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Law Student Exit Survey, 2007-2008

I. Introduction

This is the third academic year that the Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA) administered the Law Student Exit Survey (referred to as the *Law Survey* in this report) to graduating law students. The survey is specifically designed to assess law education experiences at Mason. It covers the following six topics: (a) background information, (b) law program evaluation, (c) enriching educational experiences, (d) student satisfaction, (e) employment plans, and (f) student comments on law school experiences.

There are two notable changes in the 2007-2008 Law Survey from the previous year:

- Taking the Law Survey became mandatory for graduating law students. The survey was administered solely online and required respondents to log in using their names.
- From this year onward, the data collection cycle of the survey follows the Mason Law School's academic calendar, from the fall semester through the summer semester of the following year.

Making the Law Survey mandatory drastically improved the response rate. In the 2007-2008 academic year, the Mason Law School awarded a total of 226 law degrees, including 219 JDs and 7 LLM degrees. Among them, 223 students — 218 JD and 5 LLM degree recipients — completed the survey for a response rate of 99%. This is more than triple that of the 2006-2007 Law Survey: 28.3%. The results in this report are based on all the survey respondents regardless of the degree types awarded.

Because of the changes in the data collection cycle and required participation of graduating law students in the Law Survey, the data from previous years cannot be used for comparison without major data restructuring. Therefore, a trend analysis is not included in this report.

When applicable, results from the following two surveys are used for data comparison:

- (1) *The 2007 Law School Survey of Student Engagement*¹ (*LSSSE, 2007*) is referenced to make national-level comparisons. The LSSSE is based on law students of all class levels from 72 law schools in the U.S. and Canada, whereas the Mason Law Survey is given to graduating law students only.
- (2) *The 2007-2008 Graduate Student Exit Survey* (*GSES*) is referenced to make comparisons between law students and graduate students in other programs at Mason. Law students had taken the GSES with other graduate students for more than a decade before the Law Survey was developed.

In this report,

- Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
- Frequency and mean exclude “don’t know” and “not applicable” responses unless noted.

¹ For more information about LSSSE, please visit: <http://lssse.iub.edu/index.cfm>.

II. Highlights

Student Background Information

- The overwhelming majority (92%) of the respondents started law school at Mason. Among them, 44% enrolled at Mason less than two years after college.
- Sixty-seven percent of students attended the law school primarily full-time; 33% enrolled part-time.
- The Mason Law School attracts working professionals: 30% of law students — mostly part-time students — worked full-time and 28% held part-time jobs during most of their law education.
- For 43% of the respondents, Mason was their first choice among all the law schools they had considered; 29% indicated that Mason was their second choice.
- About 35% of the respondents received financial support (e.g., assistantship, fellowship, or employee benefit).
- Mason law students are more likely to owe a smaller amount of educational debt than their peers in other American and Canadian law schools. Full-time students tend to incur more debt than part-time students upon graduation: 53% of full-time students owed more than \$60,000, compared to 12% of part-time students.

Law Program Evaluation

- The respondents gave the highest average ratings on the following statements regarding Mason's law program: (1) the program was intellectually challenging and stimulating, (2) the Law School encourages ethical practice of law, and (3) the courses were well taught.
- Law students found the range of course offerings and the frequency of course offerings the most problematic among all the 14 items about the program.
- Law students rated the intellectual caliber of fellow students very high. In contrast, student diversity received one of the lowest average ratings.

Educationally Enriching Activities

- The law students were most likely to engage in the following activities before graduation: law student organization (68% participated before graduation), clinical internship or externship (65%), and law review/journal member (53%).
- Part-time students were generally less involved in educationally enriching activities.

Student Satisfaction

- Overall, 88% of the respondents were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the Mason Law School.
- Nearly 90% of the respondents said that they would recommend the Mason Law School to prospective students. In contrast, only 61% indicated a strong sense of belonging to the Mason Law School.
- Three quarters of the respondents were satisfied with career counseling. Nearly half of the respondents gave negative ratings on mentoring and level of financial support.
- Student satisfaction with campus services and facilities varied from one service to another: over 90% were satisfied with the law school library and computer resources while 75% were dissatisfied with parking. Less than half of the respondents were satisfied with food services.

Employment Plans

- About one third of the respondents planned to begin a new position with a new employer, and another one third would look for employment upon graduation. The remaining one third would stay with the current employer in a new position or in the same position.
- When asked about their prospective employers after graduation, 53% expected to work for law firms, followed by government (19%) and judicial clerkship positions (11%).

