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## LSSSE 2007 Overview Introduction

Each spring, the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) collects information from students about the nature of their law school experiences. Since its inception in 2004, 128 different law schools have administered LSSSE to measure the extent to which their students engage in effective educational practices. The practices LSSSE measures are empirically linked to learning and other desired outcomes. With the results in hand, schools have a picture of how law students spend their time and what programs and experiences are most beneficial to their legal training.

This year more than 27,000 students at 79 law schools across the United States and Canada completed the survey. To date, LSSSE has collected data from more than 87,000 law students. Here we give you an overview of the responses — who are these students, how are they spending their time during law school, and what experiences do they find beneficial? More information on trends in legal education and the experiences of all law students in the LSSSE 2007 cohort will appear in the *Annual Survey Results* to be released at the 2008 AALS meeting.

The overview is divided into three sections. First, we discuss the characteristics of participating law schools and students. In the second section we present selected findings, including descriptive information about this year's survey respondents. Finally, we introduce several guidelines for using the data presented in this binder.

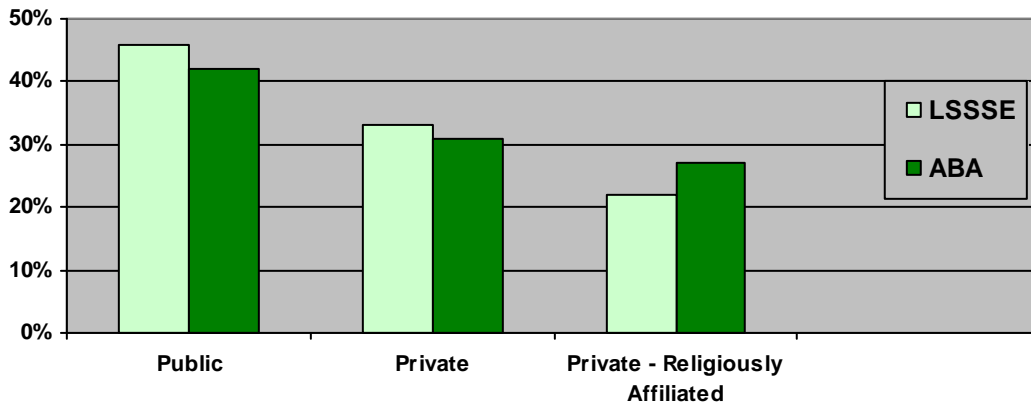


## LSSSE 2007 Law Schools and Respondents

Over 50,000 law students were included in the LSSSE 2007 sample. All JD/LLB students who attended the law school for at least one semester were invited to respond. The survey is entirely web based. Students received electronic invitations along with individualized log-in information.

LSSSE surveys were administered online in March and April 2007. The average institutional response rate was 57%, with a range of 34% to 87%. Three quarters of the schools had response rates above 50%. Additional information about response rates, including the response rate for your law school, can be found under the Respondent Characteristics tab of your binder.

