Memorandum

To: Senator Barbara Boxer

From: Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar,
American Bar Association

Date: July 28, 2011

In March you wrote the American Bar Association (ABA) to raise concerns you have about the transparency of information collected and provided by the ABA regarding employment and placement of law school graduates. Stephen N. Zack, president of the ABA, provided a response on April 27, 2011, and to that response attached a memorandum from the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar addressing the Accreditation Project’s plans for the 2011 Annual Questionnaires and possible changes to the Standards. This letter is an update and progress report on the Section’s plans. Please note that the Section is the Department of Education’s recognized accreditor of law schools and because of Department regulations is required to carry out accreditation processes independent of the American Bar Association.

Questionnaire Committee:

The Section’s Council met June 10 and 11, 2011, and received a report with recommendations from the Questionnaire Committee proposing changes to the 2011 Annual Questionnaire. The Council accepted the report of the Committee and delegated to its Executive Committee the responsibility to follow-up with the necessary steps to see to that the committee’s recommendations were implemented prior to the finalization of the 2011 Questionnaire. That has been done, and notice has been sent to the deans and career services officers of all ABA-approved law schools notifying them of changes to the Questionnaires.

On the August 2011 Annual Questionnaire, to be completed and submitted by the schools by October 31, 2011, several new questions were added in order to collect additional data. They are:
- whether employment is long-term or short-term,
- whether any employment reported is funded by the law school or the university,
- additional detail about the location of the employment,
- and additional detail about the size of law firm that is the employer.

These new questions are in addition to information on graduates’ employment status, employment types, and employment locations.

A new chart has been developed by the committee that will be completed and submitted in the late fall by all schools. This chart will allow the Section to aggregate the information for all schools using common categories and definitions. The chart for each school will be published in the *ABA/LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* in the section of the Guide devoted to each school. This will permit an applicant to compare schools across common data points.

The Section will also be collecting additional data from all law schools in the spring of 2012, just after February 15 (the traditional nine-month-after-graduation date) for the class that graduated in the spring of 2011. That new data will include:
- whether the graduate’s job is part-time or full-time,
- whether the job requires bar passage,
- whether a J.D. is preferred for the job,
- whether the job is in another profession,
- and whether the job is a non-professional one.

In order to collect this data, the Section must develop definitions for each of these categories so that the data will be comparable across law schools. We expect to have those definitions completed in the late fall so that the data can be collected from schools by February 15. Once that data is submitted by the schools, the Section will publish the school-by-school and aggregate data on its website so that applicants can review this most current and complete information available on employment and placement for the class of 2011.

Once these two changes in the Questionnaires are implemented, and the new data is collected and displayed, the Section will be producing information that will provide additional assistance to law school applicants in making informed decisions on whether to go to law school and which school to attend, and potentially to assist current law students and recent graduates in making employment decisions.
Standards Review Committee:

The Standards Review Committee met on July 9-10, 2011, and as part of its agenda considered a change to Standard 509 covering consumer information. A subcommittee recommended that the Standard be amended to require disclosure of employment/placement data on each law school’s website and in law school publications. The committee has this proposal under review and will be considering it at the fall meeting. The chair of the subcommittee is collaborating with the chair of the Questionnaire Committee to make certain that the approaches of the two committees are consistent and complementary.

Thank you for your interest in these very important issues. We look forward to working with you as we go forward implementing these important new initiatives.