For more information about the surveys:

- The 2007-2008 Law Survey results are available online at:
<https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingLaw/2008/index.cfm>
- Results from the Graduate Student Exit Survey are available at:
<https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingGrad/2008/index.cfm>
- LSSSE 2007 Annual Survey Results are available online at:
http://lssse.iub.edu/2007_Annual_Report/index.cfm

III. Background Information

1. Transfer Status and Starting Year

Among the 2007-2008 respondents, 92% started law school at Mason (i.e., *native law students*), and the remaining 8% transferred to Mason from another law school (i.e., *transfer law students*).

As shown in Table 1, 64% of the native law students began in 2005 and another 27% began in 2004. The majority of students took 3-4 years to complete the Mason law program. Approximately 6% of native law students started the program in 2003 or earlier. Transfer students are allowed to transfer up to 28 units into Mason's law program; therefore, they generally complete the program sooner than native students: 72% of the transfer students first enrolled at Mason in 2006, 22% enrolled in 2005, and the remaining 6% in 2004.

Table 1. When did you first start your law study at Mason?

Starting year	Native Law Students (n=203)	Transfer Law Students (n=18)
2003 or earlier	6%	0%
2004	27%	6%
2005	64%	22%
2006	3%	72%

2. Choice of Graduate School

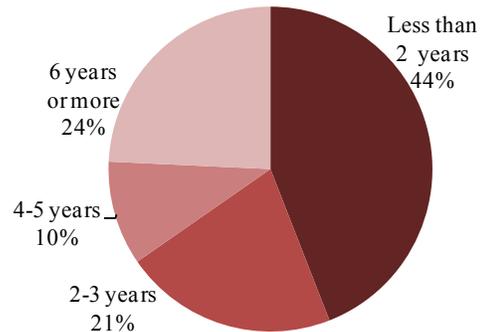
Among the 2008 law graduates, approximately 43% said Mason was their first choice among all the law schools they had considered; one third (29%) reported that Mason was their second choice. Another one third (27%) indicated that Mason was their third choice or lower.

3. Years between Receiving Undergraduate Degree and Enrolling in Law School

Among the **native law students**, 44% started at the Mason Law School within two years after they earned their undergraduate degree (see Figure 1), 21% started in 2-3 years, and 10% in 4-5 years. The remaining one fourth of the respondents pursued a law degree 6 years or more after graduating from college.

According to the LSSSE 2007 data, 65% of law school students in the nation attended law school within two years after earning an undergraduate degree; 18% started in 3-5 years; 17% started 6 years or more after college.

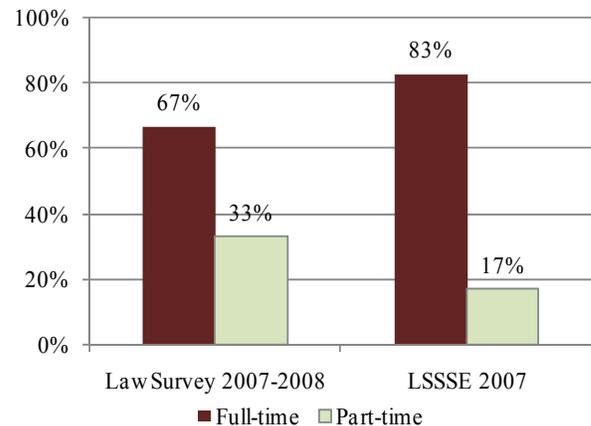
Figure 1. Years between Earning Undergraduate Degree and Enrolling at the Mason Law School (*Native law students ONLY*)



4. Primary Enrollment and Employment Status

Primary enrollment status: Compared to the LSSSE 2007, Mason Law School has significantly more part-time students than other law schools in the U.S. and Canada (see Figure 2). According to the LSSSE 2007, 83% of the respondents attended law school full-time. At Mason, 67% pursued their law degrees primarily full-time; 33% part-time.

Figure 2. Primary Enrollment Status



As shown in Table 2, there is a clear age difference between full-time and part-time law students at Mason. Almost half of part-time students (49%) were over 30 years old while only 19% of full-time students fell into the same age group.

