

# Student Engagement in Law Schools

A First Look



Law School Survey of  
Student Engagement  
2004 Annual Survey Results



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The Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) documents dimensions of quality in legal education and provides information and assistance to law schools and other organizations to improve student learning. LSSSE annually surveys law students to assess the extent to which they engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development.

## Foreword

It is my privilege to introduce the first annual report of the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) and, more generally, herald the arrival of an important new tool for assessing and improving legal education. As a longtime observer of legal education, I am delighted to support the stellar work of George Kuh, Patrick O'Day, and their colleagues at the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research in launching this enterprise.

Building on six years' experience in assessing the quality of undergraduate education using the acclaimed National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), LSSSE represents the first effort to examine systematically the way law students commit themselves to their studies and how law schools channel and build on that commitment. Drawing on the responses of some 13,000 law students representing 42 law schools, this report at one level confirms what legal educators have long believed — law students work hard and for the

a superb opportunity to see where they are and how they are improving in numerous areas that define the law school experience. The importance of this tool should be obvious to all law schools, but there is a long history of relative complacency in legal education. It is remarkable that in the face of that tradition 42 law schools were ready to invest in the first national administration of LSSSE.

Law schools face some particular challenges that LSSSE will inevitably highlight. Professors are not chosen primarily for their teaching ability. In fact, relatively few young professors have even had any teaching experience. They naturally tend to teach in the same way that they were taught, using their relative mastery of the case method to lead law students through scenarios that also tend to be reproduced through multiple generations of professors. There are strong incentives to continue with traditional approaches to teaching and learning. Classes are often large, the

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most part are satisfied with how they are taught. Legal educators will also not be surprised by the finding that law students are less satisfied with particular services, especially placement, although the aggregate data no doubt reveal very different attitudes depending on the law school.

This general confirmation of what we already know, however, is no cause for complacency. The aggregate data generally mask subtle and important differences between law schools in such areas as commitment to professional ethics, interaction with faculty, and success in legal writing skills. More generally, LSSSE has entered the scene at a time when law schools increasingly recognize that they must confront the very issues that the survey raises. The world of legal education has been very slow to move beyond simple course surveys as the means to evaluate teaching programs. The law schools that signed on for LSSSE can move to an entirely different level. They will have

pressures on professors to produce research are great, and law professors do not have the use of graduate assistants to help provide feedback and small group instruction to their students.

We know the case method is “engaging,” and the general sentiment is that students who are exposed to a good number of professors who practice this particular art well will have an optimal educational experience. For many reasons, that assumption can no longer be accepted without much more inquiry. One reason to shake up complacency is the perceived importance of law school ratings, which relates to a more general and perhaps healthier development of a consumer perspective on law school. The ratings to date emphasize law school reputation and resources, not the commitment or success in the teaching mission, but it is only a matter of time before some measures of student satisfaction and learning are developed. LSSSE is very clear that its results *not* be used for rankings. At the

## Foreword (continued)

same time, student responses to the kinds of questions LSSSE asks will be invaluable in helping law schools improve the learning experience of their students. For many law schools, the success of their students in passing the bar cannot be taken for granted. Difficulties in bar passage increase the pressure on law schools to see just what and how they are teaching their students.

Another reason for increased attention to the issues raised by LSSSE is the complexity of the law school learning environment. Students learn from their traditional classes, but they also increasingly take advantage of simulations and in-house clinical experiences. We know from recent studies, moreover, that law graduates often give great credit to work experiences during the school year and summers and consider them to be essential in facilitating their transition from law student to lawyer. In addition to the importance of monitoring this transition to the profession and the role of the law schools in enhancing it, LSSSE can help us make sense of the role and utility of interdisciplinary approaches to law school teaching and research. Law schools have a core that rarely seems to change, but there is also a great deal of experimentation around that core. LSSSE provides a unique opportunity to explore systematically what is achieved — and what can be improved — in traditional and nontraditional areas of the curriculum.

This first LSSSE report offers a number of insights that warrant the attention of scholars and practitioners of legal education. The promise of this work will only increase as more law schools participate. It will be especially interesting over the coming years to see the various ways that LSSSE data help us understand what we are actually doing and can do better in legal education. I invite you to review the findings with an eye toward their implications for improving teaching and learning in the law school environment.

