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Introduction

The second annual administration of the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) was conducted in spring 2005 with JD students at more than 50 law schools around the country. The project is cosponsored by the *Association of American Law Schools (AALS)* and *The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*, and sustained by law school participation fees.

The LSSSE survey assesses the extent to which students engage in a variety of educationally effective activities. Obtaining information about student behaviors and law school environments is essential for focusing attention and resources in ways that will enhance student learning and law school effectiveness. LSSSE results provide law school faculty members and administrators with data that can be used almost immediately to identify where improvement can be made in the local context.

This 2005 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 LSSSE 2005 results. We will send you an advance copy of that report in mid-December to complement information in this *LSSSE 2005 Overview*.

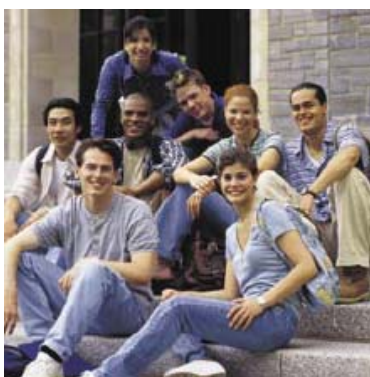
LSSSE 2005 Law Schools and Respondents

More than 40,000 students were included in the LSSSE 2005 sample. All JD students who attended the law school for at least one semester were selected from the data files provided by the 53 participating law schools in 27 states, the District of Columbia and Canada. A list of these law schools is included in the “Additional Information” tab of the *Law School Report* binder.

Electronic invitations to participate in the survey were sent directly to students. LSSSE surveys were administered online in March and April, and more than 21,000 students responded. The average institutional response rate was 57%, with a range of 34% to 73%. Additional information about response rates, including the response rate for your law school, can be found under the “Respondent Characteristics” tab of your report.



About one third of LSSSE institutions are public law schools, 30% are private with a religious affiliation, and 38% are private schools without a religious affiliation

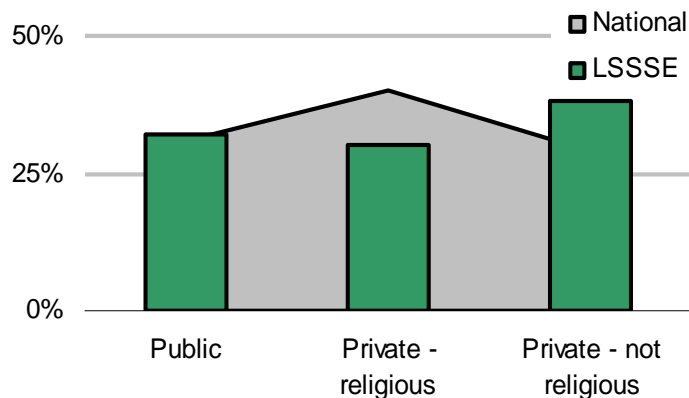


Profile of LSSSE 2005 Law Schools

Affiliation

About one third of LSSSE institutions are public law schools, 30% are private with a religious affiliation, and 38% are private schools without a religious affiliation. LSSSE schools closely resemble the national proportion of ABA-approved public and private law schools. Private religiously affiliated schools (30% LSSSE v. 40% national) are somewhat underrepresented (Figure 1).

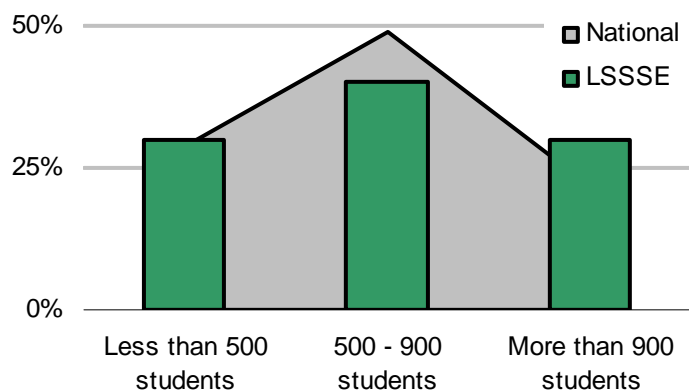
Figure 1
Affiliation of LSSSE 2005 law schools
Compared with all ABA-approved schools