**Figure 1:**  
**Affiliation of LSSSE 2007 Law Schools compared with all ABA-Approved Law Schools**



## Profile of LSSSE 2007 Law Schools

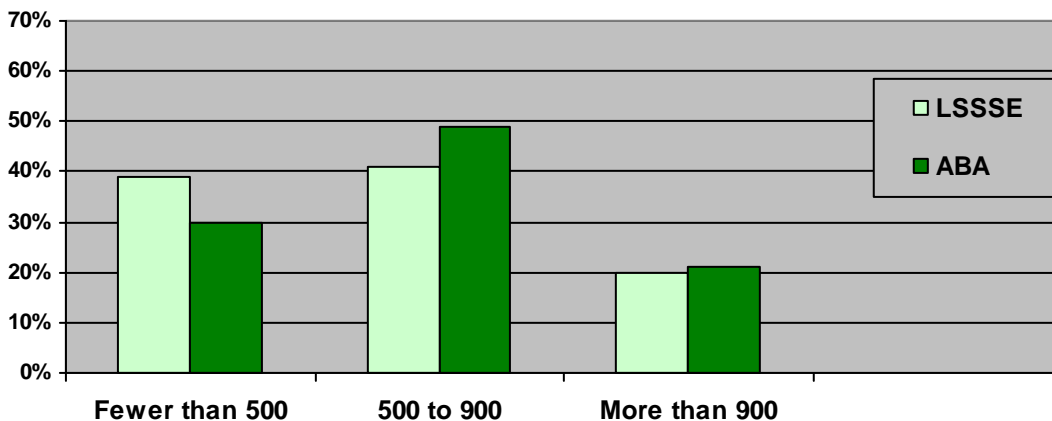
### Affiliation

Approximately 46% of LSSSE 2007 institutions are public law schools, 33% are private schools without a religious affiliation, and 22% are private law schools with a religious affiliation. The distribution of LSSSE 2007 schools closely resembles the profile of all ABA-approved public and private law schools (Figure 1).

### Size

LSSSE 2007 schools range in size from 81 to 1576 students. Thirty-nine percent of participating schools had fewer than 500 JD/LLB students, approximating the percentage of all ABA-approved law schools. LSSSE schools also mirrored the proportion of mid-sized law schools of 500 to 900 students (41% LSSSE v. 49% ABA) and schools with more than 900 students (20% v. 22%) compared to the national profile of law schools (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Size of LSSSE 2007 Law Schools compared with all ABA-Approved Law Schools**



## Profile of LSSSE 2007 Respondents

### Class

The 27,436 respondents were split between 1L (37%), 2L (32%) and 3L students (29%). Three percent of respondents were 4Ls.

### Gender

The proportions of male (48%) and female (50%) respondents matched the law student population at participating LSSSE 2007 schools and ABA-approved law schools.

### Race and Ethnicity

Respondents' race and ethnicity were similar to those of students attending LSSSE 2007 U.S. law schools and the national distribution. White student respondents were slightly underrepresented compared to enrollment at all ABA-approved law schools (Table 1).

### Enrollment

Seventeen percent of respondents were part-time students. Four percent of students transferred from another law school. Four percent of students participated in a joint-degree program.

### Grades

About one in five students reported grades in the A range (18%). The majority of students reported earning mostly B+/B grades (54%). More than a quarter of students reported grades below B- (14%), C+ (9%) or lower (5%) grades.

### Age

The vast majority of law student respondents was under 30.

**Table 1**

### Respondent Characteristics

Gender	Respondents	LSSSE 2007 student population	All ABA-approved law schools
Male	48%	53%	53%
Female	50%	47%	47%
Prefer Not to Respond	2%	-	-

Race and Ethnicity	Respondents	LSSSE 2007 student population	All ABA-approved law schools
American Indian/Native American	<1%	<1%	<1%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	6%	8%	8%
Black/African American	5%	6%	7%
Mexican/Mexican American	1%	<1%	2%
Puerto Rican	<1%	<1%	<1%
Other Hispanic/Latino	3%	5%	4%
White	71%	70%	78%
Multiracial	2%	-	-
Other	10%	2%	-

*Note: ABA and LSSSE categories for gender, race and ethnicity differ.*

*Source: LSSSE 2007 school data are from institution population files. National data are taken from the published statistics of the ABA's Section on Legal Education and Admission to the Bar.*

More than one third of respondents (38%) were under 25, and 40% of students were 26-30. Sixteen percent of students were between the ages of 31 and 40, and 6% were over 40.

### Before Law School

Over a third of students entered law school immediately following the baccalaureate (36%). Twenty-nine percent enrolled within two years. Eighteen percent started law school 3-5 years after earning

undergraduate degrees, and 9% indicated that 6-10 years had passed. For 8% of students, more than 10 years had elapsed.

### Law School Debt

One in three (31%) students expected to owe more than \$100,000 in law school debt upon graduation. Of those students with law school loans, 14% expected to owe less than \$40,000. Only thirteen percent of respondents will have incurred no law school debt.

## Selected Results

The following section briefly summarizes the frequency with which law students participated in selected educationally purposeful activities.

### *Law School Activities*

The LSSSE survey focuses on activities in which students participate, inside and outside the classroom, that influence their learning and per-

sonal and professional development. In this section, most frequent activities are those in which at least 60% of students did "often" or "very often." (Table 2). Least frequent activities are those in which more than one in five students reported "never" participating during the 2006-07 academic year (Table 2).

