The Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) documents dimensions of quality in legal education and provides information about law student participation in effective educational activities that law schools and other organizations can use to improve student learning.
Foreword

Measuring Outcomes in an Input World

Here is a thought experiment: if you could start a new law school from scratch, know that it had adequate resources, and have a free hand in designing a building, hiring a faculty, organizing a curriculum, choosing students, and assisting graduates in obtaining their careers, what would you create? How would you make your decisions? Would you model your new school on schools with high rankings? Would you consult with the leaders of existing institutions? Would you try to march the profiles of the highest ranked schools by copying their inputs—LSAT scores, undergraduate GPAs, faculty similar to theirs, traditional curricula, and so forth?

Given the apparent similarity of most law schools, either we have stumbled upon the perfect formula for legal education or all of us suffer from the same delusion (or lack of creativity). Simply put: our little corner of higher education is drawn to measures of their inputs—LSAT scores, undergraduate GPAs, and faculty from a limited number of schools to name a few. These measures provide great comfort because they are familiar. But, can we continue to rely primarily on inputs if we want to produce value for our constituencies? Are they robust enough to assure us that we are in fact producing the best graduates, with skills needed by those who will use their services, and who are satisfied with the experiences they received while students?

LSSSE is a new window to legal education. It seeks to provide us with actionable information about what our students do and how they behave and our education after they entered could create outcomes and outputs tell us much more about the success of our schools than do input measures. Moreover, in the years ahead both our accrediting agency, the American Bar Association Council on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar and its evaluators, the United States Department of Education will likely require us to focus more clearly on outcomes in assessing us. But before we ever face such regulation, it is just the right thing to do to better understand how we can improve what we deliver to our students.

At New York Law School, for example, for many years we saw unacceptably low bar passage by our students. This was true over a long period of time during which students’ entry credentials varied widely. Yet, through most of this period our solution was to assume that by increasing entry credentials, outcomes would naturally improve. This simply did not occur. Instead we systematically began to collect information regarding every aspect of our students’ performance in law school and the profile of choices they made while here. The data revealed that those who did well in low school generally did well on the bar exam and that those who did poorly in law school did poorly on the bar exam. It turned out that our conventional solution to the problem of seeking students with better incoming credentials was not solving the problem because the predictive force of the LSAT/UGPA index that we use, while somewhat useful to predict first-year performance, could not predict enough of the variance in law school performance to reliably screen out those who would not do well. Once they became students, we treated them all alike, whether they were successful or not. The question we faced was whether deeper analysis of their behavior and our education after they entered could create a program that would alter these results.

Rather than relying on entry credentials alone, we looked at every aspect of every student’s performance in school and on the bar examination. We found relationships between the paths they chose in school, their performance in school, and their first-time bar passage. After discovering that poorly performing first-year, first-semester students did not understand legal reasoning, we amended our first-year second semester curriculum by diverting the bottom third of the first-year students from one of the courses taken by their peers a rigorous legal reasoning and writing course. Our research also showed that at the end of the first year, the weakest students disproportionately avoided difficult courses, many of which were tested on the bar. We therefore restricted the upper-level curricular choices available to the students in the bottom quartile by requiring many more courses and limiting their electives. Further we discovered that in past years, full-time students who were in academic difficulty seemed to improve when they moved to part-time. We therefore mandated that full-time students in the bottom 10% of the class move to a reduced schedule by adding an extra semester to their program and limiting the number of courses they could take each semester. We cushioned the impact of this requirement by giving them all full scholarships for the extra semester and creating escape hatches if they significantly improved their performance in school in the second year. Finally, we added a legal writing and reasoning sequence in the third year for the bottom quartile students to reinforce the skills that would be tested on the bar examination.

In 1999, before the research for this program was completed and before any of these changes were implemented, the first-time New York bar pass for New York Law School students was slightly over 57%—well below the ABA school first-time takers in the state. In 2007, the pass rate was over 90% and a few points above the ABA first-time takers in the state. We are by no means sure that this improvement allows us to comfortably assure it will persist in perpetuity, but the process of dealing with the unacceptably low bar pass for our students gave us an important lesson in outcomes: we must collect data, analyze it, redesign our priorities to react to the data, and continue to refine to improve.

Looking forward to the next several years in legal education, it is clear that our schools no longer can merely rely on inputs and that success will be measured by the performance of our graduates, faculty, and students’ outputs. It is clear that our regulators will be pushing us to use outcome measures. Moreover as the cost of legal education continues to rise, our students will demand that we be accountable—that the education students receive bear some relationship to the outcomes they are seeking and that the faculty and staff direct their energies to further those outcomes. The challenge is for our schools to respond positively to these pressures.

