



# LOOKING AHEAD: ASSESSMENT IN LEGAL EDUCATION

ANNUAL RESULTS 2014



Law School Survey of  
Student Engagement



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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 legal education.



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The Law School Survey of Student Engagement is part of Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research, a research center in the School of Education devoted to studying the student experience. In addition to LSSSE, CPR houses the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSSE) and the NSSSE Institute, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), and the Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE).

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## CREDITS

Many thanks to the following for contributing photos for use in this report.

### Front Cover

*Background*  
Charlotte School of Law

*Insets (top to bottom)*  
Charlotte School of Law  
St Mary's University School of Law  
University of Idaho College of Law

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DePaul University College of Law

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SUNY Buffalo Law School

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Texas A&M University School of Law  
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### Back Cover

*Background*  
Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad  
Law Center

*Insets (top to bottom)*  
Northwestern University School of Law  
UCLA School of Law



## QUICK FACTS

### OBJECTIVES

To provide data to law schools to improve legal education and inform decision-making and compliance efforts, enhance student success, facilitate internal assessment and analysis, and support research on legal education.

### SURVEY

Administered to all students at participating law schools via the Internet. Survey completion time is approximately 15-20 minutes.

### SUPPORT

LSSSE is housed at Indiana University's Center for Postsecondary Research, and is supported by law school participation fees. Since its inception, LSSSE has benefitted from close working relationships with the Association of American Law Schools and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

### PARTICIPATING LAW SCHOOLS

One hundred and eighty-nine different law schools in the United States, Canada and Australia have participated in LSSSE since 2004.

### RESPONDENTS AND RESPONSE RATES

In 2014, 21,173 students at 70 law schools responded to the LSSSE survey. The average institutional response rate was 51%.

### AUDIENCES

Law school administrators and faculty, current and prospective law students, alumni, advisory boards, trustees, institutional researchers, accrediting organizations, and researchers studying legal education.

### DATA SOURCES

Survey responses and comments from JD/LLB students enrolled at participating law schools. Supplemental information used in analysis and reporting is obtained from the American Bar Association and the Law School Admission Council.

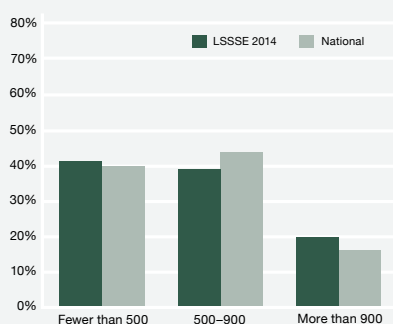
### COST

Participation fees range from \$3,000 to \$5,000, based upon student enrollment.

### PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

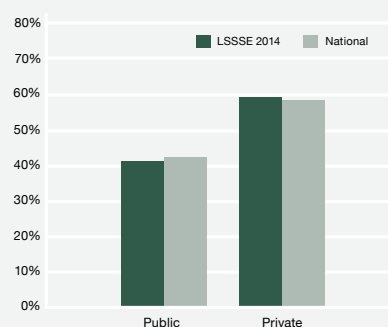
Results specific to a law school and identified as such will not be made public by LSSSE without the explicit agreement of the school. Participating law schools agree that LSSSE may use the aggregated data for national reporting purposes and other legal education initiatives, including research conducted by LSSSE staff or independent scholars.

Figure 1 Size of LSSSE 2014 U.S. Law Schools<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Compared to National Profile of ABA Approved Law Schools. National percentages are based on data from the ABA and the LSAC.

Figure 2 Affiliation of LSSSE 2014 U.S. Law Schools<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Compared to National Profile of ABA Approved Law Schools. National percentages are based on data from the ABA and the LSAC.



## FOREWORD: CATHERINE L. CARPENTER

Anecdotal observations are interesting, but data-driven information is powerful. More than any other time in legal education, we need data, not stories, to shape our decision-making.

Enter LSSSE. Originally perceived by some as an interesting peek into how students perceive their educational experience, the Survey, now in its tenth year, is viewed as an essential tool to track and assess student engagement and the success of academic policies and procedures. All for good reason. We have come to understand the importance of student engagement in the learning process. That engagement is a critical component to the success of our students – both in law school and beyond.

As legal educators, we sometimes make assumptions about the impact and effectiveness of our programs and legal education, generally. Unfortunately, our assumptions sometimes prove false. Consider the recent national conversation on curricular reform. There was considerable conjecture and anecdotal information about current law school curricula. Yet, some of those impressions were formed by outdated personal experiences or without the benefit of sufficient data.

I was privileged to be part of a project that examined law school curriculum at all ABA-approved law schools. The ABA Survey of Law School Curriculum: 2002-2012 contributed to the national conversation of curricular reform by injecting empirical information into the discussion. So too, LSSSE offers law schools the opportunity to view students' experiences more concretely and in the context of a larger database.

Take my own law school, Southwestern, for example. We were first introduced to the value of LSSSE as an assessment tool when Bryant Garth became dean of Southwestern Law School in 2005. We quickly discovered that we had been relying on assumptions and anecdotes to evaluate whether we were encouraging the ethical practice of law. After all, we offered a course in Professional Responsibility, we spoke about responsible and ethical lawyering in our doctrinal classes, and we focused on the subject in clinical and externship experiences. Plus our faculty were model sandbox players, committed to important work on the state and national level. Surely, our students found that we were imparting this important message. Not so much, as we discovered in the 2006 LSSSE results. On the question of whether we encouraged the ethical practice of law, students across all grade levels rated us below the average of our peer schools and the overall pool of schools.

Those results were surprising to us, though our reactions were not surprising at all. They ranged from “there must be some mistake,” to “our students are just not hearing us,” to “it must be Los Angeles” (that was a particularly favorite response!). But once the sting wore off – and make no mistake about it, LSSSE results sometimes sting – the data armed us with important information and with our marching orders.

**“WITH THE PASSING OF NEW ABA STANDARDS ON LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENTS, LAW SCHOOLS WILL BE IN SEARCH OF ASSESSMENT TOOLS THAT TRACK AND ASSESS INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES. LAW SCHOOLS THAT ARE NOT YET FAMILIAR WITH LSSSE WILL FIND IT TO BE AN INVALUABLE ASSESSMENT TOOL BECAUSE OF THE BREADTH OF QUESTIONS, THE TARGET TRACKING OF FIRST YEAR AND UPPER DIVISION STUDENTS, AND THE ABILITY TO SELECT PEER SCHOOLS FOR COMPARATIVE RESULTS.”**





That year, the faculty set about to change student perceptions of whether we encouraged the ethical practice of law. And in the course of change, we found a clearer and more unified voice on the message. We modified aspects of Orientation and the first year curriculum to include sessions on ethical lawyering and professionalism. We introduced an ethical problem as one of the first semester legal writing assignments, and we offered Professional Responsibility in an expanded form as an elective to our first year students. For upper division students, we retooled the Professional Responsibility course to include experiential learning components and we added programs and panels on professionalism. Finally, with a greatly expanded set of experiential offerings, we were able to reach a broader segment of the upper division class with this message.

