

December 1, 2010

To: Art Gaudio, Dean and Professor of Law, Western New England School of law and Chair of the ABA Questionnaire Committee

From: Linda S. Jones, Senior Director of Career Services, The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

Re: ABA Questionnaire and Employment Data

The current reporting through NALP and the ABA accomplishes the goal of comprehensively showing where students are employed after graduation by a variety of factors, including market sector (public and private), JD requirements, professional or non-professional status, part-time or fulltime status, and salary ranges within those categories. Law schools rely on graduates to voluntarily share employment information, and schools do not realistically have the ability to provide more information without raising privacy concerns or relying on subjective and possibly invalid information. The challenge is to present this information in a way that prospective students understand as well as to notify students as to where the information is available.

Schools currently spend an inordinate amount of time collecting data for the ABA and NALP reporting requirements. The reason this is time consuming is because of the reluctance of graduating students to provide it. Requiring more information from graduates will make them less likely to respond, resulting in the unintended consequence of actually having less information about employment statistics. If students secure employment before graduation, it is easier to get employment information and as employers tend to be bigger firms, salary information is easy to obtain. However, once students graduate it is often difficult to get accurate information.

Currently, prospective students can easily obtain employment information on both a national scale and from the particular law schools to which they are applying. On a national level, the annual NALP survey provides a comprehensive summary of employment statistics. *See* <http://www.nalp.org/classof2009>. The ABA provides a plethora of statistical information on individual law schools which includes most all of the information in the NALP survey, except for salary. *See* <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/stats.html>.

With respect to individual law schools, guidelines would be helpful for uniformity in reporting. Since statistics are meaningless without a context, schools reporting salary information should be required to reveal the percentage of graduates reporting the information. In addition, it would be helpful to prospective students, many of whom are not planning to work at large firms, to see a wide range of salary information such as median salaries for small firms and public sector employers at both the state and federal level. The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law information posted on its webpage for prospective students shows a wide range of salary information to give a broad perspective of the legal employment market. *See* <http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/careerservices/guides/gradstats/class2009.php?grp=prospective>.

After years of meeting with 1Ls both in large groups and individually, it is apparent that a large number do not enter law school with a clearly defined idea of a career path. Once students begin law school, they need to use their career services offices to learn the skills to best position themselves to obtain employment. Ensuring that prospective students are aware of the information available about legal employment, along with encouraging current students to fully utilize their career services offices, will be more effective in helping students find employment than using resources to try to gather more data for reporting.

Despite the comprehensive information that law schools, NALP, and the ABA provide to prospective students, employment is still dependent on students' own abilities, initiative, and career goals as well as the variation in economic climates. No statistical information can predict or prepare students for changes in the legal market. Thus, prospective students need to educate themselves on the broader state of the legal market before making an investment in a legal education, and take a proactive role in their career planning during their time in law school. Requiring law schools to spend more time collecting data would take time and focus away from the goal of the career services office to assist students in finding employment.