Bryant Garth  
Senior Research Fellow  
American Bar Foundation



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## A Message from the Director

The idea for a national survey of law school students has been percolating for several years. In 2000, shortly following the successful introduction of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which focuses on undergraduate students, Carl Monk from the Association of American Law Schools asked if it was feasible to apply the concept of student engagement to the law school student experience. The result is the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE – pronounced “lessie”). This is the first of what we intend to be an annual report of what law school students do and what they get from their studies.

The project enjoys the support of the Association of American Law Schools and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Both organizations recognized the potential value of creating a national survey that would focus on learning-centered indicators of quality for law schools. And both hope to see the results widely used to pursue institutional improvement. LSSSE also benefits from the advice and counsel of a national advisory board of scholars and practitioners in American legal education (see inside cover). These individuals generously gave of their time and expertise to advise and guide the project.

Many people contributed to the preparation of this report. We are especially grateful to the enormously productive staff of the Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, who skillfully managed every challenge in order to successfully launch the project and carefully analyze the LSSSE 2004 data. They include LSSSE project manager Patrick O’Day, LSSSE project associates Melanie Smith and Shana

administered entirely online, was superbly handled by the Indiana University Center for Survey Research.

Finally, we salute the law schools that accepted the invitation to learn more about the experiences of their students and to advance the national conversation about law school quality. Special thanks go to the 11 law schools that in the 2003 pilot helped us test and further improve the survey instrument, administration, and reporting procedures. The faculty and staff members at the 42 law schools that participated in LSSSE 2004, along with the 13,000 law students who answered the questions, reflect the spirit of cooperation, commitment, and goodwill that is needed from all corners to improve student learning and law school quality.

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

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Stump, and the senior associate director of NSSE John Hayek. Assisting with the data analysis were Ty Cruce, Robert Gonyea, Thomas Nelson Laird, John Moore, Shimon Sarraf, Rick Shoup, and Julie Williams. Abbi Deveyary, Kim Harris, Jennifer Smith, and Julie Sylvester provided office support, and Kevin Barry and Fang Fang maintained the LSSSE Web site. The survey itself,

## Quick Facts

### Survey

The annual LSSSE survey is entirely supported by institutional participation fees. The survey is available on the Web and takes about 15 minutes to complete.

### Objectives

Provide data to law schools to use for improving legal education, enhance student success, inform accreditation efforts, and facilitate benchmarking efforts.

### Partners

Cosponsored by the Association of American Law Schools and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

### Participating Law Schools

More than 13,000 JD students at 42 law schools across the country participated in the first national administration in 2004. The pilot test in spring 2003 gathered responses from more than 4,300 law students at 11 schools.

### Administration

Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research in cooperation with the Indiana University Center for Survey Research.

### Response Rates

Average institutional response rate was about 53%, with a range of 34% to 69%.

### Audiences

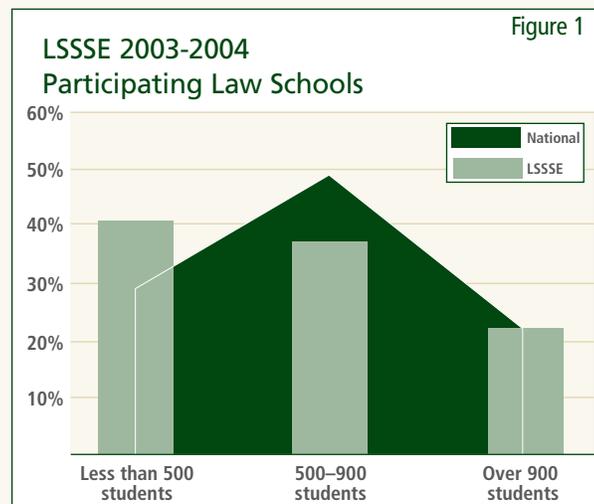
Law school administrators, faculty members, students, advisory boards, prospective students and their families, accreditors, institutional researchers, and legal education scholars.

### Participation Agreement

Participating law schools agree that LSSSE will use the data in the aggregate for national reporting purposes and other legal education initiatives. Law schools can use their own data for institutional purposes. Results specific to each law school, and identified as such, will not be made public except by mutual agreement.