As a result, we saw dramatic improvement. We went from 2.6 (on a 4-point scale) in 2006 to 3.2 by 2011. Might we have made the same changes without the 2006 LSSSE results? Possibly. But it is equally possible that we would not have realized that our message on ethical lawyering was ineffective. And even if we had made the changes on our own, we would not have been able to track their progress without the benefit of annual LSSSE results.

An even more prominent future is in store for LSSSE, I suspect. With the passing of new ABA Standards on learning outcomes assessments, law schools will be in search of assessment tools that track and assess institutional policies. Law schools that are not yet familiar with LSSSE will find it to be an invaluable assessment tool because of the breadth of questions, the target tracking of first year and upper division students, and the ability to select peer schools for comparative results. This is the kind of data that is needed in this climate, even if the information sometimes sting a little.

Congratulations, LSSSE, on your tenth anniversary!



**Catherine L. Carpenter**  
**Vice Dean and Professor of Law**  
**Southwestern Law School**

**“ANECDOTAL OBSERVATIONS ARE INTERESTING, BUT DATA-DRIVEN INFORMATION IS POWERFUL. MORE THAN ANY OTHER TIME IN LEGAL EDUCATION, WE NEED DATA, NOT STORIES, TO SHAPE OUR DECISION-MAKING.”**



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE: AARON N. TAYLOR

Over the last few years legal education has been the target of much criticism. Too many students. Too many schools. Not enough jobs. Not practical enough. Too expensive. Too long. The list of perceived and actual shortcomings could fill this entire page. But lost in the din is a positive development that deserves some trumpeting: an assessment culture is budding in legal education.

There have long been voices insisting that law schools had an obligation to measure whether we were delivering on promises made to students and to the profession. During robust times, those calls fell mostly on deaf ears. But recently the calls for data-driven accountability have grown louder, as more stakeholders have joined the chorus. With the value and utility of legal education being questioned, assumptions and anecdotes are no longer accepted answers.

Now, more than 20 years after assessment became a staple in other sectors of higher education, conversations are now taking place within legal education about the role of data in measuring effectiveness and informing decision making.

Law schools are convening among each other to share best practices and insights. In November, LSSSE commemorated its 10th anniversary by hosting a symposium titled, *Data and Assessment in Legal Education: The Necessities, The Possibilities*. The Symposium featured presentations and interactive panels discussing the importance of data-informed decision making in curricular reforms, enrollment management, student selection strategies, and student services.

In September, I attended a conference on assessment hosted by Educating Tomorrow's Lawyers (ETL), an initiative that seeks to align legal education with the needs of the profession by fostering collaboration. Many of the attendees were among the early voices advocating assessment, and it was invigorating to learn from them and others who share a passion for the topic.

Of considerable interest are the new ABA standards requiring schools to develop and assess student learning outcomes. The standards represent a significant step in instilling the type of assessment imperative that already exists in other sectors of higher education. They signal to law schools that assessment must be a priority, indeed a standard practice.







A primary challenge (and opportunity) for law schools will be to build an assessment culture. We have long used discrete sets of numbers for discrete purposes. We rely heavily on Law School Admission Test scores and undergraduate grade point averages to select our students. We use grades and rankings to sort our students. We even calculate bar passage rates, employment rates, and other post-graduation outcomes of our former students.

But assessment is holistic. It is goal-driven. It is reflective. It is iterative. It is results-oriented. Without assessment it is impossible to know the role we play in success. And the odds of being caught flat-footed by changing circumstances, like a looming downturn, are heightened.

Assessment requires valid and reliable tools. For more than 10 years, law schools have administered LSSSE in order to gain insight about the effects of their programs on their students. The concept of student engagement is based on the premise that the more engrossing the educational experience, the more students will gain from it.

Engagement is greatly influenced by what we do as educators—the courses we design, the interactions we foster, the opportunities we embed, the expectations we set, the messages we send. Student engagement and student learning tend to flow together.

As LSSSE enters its second decade, we are excited about the future. And as law schools consider what they do, why they do it, and how well they are doing it, LSSSE will be a resource. At last, an assessment culture is budding in legal education. And we are ready for it.



**Aaron N. Taylor**  
**Director, Law School Survey of**  
**Student Engagement**  
**Indiana University Center for**  
**Postsecondary Research**  
**Assistant Professor of Law**  
**Saint Louis University**  
**School of Law**

**“BUT ASSESSMENT IS HOLISTIC. IT IS GOAL-DRIVEN. IT IS REFLECTIVE. IT IS ITERATIVE. IT IS RESULTS-ORIENTED. WITHOUT ASSESSMENT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW THE ROLE WE PLAY IN SUCCESS. AND THE ODDS OF BEING CAUGHT FLAT-FOOTED BY CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES, LIKE A LOOMING DOWNTURN, ARE HEIGHTENED. ”**



## SELECTED RESULTS

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement focuses on activities that affect learning in law school. The results show how law students use their time and what they think about their law school experiences, and also highlight ways that law schools can improve student engagement and learning.

The selected results reported in this section are based on responses from 21,173 law students at 70 law schools who completed LSSSE in the spring of 2014. We also draw on responses to two sets of experimental questions appended to the survey and given to different subsets of the 2014 respondents.

These results represent just a small sampling of the information LSSSE collects each year. In addition to the three themes featured on the following pages, LSSSE data provide insight into the ways in which particular law school programs, practices and curricular efforts relate to student success and student engagement. They also identify differences in the ways that various groups of students experience law school, and reveal changes in the law school experience from year to year. These findings can yield important lessons about the law school experience writ large, and, at the school-level, about the experiences of students in the classroom and in the wider school environment. Below we highlight just a few results from the 2014 administration to provide an idea of the breadth of issues that LSSSE data can inform.

## RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

### Gender

Male and female students are nearly equally represented in the respondent group, which is comprised of 48% males and 52% females.



**17%**  
were part-time  
students

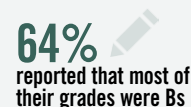


### Enrollment

Seventeen percent of students responding to the survey were part-time students. Four percent of respondents had transferred from another law school, and 4% of respondents were participating in a joint-degree program.

### Grades

Approximately 28% of all students reported earning mostly A grades. The majority of students reported that most of their grades were Bs (64%).



**74%**  
were between  
ages 23 and 30



### Age

A majority of respondents (74%) were between ages 23 and 30. About half (51%) of respondents were 25 or under, while 31% were between the ages of 26 to 30. Seven percent of respondents were 22 or younger. Fourteen percent of students were 31-40, and 5% were over 40 years of age.

