



Inside

LSSSE 2006 Law Schools and Respondents 1

- School Size
- School Affiliation
- Class
- Gender
- Race
- Enrollment
- Grades
- Age
- Before Law School
- Law School Debt

Selected Results 4

- Law School Activities
- Law School Environment
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Time on Task
- Student Satisfaction

Guidelines for Interpreting LSSSE Results 7

- Representativeness of Respondents
- 4L Student Results
- Effect Size

Final Thoughts 8

Introduction

The third annual administration of the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) was conducted in spring 2006 with JD and LLB students at 64 law schools in the United States and Canada. A list of these law schools is included in the “Additional Information” tab of this report. The project is cosponsored by the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and is supported by law school participation fees.

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement is an annual survey that collects information directly from law students about how they spend their time, what they experience during their legal training, and how they benefit from the law school experience. The idea for the project was suggested by Carl Monk, the AALS Executive Director. Inspired by the undergraduate National Survey of Student Engagement, LSSSE began in 2003 with a field test involving 11 law schools. Two national administrations followed, in spring 2004 and 2005. This LSSSE 2006 report explores selected relationships between effective educational practice and aspects of the law student experience at 64 participating law schools in 29 states, the District of Columbia, and Canada.

This 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 the students who completed the survey. Finally, we provide suggestions for interpreting the data presented in this report.

Early next year at the AALS annual meeting, we will release an annual report with an extended discussion of the combined results from the 100 different law schools that have participated in LSSSE since spring 2004. We will send you an advance copy of that report in mid-December to complement information in this *LSSSE 2006 Overview*.

LSSSE 2006 Law Schools and Respondents

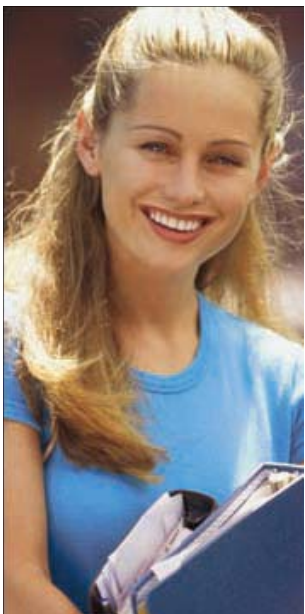
More than 45,000 students were included in the LSSSE 2006 sample. All JD/LLB students who attended the law school for at least one semester were selected from the data files provided by participating law schools. Electronic invitations to participate in the survey were sent directly to students.

LSSSE surveys were administered online from March to April 2006, and more than 24,000 students responded. The average institutional response rate was 58%, with a range of 32% to 84%. Four-fifths of schools had a 50% or better rate. Additional information about response rates, including the response rate for your law school, can be found under the “Respondent Characteristics” tab of the *Law School Report*.





LSSSE 2006 schools mirror the proportion of ABA-approved law schools based on enrollment size

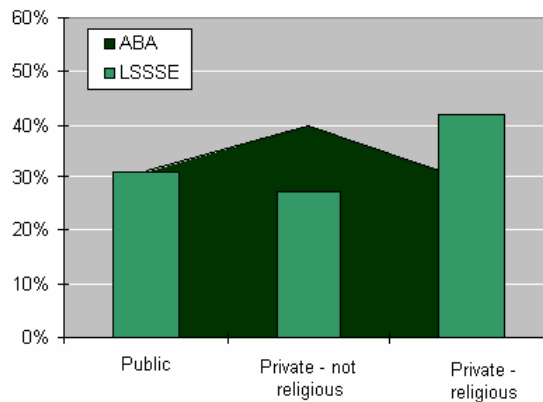


Profile of LSSSE 2006 Law Schools

Affiliation

Approximately 30% of LSSSE 2006 institutions are public law schools, 42% are private law schools with a religious affiliation, and 27% are private schools without a religious affiliation. The distribution of LSSSE 2006 schools closely resembles the profile of all ABA-approved public and private law schools; private non-religiously-affiliated law schools (27% LSSSE v. 40% ABA) were somewhat underrepresented compared with the national profile (Figure 1).