Size

LSSSE 2005 schools range in size from 200 to 1,887 students. Thirty percent of participating schools had less than 500 JD students, matching the percentage of all ABA-approved law schools. LSSSE schools were slightly underrepresented in mid-sized law schools of 500 to 900 students (40% LSSSE v. 49% national), and slightly overrepresented in schools with more than 900 students (30% v. 22%) compared to the national profile of law schools (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Size of LSSSE 2005 law schools
Compared with all ABA-approved schools



Profile of LSSSE 2005 Respondents

Gender

The proportion of male (48%) and female (52%) respondents matches the JD population at participating LSSSE 2005 schools and ABA-approved law schools (Table 1).

Race and ethnicity

Respondent race and ethnicity is representative of both LSSSE 2005 schools and law schools nationwide. White student respondents are slightly under-represented compared to enrollment at all ABA-approved law schools (Table 1).

Class

The 21,657 respondents were split fairly evenly between 1L (35%), 2L (31%) and 3L students (29%). Three percent of respondents were 4L students.

Enrollment

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

Age

More than one third of the respondents (36%) were 23-25, 38% were 26-30, 17% were 31-40, and 7% were over 40 years old.

Grades

About four in ten students reported grades of either A/A- (17%) or B+ (25%), while 27% reported mostly Bs. About one third reported B- (15%), C+ (9%) or lower (6%) grades.

Table 1
Gender and race of respondents
by LSSSE 2005 JD student population
and all ABA-approved law schools

	LSSSE respondents	All LSSSE 2005 Schools	National
<u>Gender</u>			
Male	48%	50%	48%
Female	52%	50%	52%
<u>Race and ethnicity</u>			
American Indian/Native American	1%	1%	1%
Asian American/Pacific Islander	8%	10%	7%
Black/African American	5%	5%	6%
Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin	4%	5%	5%
White	76%	77%	81%
Other	4%	2%	-
Multi-Race	4%	-	-

Note: Students could check more than one racial or ethnic group, so the percentages exceed 100%. The ABA and LSSSE categories for race and ethnicity differ.

Source: LSSSE 2005 school data are from institution population files or the ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools 2005. National data are from the ABA Section on Legal Education Enrollment Statistics 2004-05.

Before Law School

Students were asked how much time they spent between earning their undergraduate degree and enrolling in law school. About two thirds enrolled either directly (34%) or 1-2 years later (28%). Nineteen percent enrolled 3-5 years later, 10% indicated 6-10 years, and 10% more than 10 years after earning their undergraduate degree.

Law School Debt

About six in ten students (61%) indicated they will have accumulated \$60,000 or more of educational debt from attending law school. Thirteen percent said they will have \$40,001-\$60,000 of debt, 7% between \$20,001-\$40,000 of debt, and 5% between \$1-\$20,000 of debt. Only 13% said they will have no educational debt upon graduation.



Two thirds of law students discussed ideas from their readings or classes with others outside of class



Selected Results

The following section provides a selected view of the nature and frequency of law school student engagement in various effective educational practices.

Law School Activities

A major focus of the LSSSE survey is on the nature of activities in which students participate, inside and outside the classroom. 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 where the percentage of students who responded “never” exceeded 35%, meaning that roughly one third or more of the students reported having no experiences in these areas during the 2004-2005 academic year (Table 2).

**Table 2
Most frequently and least frequently reported activities**

	Students Responding “Very Often” or “Often”
Most Frequent Activities	
Came to class with readings or assignments completed	84%
Worked on a paper or assignment that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	71%
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	71%
Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coworkers, etc.)	67%
Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	66%
Used e-mail to communicate with a faculty member	61%
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	59%
Worked harder than you thought you could to meet faculty members’ standards or expectations	53%
Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	50%
Least Frequent Activities	
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.)	57%

Law School Environment

Another way to gain insight into the student experience is to look at the extent to which students perceive that their school is a supportive learning environment.

Promising Findings

- About nine out of ten students (89%) reported their school emphasized spending significant amounts of time studying and on related activities to a substantial degree (“very much” or “quite a bit”).
- Seven out of ten students (71%) 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.).
- One third of students (34%) said their school did very little to provide the support they need to thrive socially.

