Changing Demographics in Law Student Wellness

Results of the 2014 National Survey of Law Student Well Being: Correlations Between Alcohol Use, Drug Use and Mental Health Issues and Attitudes Toward Seeking Help
Speakers

• **Professor Jerry Organ**
  – Associate Director of the Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions
  – University of St. Thomas School of Law (Minnesota)

• **David Jaffe**
  – Associate Dean for Student Affairs
  – American University Washington College of Law
Agenda

• Law Student Well-Being Study Origin
• Results of the Study
• So What? Now What?
• Questions/Discussion
Survey of Law Student Well Being (SLSWB)

Made possible by the financial support of the ABA Enterprise Fund and the Dave Nee Foundation, and the cooperation of the 15 participating law schools and their students.
Goals

Of the Survey/Research
• Update Alcohol/Drug Data
• Capture Prescription Drug Use and Mental Data
• Look at Help Seeking Attitudes

Of Today’s Discussion
• Results of Key Topics
• Discuss Best Practices

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
Participants & Methods

- IRB
- Web-based Survey Design
- 15 Law Schools in Spring 2014
- Roughly 11,300 Law Students
- Approximately 3,400 Respondents
- Response Rate of Roughly 30%

- 56% women
- 44% men
- 69% Caucasian
- 8% African-American
- 5% Hispanic
- 7% Asian
- 7% Multiracial
- First-years – 30.4%
- Second-years – 34.4%
- Third-years (or more) – 35%

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol Consumption</th>
<th>SLSWB</th>
<th>Healthy Minds (Grad.)</th>
<th>Healthy Minds (Undergrad.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior 30 days - drank enough to get drunk</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior 2 weeks - binge drank at least once</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior 2 weeks - binge drank 2 or more times</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alcohol Consumption and Problem Behaviors

• 25 percent positive for CAGE questions;
• Other common problems included:
  – vomited (37%)
  – had amnesia or memory loss (25%)
  – missed class (19%)
  – drove while under the influence (15%)
  – Thought I had a problem – afraid I might be an alcoholic (14%)
Street Drugs

• Use of marijuana and cocaine have increased since the 1991 AALS survey

• 25% (12 months) and 14% (30 days) have used marijuana which compares with 21% and 8% in 1991.

• 6% (12 months) and 2.5% (30 days) have used cocaine which compares with 5% and 1% in 1991.
Distribution and Misuse

• Overall, **12.6%** of respondents with a prescription have given away their prescription drugs in the last 12 months – with stimulants being most frequent, followed by sedatives and pain medication.

• Overall, **14.4%** of respondents used prescription drugs without a prescription in the last 12 months – with stimulants being used most frequently, followed by sedatives and pain medication.
Prescription Stimulants

• Most common reasons for prescription stimulant use without a prescription:
  – To concentrate better while studying – 67%
  – To increase my alertness to study longer – 64%
  – To increase my alertness to work longer – 46%
  – To concentrate better while working -- 45%
  – To prevent other students (who are using prescription stimulants) from having an “edge” – 20%

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
SLSWB Results
Mental Health Concerns
## Depression & Anxiety in Law School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depression/Anxiety SCREEN</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Anxiety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screened Positive: 17%</td>
<td>Screened Positive: 37% total: 23% for mild to moderate 14% for severe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
### Depression & Anxiety in Law School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depression/Anxiety Diagnosis</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Depression</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis: 18% in lifetime,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17% of whom were diagnosed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since starting law school</td>
<td>This compares with 15% of undergraduate students and 17% of graduate students from Healthy Minds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosis: 21% in lifetime,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30% of whom were diagnosed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since starting law school</td>
<td>This compares with 14% of undergraduates and 15% of graduate students in the Healthy Minds Dataset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
Frequency of Suicidal Thoughts & Self-Injury

- 20% have thought seriously about suicide sometime in their life
- 6% have thought seriously about suicide in the last 12 months
- 9% of respondents have hurt themselves in the last 12 months
- 17% of those have done so two or more times in the past month
Multiple Issues

• Those who reported binge drinking two or more times in the prior week are much more likely to
  – also have experienced **five or more problem** behaviors associated with alcohol (4X more likely).
  – also have **smoked marijuana** in the last year and in the past 30 days (3X more likely).
  – also have **used cocaine** in the past year and in the past 30 days (4X more likely)
  – also have **used prescription stimulants** without a prescription in the past year and in the past 30 days. (roughly 3X more likely)
Multiple Issues

• Those who screened positive for anxiety are much more likely to screen positive for depression and those who screened positive for depression are much more likely to screen positive for anxiety.

