Back-to-school is just around the corner, and it has been a very eventful summer at LSAC. On July 15, we successfully launched the Digital LSAT in a landmark administration that was many years in the making. Almost 23,000 test takers took the July exam, which was administered at over 450 test centers across North America. About half took the Digital LSAT at 203 digital test centers, spread across seven time zones, from Newfoundland to Alaska. The response to the new format, from both test takers and test center staff, was largely positive, with many citing how smoothly the transition went and how much they appreciated the tablet’s accessibility features. We are proud of this industry-leading effort that is more secure and accessible than other tests. We are looking forward to September — when all LSAT testing will be completed digitally. We have also been busy with other exciting projects and initiatives, including prepping for the rollout of the next generation of ACES — announced in July as Unite — and launching our BE IndiVISIBLE campaign, which aims to build a broader and more diverse pipeline of law school prospects by equipping them with the information they need to succeed in their pursuit of a legal education. With 100% of this year’s likely applicants, based on our experience at this time last year, we are seeing a notable increase in both Hispanic/Latino and Asian law school applicants, with respective increases of 8.7% and 7.5% as of July 31, 2019. This report provides further insight into test-taker volume and application trends as well as an overview of our latest news, plans, and projects. We value our partnership with you and are grateful for your continued support of our mission and goals.

Sincerely,

Kellye Testy
President and CEO
Law School Admission Council

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Update on LSAT Test Takers, Applicants, and Applications

LSAT TEST TAKERS

Final test taker numbers for June are in. The June administration of the LSAT, the first of the 2019-2020 testing year, had 16,441 test takers. For the July LSAT administration, we had over 24,000 registrants. Of these registrants, 65% were first-time test takers. We are finalizing the number of July test takers and expect that number to be about 23,000.

We believe that the increase in July registrants is likely fueled by the fact that the July 15 administration was the first digital administration, but even more likely because — for the July test only — all test takers, whether they took the paper version or the digital version, will get to see their scores before deciding whether to cancel them. If they decide to cancel, they will be able to take the LSAT again, without paying an additional fee, through the April 2020 test.

It’s important to note that we’ve seen a 3.2% increase in test takers and 7.3% increase in tests administered for the just-concluded testing year, as compared to the previous year.

APPLICATION TRENDS

The number of applicants to U.S. law schools for 2019 was just over 62,000 as of July 31, 2019, up 3.3% over the same date in 2018. In addition to increases in Hispanic/Latino (8.7%) and Asian (7.5%) law school applicants, we are also seeing increases in the Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander category (13.9%). Female applicants are also up 3.8%. Regionally, we are seeing small increases in the number of applicants from the Southeast and Far West.

We are seeing small decreases in African American (-1.6%), Caucasian/White (-1.1%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (-2.3%) law school applicants. Regionally, there has been a small decrease in the number of applicants from the Midwest.
The total number of applications to ABA-accredited law schools for 2019 was over 379,000 as of July 31, 2019, down 1.5% compared to 2018.

Overall, 86 law schools are showing application volume increases, 108 schools are experiencing decreases, and eight are experiencing no change.

Canadian member law schools are experiencing small decreases as compared to last year, with applicants down 1.9% and applications down 4.9%.
WELCOME TO LSAC’S NEW BOARD AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

LSAC is proud to welcome our Board of Trustees Chair, Kevin Washburn, N. William Hines dean and professor of law at the University of Iowa College of Law, who was elected chair after serving one year as chair-elect. We also recently welcomed newly elected board members Marcilynn Burke, dean and Dave Frohmayer chair in leadership and law at the University of Oregon School of Law; Jorge Garcia, assistant dean of admissions, diversity initiatives, and financial aid at University of San Diego School of Law; and Aviam Soifer, professor and dean at University of Hawai’i at Mānoa | William S. Richardson School of Law.