### Cost

Law schools pay a fee ranging from \$3,000 to \$5,000 based on JD student enrollment.



### Profile of Participating Law Schools

- 42 law schools in 25 states participated in 2004.
- About one-third (31%) were public schools, 40% were private with religious affiliation, and 29% were private without a religious affiliation.
- LSSSE 2004 schools ranged in size from 179 to 1,492 students.

### Profile of Survey Respondents

- Over 26,000 law students were included in the LSSSE 2004 sample. The 13,197 students who responded to the survey were split fairly evenly between 1L (37%), 2L (31%), and 3L (30%) students. Two percent of respondents were 4L students.
- Respondents were equally divided among men and women. Fourteen percent were part-time students.
- More than four-fifths (81%) were White, 8% Latino, 6% Asian, 5% Black, 2% American Indian, 1% other race, and 4% were multiracial. Three percent of respondents were international students.
- About two-thirds of respondents enrolled in law school either directly (38%) or 1-2 years (27%) after earning their undergraduate degree. Seventeen percent enrolled 3-5 years later, 10% started 6-10 years later, and 8% returned for law school more than 10 years after college.



## A New Approach to Measuring Law School Quality: The Law School Survey of Student Engagement

What makes a learner-centered law school?  
And how can we tell?

News magazines rank law schools on everything from LSAT scores and faculty-student ratios to library holdings and employment rates. Alumni, parents, and friends freely share personal experiences and anecdotes, while accreditors and other groups focus on organizational arrangements and resources.

This kind of information reveals some useful things about law school quality, but it doesn't tell us much about what is most important to student learning—whether an institution's programs and practices are having the desired effect on students' activities, experiences, and outcomes. Moreover, knowing the size of a law school's endowment or students' average LSAT scores is of little help to faculty members and administrators who wish to improve the law school experience.

Ensuring that students and society get what they need from legal education has never been more important. Legal educators have expressed concern about academic disengagement of law students, especially third-year students. Some observers believe today's law students lack a strong ethical foundation and a willingness to meet pro bono obligations. Legal practitioners worry about what they see as a growing separation between what law schools emphasize and the knowledge, skills, and competencies the legal profession requires to meet the demands of a society that relies increasingly on legal remedies to resolve complex matters.

Law schools need valid, credible, and usable information about the law school experience so that administrators, faculty members, and others can assess whether students are engaged in educationally

purposeful activities. Such information will also allow them to determine how well they stack up against other law schools with similar missions and academic programs. The Law School Survey of Student Engagement was designed with these purposes in mind.

### Student Engagement: A Window into Educational Quality and Law School Effectiveness

What students gain from their law school experience depends on a variety of factors and conditions. Among the more important of these is a concept called student engagement.

Student engagement represents the combination of the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities and the policies and practices that law schools use to induce students to take part in such activities. It's a deceptively simple, even self-evident premise: the more students do something, the more proficient they become. For example, the more students study a subject, the more they learn about it. Likewise, the more students practice a skill—writing, problem solving, briefing or arguing a case—the more adept they become at the respective activity. Faculty members and administrators at all levels of education know this, and students realize it as well. Moreover, decades of research show that students learn more when they direct their efforts to a variety of educationally purposeful activities inside and outside the classroom.

In part, student engagement represents activities that are traditionally associated with learning, such as reading and writing, preparing for class, and interacting with instructors about various matters. The engagement concept also encompasses some other key activities that more recently have come to the fore as being important, such as collaborating with peers on projects,

Student engagement represents the combination of the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities and the policies and practices that law schools use to induce students to take part in such activities.

## A New Approach to Measuring Law School Quality: The Law School Survey of Student Engagement (continued)

problem solving tasks, and community service. These activities are valuable in and of themselves. They also are indicators of educational effectiveness. That is, educationally effective institutions intentionally use policies and practices that induce students to expend more effort on productive activities. For example, collaborative learning strategies promote peer interaction which, in turn, can stimulate individual and group learning as students work together to seek answers and solve problems. Students are often motivated to work harder and tend to learn more in the company of peers.