Table 2. Age and Enrollment Status of Mason Law Students

Age Group	Full-time	Part-time	Total
25 or younger	35%	3%	24%
26 - 30	46%	48%	46%
31 - 40	15%	41%	24%
41 and older	4%	8%	5%

Primary employment status: Table 3 compares law students' employment status by their enrollment status. Only 2% of full-time students worked full-time during most of their law education, 32% held part-time legal jobs, and more than half (59%) worked occasionally or did not work. In contrast, the vast majority of part-time law students (86%) worked full-time during most of their law education. The remaining part-time students worked part-time or occasionally.

In sum, the results from this and previous sections suggest that Mason attracts working professionals who are older and have spent some years in legal or non-legal fields.

Table 3. Primary Employment Status during Law Education

		Primary Enrollment Status		Total
		Full-time	Part-time	
Employment	Full-time job	2%	86%	30%
	Part-time legal job	32%	4%	23%
	Part-time non-legal job	6%	4%	5%
	Worked occasionally	32%	6%	23%
	Did not work	27%	0%	18%

The Mason Law School attracts working professionals: 30% of the students pursued their law degrees while working primarily full-time.

5. Financial Support and Educational Debt

Financial support: About 35% of the respondents received one type of financial support, and 1% received two during their law education from the sources listed in Table 4. The primary source of support is university scholarship (17% of law students received it), followed by employment benefit (13%). Please note that reported financial support from family and parents was excluded.

Table 4. Financial Support without Obligation to Repay^a

Funding Source	%
University scholarship	17%
Employment benefit (e.g., tuition assistance)	13%
Other (e.g., private fellowship)	3%
Non-University scholarship	2%
Teaching assistantship (e.g., legal writing fellow)	1%
Research assistantship or equivalent	1%

^a Respondents were allowed to select more than one source.

Educational debt: As Figure 3 shows, 40% of the respondents reported that they would incur more than \$60,000 in debt. Nineteen percent expected to have a debt between \$40,001 and \$60,000, and 22% estimated under \$40,000. Approximately one out of five Mason law students expected to graduate without debt. Full-time law students are more likely to accumulate a large amount of educational debt than part-time students: 53% estimated a debt over \$60,000, compared to 12% of part-time students. The majority of part-time students worked primarily full-time and secured a continuing income source during their law education.

Figure 3. Educational Debt upon Graduation by Enrollment Status



According to the LSSSE 2007, 31% of the respondents would owe more than \$100,000 of educational debt upon graduation. Forty-two percent expected to owe between \$40,000 and \$100,000. This leaves only 14% expected to have less than \$40,000 and 13% expected no debt. These results, however, need to be interpreted with caution because,

unlike respondents of Mason's Law Survey, the LSSSE included law students in non-graduating classes, many of whom might not have accurately estimated their debt upon graduation. Reflecting the continuous hike of tuition and fees in law schools, it is a nationwide trend that law students accumulate a large sum of educational debt upon graduation.² Nonetheless, the figures above suggest that Mason law students are on average incur a lower amount of educational debt than law school students participated in the LSSSE 2007.

IV. Program Evaluation

In the survey, students were asked to report the extent to which they agreed with 14 statements about their academic program, faculty, and peers at the Mason Law School. See Table 5 on the next page for the complete statements.

1. Academic Program

As shown in Table 5, over 95% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the Mason law program was intellectually challenging and stimulating and encouraged the ethical practice of the law. The respondents generally rated the program high in preparation for law career and academic support. Seventy-seven percent of law students said that the legal writing program had helped them improve their legal writing skills.

Among all the program evaluation questions, the frequency and range of course offerings were rated the lowest. Forty-four percent of the respondents said that courses were not offered frequently enough for timely completion of degree. A little more than half of law students did not agree that there was a wide-range of courses to choose from.

2. Faculty at Law School

The overwhelming majority of law students (95%) were satisfied with the way the courses were taught. About 90% of law students indicated that faculty members were willing to discuss academic performance with students (91%) and were interested in the welfare and professional development of students (89%).

Despite high levels of satisfaction with faculty teaching and academic/professional guidance, one third of students did NOT feel that there were enough opportunities to communicate with faculty members. Approximately one third of students (30%) disagreed with the statement "there is good communication between faculty and students regarding student needs, concerns and suggestions"; another one third (34%) reported that there were not "many opportunities outside the classroom for interaction between students and faculty."

