, again, as a charity, it's a great place to be because we're in the position where we're right now in the process of a [giveaway of 500 courses](#) on April 1 for 2Ls who go on and complete 10% of our sneak peek or 10% of our free MPRE. I'd encourage everybody to sign up for that. Also, we have lots of free resources at Helix and AccessLex, including a set of 1L outlines, which is essentially our core concepts from our UBE bar review, which is a really nice black letter law review for 1L students and anyone else who wants to get a head start on reviewing these things. I think we're a pretty broad resource, and I thank you for having us.
- Alison Monahan: Yeah, my pleasure. Well, if people want to find out more about AccessLex or Helix, how can they do that?
- Chris Chapman: I would encourage [helixbarreview.org](#) or [accesslex.org](#). You can get to either site from the other, and they both have lots of information. Helix is Helix-centric, AccessLex covers the broad swath of our other materials that can be found. And we have a multitude of tools, which I could probably spend half hour talking about those.
- Alison Monahan: Well, unfortunately, we are out of time now, but thank you so much for joining us.
- Chris Chapman: Thank you.
- Alison Monahan: My pleasure. Well, I want to take a second to remind our listeners that you can check out our [blog](#) at BarExamToolbox.com, which is full of helpful tips to help you prepare and hopefully stay sane as you study for the bar exam. You can also find information on our website about our courses, tools, and one-on-one tutoring programs to support you as you study for the UBE or California bar exam. If you enjoyed this episode of the Bar Exam Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review or rating on your favorite listening app. We would really appreciate it. And be sure to subscribe so you don't miss anything. If you're still in law school, you might also like to check out our popular [Law School Toolbox podcast](#) as well. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lee or Alison at [lee@barexamtoolbox.com](#) or [alison@barexamtoolbox.com](#). Or you can always contact us via our website [contact form](#) at BarExamToolbox.com. Thanks for listening, and we'll talk soon!



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