### LSSSE: A Tool for Evaluation and Improvement

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE—pronounced “lessie”) annually obtains information directly from law students about the quality of their education. The groundwork for the LSSSE project was laid about six years ago when The Pew Charitable Trusts funded the National Survey of Student Engagement as an initiative to strengthen institutional responsibility for undergraduate student learning. NSSE provides a short, highly focused survey that measures the extent to which institutions deeply and effectively engage their students in educationally purposeful activities. More than 850 different colleges

cognitive interviews conducted at several participating schools helped to further refine the survey questions for the law school environment. The LSSSE is designed to be sensitive to the student experience at law schools at different types of institutions and with different missions.

The LSSSE differs from other efforts to estimate law school quality in several important ways. The survey instrument focuses squarely on the teaching and learning activities that personally and intensely involve all types of students at different types of law schools. When law students read more, write more, and interact more in positive ways with their professors and peers, they gain more in terms of essential skills and competencies, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and effective communication.

The information comes directly from currently enrolled students. More than 13,000 law students from 42 law schools filled out the LSSSE survey in spring 2004. The students represent a broad cross-section of JD students from across the country. Sampling all JD students at participating law schools ensures that results are comparable, meaningful, and credible. An independent survey research organization collects the data, guaranteeing reliable results for all participating law schools.

LSSSE survey results provide insights into student behaviors and law school environments that can be addressed almost immediately to enhance student learning and law school effectiveness.

and universities and 620,000 students have participated in the NSSE project since 2000.

Building on NSSE’s experience, proven research, and widespread use, the LSSSE survey offers a student-centered approach for assessing the “value added” of the law school educational experience by determining the extent to which JD students engage in good educational practices. A pilot test in spring 2003 involved approximately 4,300 students from 11 law schools across the country. Student focus groups and

The results provide insights into student behaviors and law school environments that can be addressed almost immediately to enhance student learning and law school effectiveness. Law schools already are using LSSSE results at faculty retreats and board meetings to focus discussions about the quality of legal education, to inform internal academic reviews, and to identify areas of teaching and learning where improvement may be desired.



## Law Student Engagement in 2004—A First Look

### Selected Results

All 42 law schools that administered the LSSSE survey received customized reports including comparison information for similar schools and a data file with all of their student responses. In addition, some are further analyzing their data and integrating LSSSE results with other institutional records and information from other surveys.

The following sections highlight key findings from the spring 2004 survey.

#### Promising Findings

- About 4 in 5 (82%) law students rated their law school experience “good” or “excellent,” and a similar number (79%) would “probably” or “definitely” attend the same law school.
- Two-thirds (68%) of law students spent more than 20 hours per week preparing for class, and 87% came to class with their readings or assignments completed.
- Almost 9 in 10 (88%) students said their law school, to a substantial degree, emphasizes studying and spending time on academic work.
- Three-fourths (76%) of students indicated their school placed a substantial degree of emphasis (“very much” or “quite a bit”) on the ethical practice of the law.
- Most students (94%) were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the library assistance at their law school.
- Four-fifths of students had, or plan to have, a clinical internship or field experience while in law school.
- About 74% of law students frequently (“very often” or “often”) integrated ideas from various sources into papers or projects.

- More than four-fifths (82%) of law students reported that their classes placed a substantial amount of emphasis (“quite a bit” or “very much”) on applying theories or concepts to practical problems.
- Part-time law students viewed their campus environment as equally supportive as their full-time counterparts.
- More than half (56%) of students frequently (“often” or “very often”) had serious conversations with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Almost all students (96%) at least occasionally asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions.

#### Disappointing Findings

- About one-third (32%) of students never discussed ideas from their classes or readings with a faculty member outside of class.
- More than half (56%) of 3L and 4L students had not participated in volunteer or pro bono work in law school.
- About 1 in 5 students (18%) say they “never” get prompt written or oral feedback from faculty members.
- More than half (56%) of students reported that they will incur \$60,000 or more of educational debt by the time they graduate from law school.
- About 6 in 10 (63%) students said their law school gives little emphasis to providing the support needed for a successful employment search.
- Half of students are “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with the job search help and career counseling their law school provides.