• Roughly six percent of respondents had three or more “concerns” (binge drinking two or more times, drug use, prescription drug use without a prescription, screened positive for depression, or screened positive for anxiety).
Help Seeking Behaviors
For Drug and Alcohol Concerns

• If you believed you had an alcohol or drug problem, how likely would you be to seek assistance from ----
• 81% - a health professional
• 30% - LAP
• 14% - dean of students
• But only 4% have ever actually used a health professional for alcohol or drug issues.
For Mental Health Concerns

• If you believed you had a mental health problem, how likely would you be to seek assistance from ----
  • **79%** - a health professional
  • **15%** - dean of students
For Mental Health Concerns

- 42% thought they needed help for emotional or mental health problems in the past year.
- 21% of those who thought they needed help reported actually receiving counseling
Factors that would discourage seeking help

• Threat to job or academic status
• Potential threat to bar admission
• Social stigma
• Handle it myself
Somewhat likely or very likely to encourage others to seek help:

- Campus Counseling Services: 80%
- LAP: 50%
- Dean of Students: 40%
- Do Nothing: 30%

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
If other student doesn’t respond to encouragement…

![Bar chart showing substance use and mental health for different interventions.](chart.png)
Factors that discourage follow up...

- Threat to job or academic status
- Potential threat to bar admission
- Social stigma
- Don’t want to get involved
- Don’t have a responsibility to intervene
Our Law Students are scared to ask for help

• **44%** report a better chance of getting admitted to the bar if a mental health problem is **hidden**.

• **49%** report a better chance of getting admitted to the bar if a substance use problem is **hidden**.

• The percentages are even higher among those with multiple concerns, who are most in need of seeking help.

• **71%** agree or strongly agree that law students do not seek help for fear of the professional consequences.*
Call to Action for Law Schools

• To what extent does the culture of law school contribute to some of these challenges for our students and to what extent can we do something to improve the law school culture?
What Some Are Doing To Show Their Students That They Care About Their Well Being

(How does your institution stack up? What else are you doing?)
Holding a candid discussion during Orientation
Checking in post-admissions on students with challenges in their past
Ensuring attendance is being kept, and absences are being reported - educating/showing appreciation for students who report concerns of classmates
✓ Training/Educating faculty on behavior to look for, why attendance is important, etc.
☑ Developing a well-thought out wellness policy (including stakeholders it affects)
☑️ Utilizing outside resources

American Bar Association
Commission on Lawyer Assistance Programs

NCBE

DAVENE Foundation
☑ Ensuring sufficient financial allocation for events and programming on well-being
Developing a wellness curriculum

Sustainable Lawyering: An Introduction to Mindfulness for 1Ls; Effective and Sustainable Law Practice: The Meditative Perspective (Berkeley)

Well-Being and the Practice of Law (Duke)

Mindful Ethics; Mindfulness & Leadership; Mindfulness in Law (Miami)

Contemplative Lawyering (USF)

Lawyers in Balance (Georgetown)
Identifying one or more trained student peer volunteers
Having onsite a part-time or full-time professional counselor
Highlighting availability of resources in prominent locations (website; bathrooms)
Supporting creation of a student organization dedicated to wellness
Understanding bar application character and fitness questions and ensuring they do not interfere with a student seeking help.
Assessing the provision of alcohol on campus (none/free/paid) and the message it sends
Questions, Comments, Concerns?
Contact Information

Jerry M. Organ
Associate Director of the Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions
University of St. Thomas School of Law (Minnesota)
JMORGAN@stthomas.edu

David Jaffe
Associate Dean for Student Affairs
American University Washington College of Law
djaffe@wcl.american.edu

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
References for SLSWB comparison data

• Report of the AALS Special Committee on Problems of Substance Abuse in the Law Schools, Submitted to the Executive Committee of the Association of American Law Schools May 1993
• The Healthy Minds Study -- http://healthymindsnetwork.org/
• The Student Life Survey --
  http://sitemaker.umich.edu/umsarc/student_life_survey
• PHQ2 and PHQ9 --
• Kessler 6 - http://www.hcp.med.harvard.edu/ncs/k6_scales.php
• SCOFF -- http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1070794/

Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.
General References


General References


• McKinney, R.A. (2002). Depression and anxiety in law students: Are we part of the problem and can we be part of the solution? *The Journal of the Legal Writing Insitute, 8,* 229-255.


Copyright © 2016 Organ, J.M., Jaffe, D.B., Bender, K.M.