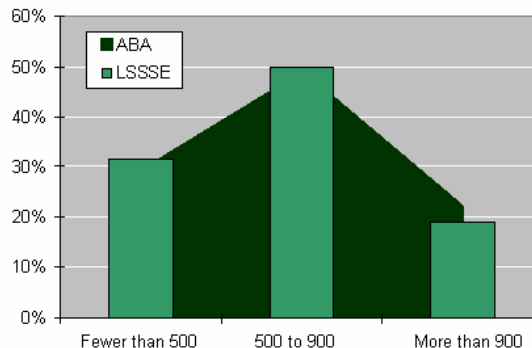
Figure 1:
Affiliation of LSSSE 2006 Law Schools Compared with All ABA-approved Schools



Size

LSSSE 2006 schools range in size from 76 to 1614 students. Thirty-one percent of participating schools had fewer than 500 JD/LLB students, matching the percentage of all ABA-approved law schools. LSSSE schools also mirrored the proportion of mid-sized law schools of 500 to 900 students (50% LSSSE v. 49% ABA) and schools with more than 900 students (19% v. 22%) compared to the national profile of law schools (Figure 2).

Figure 2:
Size of LSSSE 2006 Law Schools Compared with All ABA-approved Schools



Profile of LSSSE 2006 Respondents

Class

The 24,899 respondents were split fairly evenly between 1L (36%), 2L (32%) and 3L students (30%). Two percent of respondents were 4Ls.

Gender

The proportions of male (48%) and female (52%) respondents match the law student population at participating LSSSE 2006 schools and ABA-approved law schools.

Race and Ethnicity

Respondents' race and ethnicity are similar to that of students attending LSSSE 2006 American law schools and the national distribution. White student respondents are slightly under-represented compared to enrollment at all ABA-approved law schools (Table 1).

Enrollment

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

Grades

About four in ten students reported grades of either A/A- (18%) or B+ (25%); 29% reported mostly Bs. More than one fourth reported B- (15%), C+ (8%) or lower (5%) grades.

Age

More than one third of the respondents (39%) were under 25, 41% were 26-30, 15% were 31-40, and 4% were over 40 years old.

Table 1

Respondent Characteristics

	Respondents	LSSSE 2006 student population	All ABA-approved law schools
Gender			
Male	48%	48%	48%
Female	52%	52%	52%
Transgender	0%	-	-
Race and Ethnicity			
American Indian/Native American	1%	1%	1%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	7%	8%	7%
Black/African American	5%	5%	6%
Mexican/Mexican American	2%	1%	-
Puerto Rican	1%	0%	-
Other Hispanic/Latino	3%	5%	5%
White	77%	77%	81%
Multiracial	3%	-	-
Other	3%	2%	-

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

Source: LSSSE 2006 school data are from institution population files or the ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools 2006. National data are from the ABA Section on Legal Education Enrollment Statistics 2005-06.

Before Law School

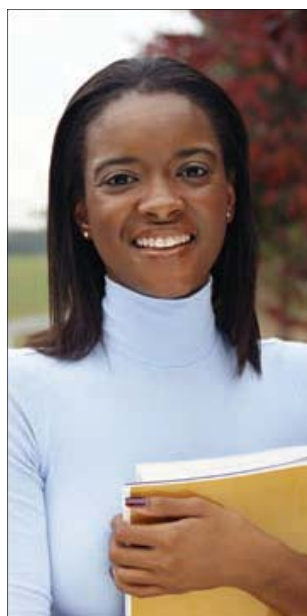
Students were asked how much time passed between earning their undergraduate degrees and enrolling in law school. Approximately two thirds enrolled either directly (37%) or 1-2 years later (30%). Eighteen percent enrolled 3-5 years later, 9% indicated that 6-10 years had passed, and 7% of respondents entered law school more than 10 years after earning an undergraduate degree.

Law School Debt

Two thirds of all students (67%) indicated that they will have \$60,000 or more of educational debt from attending law school upon graduation. Twelve percent said they will have \$40,001-\$60,000 of debt, 6% between \$20,001-\$40,000 of debt, and 4% between \$1-\$20,000 of debt. Only 11% said they will have no educational debt.