**“OVERALL, MY EXPERIENCE AT {LAW SCHOOL} HAS BEEN WONDERFUL. I BELIEVE THE CURRICULUM OFFERED ME A SUITABLE MIXTURE OF PRACTICAL, REAL-LIFE CLASSES AND THEORETICAL, THOUGHT-PROVOKING CLASSES.”**

— COMMENT FROM 3L



## SELECTED RESULTS



27 Hours – average time spent per week reading assigned material and engaging in other types of class preparation



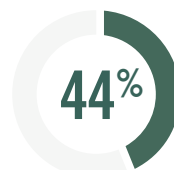
80% of students reported that their law school placed a substantial emphasis on encouraging the ethical practice of law



30% were unsatisfied with their experience with financial aid assistance



62% never participated in a clinical or pro bono project as part of a course for academic credit



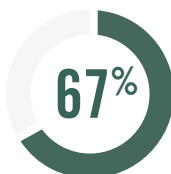
44% never worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework



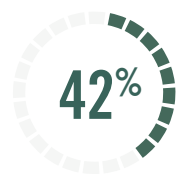
Law School Debt: 33% expect to owe more than 120,000 at graduation



Half of all respondents (50%) reported that their law school placed a substantial emphasis on providing the support they needed to succeed in their employment search



67% of students reported that their law school placed a substantial emphasis on providing the support needed to succeed academically



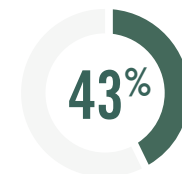
42% of 3Ls spent some time each week working for pay in a law-related job during the school year



65% of students had serious conversations with students who are very different from them in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions or personal values



Only 12% of students frequently attended events about religious or philosophical differences, and 17% of student frequently attended events on issues of gender or sexual orientation



43% spent some time each week participating in community organizations



71% OF 1L STUDENTS AND 55% OF 3L STUDENTS REPORTED THAT THEY FREQUENTLY WORKED HARDER THAN THEY COULD TO MEET FACULTY MEMBERS STANDARDS OR EXPECTATIONS







## FIRST GENERATION STUDENTS

First-generation students face a myriad of challenges in higher education. At the undergraduate level, they tend to apply to college with lower admissions indicators (e.g., grade point averages, standardized test scores) than other students, and once enrolled, they tend to persist and graduate at lower rates. The challenges faced by first-generation students have roots in academic, social, and financial realms. Higher education scholar, Ernest Pascarella, summed up the encompassing nature of the challenges thus:

*“The weight of evidence...indicates that, compared to their peers, first-generation college students tend to be at a distinct disadvantage with respect to basic knowledge about postsecondary education (e.g., costs and application process), level of family income and support, educational degree expectations and plans, and academic preparation in high school.”*<sup>1</sup>

The bulk of the research on first-generation students focuses on the undergraduate experience. There are relatively few studies on the graduate experience, and they tend to suggest that the challenges facing first-generation students persist beyond the attainment of an undergraduate degree. There is almost no research on first-generation students who go on to attend law school. Therefore, the data presented in this section will explore largely unexamined questions.

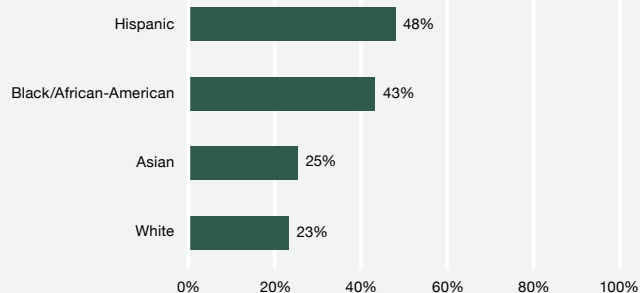
### DEMOGRAPHICS

In order to identify first-generation college students, we asked students to identify “the highest level of education completed by either of your parents (or the people who raised you).” Response options ranged from “did not finish high school” to “doctoral or professional degree.” Students who responded that neither parent had received a bachelor’s degree or higher were considered first-generation students (this is the commonly used definition in the higher education research literature.)

Approximately 27% of LSSSE respondents were first-generation students. First-generation students were evenly distributed among 1L, 2L, and 3L classes, but a higher percentage of 4Ls (32%) were first-generation.

Consistent with extant research on race and educational attainment, larger proportions of Hispanic students (48%) and black/African-American students (43%) were first-generation students. The proportions of first-generation white students (23%) and Asian students (25%) were much lower, though nonetheless noteworthy.

Percentage of First Generation Status by Race/Ethnicity



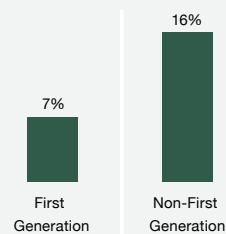
### FINDINGS

We analyzed differences in the experiences of first-generation students compared to other students through the lenses of academic preparation, debt, how they spent their time, and their feelings of satisfaction with their law school experience.

### ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

We found that first-generation students, on average, entered law school with lower LSAT scores than other students, 152.5 compared to 155.9. UGPA differences were negligible, 3.28 among first-generation students, 3.32 for other students. In law school, first-generation students reported having a “B” average; compared to a B+ average for other students.

Percentage of Law Students Reporting No Educational Debt



### STUDENT LOAN DEBT

Most law students rely on loans to fund their education. But first-generation students rely on loans to greater extents than other students. More than 86% of LSSSE respondents reported having incurred student loan debt before or during law school. Within this group, more than 93% of first-generation students had incurred loan debt, compared 84% of other students. Put differently, the proportion of first-generation students with no education debt was less than half the proportion among other students.

<sup>1</sup> Pascarella, E. T., Pierson, C. T., Wolniak, G. C., & Terenzini, P. T. (2004). First generation college students Additional evidence on college experiences and outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education*, 75 (3), 249-284.

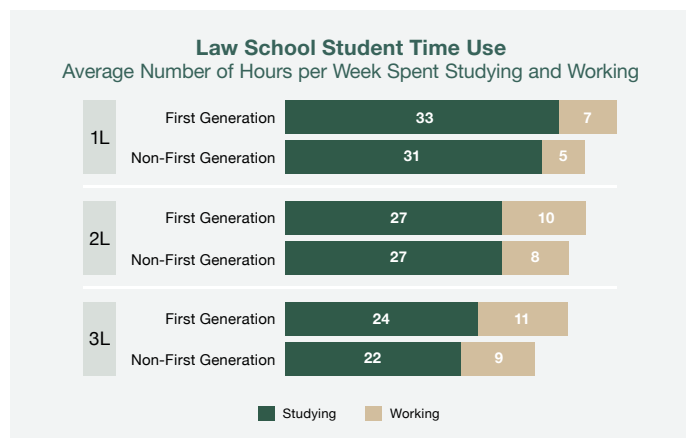


First-generation students reported higher loan debt than other students, particularly in the latter years of study. On average, first-generation, full-time 3Ls reported 23% more debt than other 3Ls—\$97,000 compared to \$79,000. Part-time, first-generation students in their fourth year reported 26% more debt than other students in the same class—\$97,000 compared to \$77,000. These self-reported figures likely understate the actual debt loads these students have incurred, but the trends of higher reliance on debt for first-generation students are both intuitive and supported by the student debt research.