We are also proud to announce the following newly appointed board members and committee chairs: Gregory Bowman, William J. Maier, Jr. dean and professor of law at West Virginia University College of Law, who was appointed chair of the Audit Committee and Executive Compensation Committee; Michael Donnelly-Boylen, assistant dean for admissions at Roger Williams University School of Law, who was appointed chair of the Schools and Candidates Committee; Garry Jenkins, dean and William S. Pattee professor of law at University of Minnesota Law School, who was appointed chair of the Assessments Committee; David Kirschner, associate dean and dean of admissions at University of Southern California, Gould School of Law, who was appointed chair of the Emerging Markets and Innovation Committee; Renée Post, associate dean for admissions and financial aid at University of Pennsylvania Law School, who was appointed chair of the Finance and Budget Committee; Kristin Theis-Alvarez, assistant dean of admissions and financial aid at University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, who was appointed chair of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee; and John Valery White, Ralph Denton professor of law at University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William S. Boyd School of Law, who was appointed chair of the Investment Committee.

In addition, Board Chair Kevin Washburn appointed Paul Paton, dean of law and Wilbur Fee Bowker professor of law at University of Alberta Faculty of Law, and Michael Waterstone, Fritz B. Burns dean at Loyola Law School, Loyola Marymount University, as appointees-at-large, and Michael States, assistant dean for admissions and financial aid at the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, as council secretary.

We want to thank all of our continuing trustees for their steadfast support of LSAC.
ASSESSING NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS AND OTHER RESEARCH

We recently reached out to our member schools to provide information on non-cognitive skills assessment research. Non-cognitive skills include characteristics such as personality traits, motivation, persistence, self-regulation, leadership, ethical behavior, and cooperative versus competitive tendencies. Our and others’ research supports the notion that many of these qualities are important for success at all levels of education and that factors such as motivation and self-regulation are associated with academic performance. The most common method of assessing non-cognitive skills is through self-report questionnaires. In low-stakes environments (e.g., developmental), these types of assessments can be useful in helping students and faculty understand where a student may need additional support. In high-stakes settings (e.g., admission, bar exam), however, research has shown that these measures are highly coachable, meaning that they are vulnerable to “self-presentation behavior” (i.e., working to create a good impression). Research also shows that in those environments, the coachability of the assessments tends to mean that they can end up reinforcing privilege rather than rewarding potential.

That’s why we are cautious in attempting to measure non-cognitive skills on high-stakes tests like the LSAT — because test takers could “game” the questions in favor of traits that don’t necessarily reflect who they are. Further, adding more filters and factors to high-stakes testing could unnecessarily limit the pool of prospective law school students when research shows that some non-cognitive skills can, in fact, be learned. On the other hand, if law school deans, admission professionals, and academic support staff would find these factors useful in the right contexts, then LSAC wants to provide measurement tools that are reliable.

We have been investigating approaches to measuring non-cognitive skills and evaluating their utility for many years. Not too long ago, we offered the Evaluations Service for references that included ratings of non-cognitive traits and prototyped the Standardized Interview platform to assist schools in capturing evidence of non-cognitive skills. We did not find sufficient demand from our schools to pursue these services at the time they were offered. We believe this may have been due to admission professionals already devoting a great deal of energy to assessing non-cognitive skills through careful review of personal statements, letters of recommendation, interviews, and other items in a candidate’s application. However, we are now asking our schools whether their view of the use of such tools may have changed and, if so, what they would find
helpful. We have shared with them our belief, bolstered by our decades of work on non-cognitive skills, that such assessments are especially helpful once students are in law school, as they can be used for purposes of academic support and as preparation for the workforce. Self-assessments paired with opportunities to help students strengthen their skills in teamwork and time-management, for example, have been shown to make measurable improvements in students’ success overall.

We look forward to exploring this topic further with our law schools as we continue working together to help both prospective and current law school students succeed.

DIGITAL LSAT

The Digital LSAT officially launched with the July 15 test administration, when approximately half of the test takers were assigned to take the test on a Microsoft Surface Go tablet, and the rest were assigned to the traditional paper-and-pencil test. This industry-leading effort was successful overall, opening an exciting new chapter in LSAC’s history with help from the organization’s technology partners at Microsoft as well as its dedicated test center staff.