3. Students at Law School

Most students (94%) found that the intellectual caliber of students in the program was high. In contrast, only 69% of students viewed fellow students in the program as socially, culturally, and ethnically diverse. This figure is much lower than other graduate programs at Mason. In the 2007-2008 GSES, 93% of the respondents agreed that the student body in their program was diverse. Some law students made specific comments on diversity of the student body. A few of these comments are provided in *Section VIII*.

Among the 2008 graduates of Mason Law School, 80% were White American; 14% minorities; and 6% foreign students. According to the American Bar Association (ABA), 23% of the students awarded J.D. degrees by ABA-approved law schools in 2006-2007 were minorities.³

² The National Association of Law Placement. 2007. "What Do New Lawyers Earn? A 15-Year Retrospective as Reported by Law School Graduates." *NALP Bulletin*, September. Available at <http://www.nalp.org/content/index.php?pid=520>. Retrieved on October 25, 2008.

³ Data Source: *The Legal Education and Admission to the Bar, the American Bar Association. 2008. Legal Education Statistics: "Total Minorities J.D. Degrees Awarded."* Available at <http://www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/stats.html>. Retrieved on September 25, 2008.
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Table 5. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements about your Mason experiences?^a

Rated on a 4-point scale:4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, and 1=Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean
Academic Program					
1. My program was intellectually challenging and stimulating.	35%	60%	3%	1%	3.29
2. The Law School encourages the ethical practice of the law.	30%	66%	2%	2%	3.24
3. My program prepared me well for my profession.	22%	66%	10%	2%	3.08
4. The Law School has given me sufficient support to succeed academically.	15%	70%	10%	5%	2.95
5. The writing program has helped me improve my legal writing skills.	24%	53%	13%	10%	2.91
6. Courses listed in the catalog are offered frequently enough for timely completion of degree requirements.	9%	47%	32%	12%	2.53
7. There are a wide range of courses to choose from.	8%	40%	43%	10%	2.45
Faculty at the Law School					
8. The courses I took were well taught.	16%	79%	4%	1%	3.10
9. Faculty were willing to meet with me to discuss my academic performance.	17%	74%	6%	3%	3.05
10. Faculty in the Law School were interested in the welfare and professional development of students.	17%	72%	7%	3%	3.04
11. There is good communication between faculty and students regarding student needs, concerns and suggestions.	13%	57%	23%	7%	2.76
12. There are many opportunities outside the classroom for interaction between students and faculty.	13%	53%	31%	4%	2.74
Students at the Law School					
13. The intellectual caliber of students in the program is high.	32%	62%	5%	1%	3.25
14. There are students from different social, cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds at the Mason Law School.	8%	61%	22%	10%	2.66

^a In this table, the items are sorted by the average rating.

V. Educationally Enriching Activities

Classroom learning is not the only learning vehicle in law education. Some out-of-class educational activities are strongly linked to the quality of learning experiences and the professional development of students at law school. The Mason Law Survey asked students to identify their level of participation in a set of educational activities, choosing from the following five response options: “have done,” “currently doing,” “plan to do,” “do not plan to do,” and “not applicable.”

Table 6 compares involvement in selected educational activities between full-time students and part-time students at Mason. As a reference, comparable results from the LSSSE 2007 are also provided in the table.

Table 6. Student Participation in Educationally Enriching Activities: Comparing Mason Law Students and LSSSE 2007 Participants^a

	Full-time Mason Law Students ^b	LSSSE 2007 3L ^c	Part-time Mason Law Students ^b	LSSSE 2007 4L ^c
Other Student Organization	80%	N/A	41%	N/A
Clinical Internship or Externship	73%	64%	48%	45%
Law Review/Journal Member	62%	30%	36%	17%
Volunteer or Pro Bono Work	41%	57%	19%	33%
A Legal Research Project with a Faculty Member Outside of Program Requirements	26%	25%	14%	17%
Moot Court Team	20%	20%	13%	13%
Legal Writing Fellow	10%	N/A	11%	N/A
Serving on a Student-Faculty Committee	5%	17%	2%	9%

^a The activities are listed by the rank order of the percentages for full-time law students.

^b The percentages in this column combined “done” and “currently doing” categories.

^c Unlike the Law Survey, the LSSSE did not include the “currently doing” option. It provided the following response categories: “done,” “plan to do,” “do not plan to do,” and “undecided.” For this reason, only the percentages of “done” are presented here.

Based on the average duration of degree completion, the results of full-time Mason law students are compared with those of the third-year law students (3L); part-time Mason law students with the fourth-year law students (4L).