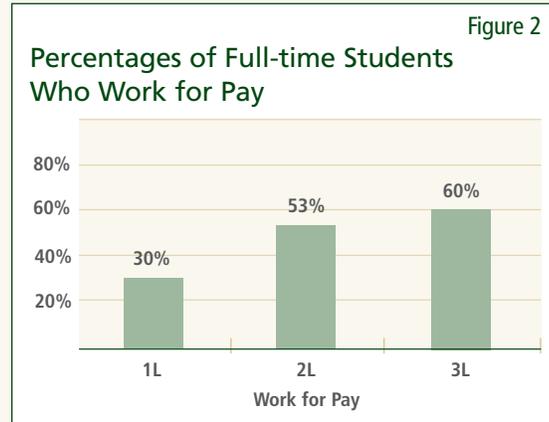
## Other Key Findings

Here are some other LSSSE 2004 highlights of the nature and frequency of law student engagement in various effective educational practices.

### Time on Task

What students put into their education determines what they get out of it. Table 1 below outlines how law students spend their time during the week.

- The more time students devote to reading for class, studying, and participating in law school-sponsored, co-curricular activities, the more likely they are to engage in other productive activities and report greater gains in desired outcomes.
- Doing legal pro bono work not required for class is positively correlated with student gains in contributing to the welfare of their community.
- About one-third (35%) of law students are caring for dependents living with them.
- Almost one-half (45%) of students spend at least one hour per week participating in community organizations.



- Half of all students work for pay. Nine in 10 part-time students (89%) work for pay, and three-quarters spend more than 30 hours per week in their jobs. The number of full-time students who work for pay varies among 1L, 2L, and 3L students (Table 1). Two-fifths of working full-time students spend more than 15 hours per week working for pay.
- Two-thirds (67%) of all students spend more than 20 hours per week studying, but the number varies by class level (Figure 2 above). About 4 in 10 (38%) spend more than 30 hours per week, and only 8% spend less than 10 hours per week preparing for class.

Table 1

### Student Time Usage Hours Spent Per Week

	1L Students		2L Students		3L Students		4L Students	
	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time
Reading for class	15	20	13	18	13	14	12	
Other studying	7	9	6	9	7	8	6	
Personal reading	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	
Pro bono work	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	
Working in law-related job	10	2	13	4	14	7	16	
Working in nonlegal job	18	2	19	2	15	3	16	
Participating in co-curricular activities	1	2	2	5	3	5	2	
Relaxing and socializing	7	10	7	11	7	11	8	
Caring for dependents	8	3	9	4	9	5	9	
Commuting to class	6	5	6	5	6	5	6	
Participating in community organizations	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	





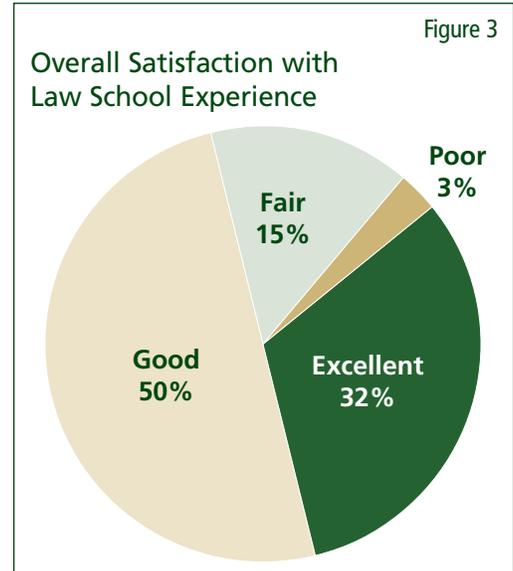
## Satisfaction with Law School Experience

A number of questions on the survey ask students to indicate their level of satisfaction with various aspects of their law school experience. Table 2 below highlights the percentage of students who reported that they are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their law school experience.

- Student satisfaction is positively related to virtually all other engagement items and dimensions of self-reported educational and personal growth.
- Half of all students are “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with the job search help and career counseling their law school provides.
- About 4 in 5 (82%) law students rate their overall law school experience “good” or “excellent.”
- Seventy-nine percent of students would “probably” or “definitely” attend the same law school.