Lower levels of personal and family wealth likely contribute to the higher reliance on student loans by first-generation students. Law school financial aid policies could also contribute. Law schools tend to award the most lucrative merit scholarships to students with higher LSAT scores and undergraduate GPAs. Because first-generation students tend to score lower on both indicators, they likely have a lower proportion of their education costs subsidized by scholarship aid.

## USE OF TIME

First-generation students reported spending about 8% more time studying for class and 25% more time working for pay, compared to other students. The disparities in time spent studying are greatest in the latter years of study. First-generation 3Ls reported spending 8.5% more time studying than other 3Ls. Part-time, first-generation students in the fourth year reported spending 17% more time studying than other students in the same year. The additional time spent studying may be the result of many factors that could evolve over time. For example, differences in entering student credentials could necessitate that first-generation students spend additional time early on, while additional time later on could be motivated by a desire to shore up grades before graduation.



Disparities in the amount of time spent working are most pronounced in the first year, when first-generation students report spending 40% more time. The actual hours spent do not seem particularly high for either group, but aggregated over the course of the school year, the additional time adds up. It is hard to speculate on the effects, if any, of these differences. But it is worth noting the conventional wisdom regarding avoiding employment during the first year of full-time study.

Co-curricular activities are critical components of the academic experience. These activities often supplement class discussions and aid in the development of new skills. They can also make students more attractive to potential employers. First-generation students reported lower rates of participation in some of the most prominent co-curricular activities, such as law journal, moot court, and faculty research assistantships. Eligibility for these activities is often determined by law school grades. So the grade trends discussed earlier could contribute to participation trends. Differences in time spent studying for class and working for pay could also contribute.

Table 1 Participating in Activities Outside of Class

	FG Law Student	NFG Law Student
Member of Law Journal	18%	27%
Participate in Moot Court	13%	15%
Research with Faculty Member	15%	19%

## SATISFACTION

Despite the challenges facing first-generation students, they report being equally, if not more, satisfied with their law school experiences than other students. First-generation students reported higher satisfaction with student advising, more favorable perceptions of the law school environment, and a greater belief that they are learning how to think like a lawyer. These trends persisted across class levels.

Table 2 Percent “satisfied” with academic advising (selected very satisfied/satisfied)

		FG Law Student	NFG Law Student
Academic Advising	1L	76%	73%
	2L	69%	64%
	3L	66%	65%
	Overall	71%	67%



# SUPPORTING LAW STUDENTS

## LAW SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Student support services are critical components of the education process. In their best form, student services work in furtherance of the academic mission of the institution and contribute to the health, well-being, and overall success of students. Student perceptions of the extent to which their school cares about them are important and are informed in large part by satisfaction with student support services. Embedded in the concept of student satisfaction are other concepts, such as sense of belonging, that are precursors to academic and social engagement—the critical building blocks of student success. Robust, integrated, and intrusive student services yield an array of positive outcomes that contribute to student success.

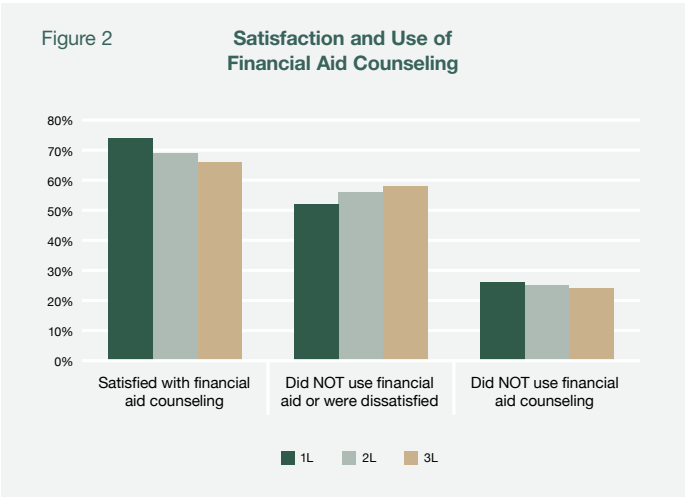
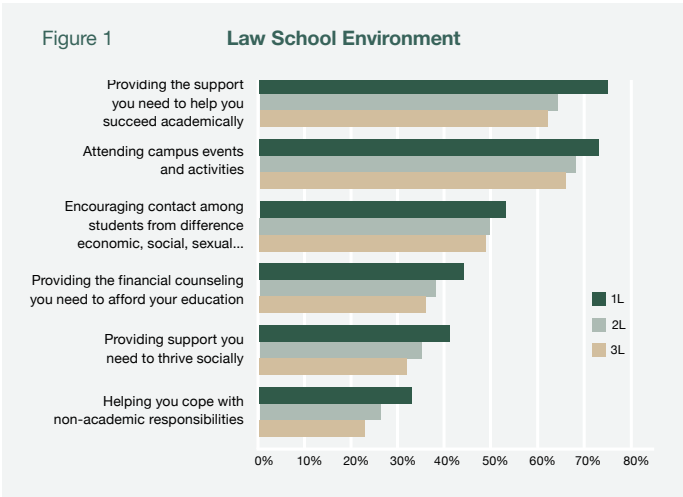
LSSSE consists of six question prompts that together comprise of the Law School Environment Engagement Indicator. These questions relate to student perceptions of the quality of student services, both overall and in specific areas. Below are the prompts that explore this theme:

To what extent does your law school emphasize:

- i) Encouraging contact among students from difference economic, social, sexual orientation, and racial or ethnic backgrounds
- ii) Providing support you need to thrive socially
- iii) Helping you cope with non-academic responsibilities
- iv) Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically
- v) Attending campus events and activities
- vi) Providing the financial counseling you need to afford your education

LSSSE found significant differences in these perceptions by class year. On every question, perceptions were most favorable among 1Ls and least favorable among 3Ls (Figure 1).

Overall, perceptions are most favorable for academic support and campus events and activities. On the other hand fewer than half of students, irrespective of class, felt that their school provided sufficient levels of non-academic support, including financial aid counseling.