Full-time Mason law students are much more likely to participate in all eight activities except for legal writing fellow than part-time students. For instance, 73% of full-time law students had done or were currently doing a clinical internship or externship, while the figure was only 48% among part-time students. Compared to the LSSSE 2007, full-time Mason law students are more likely to participate in clinical internships/externships and serve as law review/journal members, but less likely to serve on a student-faculty committee and do volunteer or pro bono work than the 3rd year law students in other North American law schools.

Participation of part-time Mason law students in a law review/journal (36%) and a clinical internship/externship(48%) is more frequent than the 4th year law students in the LSSSE 2007. On the other hand, part-time Mason law students were less frequently involved in volunteer or pro bono work, student-faculty committees, and research projects outside of course/program requirements. However, we need to carefully interpret these results because not all the 4th year law students in the LSSSE 2007 were part-time students. Some of them may be full-time students who were in joint degree programs or were taking longer to complete the program for various reasons.

VI. Student Satisfaction

1. Satisfaction with Advising and Support

Before reporting the results of satisfaction with advising and support, it should be noted that a sizeable portion of law students selected “not applicable (NA)” or “don’t know.” One fourth of the respondents selected “NA/don’t know” for financial support and mentoring; 16% said the same for academic advising. In a law school with a good number of working professionals like Mason, some students may not need to use some of these services (e.g., career counseling). Still, it is alarming that such a large number of students were not aware of services available to them.

Among the respondents who provided valid responses, career counseling scored the highest rating — about 73% were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied”— followed by academic advising (61%) (see Table 7). About half of the respondents gave positive ratings to mentoring and level of financial support. According to the 2007-2008 GSES, master’s students in other programs at Mason showed much higher levels of satisfaction with advising and support. For example, the percentage of master’s students who were satisfied with academic advising and mentoring is 83% and 80% respectively.

Table 7. Student Satisfaction with Advising and Support

How satisfied are you with the following at the Mason Law School? (Rated on a 1-4 scale: 4=very satisfied, 1=very dissatisfied)	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Mean
Career Counseling	23%	50%	19%	9%	2.87
Academic Advising	9%	52%	28%	11%	2.59
Mentoring (e.g. supporting professional development)	5%	48%	37%	9%	2.50
The level of financial support	5%	45%	28%	21%	2.35

2. Satisfaction with Services/Facilities

The Law survey also asked students to evaluate the services and facilities on the Arlington campus. As listed in Table 8 (see next page), the majority of the respondents gave positive ratings on computing resources (93%) and the Law School library (91%). Positive ratings on lounge facilities (68%) and the bookstore (62%) were much lower, but better than food services and parking. More than half of the respondents were not satisfied with food services; and three quarters of them were “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with parking on the Arlington campus.

Table 8. Student Satisfaction with Campus Services/Facilities

How satisfied are you with the following services/facilities on the Arlington campus? (Rated on a 1-4 scale: 4=very satisfied, 1=very dissatisfied)	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Mean
Law school library	28%	63%	7%	1%	3.18
Law school computing resources	21%	72%	6%	1%	3.13
Campus lounge facilities	8%	60%	25%	8%	2.67
Campus bookstore	1%	61%	27%	10%	2.54
Campus food services	3%	42%	30%	25%	2.23
Campus parking	1%	24%	35%	40%	1.85

3. Overall Satisfaction

Overall, 88% of the 2008 law graduates were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the Mason Law School. For the other indicators of overall satisfaction, 88% of the respondents agreed that they would recommend the Mason Law School to prospective students; 85% said that they would enroll at the Mason Law School if they were starting over. On the other hand, only 61% said that they had a strong sense of belonging to the Mason Law School.

Table 9. Overall Student Satisfaction with the Mason Law School

Rated on a 1-4 scale: 4=very satisfied, 3=satisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 1=very dissatisfied	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied	Mean
Overall, how satisfied are you with the Mason Law School?	24%	64%	9%	3%	3.10
Rated on a 1-4 scale: 4=strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
I would recommend the Mason Law School to prospective students.	32%	56%	9%	3%	3.16
If I were starting over, I would enroll at the Mason Law School again.	32%	53%	10%	6%	3.10
Overall, I have a strong sense of belonging to the Mason Law School.	15%	46%	29%	10%	2.67

VII. Employment Plans and Expected Employer after Graduation

1. Employment Plans

When asked about their employment plans, 31% of the students said that they would begin a new position with a new employer and another 31% would look for employment once they graduate (see Table 10). About one third chose to stay with the current employer: 19% would start a new position with the current employer and 12% would remain in the same position. Five percent of the respondents would return to a previous employer in a new or previous position. Only 2% would either be self-employed or not looking for employment.