From around the country, test takers and test center staff reported that the tablets used to administer the Digital LSAT generally worked as expected and provided an easy, accessible, and secure digital version of the test.

While final test taker numbers are not yet available, it appears that almost 23,000 test takers took the July LSAT, which occurred at over 450 test centers across North America. About half took the Digital LSAT at 203 digital test centers, spread across seven time zones, from Newfoundland to Alaska.

Feedback on the digital version was largely positive. Sabrina, from Flemington, NJ, said she entered the Digital LSAT skeptical and nervous, since she wasn’t used to taking tests in a digital environment. After taking the test, however, she said she loved the accessibility features of the Microsoft Surface Go tablet, finding it “easier on my nerves” than paper and pencil. And for Alexis, from Waynesboro, PA, the July 15 administration was the first time she had taken the LSAT. She had taken practice tests on paper. “Overall, the digital exam made it a much smoother process,” she said. Taking the test on a tablet offered many advantages, Alexis said, including having more space between the lines in the reading passages, not
having to flip back and forth in the test booklet while working on the logic section, and being able to keep track of how much time she had left — all while still being able to use scratch paper. Alexis prepared for the exam using tools found on LSAC’s website and those offered by Khan Academy, both of which she found helpful.

James Schultz, test center supervisor at Michigan Technological University, said he initially was skeptical about the transition to digital but that the experience exceeded his expectations. Citing features such as the automated five-minute warnings and the highly intuitive interface, Schultz said technology expertise was not required to navigate the test.

A few test centers across the U.S. and Canada experienced relatively few issues, and LSAC will use all the feedback from test centers and test takers to improve the digital experience for future administrations, starting with the September test when all LSAT testing will be completed digitally.

INTRODUCING UNITE

LSAC’s proprietary online admission platform, Unite (formerly known as ACES), preserves all the features and functions that admission professionals have enjoyed over the years and is enhanced with the addition of industry-leading CRM from Microsoft Dynamics 365. Unite will provide a connected view across admission, marketing, and communications to manage the enrollment journey — from personalizing prospect experiences to simplifying event management.

Schools can take action from anywhere, allowing for real-time reporting and data insights. It is designed to be easy to use and to work the way its users work, helping to eliminate many manual processes. It will also provide schools with richer data for effective enrollment-management planning and decision-making. Over time, Unite will also be the engine that powers LSAC’s vision of supporting students along their law school journeys.

The initial rollout of Unite is currently underway, and we are confident that the new system will live up to the promise of its name, uniting law schools and those pursuing a legal education, as we work together to build a more just and prosperous world.
Expanding the Legal Pipeline

DISCOVER LAW CAMPAIGN

LSAC’s Discover Law ad campaign was launched nearly one year ago, in September 2018, with the goal of expanding outreach to attract a more diverse and representative set of candidates to law school. This initiative is designed to help college students and recent college graduates, particularly those from underserved groups, learn about the benefits of a law degree.

Hundreds of thousands of people have taken this opportunity to engage with us by visiting LSAC.org or via our social media channels. We are working to convert that interest into concrete action — ultimately, application submissions — through targeted remarketing efforts.

EXPANDING DISCOVER LAW: BE indiVISIBLE

In May, at LSAC’s Annual Meeting and Educational Conference in Boston, LSAC President and CEO Kellye Testy announced a new expansion of LSAC’s Discover Law effort. This new initiative to increase access to law and education for students of all backgrounds is known as “BE indiVISIBLE.” The campaign aims to build a broad and diverse pipeline of prospective law students by inspiring more people to consider a career in law. BE indiVISIBLE features compelling stories from current law students and young lawyers, describing their journeys to law school and the impact they intend to have on the world. The initiative, which aligned with the conference’s “Gateway to Justice” theme, is designed to equip prospective law students for success in their pursuit of a legal education.