LSSSE is an important part of the quest for outcomes. It is a window into our students’ thoughts and actions. It provides insight into whether our schools are succeeding. It is no longer enough to seek students with strong credentials and then watch them disengage because we inadequately challenge them or offer programs that do not excite them or help them achieve their goals. The brutal truth to be seen in the data for our schools is not a scoreboard that compares our school to others; rather it is the scorecard of our own performance. It sets the baseline of data that we can use from year to year to measure our improvements and responsiveness. It is a way to learn whether we are providing value.

Why do we need to create the new school I imagined at the beginning of this essay to ensure a transition to a system that is concerned with outcomes when the tools are available today to respond and change? We must seek to serve our students and build good outcomes or we risk being supplanted by new competitors that will design their programs to focus on outcomes from the start. It is surely the case that intentional, reflective design in education, purposefully directed to helping students reach their goals will replace static, input reliant metrics for measuring our performance. That is the promise of measuring outcomes in a world that expects nothing less.

Richard A. Matasar
President and Dean, New York Law School
Since its introduction in 2004, the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) has been used one or more times by 128 law schools in the U.S. and Canada. LSSSE focuses squarely on many promising teaching and learning practices and other aspects of the law school environment that are thought to be linked to high levels of student performance. We believe its questions have considerable face validity to law students, faculty and staff, which is one reason more than 87,000 law school students so far have completed the survey, making it one of the largest contemporary databases of legal education. LSSSE's acceptance reflected by its relatively high response rates – more than 50 percent every year – and the increasing number of schools participating annually are gratifying and have allowed the survey to be self-supporting through institutional user fees.

In terms of the impact of law school, students themselves are key variables in the equation. As we discuss later, more than three fifths of those responding to LSSSE 2007 are members of the so-called Millennial generation. Does this make a difference in terms of how they experience law school or, equally important, how law school faculty and staff might more effectively work with them, given that some observers believe Millennials have distinctly different attitudes and values than their law school predecessors of a decade or more ago? As we shall see, LSSSE data suggest that the chronological age of law students is more important than generational membership with regard to, for example, how much time they spend preparing for class.

Where students go to law school is another factor that could well influence what students do and how they benefit from their legal studies. Does law school size, selectivity, or region of the country matter in terms of student engagement? What about whether a law school is public or private? LSSSE data from scores of law schools with variations of these characteristics provide some insight into these matters. Many of the findings are about what one would expect. For example, students at smaller law schools report having more contact with faculty and peers than students at larger law schools. In terms of law school selectivity, students at less selective law schools are more likely to say their academic needs are being met, even thought their counterparts at more selective schools are more satisfied overall and are more likely to say they would choose the same school again. Perhaps the perceived prestige that is typically correlated with selectivity affects the value students assign to their experience.

How students feel about their law school may not necessarily affect how much they learn. But students' perceptions about whether they are supported and comfortable in the learning environment almost certainly is related to their satisfaction and whether they will put forth the effort required to benefit in desired ways. Studies of undergraduates often show that students from various racial and ethnic groups who are in the numerical minority typically report being less satisfied and view the campus environment as being less supportive. However, LSSSE 2007 results show that the perceptions of African American students, for example, do not differ from their White peers nor are they less satisfied overall. In terms of student engagement in law school, there is more to the story, of course, about which we say more later in this report.

In previous annual LSSSE reports, we examined the experience of 3Ls in some depth. Because it is a perennial topic of concern, we again briefly take up the related question of whether students are using the final year of law school in ways that they see will help in the transition to the world of legal practice. That is, LSSSE data show that although 3Ls spend less time on traditional academic matters, they do devote more time to working and co-curricular activities that, perhaps, approximate some of the kinds of activities that lawyers do.

LSSSE’s Governance Structure
Co-sponsored by the Association of American Law Schools and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, LSSSE is a cost-recovery project with all of its operating expenses covered by institutional participation fees. Housed in the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, LSSSE benefits from the advice a group of nationally recognized legal educators and other experts.

We are indebted to all the LSSSE board members listed on the inside cover for their selfless service that helps to ensure that the project meets its potential by providing high quality information not otherwise available to the legal education community. Hats off especially to Bryant Garth, dean of Southwestern Law School, for his leadership as LSSSE board chair since its inception. We are pleased to welcome two new members to the board, Hulett “Bucky” Askew, consultant for legal education on the American Bar Association, and William Sullivan, senior scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Sullivan succeeds Tom Ehrlich who was an unfailing source of wisdom.

