

# UNIVERSITY *of* MISSOURI

SCHOOL OF LAW  
OFFICE OF THE DEAN

November 29, 2010

Arthur R. Gaudio  
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School of Law  
1215 Wilbraham Road  
Springfield, MA 01119

Dear Art,

I write in response to your October 19, 2010, request for suggestions concerning the reporting of placement data by law schools on the annual ABA questionnaire. I write not on behalf of my law school or university, but as someone in my 16<sup>th</sup> year as dean—at both a public and private law school—and in my 26<sup>th</sup> year in legal education.

My thoughts are based upon my assumption that the great majority of people come to law school because they are interested in full-time, non-temporary employment in jobs for which a law degree is required or for which legal training is useful. I also assume that providing information concerning these aspects of student and graduate employment is of interest to potential law school applicants and should be provided as consumer information by the ABA. Finally, I am concerned that the publication of partial and misleading employment data by others, such as *U. S. News and World Report*, is doing a disservice to potential law school applicants and other constituents and consumers of legal education.

This leads me to suggest that the ABA, itself, collect the following employment data:

- whether a job is temporary or indefinite in duration (recognizing that some jobs such as judicial clerkships are, by their nature, often temporary in nature);
- whether a job is full-time or part-time;
- whether a job is being funded directly or indirectly by the law school from which the attorney graduated;



- how long the graduate has held the job in question (to address the situation in which the job was acquired a few weeks, or a few days, before the NALP or ABA employment reporting date);
- if the job does not require a law degree, whether legal training is significantly helpful to the position in question.

Consumers also are interested in real and nuanced salary data. The current reporting of average salaries based upon a relatively small percentage of law school graduates is misleading for at least two reasons. Initially, the salary bifurcation within legal employment makes the reporting of “average” salaries misleading. Reporting not only average salaries but also salaries at the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles would be relatively easy and inexpensive and would provide additional useful consumer information. In addition, it would be helpful to provide consumers with school salary information broken down by public and private employers and by size of private employers. Law schools also should be required to report the number of students reporting salary data, to avoid misleading salary aggregations based on the reports of relatively small numbers of highly paid graduates of particular law schools.

Finally, law schools should be required to report all employment data directly to the ABA, even if some or all of this data also may have been reported to other groups such as NALP. The ABA accredits law schools, and law schools are most likely to report accurate data if it is reported directly to the ABA (as opposed to a requirement merely to “please provide the ABA with the data previously provided to NALP”).

Thank you so much for requesting input on these important questions and thanks to you and your committee for considering this area that is so important to our students, graduates, and all of legal education.

Very truly yours,



R. Lawrence Dessem  
Dean and Professor of Law

RLD/jt