### Law School Debt

- More than half (56%) of students reported that they will incur \$60,000 or more of educational debt by the time they graduate from law school. Seventeen percent estimate they will have from \$40,001 to \$60,000 of debt, 10% from \$20,001 to \$40,000, and 5% will owe less than \$20,000. Only about one-tenth (11%) indicated they will be debt-free after completing the JD.



- Even though many students have high levels of educational debt, 7 in 10 students are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the financial aid counseling their school provides.

### Grades

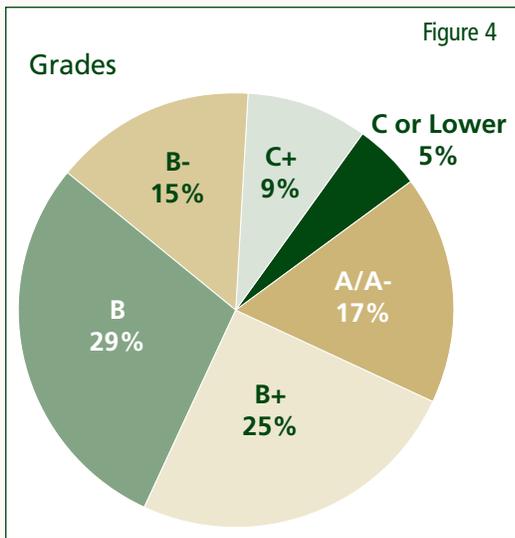
- About 4 in 10 (42%) students reported earning grades of B+ or better in law school (Figure 4).

Table 2

Student Satisfaction				
	1L Students*	2L Students*	3L Students*	4L Students*
Library assistance	94%	94%	94%	97%
Computing technology	78%	79%	78%	79%
Financial aid advising	73%	66%	69%	70%
Academic advising and counseling	65%	57%	59%	53%
Personal counseling	60%	55%	56%	53%
Career counseling	59%	47%	41%	49%
Job search help	55%	48%	41%	48%

\* Percentage of students who responded “satisfied” or “very satisfied”

## Law School Activities



A major focus of the LSSSE survey is on the types of activities in which students take part, inside and outside the classroom. A “substantial amount” of engagement is defined to be at least 50% of all students who responded “often” or “very often” on a given item (Table 3).

The least frequent activities are those in which the percentage of students who responded “never” exceeded 35%, meaning that roughly one-third had no experiences in these areas during the 2003-2004 academic year.

Table 3

Law School Activities				
Most Frequent Activities	1L Students*	2L Students*	3L Students*	4L Students*
Came to class with readings or assignments completed	91%	86%	78%	85%
Worked on a paper or assignment that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	80%	68%	71%	65%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)	71%	69%	64%	62%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	67%	57%	55%	61%
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	65%	66%	55%	45%
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet a faculty member’s standards or expectations	62%	53%	47%	46%
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	57%	55%	63%	47%
Used e-mail to communicate with a faculty member	53%	59%	64%	49%
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	48%	52%	55%	65%

\* Percentage of students who responded “very often” or “often”

Least Frequent Activities	1L Students*	2L Students*	3L Students*	4L Students*
Participated in clinical or pro bono project as part of a course or for academic credit	88%	74%	52%	68%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	68%	50%	51%	67%

\* Percentage of students who responded “never”



## Educational and Personal Growth

A number of questions on the survey asked students to self-report the extent to which their law school experience has contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development. Table 4 below highlights the percentage of students who reported substantial (“very much” and “quite a bit”) gains from their educational experience in law school.

Table 4

### Self-Reported Educational and Personal Growth Gains From Law School

	1L Students*	2L Students*	3L Students*	4L Students*
Acquiring a broad legal education	89%	89%	88%	87%
Thinking critically and analytically	89%	87%	87%	82%
Developing legal research skills	86%	81%	81%	77%
Writing clearly and effectively	74%	71%	70%	76%
Learning effectively on your own	74%	73%	74%	74%
Speaking clearly and effectively	68%	62%	65%	52%
Acquiring job- or work-related knowledge and skills	57%	67%	58%	56%
Understanding yourself	49%	50%	51%	45%
Using computing and information technology	46%	43%	44%	30%
Solving complex real-world problems	45%	45%	47%	43%
Developing a personal code of values and ethics	42%	42%	45%	37%
Working effectively with others	37%	36%	40%	25%
Developing clearer career goals	36%	39%	37%	34%
Contributing to the welfare of your community	33%	35%	35%	28%
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	21%	25%	25%	23%

\* Percentage of students who responded “very much” or “quite a bit”

8 of 10 law school students report making substantial progress developing their legal research skills.