Finally, we are grateful to the many law school educators who are committed to using student engagement data and related information to enhance the quality of legal education. As always, we welcome your comments about this report and suggestions for ways LSSSE can contribute to the national conversation about improving the quality of legal education or work with other interested parties toward this end.

George D. Kuh
Chancellor’s Professor and Director
Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research

“In terms of the impact of law school, students themselves are key variables in the equation.”

The LSSSE 2007 Report: Context and Contents
Noteworthy reports such as the 2006 book, Educating Lawyers, coauthored by LSSSE advisory board member William Sullivan have brought additional attention to what students are learning during law school and other aspects of legal education. One of the key discussion points is how to most productively use the three years of training to make sure students are well versed in the law as well as socialized to its professional practice. As the merits of such traditional approaches to teaching as the Langdellian model are weighed against innovative initiatives and programmatic developments, LSSSE data can inform such discussions by providing information about what students do and how they benefit from their legal studies. Does law school size, selectivity, or region of the country matter in terms of student engagement? What about whether a law school is public or private? LSSSE data from scores of law schools with variations of these characteristics provide some insight into these matters. Many of the findings are about what one would expect. For example, students at smaller law schools report having more contact with faculty and peers than students at larger law schools. In terms of law school selectivity, students at less selective law schools are more likely to say their academic needs are being met, even thought their counterparts at more selective schools are more satisfied overall and are more likely to say they would choose the same school again. Perhaps the perceived prestige that is typically correlated with selectivity affects the value students assign to their experience.

“As the merits of such traditional approaches to teaching as the Langdellian model are weighed against innovative initiatives and programmatic developments, LSSSE data can inform such discussions by providing information about what students do and how they spend their time during law school.”
The Law School Survey of Student Engagement focuses on activities that affect learning in the law school context. The results show how law students use their time, what they think about their experience, and what law schools can do to improve engagement and learning.

In the sections that follow, we feature select findings from the 2007 survey administration, focusing on some main themes. In Engagement and Age, we look at issues surrounding the new face of law student populations. Much has been written about the differences between the Millennial generation and its predecessors, and the LSSSE data help us understand such differences in the law school context. Next, in Law School Characteristics and Student Engagement, we explore the ways in which the student experience differs by the types of law school students attend. In Race and Ethnicity and Student Engagement, we explore the experiences of minority law students. Finally, in Another look at the 3L Experience, we take a closer look at the third year of law school to better understand how 3Ls spend their time, and what experiences seem to be most beneficial during this final year of study.

“The most significant benefit of LSSSE is that it is a versatile tool that provides law schools the opportunity to improve student life and learning.”

–Robert Mena, Director of Student Affairs, Southwestern Law School

**Student Engagement Quiz**

Information about the engagement of law students can be used to evaluate assumptions about the law school experience. This short quiz highlights what the data reveal about various areas of legal education. Answers to this quiz are based on the LSSSE 2007 survey results.

**True/False**

1. Nontraditional students, such as part-time or evening students, transfer students and older students, are less involved in co-curricular activities like journal and moot court and law student organizations.

2. Female students interact with professors less frequently than their male counterparts.

3. The average law student expects to owe between $60,000 and $80,000 in law school loans at graduation.

4. Students with substantial debt from law school are less likely to be satisfied with career services than those with less law school debt.

5. Minority students are less satisfied than White students with their overall law school experience.

6. Four in five third year students work for pay during their final year of law school.

7. Fewer than five percent of all law students prefer to work in non-legal settings after law school.

8. One in four students say their law school places very little importance on helping students meet the standards or expectations of faculty members.

9. Students typically report that the quality of their relationships with administrative staff and offices is more positive than with faculty.

10. Minority students are more likely than White students to report working harder than they thought they could to meet the standards or expectations of faculty members.

**Answers**

1. True. Transfer students, part-time and evening students and students over 30 years of age all reported participating less frequently in co-curricular activities than traditional students.