Two thirds of law students had serious conversations with students who are very different from them



Selected Results

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

Law School Activities

The LSSSE survey focuses on activities in which students participate, inside and outside the classroom, that influence their learning and personal and professional development. In this section, a “substantial amount” of engagement is defined to be at least 50% of all students reporting “often” or “very often” (Table 2).

The least frequent activities are those in which the percentage of students who responded “never” exceeded 35%, meaning that roughly one third or more of the students did not participate in the respective activity during the 2005-2006 academic year (Table 2).

Table 2

Law School Activities

Most Frequent Activities	Students*
Came to class with readings or assignments completed	83%
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	70%
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	66%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)	65%
Used e-mail to communicate with a faculty member	64%
Had serious conversations with a 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	59%
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet faculty members' standards or expectations	51%

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

Least Frequent Activities	Students*
Participated in a clinical or pro bono project as part of a course or for academic credit	73%
Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	55%

* Percentage of students who responded "never"

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”).

Seven out of ten students (72%) indicated their school emphasized encouraging the ethical practice of law to a substantial degree.

Disappointing Findings

Almost one half of students (49%) said their school did very little to help them cope with their non-school activities (family, work, etc.).

Three out of ten students (30%) said their school did very little to provide the support they need to thrive socially.

Enriching Educational Experiences

The types of educational programs and opportunities in which students take part can enrich their learning and professional development. Table 3 highlights the percent of students who reported having participated in, or who planned to become involved in, these complementary experiences.

Table 3

Educationally Enriching Activities

	1L*	2L*	3L*	4L*
Clinical internship or field experience	85%	77%	69%	53%
Volunteer or pro bono work	77%	71%	62%	47%
Student-faculty committee	24%	21%	17%	14%
Work on a legal research project with a faculty member	36%	36%	29%	22%
Study abroad	23%	17%	16%	14%
Law journal member	49%	35%	32%	21%
Moot court team	41%	29%	22%	14%
Law student organization member	73%	72%	68%	45%
Law student organization leader	41%	43%	39%	20%

* Percentage of students who responded "done" or "plan to do"



More than half of students participate in volunteer or pro bono work while in law school





Almost two fifths of law students spend 30 or more hours reading and preparing for class



Time on Task

What students put into their education determines what they get out of it. The amount of time spent preparing for class, participating in law-school sponsored activities, or participating in community organizations correlates positively with self-reported educational and personal growth. For example, time spent on legal pro bono work not required for a class is positively correlated with student gains in contributing to the welfare of their community. Time spent working for pay, relaxing and socializing, caring for dependents, or commuting is not positively related to any educational and personal growth items on the survey.

About half of all law students (45%) work for pay. Half of working students (50%) spend at least 15 hours per week working for pay.

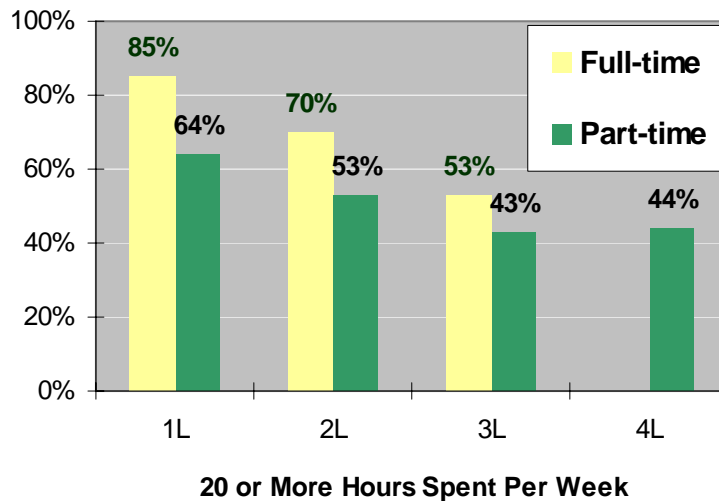
Approximately four in ten students (43%) spend at least one hour per week participating in community organizations and 7% spend more than 5 hours per week.