## Enriching Educational Experiences

LSSSE reports student participation in selected enriching educational experiences. Table 5 below shows certain types of students are likely to engage in various activities before graduation. Only 3L and 4L students are represented, because by this point in their studies they likely have done these experiences or will not participate in these experiences before graduating.

- On balance, women, African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, students of Hispanic origin, and joint degree students are more likely to participate in one or more enriching activities.
- Part-time students and returning students (who enrolled in law school more than five years after earning an undergraduate degree) are less likely than their counterparts to participate in one or more of these activities.
- Foreign nationals and transfer students are more likely to participate in several of these enriching activities, but are less likely than other JD students to participate in a student-faculty committee, journal, or law student organization.

Table 5

### Likelihood of Participating in Educationally Enriching Experiences

Student	Clinical internship or field experience	Volunteer or pro bono work	Student-faculty committee	Research with faculty member outside of program	Study abroad	Law journal	Moot court	Law student organization member	Law student organization leader
Female	+	+					-	+	+
African American (vs. White)	+	+		-		-	+	+	+
Asian/Pacific (vs. White)		+	-		+			+	
Hispanic (vs. White)			+			-	-	+	+
Foreign National		+	-	+	+	-		-	-
Part-time	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-
Joint Degree	-		+	+	+		+		+
Transfer	+	+	-		+	-	+	-	-
Returning	-	-	-	+		-	-	-	-

+ indicates student is more likely to participate

- indicates student is less likely to participate



Part-time students are less likely than full-time students to participate in enriching educational experiences while in law school.

## Using LSSSE Data

Law schools are using their LSSSE results in a variety of ways:

- **Institutional evaluation and improvement.** Some LSSSE schools are incorporating their results into the ABA accreditation review. Because the ABA values student input in the self-study process, schools find LSSSE results to be helpful in their internal evaluation efforts and identifying areas in which the student experience can be enhanced.
- **Faculty development.** LSSSE schools indicate that faculty members gain insight into their students' experiences by comparing them to what students at comparable law schools report.
- **Resource allocation.** At several schools, LSSSE results prompted thoughtful discussion about how resources might be best allocated to enhance the learning environment.
- **Evaluating the 3L experience.** While many law schools know a good deal about the experiences of their 1L and 2L students, information about 3L students is often limited. LSSSE schools are using their data to stimulate discussions about understanding and improving the 3L experience.
- **Respect for student opinions.** Law schools note that conducting the LSSSE survey demonstrates respect for student opinions. Incorporating student feedback into institutional decision-making further shows the value of student input.
- **Examining trends.** Some schools are very interested in monitoring their LSSSE results over time in order to document improvements in the law student experience in response to interventions they are planning.

The LSSSE survey was designed to provide information law schools can use to improve the quality of the JD experience. Over the next year, LSSSE will seek to work closely with participating schools to help them further analyze their data and put their results into action.

### Final Thoughts

We close this first report on law student engagement by saluting the leadership shown by those law schools participating in LSSSE 2004. Thanks to their commitment, legal education has taken an important step toward learning more about law school quality.

Everyone wants the same thing from our law schools—a law school experience that results in high levels of learning and personal development for all students. To realize this goal, key players—deans, academic and student life administrators, faculty members, and students—must work together to structure learning opportunities and arrange institutional resources so that more students can take part in a variety of challenging and complementary educational activities inside and outside the classroom.

We don't minimize the challenges that lie ahead. Improving law student engagement requires more than the results of an annual survey. This is why LSSSE aims to join with other like-minded people and organizations to identify and describe transformative exemplars, such as law schools that have intentionally changed the way they work with students to promote higher levels of student engagement that translate into higher levels of learning and personal development. And we also need to link law student engagement data with valid outcome measurements of student learning. Along the way we'll surely discover additional activities and institutional factors that need to be assessed and improved. We're very much looking forward to the journey and welcome your suggestions and help.