**Table 2**

## Law School Activities

<b>Most Frequent Activities</b>	<b>Students*</b>
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	73%
Used e-mail to communicate with a faculty member	67%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)	65%
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	65%
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	60%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	60%
<b>Least Frequent Activities</b>	<b>Students†</b>
Participated in a clinical or pro bono project as part of a course or for academic credit	72%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	55%
Worked with other students on projects during class	31%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	29%
Talked about career plans or job search activities with faculty members or advisor	27%
Came to class without completing readings or assignments	26%
Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	20%

\* Percentage of students who responded "very often" or "often"

† Percentage of students who responded "never"

**Table 3**  
**Educationally Enriching Activities**

	1L*	2L	3L	4L
Clinical internship or field experience	83%	33%	64%	45%
Volunteer or pro bono work	77%	43%	57%	33%
Student-faculty committee	25%	13%	17%	9%
Work on a legal research project with a faculty member	38%	16%	25%	17%
Study abroad	25%	10%	14%	9%
Law journal member	47%	27%	30%	17%
Moot court team	37%	16%	20%	13%

\* Percentage of students who responded "done" or "plan to do." For all other years, percentage reports students who have "done" the activity.

### ***Law School Environment***

Another way to learn about the quality of the law school student experience is to examine the extent to which students perceive that their school provides a challenging, supportive learning environment.

### **Promising Findings**

Nearly nine out of ten students (88%) reported their school emphasized spending significant amounts of time studying and on school work to a substantial degree ("very much" or "quite a bit").

Nearly half (45%) of law students reported that their professors were very available, helpful and sympathetic (6 or 7 on a 7 point scale).

Nearly three in four students (73%) reported that their law school placed a substantial emphasis ("very much" or "quite a bit") on encouraging ethical legal practice.

About two in three law students (63%) reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with academic advising and planning.

### **Disappointing Findings**

Nearly half (45%) of students reported being "unsatisfied" or "very unsatisfied" with job search assistance at their law school, and 22% of students report never using job search assistance. About three in five students report that the law school did "very little" or only "some" to support their successful employment search.

More than one in three students (37%) reported being "unsatisfied" or "very unsatisfied" with academic advising and planning at law school.



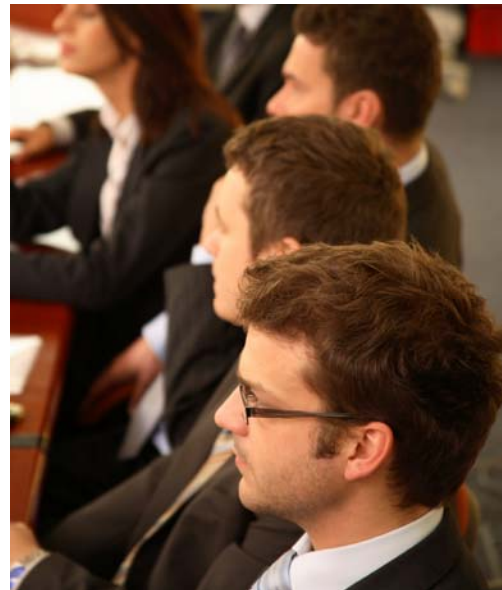
## Selected Results (continued)