Table 10. Employment Plans after Graduation

	What are your employment plans after graduating from law school?	%
1	Beginning a new position with a new employer	31%
2	Looking for employment	31%
3	Continuing with my current employer in a new position	19%
4	Continuing with my current employer in my current position	12%
5	Returning to a previous employer in a new or previous position	5%
6	Being self-employed	1%
7	Will not be employed	1%

2. Expected Employers

As shown in Table 11, 53% of the respondents expected to be working for law firms, followed by government (19%) and judicial clerkships (11%) after graduation. A small portion of law students expected to work for non-profit organizations (3%), trade associations or lobbying firms (3%), academic institutions (2%), or Military (2%). “Other” is ranked the fourth in Table 11, but those who chose this option did not necessarily expect to work for other types of employers not listed in the table. Most of them were not sure about their future employers when taking the Law Survey.

Table 11. Expected Employers after Graduation

	Which setting BEST describes your EXPECTED employer once you graduate?	%
1	Law firm	53%
2	Government (federal, state or local)	19%
3	Judicial clerkship	11%
4	Other	4%
5	Business/industry	4%
6	Other non-profit organizations	3%
7	Trade association or lobbying firm	3%
8	Academic institution	2%
9	Military	2%

VIII. Student Verbatim Comments on Law School Experiences

In the Law Survey, students were asked to explain if they selected “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” for any of the 10 items in the satisfaction section (see Table 7 and 8). They were also given an opportunity to provide general comments on their law school experiences at the end of the survey. About 87% of the respondents provided at least one written comment. The following subsections briefly summarize the major results citing actual student comments.

1. Academic Environment and Services

Curriculum and Course Offerings: about one third of the respondents discussed curricular issues. Respondents often had trouble finding the courses that met their academic interest/requirements and fit their schedule. They also found course offerings varied greatly from one semester to another. One student stated:

- *I know it is difficult with a small school, but I would have liked to see each class offered every semester. I had a number of classes I was unable to take because of conflicts with other classes, particularly when both were only offered in the same semester.*

Another frequently discussed issue was the writing program. Many questioned the quality and consistency of advice and grades given by the Writing Fellows.

- *Mason students do gain from taking so many writing classes, but I question the quality of the writing fellows and the adjuncts (they were inconsistent and often gave poor advice).*
- *Writing fellows should actually speak to each other so everyone has the same assignment...And those courses are completely subjective by grader, and each one has unique standards that take too long to get used to. This program should be pass fail, especially for 1 and 2 when other students are grading the papers.*

Faculty: Nearly one fourth of students commented on faculty. The respondents viewed law faculty at Mason as very “conservative” and wanted to see “a bit more ideological diversity” among them. The respondents were generally pleased with instructional quality of professors including adjunct professors, describing them as “passionate,” “informed,” and “extremely brilliant and articulate.” Some students wished to have more opportunities to get to know their professors.

- *While I have no problems with politicized classes, I felt that the polarization at GMU was extremely unbalanced, and that contrasting opinions were not only not welcome, but discouraged.*
- *I was quite impressed with the quality of faculty members. Not only are they leaders in their field, they're nice. They almost all seemed to care for the wellbeing of the students.*

Academic Advising and Mentoring: A previous *In Focus* report on the Law School Survey⁴ reported students had been frustrated with insufficient academic advising, and it continued to be an issue among the 2008 law graduates. The respondents unanimously hoped to have systematic academic advising provided by the program. The respondents also complained about the lack of mentoring programs.

- *I strongly suggest you set up ILs with a faculty advisor so they can have a point of contact for academic questions, such as which courses to take, how to find a summer job, etc.... Other schools have well established faculty advisor programs and it is embarrassing that we do not.*
- *There does not seem to be a structured mentoring program for student and I think that would serve GMU in the long run with helping student in their professional development.*

Career Counseling: The comments about career counseling were polarized. Some were very pleased with the service, but others were very frustrated with insufficient employment support for non-top students.