“LSAC is committed to ensuring that a legal education is accessible to everyone who wishes to pursue it,” Testy said in her announcement, reaffirming our organization’s steadfast devotion to increasing diversity in the legal profession and ensuring that the “gateway to justice” remains open to all.

We welcome your ideas for how we can best support and add value to our collective mission of building a just and prosperous world. Please contact us at beindivisible@LSAC.org.
LSAC recently announced the recipients of our new LSAT—India Law Scholarship, an award that aims to provide aspiring lawyers with the opportunity to study at some of the best law schools in India. The scholarship awards up to a maximum of ₹6 lac to the 2019 LSAT—India scholar — the student with the highest overall reported score on the LSAT—India taken at the June 2, 2019, test administration. With three students scoring the highest, LSAC named Hena Ayisha, Shivansh Bagadiya, and Pulkit Goyal as its 2019 LSAT—India scholars.

Hena Ayisha wants to help improve accessibility to law and continue to widen the scope of career options in the legal profession. Shivansh Bagadiya comes from a family of lawyers and says his decision to pursue a career in law came quite early on. And Pulkit Goyal aims to make law more accessible to students as a professional career, especially those from underprivileged sections of society.

The scholarship — divided among the three recipients — will cover tuition and halls of residence fees for the first year of the law program, up to a maximum of ₹6 lac. Any unutilized amounts from the first year can be rolled over to the subsequent year, and the scholars will have the opportunity to continue receiving the benefits of the scholarship to cover a second year of tuition and halls of residence fees — as long as they secure an overall score in the top 5% (cumulative of both semesters) of the batch in their first year of the program. LSAC will also have Ayisha, Bagadiya, and Goyal present during LSAT—India events.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE CHALLENGE

In June, LSAC announced the Justice Innovation Challenge, which will award a total of $30,000 in seed funding and mentorship to law students with compelling ideas for addressing access to justice issues. Developed by the Access to Justice Tech Fellows Program and sponsored by LSAC, the challenge is open to all current law students in the U.S. and requires individuals and teams of up to four members to collaborate with a nonprofit legal services organization to assist low-income people in need of legal support for issues such as domestic violence, consumer debt, evictions, business entity formation, foreclosures, and access to government benefits. Participants will present their best ideas to a panel of judges, who will award three winners $15,000, $10,000, and $5,000 respectively to bring their ideas to fruition.
“The Justice Innovation Challenge is one of the ways we’re galvanizing and mobilizing the next generation of law students who are passionate about addressing various inequalities in our justice system with truly bold solutions,” said Miguel Willis, LSAC Presidential Innovation Fellow and director of the Access to Justice Tech Fellows Program, which was initially catalyzed through a similar pitch competition.

The deadline for submissions was July 19, and a small group of finalists have been invited to advance to the next round, which will consist of a virtual pitch competition before a panel of judges on August 21. Among the judges are LSAC President and CEO Kellye Testy, ABA President Judy Perry Martinez, and ABA Center for Innovation Deputy Director and Counsel Chase Hertel. Winners will be invited to present their solutions at the Microsoft Innovation Policy Center in Washington, D.C., on October 1.

The Access to Justice Tech Fellows Program is designed to identify and equip the next generation of civil justice leaders to ensure equitable access to justice for all. For more information on the program and the Justice Innovation Challenge, visit www.atjtechfellows.org.

Events and Updates

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND CONVENTION IN LAS VEGAS**

The largest gathering of blind people in the world, the National Federation of the Blind National Convention was held from July 7-12 at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada. LSAC was a proud sponsor of the event, which is crucial to our ongoing commitment to learning more about how we can provide the appropriate accommodations for disabled LSAT test takers, and to our larger mission of enhancing diversity, equity, and access to everyone’s pursuit of a legal education.