## Notes

### Supporting Materials on the LSSSE Web site

For more detailed information in the following areas, please visit the LSSSE Web site at:

[www.iub.edu/~nsse/lssse](http://www.iub.edu/~nsse/lssse)

- Copy of LSSSE's survey instrument
- Profiles of all participating law schools
- LSSSE 2004 descriptive statistics by student class year, law school affiliation, and law school size.
- Registration information on LSSSE's second national administration in spring 2005

### Resources

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R. Lawrence Dessem, *Principle 5: Good Practice Emphasizes Time on Task*, 49 J. L. EDUC. 430, 430-440 (1999)

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ERNEST T. PASCARELLA & PATRICK T. TERENCE, *HOW COLLEGE AFFECTS STUDENTS: FINDINGS AND INSIGHTS FROM TWENTY YEARS OF RESEARCH* (1991).

STUDY GROUP ON THE CONDITIONS OF EXCELLENCE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION, *INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING* (1984).



## LSSSE 2004 Participating Law Schools

Ave Maria School of Law,  
Ann Arbor, MI

Brigham Young University – J. Reuben Clark  
Law School,  
Provo, UT

Brooklyn Law School,  
Brooklyn, NY

The Catholic University of America, The  
Columbus School of Law,  
Washington, DC

Cleveland State University Cleveland-Marshall  
College of Law,  
Cleveland, OH

Drake University Law School,  
Des Moines, IA

Fordham University School of Law,  
New York, NY

Franklin Pierce Law Center,  
Concord, NH

Indiana University School of Law – Bloomington,  
Bloomington, IN

Michigan State University – DCL College of Law,  
East Lansing, MI

New York Law School,  
New York, NY

Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad  
Law Center,  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Ohio Northern University, Pettit College of Law,  
Ada, OH

Oklahoma City University School of Law,  
Oklahoma City, OK

Pace University School of Law,  
White Plains, NY

St. John's University School of Law,  
Jamaica, NY

St. Thomas University School of Law,  
Miami, FL

Samford University, Cumberland School of Law,  
Birmingham, AL

Seattle University School of Law,  
Seattle, WA

South Texas College of Law,  
Houston, TX

Southern Illinois University School of Law,  
Carbondale, IL

Syracuse University College of Law,  
Syracuse, NY

Temple University Beasley School of Law,  
Philadelphia, PA

Texas Tech University School of Law,  
Lubbock, TX

Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center,  
Huntington, NY

University of Arkansas at Little Rock  
School of Law,  
Little Rock, AR

University of Detroit Mercy School of Law,  
Detroit, MI

University of the District of Columbia, David A.  
Clarke School of Law,  
Washington, DC

University of Idaho College of Law,  
Moscow, ID

University of Missouri – Columbia  
School of Law,  
Columbia, MO

University of Missouri – Kansas City  
School of Law,  
Kansas City, MO

University of Montana School of Law,  
Missoula, MT

University of Richmond, The T.C. Williams  
School of Law,  
Richmond, VA

University of St. Thomas School of Law,  
Minneapolis, MN

University of Tennessee College of Law,  
Knoxville, TN

University of Tulsa College of Law,  
Tulsa, OK

Valparaiso University School of Law,  
Valparaiso, IN

Washburn University School of Law,  
Topeka, KS

Washington and Lee University School of Law,  
Lexington, VA

Washington University School of Law,  
St. Louis, MO

Western New England College School of Law,  
Springfield, MA

William Mitchell College of Law,  
St. Paul, MN

## LSSSE 2003 Pilot Test Law Schools

Brigham Young University – J. Reuben Clark  
Law School,  
Provo, UT

College of William & Mary, Marshall-Wythe  
School of Law,  
Williamsburg, VA

Duke University School of Law,  
Durham, NC

Fordham University School of Law,  
New York, NY

Indiana University School of Law – Bloomington,  
Bloomington, IN

New York Law School,  
New York, NY

University of the District of Columbia – David A.  
Clarke School of Law,  
Washington, DC

University of Florida, Levin College of Law,  
Gainesville, FL

University of Minnesota Law School,  
Minneapolis, MN

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
School of Law,  
Chapel Hill, NC

University of Wisconsin Law School,  
Madison, WI



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