Enriching Educational Experiences

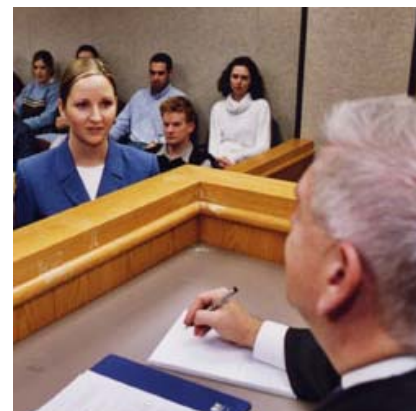
The types of educational programs and opportunities in which students take part can enrich their school experience. Table 3 highlights the percent of students who reported having participated in, or plan to participate in, some of these complementary experiences.

Table 3
Percentage of students reporting various educationally enriching activities

	<u>1L</u>	<u>2L</u>	<u>3L</u>	<u>4L</u>
Clinical internship or field experience	85%	80%	75%	50%
Volunteer or pro bono work	75%	67%	62%	43%
Law student organization member	71%	71%	66%	42%
Law journal member	51%	38%	35%	22%
Law student organization leader	40%	40%	39%	20%
Moot court team	38%	25%	19%	12%
Work on a legal research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	37%	35%	31%	19%
Student-faculty committee	24%	19%	17%	12%
Study abroad	22%	18%	15%	9%



Three fourths of students participate in a clinical internship or field experience while in law school





More than half of working students spend at least 15 hours per week working for pay



Time on Task

The effort 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 is positively correlated with self-reported educational and personal growth. 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.

- Half of all students (50%) work for pay although this number varies significantly by class level (Figure 3). More than half of working students (56%) spend at least 15 hours per week working for pay.
- Almost one half of students (46%) spend at least one hour per week participating in community organizations and 7% spend more than 5 hours per week.
- About four out of every ten students (39%) do not participate in school sponsored activities such as student organizations, journal, moot court, and student bar association, while 17% spend more than 5 hours per week participating in extra-curricular activities.

Figure 3
Percentage of students who work for pay

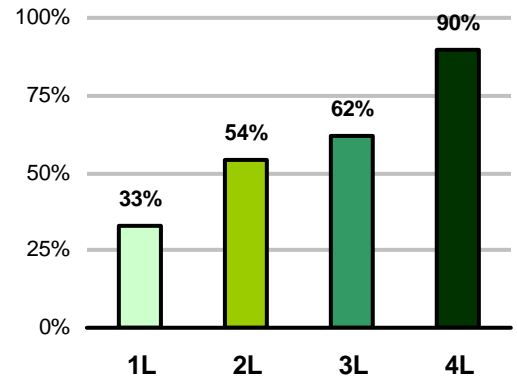
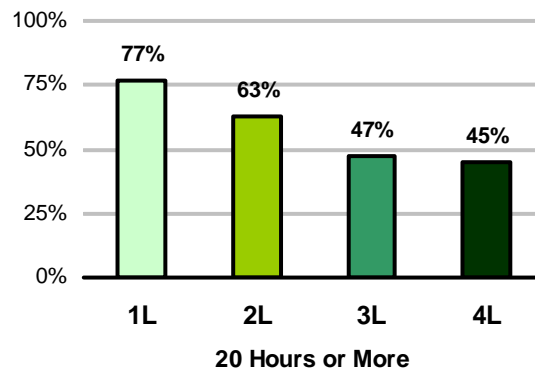


Figure 4
Hours per week students spend preparing for class and clinical courses



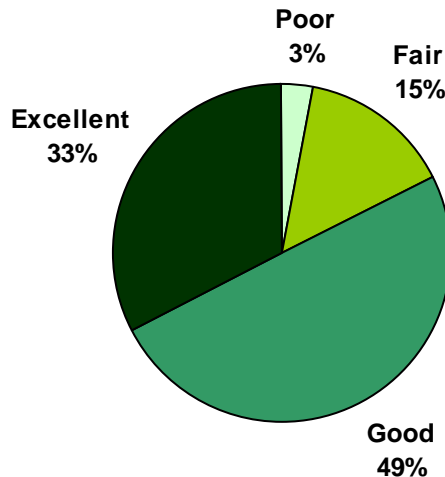
- More than three fifths of all students (63%) spend 20 or more hours per week studying. (Figure 4). About one third of students (35%) spend 30 or more hours per week, and only 9% spend ten or less hours per week preparing for class.
- Roughly one third of students (36%) care for dependents living with them.