2. False. Female students reported discussing assignments and career plans with faculty members as frequently as male students. While male students reported discussing course concepts with professors outside of class more frequently than females, female students were more likely to work with faculty members on activities other than coursework (e.g., committees). Male and female students reported receiving approximately the same amount of feedback from professors.
10. True. Fifty-eight percent of African American students
9. False. Students report that their relationships with
8. False. Fewer than five percent of students reported that
7. True. Three percent of law students list “non-legal” as their
6. False. Sixty-four percent of 3Ls report working for pay in
5. False. While Latino students are as satisfied or more
4. False. Students with expected law school debt between $0
3. True. Thirteen percent of law students expect to graduate
2. True. The value of information, arguments or methods. Nearly
1. False. Twenty-six percent of students preferred private firms as

Training 21st Century Lawyers: Selected Results

What aspects of professional preparation should legal educators emphasize in law school? Should legal theory dominate? Or should coursework focus on strategies and skills for law practice? Are we instilling in students a sense of professional ethics and responsibility sufficient to sustain them through their careers as practitioners, policy makers, and public servants? These are questions law schools must consider as they think about ways to improve legal education in the 21st century. There are no easy answers, but by using available data to inform our understanding of the current state of legal education, we can begin to develop a strategy to tackle these tough questions. Below we present select results from the 2007 data – both promising and disappointing – related to professional training in our law schools.

- Despite research suggesting that students benefit from collaborative learning during class (Soricelli, 1991; LSSSE, 2007), only 13% of students reported that they frequently engage in such activities. Sixteen percent of students reported that law school contributed “very little” to their ability to work effectively with others. Outside of class, however, nearly one in three students chose to frequently collaborate with their peers to complete assignments.
- Three in four students (76%) reported that their law school placed a substantial emphasis on the ethical practice of law. Yet a little less than half of students reported that law school actually contributed substantially to their development of a personal code of values or ethics.
- Two thirds of students felt that their coursework placed “very little” emphasis on the ethical practice of law. Indeed, the majority of students (76%) reported that their law school emphasized the ethical aspect “quite a bit” or “very much.”

Selected Results (continued)

Examining Engagement by Age

A significant challenge law schools face today is effectively preparing a new generation of lawyers who are Millennials. The Millennial generation – the largest in the nation’s history – is made up of people born in or after 1980. They are said to be ambitious, highly diverse, and technologically-oriented (Coomes & Delbard, 2010; Howe & Strauss, 2003). Educators and researchers have considered at length the dynamics of serving the Millennial generation in higher education settings, from technology in the classroom to interacting with “helicopter parents.” As these students enter law schools in growing numbers – almost two thirds (62%) of LSSES 2007 respondents – law school faculty and staff members would do well to anticipate the implications for legal education of having Millennials in the classroom.

Although LSSES data show differences between the engagement of Millennial students and other students, such differences appear to be more a function of age than generational membership. In 2007, students in the Millennial generation were 27 and younger. Student engagement data of respondents in 2004 and 2007 show similar patterns by age even though in 2004, younger “traditional-age” law students were not members of the Millennial generation. Thus, in this section we explore patterns of engagement in educational activities in terms of age rather than generational status.

Among 1Ls, traditional-age law students reported interacting more frequently with peers than their older counterparts. Younger students were also more likely than their classmates to:
- work with other students outside of class to complete assignments
- have serious conversations with students who differed from them
- spend time socializing or exercising.

Among 3Ls, younger students were much more likely to participate in student organizations and be members of law journal.

Table 1 Percent of 1L Students Frequently Participating in Select Activities By Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Age 27 and Younger</th>
<th>Age 28 to 35</th>
<th>Age Over 35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asked question in class or contributed to class discussions</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or class assignment before turning it in</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used email to communicate with a faculty member</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked about career plans or job search activities with a faculty member or advisor</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Full-Time, 1L U.S. Law students only.
In terms of academic effort, younger students were generally less engaged than other students. Among first years, younger law students were much less likely to ask questions and contribute to class discussions and were less likely to prepare multiple drafts of a paper (Table 1). Younger first-year students also spent less time studying than their older first-year classmates (Table 2).

Despite engaging less frequently in many effective educational practices, younger students were more positive than their older counterparts about certain aspects of the law school experience, such as:

- Social support and non-academic support (work, family, etc.)
- Financial counseling
- School emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different backgrounds
- School emphasis on encouraging students to attend campus events and activities (Table 3).

An exception to this pattern is their views of the quality of relations with faculty and administrative staff (Table 4). Younger 3L students were less satisfied with the overall law school experience and less likely to say they would attend the same law school again (Figure 3). In part, this difference may be because older students are place bound and have fewer if any other options to pursue legal training. Younger students also reported gaining more from law school in a variety of areas than their older classmates, probably because younger students have not had as many life experiences that contribute to development in such areas as self understanding, career goals, and ethics and values (Table 4). At the same time, older students may benefit more if some aspects of the law school are designed to better suit their needs. For example, schools could develop initiatives to help students smooth the transition from an existing career to law practice or students earning a J.D. to complement a current career.
Law School Affiliation

Despite the relative standardization of law school curricula across the country, LSSSE data suggest that a law school’s affiliation is linked with different patterns of student engagement. For example, while students at public law schools reported more frequent interactions with peers from diverse backgrounds than their private school counterparts, they were less likely to develop positive relationships with faculty members. Additionally:

- Students at public schools were less likely to report that their school provided the support they needed to succeed academically.
- Students at public schools were more likely to attend the same school again if they had it to do over.
- Students at public and private schools did not differ in their perceptions of the quality of counseling and advising services.