## FINANCIAL AID COUNSELING

Only 44% of 1Ls, 38% of 2Ls, and 36% of 3Ls reported that their law school provided sufficient financial aid counseling (Figure 1). More troublingly, almost a quarter of 3L students (23%) reported that their law school placed “very little” emphasis on financial aid counseling. These trends are concerning because of the prevalence of high education debt among law students and the resulting importance of information on debt management. Moreover, ABA Standard 507 requires law schools to “demonstrate reasonable steps to minimize student loan defaults, including provision of debt counseling.” Student perspectives are germane to this Standard and whether law schools are in compliance.

About three-quarters of students reported receiving financial aid counseling from their school. A large, though declining, majority of these students were satisfied with that counseling. For example, 74% of 1Ls who received counseling were satisfied, along with 69% of 2Ls and 66% of 3Ls. While these trends suggest that financial aid counseling was mostly effective for those who received it, other data suggest that most students were either unsatisfied with counseling or were not counseled at all (Figure 2). This is a troubling trend, even after accounting for students who reported having no education debt (about 14% overall).



**“AS MUCH AS I FEEL THAT TAKING OUT LOANS TO FUND MY LEGAL EDUCATION HAS BEEN AND WILL BE WORTH IT, IT’S REALLY, REALLY SCARY TO GRADUATE WITH THIS MUCH DEBT - AND I DO FEEL A LITTLE WORSE ABOUT IT KNOWING THAT OTHER MEMBERS OF MY CLASS GOT SUBSTANTIALLY MORE SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT FROM THE SCHOOL BASED ONLY ON THEIR LSAT SCORES...IT DOES KIND OF DEVALUE EVERYTHING ELSE IN A PERSON’S LIFE AND BACKGROUND TO SEE FINANCIAL AID DOLED OUT THAT WAY.”**

— COMMENT FROM 3L



## DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

The ability to analyze issues from different viewpoints is critical to effective advocacy. Therefore, it is important that law students are exposed to diverse ideas and people. The benefits of such exposure are well-documented in the higher education research literature. They include gains in critical thinking skills, greater levels of satisfaction with the educational experience, positive perceptions of the campus environment, and enhanced leadership skills. Both formal and informal opportunities for exposure can yield benefits.

This issue of diversity remains salient in legal education and higher education, generally. The Supreme Court of the United States has deemed diversity in higher education a compelling state interest, noting that in the law school context “diversity promotes learning outcomes and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce, for society, and for the legal profession.” It has been argued repeatedly and compellingly that the purposeful cultivation of environments that promote diverse student interactions benefits law students and the legal profession.

LSSSE seeks insights on the extent to which students are exposed to diverse ideas and people. Related questions revolve around three themes:

- The nature and frequency of student interactions with peers of different backgrounds;
- The extent to which students considered and included diverse perspectives in class discussions and assignments; and
- The extent to which law schools encouraged diverse interactions and understanding among students.

Results from the 2014 LSSSE survey find that:



Two-thirds of all law students report that they frequently have serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity.



More than half of law students included diverse perspectives (different races, religious, sexual orientations, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments.



Half of all law students report that their law school places a substantial emphasis on encouraging contact among students from different economic social, sexual orientation, and racial or ethnic backgrounds.

This year, LSSSE administered a set of experimental questions that examined the extent to which law school sponsored events and activities (e.g. panel discussions, “lunch and learn” talks) discussed issues relating to societal differences. This is an important area of inquiry because events and activities serve a vital co-curricular function. The questions were submitted to a subset of participating law schools; 6,549 responses were received from students enrolled at 20 U.S. law schools.

**“I HAVE SEEN SOME LAUDABLE CHANGES IN TERMS OF STUDENT DIVERSITY AND OVERALL SOCIAL CLIMATE... THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE AND DEBATE ON CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS.”**

— COMMENT FROM 4L



A slight majority of students (52%) said only “very little” or “some” emphasis is placed on societal differences at events or activities offered at their law school (Figure 1). However, LSSSE data found significantly lower levels of overall engagement among this group compared to students who reported that events or activities emphasized perspectives on societal differences “quite a bit” or “very much.” Therefore, it is possible that engagement differences influenced how the underlying purposes of law school sponsored events and activities were interpreted.

A little more than one-fifth of students reported frequently attending events discussing economic or social inequality (22%), different political viewpoints (22%), or issues of race, ethnicity or nationality (21%). Smaller percentages reported frequently attending events discussing issues of gender and sexual orientation (17%) or religious or philosophical differences (12%). For each topic, much larger proportions of students reported frequently engaging in relevant discussions. This trend suggests that most conversations take place outside of the context of school events and activities, though they may be encouraged by class discussions and assignments.

Figure 1

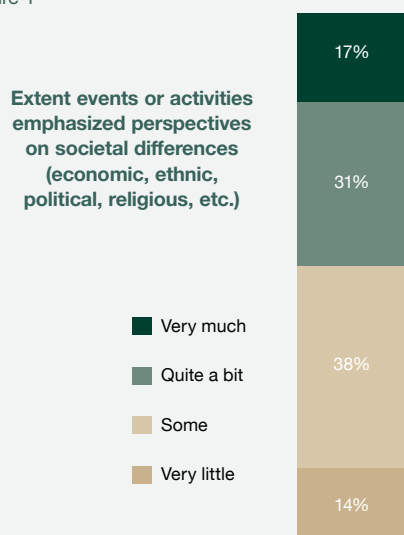
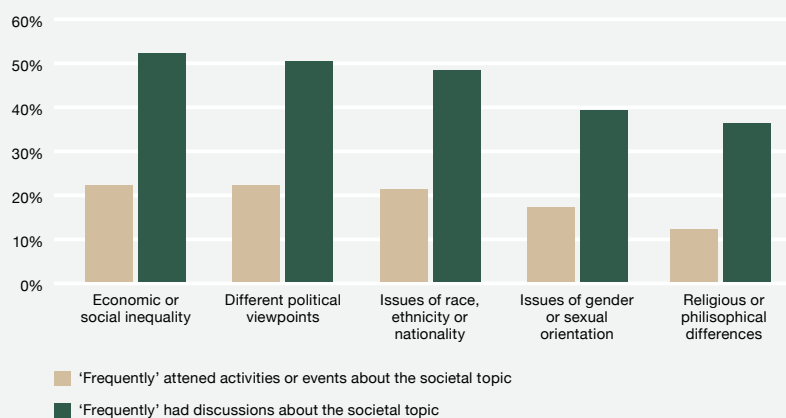


Figure 2

**Percentage of Law Students who frequently<sup>1</sup> Attended Events and Discussed Societal Topics**



<sup>1</sup> Responders who selected “often” or “very often”





## USING LSSSE DATA

Law schools administer LSSSE in order to learn about the effects of their programs on their students. Assessment is vital, and LSSSE is a valuable assessment tool. Below are ways that law schools use LSSSE to facilitate assessment.

