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Trending @ RWU Law: Dean Yelnosky's Post: Jobs Data 12-22-2016

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Dean Yelnosky's Post

Jobs Data

Posted by Michael Yelnosky on 12/22/2016 at 03:37 PM



The American Bar Association, which regulates law schools, has recently taken steps to increase the amount of “consumer information” law schools must make available to potential applicants. I consider this a positive trend, even though reasonable minds can differ on the question of what kinds of information should be provided.

There are at least two risks involved when picking data all schools must report. First, as the saying goes, “just because you can measure something does not make it important.” For example, does the total number of volumes and titles in a law school’s library really matter? The second risk is that picking a metric could influence law school behavior in unintended ways. A classic example is the LSAT and undergraduate GPA information reported by *U.S. News & World Report* in its annual ranking of law schools. There was a time when that information was gathered by the ABA and reported by *U.S. News* for all full-time incoming 1L students. To game that metric, many law schools moved their new students with weaker LSAT scores and undergraduate GPAs to their part-time division. If the purpose of reporting the LSAT and GPA numbers was to paint an accurate picture of the numbers for incoming students, that behavior subverted the purpose, and the ABA and *U.S. News* now report LSAT and GPA numbers for a law school’s entire 1L class.

That brings me to the reporting of employment outcomes for a law school’s graduates. The ABA recently settled on requiring law schools to publish the employment status of the members of a graduating class

ten months after graduation. Moreover, the status must be reported on a very granular level. (There are at least eleven different categories, and all the “employed” categories are further broken down by full-time/part-time and long-term/short term). A consensus seems to be developing that “the gold standard jobs” are “Long-Term, Full-Time Bar Passage Required” and “Long-Term, Full-Time J.D. Advantage.” I think that careers are more important than first jobs but (and this is another impact of required reporting) this 10-month data is all we have to compare ourselves to other schools, and first jobs certainly have something to do with successful careers.

With all that said, I want to share some information about the employment outcomes for our May 2015 graduates as of April 2016 – the date for the ABA report. Professor Dan Filler from Drexel Law School (who is now Drexel’s dean) recently [published a ranking of law schools based on their placement rates in the two “gold standard” categories](#). According to that ranking RWU Law (as it so often does) “punched above its weight.” We are #6 among all schools in our *U.S. News* category and above **28** schools that are ranked above us in *U.S. News*, including some household names like Syracuse, Brigham Young, Pepperdine, University of Hawaii, American University, and University of Oregon. Closer to home, we are ranked ahead of all of our peer schools (Vermont, Suffolk, New England, University of Maine, Western New England, and University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth).

Our 2015 graduates are employed in thirteen states and the District of Columbia. They are in private practice; in not-for-profit organizations; in local, state, and national governments (as prosecutors, public defenders, city solicitors, immigration lawyers, and military lawyers); in business; and in education. And a large percentage, almost 15% of the graduating class, were in judicial clerkships, [a percentage that exceeds every law school in New England, with the exception of Yale, Harvard, Vermont, and Northeastern](#). Judicial clerkships are one of the most powerful entry-level jobs a law graduate can obtain because of their educational and career benefits.

These competitive employment outcomes are all the more remarkable because RWU Law delivers them [at a lower cost to students than any other private ABA-accredited school in the Northeast](#).

Since Filler published his list, Professor Robert Anderson from Pepperdine University School of Law crunched the ABA employment data in another way and published an alternative list. [On that list](#) we are similarly ranked in the upper-tier of schools in our *U.S. News* category and ahead of all of our peer schools.

As I wrote at the outset, the utility of a single piece of data about a law school is questionable. However, looking at the right information can help prospective students make better decisions about which law school is right for them, and there has never been more information available.