Table 5 Characteristics of full-time students at public and private law schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Public %</th>
<th>Private %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of choosing the same law school again</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having serious conversations with students who hold different values and beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in law school activities and organizations and community organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with computing technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing papers of 20 pages or more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Percent of Students Frequently Participating in Select Activities by Law School Enrollment Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Fewer than 500 Students</th>
<th>500 - 900 Students</th>
<th>More than 900 Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clinical internship or field experience</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer or pro bono work</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study abroad</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law journal member</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moot court team</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law student organization member</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Full-Time, 3L U.S. Law students only. Students who frequently participate are those who do so often or very often.
Law School Selectivity

Selectivity as determined by LSAT percentile range admissions criteria published by the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) is weighted heavily in law school rankings. In this section we look at the relationships between selectivity and law student engagement.

Students at schools in the least selective category reported more frequent interactions with their classmates and professors. They were more likely to:

- Work with other students on projects during class.
- Work with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments.
- Discuss ideas from readings or classes with faculty members outside of class, and to discuss assignments with faculty members.
- Work hard to meet the expectations of faculty members.
- Receive prompt feedback from professors on academic performance (Table 7).

In addition, students at the least selective law schools were more likely to report being supported in meeting their academic needs. Although all students reported a strong emphasis on encouraging ethical development, students at the least selective schools were more likely to report making substantial gains in this area. Students over 40 years of age were less likely to attend highly selective schools than to attend schools in the other two categories, while Asian students were represented in greater percentages at the highly selective schools.

Although selectivity was not linked with the quality of students' relationships with peers, professors or administrators, students at schools in the highly selective category reported greater overall satisfaction with their law school experience, and were more likely to:

- Participate in moot court
- Join a law journal
- Work on a legal research project with a faculty member (Figure 6).

Such differences associated with law school selectivity might suggest that more resources are available to support such enriching educational activities as having a law journal. It may also be the case that different classroom approaches are more appropriate with certain types of students. More selective law schools might experiment with ways to stimulate academic collegiality among students and foster substantive interactions between students and professors outside of the classroom.

### Table 7: Percent of Full-Time 1L Students Frequently Participating in Select Educational Activities by Law School Selectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Highly Selective</th>
<th>Selective</th>
<th>Less Selective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worked on an assignment that required integrating information from various sources</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Included diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing assignments</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked with other students on projects during class</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed assignments with a faculty member</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received prompt feedback (written or oral) from faculty on your academic performance</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked harder than you thought you could to meet faculty members’ expectations</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students responding often or very often are considered frequent participants. Full-Time, 1L U.S. Law students only.

### Figure 5: Student Overall Satisfaction with Law School by Law School Selectivity*  

* Full-time, 3L students from U.S. law schools who reported their experiences were good or excellent, or that they would probably or definitely choose the same law school again.

### Figure 6: Percent of Students who Frequently Participating in Select Co-curricular Activities by Law School Selectivity*  

* Full-time, 3L students at U.S. law schools. Students who participate frequently are those do so often or very often.
Race in legal education has been a controversial topic for many years. From *Grutter* to the Sander study and its rejoinders, \(^1\) and from the law school application to the bar exam, the experiences of minority students have received considerable attention. Here, we use the LSSSE 2007 data to better understand whether race and/or ethnicity play a significant role in the engagement of students in their legal education. \(^2\) Controlling for gender, LSAT scores, enrollment status (part-time versus full-time) and class level, we tested for the effects of race and ethnicity on 100 questions ranging from involvement in academic activities, self-reported gains, perceptions of the law school environment, relationships with other students, faculty and administrators, and participation in various co-curricular activities.

Overall, general patterns in student responses to the range of LSSSE engagement activities did not differ markedly for students from various different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Similarly, students’ perceptions of the law school environment also did not differ. The responses of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in a few areas warrant additional attention and study. For example:

- African American students more frequently asked questions and contributed to class discussions
- Asian students were least likely to ask questions and participate in discussions during class
- African American students were most likely to participate in law student organizations (Table 8).