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” (Figure 4). Only 3% said their experience was “poor.” More than three quarters of students (79%) 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 (94%), computing technology (79%) and financial aid advising (69%).
- Students were most dissatisfied (“unsatisfactory” or “very satisfactory”) with job search help (47%), career counseling (46%) and personal counseling (43%).

Figure 5
Satisfaction with law school experience



Check the representativeness of your results by comparing your respondent characteristics with those of your entire law school student body

Guidelines for Interpreting LSSSE Results

Before sharing your LSSSE results, become familiar with the nature of the data within the context of your institution. Here are some things to consider.

Check the Representativeness of Your Respondents

An essential early step in reviewing your results is making sure that the student characteristics listed in the various reports are comparable to other school-reported data. Compare your student respondent characteristics, summarized in the *Respondent Characteristics* and *Frequency Distribution* sections of this report, with your institutional data file. The student year in school designation is based on the electronic data file your school provided last fall. If your school did not submit this information, then we used the student-reported class year.

Interpret Results for 4L Students with Caution

Of the 21,657 student respondents, only 660 are 4L students. While one half of schools (51%) had at least seven 4Ls complete the survey, half of the LSSSE schools have either none (25%) or very few (25%) 4L respondents. Because these numbers are relatively small, use caution when interpreting these results.

Law School Survey of Student Engagement 2005

Please mark your answers in the boxes. Examples: or In the larger boxes, please print your responses.

1 In your experience at your law school during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following?

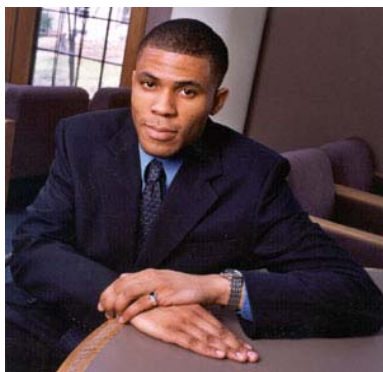
	Very Often	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
a. Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Prepared for or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Came to class without completing readings or assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Worked with other students on projects during class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Put together ideas or concepts from different classes when completing assignments or during class discussions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Participated in a clinical or you have project to part of a course or for academic credit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Used an electronic medium (e-mail, chat group, Internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Used e-mail to communicate with a faculty member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Discussed assignments with a faculty member	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Talked about career plans or job search activities with a faculty member or advisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Received prompt feedback from faculty on your academic performance (written or oral)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. Worked harder than you thought you could to meet faculty members' standards or expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (conferences, seminars, student life activities, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, coaches, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity this year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t. Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of race, religion, beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Mark the box that best represents the extent to which your characteristics during the current school year have challenged you to do your best work.

Very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Very much
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 During the current school year, how much has your coursework emphasized the following student activities?

	Very much	Quite a bit	Some	Little
a. Memorizing facts, cases, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Analyzing the basic elements of an issue, experience, or theory such as the elements in a case or situation in depth and understanding the relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex conclusions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as assessing how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



We hope your school's results prompt discussions and action that lead to improved teaching and learning



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 2005. Because of the large number of law students surveyed, we use three different thresholds 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 they 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 discrepancy in the student or school behavior represented by the item. When the effect size is large, or a pattern of small or moderate effect sizes exists, it is likely that the quality of the student experience is appreciably different and, therefore, may be of practical as well as statistical significance in the respective area of student engagement.

Finding large effect sizes is not common in most areas of non-experimental educational and social science research. If your results include medium or large effects, then these may indicate an issue 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 for participating in the 2005 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 these results will prompt discussions and action in ways that lead to improved teaching, learning and overall law school performance.

We welcome your comments and feedback and look forward to working with you on interpreting and using your LSSSE results.

Law School Survey of Student Engagement

Center for Postsecondary Research, Indiana University
1900 East 10th Street, Eigenmann Hall, Suite 419
Bloomington, IN 47406-7512

617-548-1247 (phone) 812-856-5150 (fax)
lsse@indiana.edu (e-mail)
www.nsse.iub.edu/lssse (website)