Survey of Law School Students
Trend Report: 2011-2013

January 2014

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OVERVIEW

The Survey of Law School Students has been administered by the Office of Institutional Assessment (OIA) since 2005. This survey collects data in the following areas: a) background information, b) law program evaluation, c) enriching educational experiences, d) student satisfaction, e) employment post-graduation, and f) comments. Law students take this mandatory survey online during the fall and spring semesters prior to graduation. All graduating students receiving Juris Doctor (JD) and Master of Laws (LLM) degrees are required to take the survey. Previous law school reports and customizable survey results can be found on the OIA website (https://assessment.gmu.edu/data-and-reports/).

This report focuses on trend analyses of the Survey of Law School Students from 2011 to 2013. During the 2010-2011 academic year the Law School awarded 170 degrees (all JD), with 168 graduates responding to the survey for a 99% response rate. During the 2011-2012 academic year, 219 degrees (all JD) were awarded. Among those graduates, 218 graduates responded, yielding a 100% (rounded) response rate. During the 2012-2013 academic year the Law School awarded 259 degrees (255 JD and 4 LLM). Among the graduates during this academic year, 100% responded to the survey. All results presented in this report are based on combined JD and LLM graduate responses.

Important Notes

- Data previously reported from the 2008 Survey of Law School Students is included in this report as a five-year comparative measure.
- Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- Frequencies exclude “don’t know” and “not applicable” responses.
- “Native students” refers to those who started law school at Mason. “Transfer students” refers to those who started at another institution and transferred to Mason’s Law School later.

HIGHLIGHTS

The following highlights summarize key findings from this report.

Student Demographics and Background

- Graduates from 2011-2013 began law school at Mason at rates of 90% or higher. Among students who started at Mason, more than two-thirds completed their degree programs in three years.
- The rates of graduates enrolled full-time since 2012 have remained at least 14% higher than the 67% rate reported in 2008. Part-time graduates matriculated at an all-time low of 18% in 2013, noticeably lower than the 2008 rate of 33%.
- Consistently, less than half of full-time respondents did not work while in law school. On the other hand, the majority of part-time students reported having a full-time job (74% in 2011; 83% in 2012; and 82% in 2013).
- When given a list of financial support options that do not require repayment, respondents were more likely to report having a university scholarship than other choices. However, only 15-22% of respondents reported having university scholarships.
- Since 2011, the percentage of full-time students graduating with over $60,000 of educational debt has decreased by 6%; however, the percentage has remained at least 20% higher than the 2008 rate of 53%. The percentage of part-time graduates with educational debt over $60,000 has increased from 12% in 2008 to 67% in 2013.

Law Program Evaluation

- Most respondents since 2011 agreed that courses were well taught (86-92%) and faculty were willing to meet with them to discuss their academic performance (89-94%).
- Data from 2011 and 2012 showed that high percentages of respondents (93% and 94%, respectively) agreed that the intellectual caliber of students in the program was high. Lower
percentages of graduates (43-47%) reported that there are students from different social, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds at Mason Law School compared to 69% in 2008.

- Consistently, at least 93% of graduates agreed that their programs were intellectually challenging and stimulating. However, only about half of the graduates agreed that there is a wide range of courses to choose from.

**Educational Experiences**

- In general, students enrolled part-time were less likely to participate in enriching educational activities (e.g., student organizations, internships, law journals, volunteer or pro bono work) than full-time students. For example, the difference is reflected in students’ participation in student organizations (80-84% full-time; 41-61% part-time) and clinical internships or externships (73-83% full-time; 30-48% part-time).

**Satisfaction**

- Increasingly, graduates have reported being satisfied with academic advising, as reflected in rates of 85% in 2013 compared to 61% in 2008.
- There has been an overall decline in the percentages of graduates satisfied with career counseling (73% in 2008; 68% in 2013).
- Since 2008, graduates were most likely to be satisfied with the law school library (84-98%) and computing resources (79-93%), and were least likely to be satisfied with campus food services, at rates ranging from 13% to 21% among 2011-2013 graduates.
- Over 75% of graduates reported being satisfied with Mason Law School overall. Compared to full-time students, higher percentages of part-time students had a strong sense of belonging, would recommend Mason Law School to prospective students, and enroll at Mason Law School again if starting over.
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND BACKGROUND

This section provides data about demographics for law school graduates. Additional background information concerning enrollment status, law school choice rankings, years between undergraduate and law schools, and financial support is also included.