Although White students were more likely than minority students to participate in law journal, they were least likely to participate or hold leadership positions in law school organizations or to engage in serious conversations with students of another race or ethnicity (Table 8). It would be instructive to determine what factors may account for such differences in participation levels and what students hope to gain from their involvement.

Latino, Mexican and Mexican American students reported higher debt levels than other minority students. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of those students expect to owe more than $80,000 in law school loans at graduation, compared to 44% of African American students and 45% of Asian students. While differences in personal financial resources may explain these discrepancies, law schools should determine if similar patterns hold for their students and address the contributing factors, such as lack of access by certain groups of students to certain kinds of financial aid and planning.

While these findings reflect the experiences of minority law students in the aggregate, they may not represent the experiences of such students at a particular law school. It is possible that organizational and cultural features of law schools that LSSSE does not directly assess may affect the engagement of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. It would be prudent for law schools to disaggregate LSSSE data and related information to determine the extent to which these national patterns hold for their students.

### Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>1L</th>
<th>2L</th>
<th>3L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently asked questions in a class or contributed to class discussions</td>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White (not-Hispanic)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino, Mexican, or Mexican American</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own</td>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White (not-Hispanic)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino, Mexican, or Mexican American</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law student organization leader</td>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White (not-Hispanic)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino, Mexican, or Mexican American</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law student organization member</td>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White (not-Hispanic)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latino, Mexican, or Mexican American</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who frequently participate in an activity are those who do so often or very often. \(\dagger\) Indicates those students who have done or plan to do the activity.

---

\(^1\) From *Grutter* to the Sander study and its rejoinders.

\(^2\) Controlling for gender, LSAT scores, enrollment status (part-time versus full-time) and class level.
Another Look at the the 3L Experience

The third year of law school has been the subject of considerable discussion over the years. Without question, LSSSE data show that 3Ls do not study or prepare for class as much as 1Ls. Does this mean that 3Ls are underengaged? Or does the nature of the third year experience change in ways that appropriately prepare students for the practice of law? LSSSE data help law schools better understand how third year law students spend their time and, in turn, identify areas that may warrant attention.

Some suggest that during the third year students would benefit from an increased emphasis on practice-based training, in contrast to the theoretical style typically employed in the classroom (Sullivan et al., 2007). To the extent that participating in co-curricular activities represents some of what law students can expect when they begin practicing law, many 3Ls are having such experiences. LSSSE data (LSSSE, 2006) indicate that taking part in moot court and doing legal research with a faculty member are linked to a variety of social and academic gains during law school (LSSSE, 2006). Compared with other students, 3Ls were most likely to have participated in such activities, probably because they have had several years to make connections with faculty members and seek out interesting volunteer and internship opportunities. Also, at many law schools, co-curricular activities are limited to second and third year participation.

Whether spending more time in co-curricular activities has a debilitating influence on the academic focus of 3Ls is not clear from LSSSE data, nor can we determine if decreased levels of academic involvement are a function of fatigue with the standard case-based pedagogy. Nevertheless, 3L responses to LSSSE indicate that they are not as engaged in their academics and less satisfied with the services law schools are providing.

Table 9 shows other evidence of academic lower engagement of 3L students. It is particularly troubling that a fifth of 3Ls come to class unprepared.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1L</th>
<th>3L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Came to class unprepared</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared two or more drafts of a paper before turning it in</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked harder than they thought they could to meet faculty standards and expectations</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams challenged them to do their best work</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed readings outside of class with fellow students, friends or family</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† Students who frequently participate in a given activity are those who do so “often” and “very often.”

In addition, fewer 3Ls say they would choose the same law school they currently attend if given another chance: 84% of 1L versus 74% of 3L students.

Table 9 shows other evidence of academic lower engagement of 3L students. It is particularly troubling that a fifth of 3Ls come to class unprepared.

*The LSSSE has been an invaluable tool for taking the pulse of our students. Everyone has anecdotes about what ‘the students’ think, but the LSSSE gives us the ability to add credence to the truths and combat the myths." –Stephen M. Perez, Director of Admissions, University of Idaho College of Law*
Using LSSSE Data

LSSE provides information that administrators and faculty can use almost immediately to improve the quality of the law school experience. As illustrated later, law schools such as Fordham and Southwestern are using their results to track the effects of new initiatives over time. This section illustrates how law schools across the U.S. and Canada are translating their data to action.

