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### **Transfer law students succeed academically but fail to integrate fully in new school: LSSSE study**

Findings from a national study released today by the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) indicate that JD students who transfer to a new law school midway through their legal education report thriving academically at their new schools. However, they report less success in integrating into their new environment.

According to the study, which surveyed more than 33,000 students in 95 U.S. and Canadian law schools, transfer students' grades are on par with those of their new classmates, although their entering credentials are lower than their peers'. In addition, transfer students report greater gains than non-transfer students in the areas of academic and personal development, and they are more likely than non-transfer students to come to class prepared, and they spend more time reading and studying.

"Despite their academic success, transfer students' overall experience at their new school is mixed," said Carole Silver, director of LSSSE and professor of law at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law. "The survey finds that transfer students do not fully integrate into their new environment, at least in the 2L year, although they are successful according to traditional academic measures."

Silver said that transfer students' participation in co-curricular activities such as law review, moot court, and other law school organizations is significantly lower than non-transfer students'. In addition, transfer students are less likely than non-transfers to work collaboratively with other students and to interact with faculty. "LSSSE is premised on the notion that students' reflections on their own experiences comprise a valuable barometer of the health of the law school," Silver said. "As law schools increasingly compete for students, opportunities for transferring likely will increase. Awareness of these differences therefore enables law schools to address the challenges of transferring and adjust their programs accordingly," Silver explained.

Tom Morgan, Oppenheim Professor of Antitrust and Trade Regulation Law at The George Washington University Law School, also noted the value of LSSSE. Law faculty "tend to be profoundly ignorant ... about how our students study, learn and grow. Each year, LSSSE gives us insight into that kind of important information," he said.

LSSSE's 2011 report is titled *Navigating Law School: Paths in Legal Education*. Data for the report was gathered by administering an on-line survey to law students at participating law schools. The survey includes questions about how students spend their time in law school; their relationships with peers, faculty and staff; their sense of their school's emphasis and of their own gains; and demographic information. In addition to examining the experience of transfer students, this year's report also explores the ways in which US law schools are providing an international experience for their students and the experiences of part-time law students.

While globalization has become ubiquitous in the economy and in much of higher education, LSSSE's findings reveal that interaction between American JD students and international law students still is quite limited. Many US law schools enroll international law school graduates for one-year programs leading to an LLM degree. These international graduate law students offer schools an opportunity to globalize their classes and expose American JD students to an international peer group without leaving home. But LSSSE data show that only 20% of JD students reported frequent interactions with international students in class, and even fewer JD students (16%) reported frequent interactions with international students in academically-oriented settings outside of the classroom, such as



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study groups. LSSSE data suggest that law schools can do more to help American JD students and international graduate students interact in meaningful ways that will benefit both groups.

Other key findings from the 2011 report are:

- Students who transfer to a new law school were significantly more likely than non-transfer students to report that they were satisfied with their overall legal education experience at their new school.
- Transfer students were less likely than non-transfer students to participate in pro bono activities and to work in law-related settings.
- More than 70% of JD students never interacted with international graduate law students in formal or informal study groups, to complete assignments, or as part of a formal networking program. More than 30% of all JD students never interacted with international graduate law students in class, school-sponsored events, or in social contexts.
- One-third of responding JD students enrolled in law schools with international LLM programs were uncertain about whether or not international graduate law students were in their classes.
- Part-time law students were as engaged as full-time students in terms of class participation and preparation. They were less likely, however, to take part in important experiential activities, including pro bono work and clinics, which have been empirically linked to higher self-reported gains in writing and speaking skills and critical and analytical thinking.
- Part-time law students were less likely than full-time students to work collaboratively with other students outside of class.
- Part-time law students were less likely than full-time students to use career counseling and job-search services at their law school. Despite this finding, part-time students were just as likely as full-time students to report that they expected to practice law following graduation.
- Part-time law students were just as positive as full-time law students about the intellectual rigor of their legal education. The two groups reported similar gains in knowledge, skills and personal and academic development as well as their perception of the emphasis that the law school placed on higher-order learning skills such as analysis and synthesis of ideas and applying theories or concepts in practice.

The annual LSSSE survey results provide information for law schools to use in considering their students' experiences, contextualizing each school's performance by providing a comparison to all participating law schools and select peer schools, and identifying a school's policies and practices that may need attention to improve the educational experience of its students. Key areas measured by the survey are time devoted to educationally-purposeful activities, student satisfaction, intellectual experiences, the climate for learning, and selected dimensions of educational, personal and professional development.

*LSSSE is cosponsored by the Association of American Law Schools and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Copies of the LSSSE 2011 Annual Survey Results, Navigating Law School: Paths in Legal Education are available for download from our Web site or available for purchase in print format.*