Almost four out of every ten students (36%) do not participate in school sponsored activities such as student organizations, journal, moot court, and student government, while 16% spend more than 5 hours per week participating in extra-curricular activities.

Roughly one third of students (32%) care for dependents living with them.

Two thirds of students (67%) spend 20 or more hours per week studying, although this number varies significantly by class level and enrollment status (Figure 3). Almost two fifths (39%) spend 30 or more hours per week, and only 8% spend ten or fewer hours per week preparing for class.

**Figure 3
Reading and Preparing for Class**



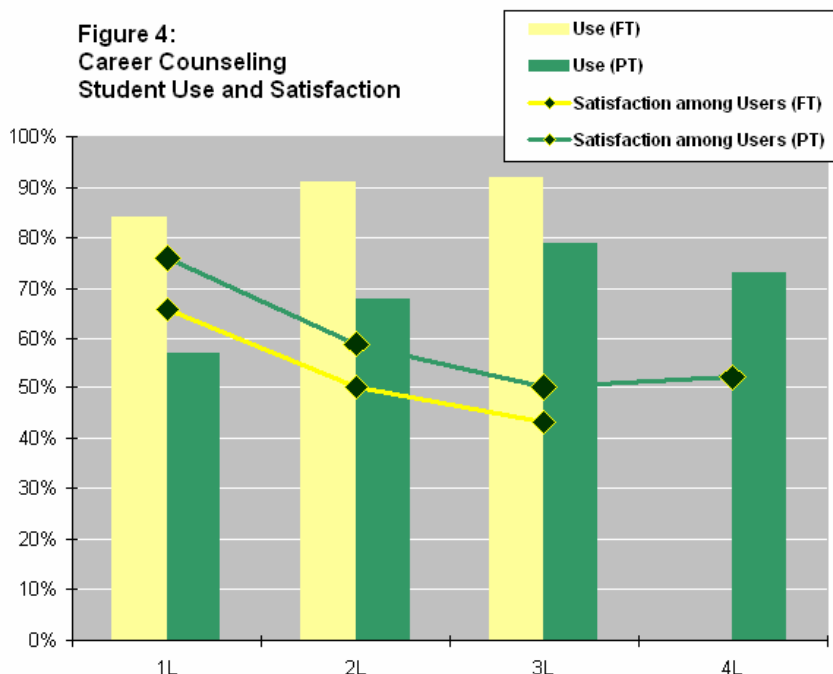
Student Satisfaction

Students were generally satisfied with their law school experience. Eighty percent of all students rated their law school experience “good” or “excellent.” Only 3% said their experience was “poor.” More than three quarters of students (78%) would “probably” or “definitely” attend the same school if they were starting over again.

Students were most “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their school’s library assistance (95%), computing technology (81%) and financial aid advising (66%).

Students were most dissatisfied (“unsatisfactory” or “very unsatisfactory”) with job search help (49%), career counseling (46%), personal counseling (43%) and advising (40%).

Student use of and satisfaction with career counseling varies significantly by class level and enrollment status (Figure 4). Although a greater portion of students report using career counseling as they advanced through law school, overall satisfaction generally tends to decline. Part-time students report higher levels of satisfaction with career counseling than their full-time counterparts.



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

Even though the survey was administered online to all JD/LLB students at every participating law school, 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. It would be wise to compare this information against your law school data file to determine if 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 for this characteristic.

Interpret Results for 4L Student with Caution

Of the 24,899 student respondents, only 462 are 4L students. While one third (36%) of schools had at least seven 4Ls complete the survey, about two thirds of the LSSSE 2006 schools have either none (57%) or very few 4L respondents (8%). Because these numbers are relatively small, caution should be used in interpreting results.



LSSSE seeks to partner with others to answer evocative questions about law school



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 participated in LSSSE 2006. 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 corroborate 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

Final Thoughts

Thank you very much for participating in the 2006 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 are also due to Amy Garver and 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.