### MEETING ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Recent changes to the ABA Standards require law schools to establish and assess student learning outcomes. Per Standard 315:

“The dean and the faculty of a law school shall conduct ongoing evaluation of the law school’s program of legal education, learning outcomes, and assessment methods; and shall use the results of this evaluation to determine the degree of student attainment of competency in the learning outcomes and to make appropriate changes to improve the curriculum.”

Learning outcomes can be difficult to measure. As a result, schools have often relied on inputs, such as course offerings, as proxies for student learning. In other words, the opportunity to learn was used as evidence that actual learning was taking place. The Standards, however, require schools to rely on outcomes to demonstrate that their curricula are having the desired effects on students. These outcomes must be measured using formative and summative assessments.

LSSSE data can be central to a law school’s self-study and strategic planning process. Interpretation 315-1 identifies “student evaluation of the sufficiency of their education” as one method that may be used to measure the degree to which students have attained desired learning outcomes. LSSSE’s focus on the student experience provides insight on how the process of legal education affects student development. LSSSE is a valuable measure of the kinds of activities that are empirically associated with student learning and institutional effectiveness.

While LSSSE results are pertinent to many aspects of the accreditation and review process, they are perhaps most helpful when preparing the self-study. LSSSE data helps guide the self-study process by providing evidence of outcomes and highlighting areas of possible emphasis.

LSSSE results provide law schools with the ability to measure student learning at every phase of the student experience. The primary benefit of this approach is that schools can monitor changes in student learning over time. LSSSE also gives schools context by comparing their findings to those of selected peer schools and the national pool of LSSSE schools. With these longitudinal and comparative perspectives, schools are positioned to engage in the type of assessment and self-reflection required by the Standards.

*During my tenure with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and my time developing recommendations that appeared in the Carnegie Report, I learned firsthand that “assessment drives learning.” Faculty members who hear students ask “Will it be on the test?” appreciate this powerful dynamic...[LSSSE] provides a meaningful measure of what law students actually gain from participation in law school. It offers faculty members a key to unlock the effectiveness of crucial curricular initiatives by means of direct student assessments and comparisons to peers. I urge colleagues around the country to engage with the challenging questions posed by [LSSSE]...and to use these important tools to improve the ways in which we prepare law students for future roles as leaders within the legal profession.*

*Judith Wegner  
Dean Emerita and Burton Craige Professor of Law  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

LSSSE provides law schools with an Accreditation Toolkit that aligns survey questions with Accreditation Standards. The goal is to make the data as useful as possible and give the results more meaning. Among the schools to use LSSSE data to prepare recent self-studies are **Drake University Law School, University of Arkansas School of Law and University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law.**



## ASSESSING NEW PROGRAMS

As law schools implement new curricular initiatives, assessment helps ensure that resources are targeted in the most efficient and effective ways and that the initiatives are serving desired ends. The following schools used LSSSE to assess new programs.

**Washington and Lee University School of Law** recently used LSSSE to assess the effects of its completely revamped third year experiential curriculum. The curriculum was implemented in 2009, and LSSSE data was collected at three strategic intervals (a “baseline” in 2004, a “before picture” in 2008, and a “follow-up look” in 2012). The results gave W&L a lens into whether the curricular innovation was having the intended consequences. As hoped, 3Ls surveyed in 2012 were much more likely to work with peers to complete assignments, participate in pro bono or volunteer work, talk with professors about future plans, and acquire work-related knowledge and skills. The results are promising and suggest that the new curriculum is effectively engaging 3Ls. Continued assessments will allow for continued reflection.

**Indiana University Maurer School of Law** used LSSSE data to gather important insight about a new course requirement for 1Ls. This four-hour course explores the legal profession from a variety of angles and represents a real innovation in instruction and approach. The curriculum development team relied on LSSSE data to inform the development and assess the impact of the course.

As the team set out to design the course, it used information from LSSSE to better understand how students perceived the law school's emphasis on teaching ethics and elements of professionalism. Comparative data were useful in helping the team identify areas of relative strength and weakness. After the course was launched, the team used LSSSE data to monitor change. Scores increased steadily over several years for survey items related to student gains in ethical development and professional skills. These findings confirmed that the new course was having the intended effect.

## CREATING CONTEXT

Some law schools have combined their LSSSE data with information on bar passage, employment, and grades to learn more about the relationship between law school engagement and other outcomes.

Southwestern Law School has investigated the relationship between engagement and bar passage. Their findings confirmed anecdotal perceptions of a positive relationship between engagement (as measured using LSSSE) and bar passage. The more engaged the student, the more likely the student passed the bar. Southwestern undertook a more detailed follow-up study that not only linked bar passage to various aspects of engagement, but also to students' confidence in bar exam success. In short, students who were more likely to come to class prepared, more likely to discuss assignments with faculty members, and more likely to perceive a positive law school environment reported higher bar exam confidence, and were more likely to pass the bar. Being able to identify specific engagement constructs that were tied to higher confidence and bar exam success allowed Southwestern to target programming more effectively.

## GUIDING RESOURCE ALLOCATION

LSSSE results can highlight areas where additional attention and resources are needed. Below are schools that used LSSSE to help guide resource allocation decisions.

- **St. Thomas University School of Law** used LSSSE results—specifically findings that student satisfaction with financial aid advice lagged peer schools—to obtain funding for a dedicated financial aid advisor. Law students had previously been served by the central university financial aid office.
- **University of Arkansas School of Law** used LSSSE data to demonstrate the impact and efficacy of an additional academic advisor. After an initial part-time hire, LSSSE data revealed an increase in student satisfaction in areas related to academic advising, and as a result the position was upgraded to full-time.
- **St. John's University School of Law** used LSSSE results to secure additional resources for career services. The data was used not only to support the request, but to also report back to the university on the effects of the investment. The Mean Comparisons Report was particularly helpful.

## USING LSSSE DATA *continued*

### SHARING LSSSE RESULTS

Data resonates in ways that words alone often cannot. Therefore, law schools use LSSSE results when communicating with stakeholders. The results can provide tangibility, especially when illustrating abstract concepts, like student learning or satisfaction. The following are examples of how schools have used LSSSE results to communicate with stakeholders.

#### FACULTY

Faculty members are central to fostering student engagement. Therefore, sharing LSSSE data with faculty members is critical to building and maintaining a student-centered institutional culture.

- An analysis of three years of LSSSE data was presented to the Santa Clara Law faculty to facilitate their discussion of improvement and reform. The analysis lent new insights to institutional assessment efforts, highlighting issues that otherwise might have been ignored.
- University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law shares its LSSSE results annually with the faculty. The results are then compared against a predictive model developed to chart where the results should be in a given year. Based on the extent to which the actual LSSSE results align with the predicted results, the faculty can better assess how well the institution has performed relative to what was expected.

#### STUDENTS AND THE PUBLIC

Some law schools make their LSSSE results available to the public, often on their websites. This type of transparency can inspire trust towards the institution, while also allowing the institution to tout positive outcomes.

