

Survey of Third Year Law Students

In 1998, we received a grant (along with Richard Sander at UCLA) from the Law School Admissions Council to conduct a nationwide survey of third year law students. The survey covered two broad areas: perceptions about law school and perceptions about the job market. Respondents were told that participating in the survey was optional, that their individual answers would be kept confidential, and that results of the survey would be reported in aggregate form only. Students were also asked to sign release forms allowing researchers to gain access to their complete law school records, including LSAT scores and law school transcripts. Students were told that they could participate in the survey without signing the release and that in no event would researchers be given access to their names. Instead, the release form and the surveys were numbered so that researchers could subsequently match responses to law school data while protecting student confidentiality. In this paper, we report survey results only.

Ten schools agreed to administer the survey in the spring of 1998. Although the number of schools is relatively small, as we report below, the participating institutions represent a reasonably good cross section of American law schools in terms of their size, status, and geographic location. As with students, participating schools were promised anonymity. In all but one school, surveys were administered by distributing them either at the end or the beginning of class. Students were given approximately fifteen minutes of class time to fill out the surveys. In the remaining school, surveys were distributed by the registrar's office outside of class. In total, we received 1,103 completed surveys, although not every survey contained answers to all questions. The tables that follow report the exact number of students who did respond to particular questions.