### Time on Task

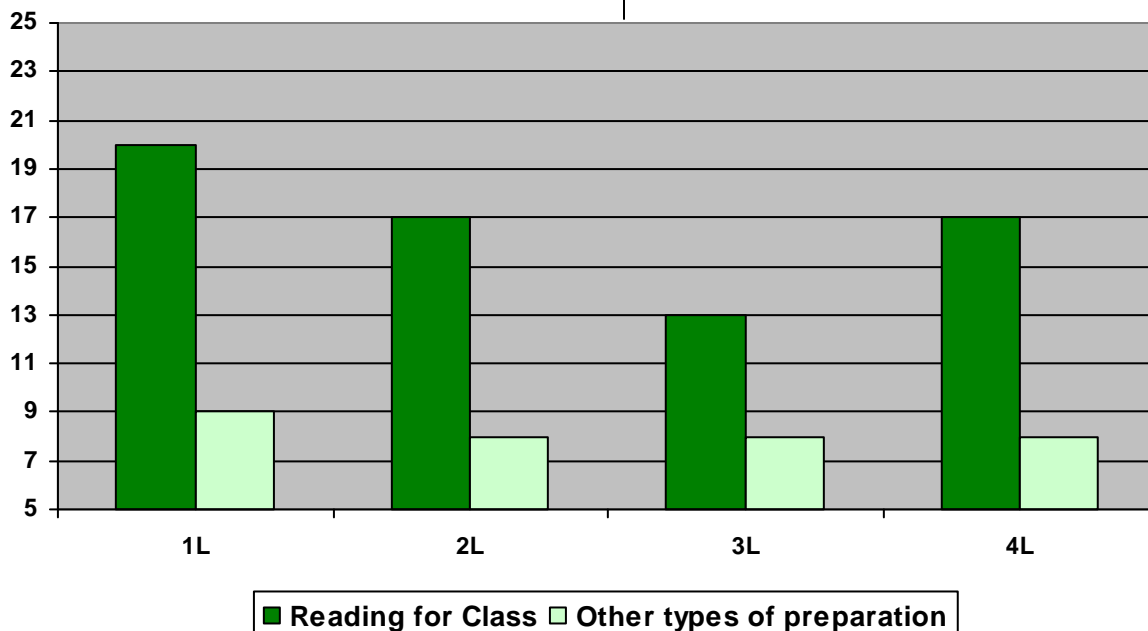
What students put into their education determines what they get out of it. But what *do* students put into their education? Traditional outcomes measures do not provide a picture of how students spend their time during law school. LSSSE data tell us the amount of time students spend preparing for class, working in legal or non-legal jobs, and participating in co-curricular activities. Using the data, we can determine which activities are positively correlated with self-reported educational gains.

- The typical student spends 15-16 hours per week reading assigned material for class. Six hours per week are devoted to unassigned preparation (e.g. studying, writing, other academic preparation). First year students spend significantly more time reading assigned material than their 2L and 3L counterparts, however (Figure 3).
- Approximately half of students (51%) do not work for pay during the academic year. Of those students who do work, 59% work in a law-related job.

- Nearly 80% of students do not spend any time on legal pro bono work that is not required for a class or clinic.
- More than one third of students (36%) do not participate in law school sponsored activities (SBA, student organizations, journal, etc.). Of those students who do participate in such activities, three in four (76%) devote between one and five hours per week.
- More students reported participating in journal (27% of 2Ls and 30% of 3Ls) than in moot court (16% of 2Ls and 20% of 3Ls).



**Figure 3:**  
Reading and Preparing: Mean Number of Hours per Week



## Selected Results (continued)

### Student Satisfaction

Students were generally satisfied with their law school experience. Eighty-two percent of all students rated their law school experience “good” or “excellent.” Only 3% said their experience was “poor.” Four in five students said they would “probably” or “definitely” attend the same school if they were starting over.

Students were most “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their school’s library assistance (94%), computing technology (81%) and financial aid advising (64%).

Students were most dissatisfied (“unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied”) with job search help (45%), career counseling (44%), personal counseling (40%) and academic advising (37%).

Student use of and satisfaction with career counseling varied significantly by class level and enrollment status (Figure 4). Although a greater portion of students reported using career counseling as they advanced through law school, satisfaction generally tended to decline. Part-time students generally reported being more satisfied with career counseling than full-time students.

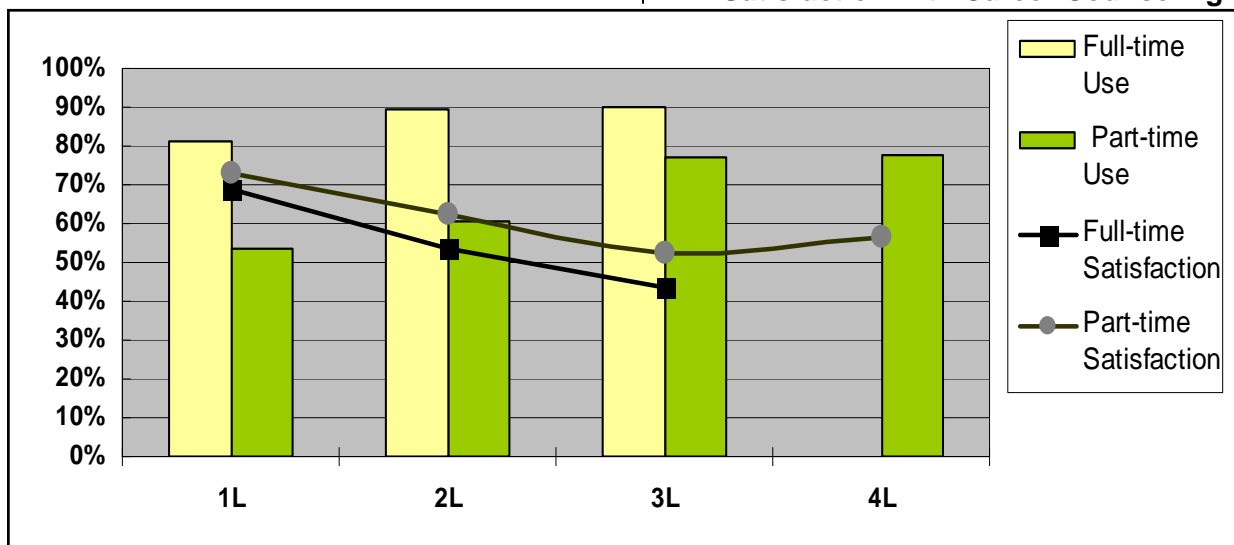
## Guidelines for Interpreting LSSSE Results