Making Improvement a Common Goal

Osgoode Hall Law School has developed a strategy for disseminating the results with the faculty. At an annual summer faculty workshop, Osgoode administrators presented the results to professors. The LSSE findings have proven helpful in directing agenda items for these meetings. For example, LSSE data provided the background for a discussion of first year curricular reform in 2006. In 2005, the results informed a discussion of law school strategic planning. In addition, the LSSE results played a role in Osgoode’s annual Course Design Institute. During the Institute, faculty members used LSSE student engagement data to give context and meaning to a discussion of best practices in legal education.

Understanding Student Sub-Populations

Several schools are disaggregating their results to better understand the experiences of certain sub-populations within their law school. Widener University School of Law is using this approach to examine how the experiences of students at their two campuses differ. They are using the data to inform committee and administrative actions in the upcoming year, and to provide benchmarks for measuring the success of future initiatives designed to enhance the student educational experience at Widener. The University of Ottawa Faculty of Law offers a bilingual program of study. Administrators are analyzing their data to get a better idea of how the student experience differs according to the language of study. Meanwhile, members of the Infilaw System, including Charlotte School of Law, Florida Coastal School of Law, Marquette University Law School, New York Law School, Nova Southeastern Law Center, Thomas Jefferson School of Law, and University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law, are using their multiple datasets to compare mean responses from students over several years.

With several years of LSSE data in hand, administrators at Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington were ready to tackle a longitudinal analysis. Looking at trends over time, the deans were able to identify some areas for improvement and to discover which new policy initiatives have been most successful. This type of trend analysis lent new insight to institutional assessment efforts. Data points that may not stand out as notable during a particular admission year were more informative when viewed over several years. IU Law is now prepared to target specific programmatic areas, confident that these areas warrant attention.

Identifying Peer Law Schools and Setting Goals

Southwestern University Law School is using a normative approach to obtain a clearer picture of how the law school is performing vis-a-vis other law schools. Dean Bryant Garth also plans to triangulate Southwestern’s results to achieve the most accurate picture available. To that end, Southwestern requested data from a second comparison group to complement the selected peers data included in their report. The first group included self-identified peer schools, while the second included several aspirational peers. By charting their results against both groups, administrators at Southwestern will be able to better understand the import of their results. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock, William H. Bowen School of Law is also planning to triangulate their results in a similar manner.

Other schools have recognized the value of peer comparisons in lending perspective to the results. The consortium option allows schools to examine topics in further detail. For example, schools with sizeable part-time populations can use the consortium option to examine issues pertinent to their students. Past consortium participants include Campbell University Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law, Florida Coastal School of Law, Marquette University Law School, New York Law School, Nova Southeastern Law Center, Thomas Jefferson School of Law, and University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law.

Collaborating with Institutional Research

Many law schools have found it useful to team up with institutional researchers to take their results further. Institutional research offices, whether housed within the law school or in the university at large, serve as valuable resources for schools looking to identify sub-populations or perform extensive statistical analyses. St. John’s University School of Law worked with its research office to break down the data into a format that enabled them to better share the results with different offices. When the new dean arrived on campus, she had a quick snapshot of student life.

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Improving Teaching and Learning

The University of British Columbia Law School is committed to giving their students a first rate legal education. Using their 2006 data, administrators worked with institutional researchers to prepare a presentation of the results for the faculty members. This presentation gave rise to a full discussion of the results and their import to professors and students. A series of recommendations followed, targeting areas for immediate response and improvement. UBC plans to use the 2006 data as part of a baseline for future years as the school continues to gather data and develop a complete and nuanced picture of the student experience.

"We’ve found it particularly useful to see changes across the years of law school. Like many law schools, we tend to focus on the first-year academic program, and LSSE has helped us to readjust our focus and to analyze the second and third years more systematically."

