

**Pre-law Advisor Perspectives on the ABA Law School Questionnaire
Comments from the Pre-law Advisors National Council (PLANC)
November 2010**

Pre-law advisors are on the front lines with students and alumni as they navigate the law school admission process. One of our most important functions is to help our advisees educate themselves about legal education and the legal profession, and make wise investments in their future. For those considering entering the profession, particularly in the current economic downturn, information about the employment of recent law school graduates and institutional financial aid is essential. We appreciate this opportunity to share our views about the ABA Questionnaire. As the coordinating body of the six regional pre-law advisor associations (APLA's), the Pre-law Advisors National Council (PLANC) values our close working relationship with the American Bar Association, the Law School Admission Council (LSAC), and the National Association of Legal Career Professionals (NALP).

The *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* is a key resource for our advisees, providing objective, trustworthy information about the law schools. Pre-law advisors use both the print and online versions of the *Official Guide* on a daily basis as we work with students and alumni. Law school candidates have online access to the *Official Guide* as they create a school list in their LSAC accounts. **We recommend that the ABA pages of the *Official Guide* be expanded to include additional basic employment information** (this information is already collected by NALP, but would need to be added to the ABA Questionnaire):

- **Employment at graduation:** provide same level of detail as provided for Employment (9 months after graduation), including additional information listed below.
- **Additional information** (number and percentage of each category) :
 - Geographic Distribution: employed in state; employed by region; employed in foreign countries; # of states where employed
 - Employed in law firms, by size of firm
 - Bar Admission required/anticipated and JD preferred positions
 - Judicial Clerkships by category (Federal, State, and Local)
 - Part-time and Full-time employment
 - Number of graduates receiving law school funding for post-graduate work

There are many reports of recent law school graduates who have not been able to find work for which bar admission is required or a JD is preferred, but only anecdotal information on what happens to this group. **We recommend the addition of a new question to the ABA Questionnaire:**

- **Number of graduates unable to find a bar admission/anticipated or JD preferred position who found employment not requiring these credentials; and, within this group, the number who will continue to search for a bar admission/anticipated or JD preferred position.**

The cost of a legal education is an important consideration for law school applicants. The current ABA pages of the *Official Guide* provide information on the cost of attendance, and some information about institutional grants and scholarships, but they do not describe the criteria used by law schools to award financial aid. **We recommend the addition of a new question on the ABA Questionnaire:**

- **Criteria for Institutional Grants and Scholarships (merit vs. need-based)**

We recommend that the ABA require law schools to prepare a detailed public report with employment information on each law school class. Availability of the detailed report should **not** be limited to accepted applicants, as the information is important to others, including pre-law advisors, **before** a candidate applies to law school. Most of this data is already collected by NALP, and should be made available in greater detail than is currently provided in the *NALP Directory of Law Schools*. The report should include the following:

- Summary employment information as listed the *Official Guide* and in the Areas of Practice section of the *NALP Directory of Law School*, including PLANC-recommended changes (above)
- Median Salary by Employment Sector
- Positions secured through OCI programs
- Number of graduates unable to find a bar admission/anticipated or JD preferred position who found employment not requiring these credentials; and, within this group, the number who will continue to search for a bar admission/anticipated or JD preferred position.
- Detailed list of employers, by category of employment and number of positions

Finally, it is important to create a system of accountability for the reporting of employment information. **We recommend that the ABA conduct an annual audit of the law schools' reporting of employment information.**

PLANC would like to extend an offer to the ABA Questionnaire Committee to discuss these issues at our next scheduled meeting in March 2011 in Philadelphia, or at another convenient time. We look forward to this opportunity.

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