- *The Career Services staff is absolutely wonderful and you can tell they care about GMUSL students and work hard to try to help them find jobs.*
- *I was extremely disappointed with the career services. I felt that they were primarily focused on getting the top 10% jobs and those were the people who needed no help. The rest of the class had to basically hunt on their own which is extremely difficult...*

Students: The respondents were very satisfied with “the intellectual caliber” of fellow students. At the same time, some pointed out that Mason Law students were “overwhelmingly white” and “conservative” and that the lack of diversity in the classroom would not help prepare them to practice law in today’s diverse social environment.

- *I feel there is an imbalance that does not reflect the diverse nature of the legal field, especially in the Washington DC area, where many minorities work as legal professionals.*
- *A greater diversity of opinion and background would add tremendously to the caliber of discussion in class and add to the overall academic environment. The world is a diverse place, it would be nice to see that diversity reflected in the school.*

Level of Financial Support: Many students said that high quality law education at an affordable price is a major appeal of the Mason Law School. Some expressed their concerns that Mason might lose its competitiveness as its tuition has risen rapidly. Despite nearly half of law students being dissatisfied with the level of financial support (see Table 8), only a small number of students commented on this topic. Failure to get in-state tuition was the major source of frustration for some students — this left them “with a significantly larger debt” than anticipated.

- *The law school is ranked 34th in the nation, but we are losing great students to George Washington and other schools because our school has little or no scholarships to give. Our school is (has been) competitive because it offered a great education at a lower price than other law schools in the area. But with tuition rates raising every year, that competitive advantage is disappearing.*
- *[Before accepting admission] I was told by more than one person that it was likely that I would qualify for in-state tuition after my first year of law school. The reality appears to be that very few students are reclassified if they enter the law school as an out-of-state student. This would have been nice to know before I accepted admission to the law school as it would have weighed on my decision to attend GMUSL.*

2. Campus Facilities and Services:

Parking: Parking is the most frequently raised issue among all the comments. Nearly half of law students mentioned parking in their comments and they were extremely frustrated with parking situations on the Arlington campus. Parking shortage worsened due to construction on campus this year. Some also raised safety concerns in the parking lots/garages and the pathway to the parking in the evening.

- *Parking passes were expensive, and there was never space in the parking lot. I think if students have to pay for parking passes, the number offered should not exceed the number of parking spaces.*
- *The parking situation is a nightmare this semester and I do not feel safe in the garage after my night classes.*

⁴ The Office of Institutional Assessment. 2007. “Survey of Law School Students, 2005-2006.” *In Focus* 12(4): 1-12.

Food Services: One third of the respondents sought improvement in the quality of food and service hours in the evening. The students described food at the cafeteria as “*unhealthy,*” “*low-quality,*” “*limited choices,*” and “*not fresh.*”

- *As an evening student who is regularly here past the time when the cafeteria closes, I think it would be nice if there was some minimum food service still available in the evening hours, or at least if there was still some cafeteria space open to go sit and eat food brought in from home or elsewhere.*
- *The cafeteria is not commensurate with a top tier law school. I look forward to the accommodations the campus improvements will bring.*

Lounge Facilities: Majority of the students were very pleased with the atrium. Nonetheless, some students still had a hard time finding lounge and group study space.

- *Very few comfortable places to sit or study outside of the library; however, the atrium additions (e.g., tables & chairs) are good.*
- *Beyond the atrium, there are no general student lounge facilities with tables conducive to non-library or group study. Also, the atrium is a distracting high traffic area.*

Bookstore: Nearly one fourth of the respondents complained about the campus bookstore. Many of them had to attend classes without textbooks for varying periods of time due to the problems associated with textbook orders. Evening students found hours of the bookstore inconvenient to them.

- *The bookstore is often poorly stocked, and books are often not on order (yes, I realize this may be a problem created by professors ordering books late).*
- *The bookstore often is out of the required textbooks. I went half the semester without a book because each time I would go in, the staff would assure me that the book would be in the next week.*

IX. Summary

In summary, Mason law students are generally pleased with their program and their faculty, and would recommend it to prospective students. They feel they have good instructors and other students in the program are challenging. Mason students — many of them are working professionals attending law school part-time — graduate with less debt than law students nationally. While they are satisfied with the law library and computing resources, parking and food services are sources of dissatisfaction.

Please visit the following website to view comments from law students:
<https://assessment.gmu.edu/Results/GraduatingLaw/2008/index.cfm>