Before sharing your LSSSE results school wide, become familiar with the nature of the data and “story line” of your school’s performance. Here are some things to consider.

### Check the Representativeness of Your Respondents

Although the survey was administered to all JD/LLB students at participating law schools, an essential early step in looking at your results is making sure that the student characteristics listed in the various reports are comparable to other school-reported data. Your student respondent characteristics are summarized in the *Respondent Characteristics* and *Frequency Distribution* sections of this report. Please compare this information against your law school data file to determine whether your school’s respondents differ in any meaningful ways from your student population as a whole. The student year in school designation is based on the electronic data file your school provided this spring. If your school did not submit this information, the student-reported class year is used.

**Figure 4: Student Use of and Satisfaction with Career Counseling**



## Guidelines for Interpreting Results (continued)

### Look Carefully at Items with Large Effect Sizes

In the *Means Comparison Report*, asterisks (\*) mark those survey items where your students' responses differ at a statistically significant level from students at other law schools that participating in LSSSE 2007. Because of the large number of law students surveyed, we use several thresholds of statistical significance to reduce the probability that the differences noted are due to chance ( $p < .05$ ,  $p < .01$ , and  $p < .001$ ). Even so, the actual magnitude of some item score differences may seem trivial, even though these differences are highly reliable and statistically significant.

For this reason we also report the effect size associated with those item comparisons that are statistically significant. The effect size represents the magnitude of the difference between your students and their counterparts at other participating LSSSE schools. When the effect size is large, or a pattern of small or moderate effect sizes exists, it is likely that the nature and quality of the student experience differs appreciably.

Finding large effect sizes is not that common in most areas of non-experimental educational and social science research. Accordingly, if your results include a pattern of small effects or some medium or large effects, something may be going on that warrants immediate attention, especially if other empirical or anecdotal information corroborates the LSSSE data. Here are some general guidelines for determining the relative importance of a Cohen's *d* effect size:

- .20 is a small effect
- .50 is a medium effect
- .80 is a large effect

For more information on effect size, and for a step-by-step guide to digesting and understanding these data, please refer to the *Facilitator's Guide* located in the Users Tools section of this *Report*.

## Final Thoughts

We would like to thank you for participating in the 2007 administration of the *Law School Survey of Student Engagement*. Our goal is to provide high quality, usable information about the law school student experience. Toward that end, we hope your school's results prompt discussions and action in ways that lead to improved teaching, learning and overall law school performance.

The LSSSE project and this report are a collaborative effort. We are indebted to Kellie McGiverin-Bohan and the Indiana University Center for Survey Research staff who superbly designed and managed the Web survey. Special thanks is also due to the Center for Postsecondary Research analysts who helped prepare the survey data and reports.

LSSSE seeks to partner with others in investigating evocative questions about law school, and in documenting successful efforts that enhance the quality of the law school experience for all students. We welcome suggestions to make the LSSSE project even more useful to participating schools and other interested parties, and look forward to working with you to interpret your LSSSE results and put them to effective use.



Law School Survey of  
Student Engagement

Want more information?  
Visit us at [www.lssse.iub.edu](http://www.lssse.iub.edu)

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