–John Applegate, Executive Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Walter W. Foskett Professor of Law, Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington
This is a pivotal moment in legal education. Focus on the professional training taking place in law school has sharpened. Calls for more accountability and new assessment measures in higher education are becoming commonplace. A new generation of students is matriculating to law school, and with it come new questions about the roles of technology, diverse learning styles and interests, and preparing lawyers for the challenges of 21st century law practice. More and more law schools are discovering the value of student engagement data, and as we anticipate LSSSE’s fifth annual survey cycle, we are increasingly confident that these data play a significant role in assessment and improvement efforts at law schools across the country. Accordingly, a primary goal for LSSSE over the coming year is to continue to make the data useful and accessible to law schools. The LSSSE core survey has helped expand our knowledge of law student engagement considerably, but there is more to discover. In 2008, we will introduce several sets of supplementary survey items to explore more deeply certain areas of student engagement. As legal educators continue to look more closely at the quality of the law school experience, provocative questions may arise. What is the best method to teach legal research skills? How do we make the most of students’ third year in law school? Does the traditional pedagogy suit the needs of 21st century lawyers? The LSSSE data can help us tackle these questions by enhancing our understanding of the underlying issues. These additional questions may focus on the effects of practice-based learning experiences on student engagement, or how legal writing programs impact the first-year experience. Such additional information will further the efforts of legal education researchers working with the LSSSE data. The LSSSE data provide a rich resource for researchers, professional associations and sections, and other entities that share the goal of enhancing the law school experience. We will continue to facilitate appropriate partnerships and to connect student engagement data with other sources of information about the law school experience. We look forward to working with law schools as they work to improve the quality of legal education now and into the future.

“Participation in LSSSE has given us focused and reliable feedback from our students. This data will provide benchmarks for measuring the success of future initiatives designed to enhance the student educational experience here at Widener.”

–Susan L. Goldberg, Associate Dean of Student Affairs, Widener University School of Law

To that end, we are planning several workshops for LSSSE schools aimed at helping faculty and staff to develop strategies and the skills to translate their LSSSE results to action. We anticipate that these forums will also help forge connections between LSSSE schools and facilitate the exchange of good ideas for improvement among law schools. Since developing a vital user community is an essential part of LSSSE’s vision, we also intend to make greater use of virtual forums to connect users. We always encourage schools to be in touch with the LSSSE staff. Through one-on-one consultations or campus visits, we can help schools better understand their data in context and develop the skills and strategies necessary to incorporate student engagement data when implementing curricular or policy reform, or conducting self-studies or assessment efforts.

“Having administered the LSSSE for the past four years, we’ve been able to measure performance both yearly and longitudinally. The feedback verified that strategies we implemented to address issues of concern actually produced the desired outcomes.”

–Dr. Joane M. Ingham, Assistant Vice President for Institutional Research, New York Law School
Law School Survey of Student Engagement 2007

Do you experience your law school during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

- a. Read assigned text, lecture, or course materials
- b. Worked with other students on a course project or assignment
- c. Participated in a weekly or biweekly reading group, discussion group, or seminar
- d. Worked with faculty members on class projects or assignments
- e. Given a written or oral presentation in class
- f. Attended class
- g. Did not attend class

Survey Instrument

The LSSSE survey is administered entirely online. In addition to the questions listed below, submitting respondents can add additional comments at the end of the survey.

Law School Survey of Student Engagement 2007

Please mark your answers in the boxes. Examples:

- In the larger boxes, please print your responses.

1. Do you consider the law school curriculum important?

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not important

2. During the current school year, how much has your workweek varied from week to week?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Not much

3. During the current school year, how much have you felt pressured to do well?

- Very much
- Somewhat
- Not much

4. During the current school year, about how many hours did you spend on a typical week?

- Less than 10
- 10 to 15
- 16 to 20
- 21 to 25
- More than 25

5. Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do at your law school before you graduate? (Mark any unimportant for each item.)

- a. Clinical internship or field placement
- b. Volunteer or pro bono work
- c. Student-faculty committees
- d. Work on a legal research project with a faculty member
- e. Participate in a study abroad program
- f. Study abroad
- g. Law journal
- h. Student organization
- i. Law student employment

6. In your experience at law school, how well have you been supported by your classmates?

- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Not well

7. During the current school year, how many times have you felt忍不住 to respond?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

8. What is your current classification in your law school?

- 1L
- 2L
- 3L
- NS
- Other (specify)
Law School Survey of Student Engagement

From Law School Characteristics and Student Engagement


2 Variables included: (a) had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own, and (b) had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values.

3 Selectivity ranges based on LSAT score at 75th percentile for institution as reported by the Law School Admission Council. Schools in the highly selective category have 75th percentile scores above 155; selective schools have 75th percentile scores from 150; and schools in the less selective category have 75th percentile scores from 145.

4 Based on responses from full-time, 3L students at U.S. law schools. Students who reported a substantial emphasis were those who felt that the law school contributed quite a bit or very much to their personal development in that area.

From Race and Ethnicity and Student Engagement


6 Students who did not report their race and/or ethnicity were not included in this analysis. We combined the following student responses into a single category: Mexican, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Other Hispanic Latino. The other category includes those students responding American Indian or Native American, multi-racial, and other. We controlled for gender, LSAT, enrollment status (part-time/full-time) and class level in this analysis.