- **University of California—Irvine School of Law** places its LSSSE results on its website as a means of providing information to prospective students and other members of the public about the student climate. In framing the results, the law school discusses how the results compare to peer schools and the national pool.
- **Regent University School of Law** recently touted the LSSSE results for its third year students in a press release. The law school tied the results to aspects of its mission and programming that fostered the favorable outcomes.
- **Drake Law School** touts its LSSSE results on a webpage titled, “Why Study at Drake?” A link on the page takes visitors to a fuller summary of the results.

**“THE EXAMPLE OF THE WASHINGTON & LEE 3L EXPERIENTIAL YEAR OUGHT TO BE A WATERSHED FOR LEGAL EDUCATION. WE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO IGNORE DATA. THROUGH LSSSE, HIGH QUALITY COMPARATIVE DATA ARE CHEAP AND COMPREHENSIVE. AND THAT INFORMATION, AS WE HAVE SEEN, CAN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE VALUE OF A LEGAL EDUCATION.”**

– WILLIAM HENDERSON PROFESSOR OF LAW, INDIANA UNIVERSITY MAURER SCHOOL OF LAW





## SERVICES

### CONSULTATIONS

LSSSE staff are available to visit individual law schools to conduct workshops, facilitate school-specific interpretation and analyses, and to present your results to administrators and faculty. Contact us for more information and to schedule a campus visit.

### CUSTOM ANALYSIS

Custom analyses allow for more detailed or additional comparisons between your students and those attending other institutions. Consider viewing engagement results in light of bar pass statistics, job placement numbers, or information gathered from alumni surveys. LSSSE staff can link your results to other sources of information and provide detailed reports.

## USER RESOURCES

LSSSE has developed several print resources to help participating law schools use their data most effectively.

### PREDICT LSSSE RESULTS WORKSHEETS

These worksheets can be used as part of a LSSSE presentation to generate interest in the findings. The worksheets ask participants to contemplate their own assumptions about student behaviors, and then to compare those assumptions to their school's actual results. Two different versions are available, tailored for faculty and administrators.

### LSSSE POWERPOINT TEMPLATE

To facilitate presentations to faculty groups and administrators using results from your own law school, customize LSSSE's sample PowerPoint template. The template outlines some of the important aspects of student engagement and provides talking points along with space to drop in data from your school.

### ACCREDITATION TOOLKIT

The Accreditation Toolkit offers guidelines for incorporating LSSSE results into self-studies and suggests ways to map specific questions from the LSSSE survey instrument onto ABA accreditation standards. The toolkit also includes sample timelines to help you decide when and how often to collect student engagement data.





## PARTICIPATING LAW SCHOOLS: 2004–2014

### ALABAMA

Faulkner University  
Thomas Goode Jones School of Law  
Montgomery

Samford University  
Cumberland School of Law  
Birmingham

The University of Alabama  
School of Law  
Tuscaloosa

### ARIZONA

Arizona State University  
Sandra Day O'Connor  
College of Law  
Tempe

Arizona Summit Law School  
Phoenix

### ARKANSAS

University of Arkansas at  
Little Rock  
William H. Bowen School of Law  
Little Rock

University of Arkansas  
School of Law  
Fayetteville

### CALIFORNIA

California Western School of Law  
San Diego

Chapman University School of Law  
Orange

Concord Law School  
Los Angeles

Golden Gate University  
School of Law  
San Francisco

Humphreys College  
Laurence Drivon School of Law  
Stockton

Loyola Law School  
Los Angeles

Pepperdine University  
School of Law  
Malibu

Santa Clara University  
School of Law  
Santa Clara

Southwestern Law School  
Los Angeles

Thomas Jefferson School of Law  
San Diego

University of California, Davis  
School of Law  
Davis

University of California, Hastings  
College of the Law  
San Francisco

University of California, Irvine  
School of Law  
Irvine

University of California,  
Los Angeles  
School of Law  
Los Angeles

University of La Verne  
College of Law  
La Verne

University of the Pacific  
McGeorge School of Law  
Sacramento

University of San Diego  
School of Law  
San Diego

University of San Francisco  
School of Law  
San Francisco

University of Southern California  
Gould School of Law  
Los Angeles

Western State University  
College of Law  
Fullerton

Whittier Law School  
Costa Mesa

### COLORADO

University of Colorado Law School  
Boulder

University of Denver Sturm  
College of Law  
Denver

### CONNECTICUT

Quinnipiac University School of Law  
Hamden

University of Connecticut  
School of Law  
Hartford

### DELAWARE

Widener University School of Law  
Wilmington

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

American University  
Washington College of Law

The Catholic University of America  
Columbus School of Law

The George Washington University  
Law School

Georgetown University Law Center

The University of the  
District of Columbia  
David A. Clarke School of Law

### FLORIDA

Ave Maria School of Law  
Naples

Florida Coastal School of Law  
Jacksonville

Florida International University  
College of Law  
Miami

Nova Southeastern University  
Shepard Broad Law Center  
Ft. Lauderdale

St. Thomas University  
School of Law  
Miami

Stetson University College of Law  
Gulfport

University of Florida  
Levin College of Law  
Gainesville

University of Miami School of Law  
Coral Gables

### GEORGIA

Emory University School of Law  
Atlanta

Georgia State University  
College of Law  
Atlanta

John Marshall Law School, Atlanta  
Atlanta

Mercer University  
Walter F. George School of Law  
Macon

### HAWAII

University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
William S. Richardson  
School of Law  
Honolulu