The NFB convention is the premier event for training, support, and information for the blind community. As a sponsor, LSAC participated in the NFB career fair, exhibited at the convention, and presented to the organization’s Blind Lawyers Division. At the career fair, LSAC’s representatives interacted with more than 500 attendees. Our exhibition table included Microsoft Surface Go tablets on
which we could demonstrate the new Digital LSAT — which includes accessibility features such as adjustable type size, colors, and brightness. We also brought Braille and large-print brochures to accommodate sight-impaired attendees.

The event was described by LSAC’s Senior Vice President for Legal and Corporate Affairs Leanne Shank as fostering “a community of compassion.”

“For those of us in attendance, the experience was nothing short of inspirational,” she said. “Attendees helped each other maneuver between the convention center, casino, and the hotel. People held shoulders or followed the sound of others’ voices. Some used service dogs. Casino workers and even people there gambling lent a hand, joining in the spirit of helping everyone. Among other things, we learned how best to assist the blind while enabling them to feel capable and independent.”

On July 26, LSAC honored the 29th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act with a commemorative blog post on Law:Fully highlighting our attendance at this powerful event.
DEANS PANEL DISCUSSES “WHY LAW SCHOOL AND WHY NOW?” AT D.C. FORUM

The first LSAC Law School Forum of 2019 was held on July 20 in Washington, D.C., at Marriott Wardman Park. In addition to providing candidates with access to more than 170 ABA-approved law schools, the forum also offered workshops exploring topics such as the LSAT, the application process, financial aid, and diversity. One of the workshops, entitled “From the Law School Deans: Why Law School and Why Now?”, featured a panel of deans including Jane Aiken (Wake Forest), Renee McDonald Hutchins (UDC), Donald Tobin (Maryland), and William Treanor (Georgetown). The panel reflected not only racial and gender diversity, but also a mix of public and private schools and new and experienced deans. Panelists discussed why one should attend law school, described the law school academic experience, and explored some of the benefits and career opportunities available to someone with a law degree.

The well-attended workshop was packed with participants who had several questions for the deans. Nearly half of the room said they identified as first-generation law school candidates.

The next law school forum will be held on September 16, 2019, at the Hyatt Regency in Toronto, Ontario. Additional forums are scheduled at various locations throughout the fall. For a complete listing, please visit LSAC.org/lawschoolforums.

LIVE WITH KELLYE AND KEN

Each month, Deans Emeritus Kellye Testy (LSAC president and CEO) and Ken Randall (iLaw founder and president) host a live stream dialogue about the present and future of legal education. Featuring expert panels of law school deans, “Live with Kellye and Ken” delves into engaging online discussions of today’s important topics surrounding legal education and leadership.

The most recent live dialogue, entitled “Innovations in Learning and Assessment,” took place on July 31, and featured Dean Melanie Wilson (Tennessee), Kellie Hill (Khan Academy), Mark Raymond (National Board of Medical Examiners), Executive
Associate Dean Christiana Ochoa (Indiana), and Dean Luke Bierman (Elon). The discussion focused on the core principles of valid and reliable assessment, including innovations in assessment, ABA Standards on assessment, the use of technology to facilitate assessment, the use of self-assessment and peer feedback, and the use of authentic practice technologies to hone student problem-solving capacities.

To view this and other past shows, visit LSAC.org/live-with-kellye-and-ken.

**LSAT BLOG SERIES**

In June, as part of the countdown to the launch of the Digital LSAT, LSAC’s Law:Fully blog commenced a new series spotlighting the LSAT. The first post in the series discussed the years of planning that went into the Digital LSAT, while answering the questions at the top of everyone’s minds, such as how the digital version of the test actually works. The second post highlighted issues relating to score release, test preparation, and ensuring accessibility for all test takers. And the third and most recent post in the series explored how the LSAT contributes to fair and comprehensive law school admission. Upcoming posts will feature stories of people who took the LSAT and how the test helped pave the way for a successful journey through law school.

We always welcome story ideas for our blog, which features the latest on all aspects of law and legal education, including the future of the legal profession, access to justice, diversity and inclusion, testing and assessment, law and technology, and more. To submit a suggestion, please email news@LSAC.org.