### IDAHO

Concordia University School of Law  
Boise

University of Idaho College of Law  
Moscow

### ILLINOIS

DePaul University College of Law  
Chicago

Northern Illinois University  
College of Law  
Dekalb

Northwestern University  
School of Law  
Chicago

The John Marshall Law School  
Chicago

Loyola University Chicago  
School of Law  
Chicago

Southern Illinois University  
School of Law  
Carbondale

University of Illinois College of Law  
Champaign

### INDIANA

Indiana University  
Maurer School of Law  
Bloomington

Indiana University  
Robert H. McKinney School of Law  
Indianapolis

Valparaiso University School of Law  
Valparaiso

### IOWA

Drake University Law School  
Des Moines

The University of Iowa  
College of Law  
Iowa City

### KANSAS

The University of Kansas  
School of Law  
Lawrence

Washburn University School of Law  
Topeka

### KENTUCKY

Northern Kentucky University  
Salmon P. Chase College of Law  
Highland Heights

University of Kentucky  
College of Law  
Lexington

University of Louisville  
Louis D. Brandeis School of Law  
Louisville

### LOUISIANA

Louisiana State University  
Paul M. Hebert Law Center  
Baton Rouge

Loyola University  
New Orleans College of Law  
New Orleans

Southern University Law Center  
Baton Rouge

Tulane University Law School  
New Orleans

### MAINE

University of Maine School of Law  
Portland

### MARYLAND

University of Baltimore  
School of Law  
Baltimore

University of Maryland  
Francis King Carey School of Law  
Baltimore

### MASSACHUSETTS

Boston College Law School  
Newton

Harvard University Law School  
Cambridge

Northeastern University  
School of Law  
Boston

Suffolk University Law School  
Boston

University of Massachusetts  
School of Law  
Dartmouth

Western New England College  
School of Law  
Springfield

### MICHIGAN

Michigan State University  
College of Law  
East Lansing

Thomas M. Cooley Law School  
Lansing

University of Detroit Mercy  
School of Law  
Detroit

Wayne State University Law School  
Detroit

### MINNESOTA

Hamline University School of Law  
Saint Paul

University of Minnesota Law School  
Minneapolis

University of St. Thomas  
School of Law  
Minneapolis

William Mitchell College of Law  
St. Paul

### MISSISSIPPI

Mississippi College School of Law  
Jackson

The University of Mississippi  
School of Law  
Oxford

### MISSOURI

Saint Louis University School of Law  
St. Louis

University of Missouri  
School of Law  
Columbia

University of Missouri Kansas City  
School of Law  
Kansas City

Washington University  
School of Law  
St. Louis



## MONTANA

The University of Montana  
School of Law  
Missoula

## NEBRASKA

Creighton University School of Law  
Omaha

University of Nebraska  
College of Law  
Lincoln

## NEVADA

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
William S. Boyd School of Law  
Las Vegas

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

University of New Hampshire  
School of Law  
Concord

## NEW JERSEY

Seton Hall University School of Law  
Newark

## NEW MEXICO

The University of New Mexico  
School of Law  
Albuquerque

## NEW YORK

Albany Law School  
Albany

Brooklyn Law School  
Brooklyn

City University of New York  
School of Law at Queens College  
Flushing

Fordham University School of Law  
New York

Hofstra University  
Maurice A. Deane School of Law  
Hempstead

New York Law School  
New York

Pace University School of Law  
White Plains

St. John's University School of Law  
Queens

Syracuse University College of Law  
Syracuse

Touro College  
Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center  
Central Islip

University at Buffalo Law School  
Buffalo

Yeshiva University  
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law  
New York

## NORTH CAROLINA

Campbell University  
Norman Adrian Wiggins  
School of Law  
Raleigh

Charlotte School of Law  
Charlotte

Duke University School of Law  
Durham

Elon University School of Law  
Greensboro

North Carolina Central University  
School of Law  
Durham

University of North Carolina  
School of Law  
Chapel Hill

Wake Forest University  
School of Law  
Winston-Salem

## OHIO

Capital University Law School  
Columbus

Case Western Reserve University  
School of Law  
Cleveland

Cleveland State University  
Cleveland-Marshall College of Law  
Cleveland

Ohio Northern University  
Claude W. Pettit College of Law  
Ada

The Ohio State University  
Michael E. Moritz College of Law  
Columbus

The University of Akron  
School of Law  
Akron

University of Cincinnati  
College of Law  
Cincinnati

University of Dayton School of Law  
Dayton

## OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City University  
School of Law  
Oklahoma City

The University of Oklahoma  
College of Law  
Norman

The University of Tulsa  
College of Law  
Tulsa

## OREGON

Lewis & Clark Law School  
Portland

University of Oregon School of Law  
Eugene

Willamette University College of Law  
Salem

## PENNSYLVANIA

Earl Mack School of Law  
Drexel University  
Philadelphia

Temple University  
James E. Beasley School of Law  
Philadelphia

University of Pittsburgh  
School of Law  
Pittsburgh

## RHODE ISLAND

Roger Williams University  
School of Law  
Bristol

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Charleston School of Law  
Charleston

University of South Carolina  
School of Law  
Columbia

## SOUTH DAKOTA

University of South Dakota  
School of Law  
Vermillion

## TENNESSEE

Lincoln Memorial University  
Duncan School of Law  
Knoxville

The University of Tennessee  
College of Law  
Knoxville

Vanderbilt University School of Law  
Nashville

## TEXAS

Baylor University School of Law  
Waco

St. Mary's University of San Antonio  
School of Law  
San Antonio

South Texas College of Law  
Houston

Southern Methodist University  
Dedman School of Law  
Dallas

Texas Southern University  
Thurgood Marshall School of Law  
Houston

Texas Tech University School of Law  
Lubbock

Texas Wesleyan University  
School of Law  
Fort Worth

The University of Texas  
School of Law  
Austin

University of Houston Law Center  
Houston

## UTAH

Brigham Young University  
J. Reuben Clark Law School  
Provo

University of Utah  
S.J. Quinney College of Law  
Salt Lake City

## VERMONT

Vermont Law School  
South Royalton

## VIRGINIA

Regent University School of Law  
Virginia Beach

University of Richmond  
School of Law  
Richmond

Washington and Lee University  
School of Law  
Lexington

William & Mary Law School  
Williamsburg

## WASHINGTON

Gonzaga University School of Law  
Spokane

Seattle University School of Law  
Seattle

University of Washington  
School of Law  
Seattle

## WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia University  
College of Law  
Morgantown

## WISCONSIN

Marquette University Law School  
Milwaukee

University of Wisconsin Law School  
Madison

## WYOMING

University of Wyoming  
College of Law  
Laramie

## AUSTRALIA

University of New South Wales  
Faculty of Law  
Sydney, NSW

University of Tasmania  
Faculty of Law  
Hobart, TAS

## CANADA

University of Alberta  
Faculty of Law  
Edmonton, AB

University of Calgary  
Faculty of Law  
Calgary, AB

University of British Columbia  
Faculty of Law  
Vancouver, BC

University of Victoria  
Faculty of Law  
Victoria, BC

University of Manitoba  
Faculty of Law  
Winnipeg, MB

University of New Brunswick  
Faculty of Law  
Fredericton, NB

Dalhousie University  
Schulich School of Law  
Halifax, NS

McGill University Faculty of Law  
Montreal, ON

Osgoode Hall Law School  
of York University  
Toronto, ON

Queen's University Faculty of Law  
Kingston, ON

Université d'Ottawa  
Faculté de droit,  
Section de droit civil  
Ottawa, ON

University of Ottawa  
Faculty of Law,  
Common Law Section  
Ottawa, ON

University of Toronto Faculty of Law  
Toronto, ON

University of Western Ontario  
Faculty of Law  
London, ON

University of Windsor Faculty of Law  
Windsor, ON

Université de Montréal  
Faculté de droit  
Montréal, QC

University of Saskatchewan  
College of Law  
Saskatoon, SK





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Law School Survey of  
Student Engagement