Table 1 contains information about student demographics among law student respondents from the 2011-2013 graduating classes. Mostly all law students completed the Survey of Law School Students upon graduation. Based on the student demographics information, the following can be said about trends from 2011-2013:

- The percentage of white graduates has not changed when comparing 2013 to 2008; yet, the percentage dropped by at least 13 percentage points in 2011. The upswing in the percentage of white students in the past two years meant that there were decreases in the percentages of graduates from other racial/ethnic groups.
- Law school graduates have become increasingly younger such that the percentage of graduates 27 or younger has increased by 12 percentage points since 2011, and by 16 percentage points since 2008.
- The proportion of Virginia residents in the graduating classes has declined, resulting in an overall 22-percentage point decrease from 2008 to 2013.
- Increasingly more law school graduates are starting their studies at Mason. Since 2008, there has been a six-percentage point increase in native students.
- Over time, more law school students are graduating with GPAs over 3.50.

Table 1. Student Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents (N)</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Unknown</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident Alien</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White American</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 or younger</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-34</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 or older</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-State Resident</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Student</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Grade Point Average</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.501-4.000</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.001-3.500</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.000 and below</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
Transfer Status and Time to Degree

As previously indicated in Table 1, the overwhelming majority of Mason Law School graduates started their education at Mason. To gauge how long it took them to obtain their degrees, respondents were asked what was the first year they started their studies. Responses to this question were organized into three categories (less than 3 years, 3 years, and 4 or more years), as indicated in Table 2. Results of time to degree revealed that, increasingly, greater percentages of graduates are completing law school in three years. The increase in respondents completing law school in three years was nearly 20 percentage points since 2008.

Choice of Law School

In the most recent three years of data, around one-third of law school graduates said that Mason was their first choice of law schools (see Table 3). Since 2008 there has been an overall nine-percentage point decrease in Mason being the top choice among graduates. Furthermore, higher percentages of graduates have indicated Mason was their third choice.

Enrollment Status

In the past three years, there has been an upward trend in law school graduates who were enrolled on a full-time basis. According to the data in Figure 1, 82% of 2013 graduates were enrolled full-time, a 15-percentage point increase compared to what was reported in 2008.

Employment Status

Respondents were asked about their employment status, excluding unpaid internships, during most of their law school education. In the past three survey years, less than half of full-time respondents reported not working while in law school (see Table 4). Among those who worked, most had a part-time legal job or reported working occasionally. Among part-time graduates, at least three-fourths (74-86%) of students reported having a full-time job.
Financial Support and Educational Debt

The percentage of respondents reporting that they received at least one form of financial support that does not have to be repaid upon graduation has declined slightly in recent years from 35% in 2011 to 30% in 2013. Compared to 2008, there has been an overall five-percentage point decrease (not shown in Table 5) in respondents reporting that they received financial support not requiring repayment. The data contained in Table 5 provide information about the specific types of financial support law graduates reported receiving. Consistently across years, a higher percentage of respondents reported receiving university scholarships (17-22%) than other forms of support. In 2008 university scholarship was the primary financial support, followed closely by employment benefits (e.g., tuition assistance). However, percentages of graduates receiving employment benefits have declined over time by 10 percentage points in 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Financial Support without Obligation to Repay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2008</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment benefit (e.g., tuition assistance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g., private fellowship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-university scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assistantship (e.g., legal writing fellow)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research assistantship or equivalent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Survey of Law School Students inquires about educational debt students expect to have upon graduation. Figure 2, depicts the percentages of full-time and part-time respondents who reported educational debt in excess of $60,000. While there has been a steady decrease in percentages of full-time students borrowing over $60,000 to complete law school, the percentages from 2011-2013 consistently remain at least 20 percentage points higher than the 2008 rate of 53%. Similarly, the rate of part-time graduates accumulating over $60,000 of educational debt has far exceeded the 12% rate reported in 2008, reaching 67% in 2013.
LAW PROGRAM EVALUATION

A set of questions in the Survey of Law School Students give graduates an opportunity to provide their perceptions of faculty, students, and academic experiences, along with information about their participation in other educational experiences.

Student Perceptions of Faculty

As indicated in Table 6 most respondents agreed that courses were well taught and that faculty were willing to meet with them to discuss their academic performance. At least 75% of the 2013 respondents reported that faculty were interested in the welfare and professional development of students and that there is good communication between faculty and students regarding student needs, concerns and suggestions, much higher than the percentages reported in 2011 and 2012. On the whole, generally lower percentages of graduates (54-69%) agreed that there are opportunities outside the classroom for interaction between students and faculty.

Student Perceptions of Peers

Most graduates in 2011 and 2012 agreed that the intellectual caliber of student in the law program was high (see Table 7). However, less than half of students agreed that there are students from different social, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds at the Mason Law School. During the same period, there was a drastic decrease of 22 percentage points in 2011 compared to what was reported in 2008.

Student Perceptions of Academic Experiences

Data in Table 8 show results from survey items related to student perceptions of academic experiences. Most respondents have consistently agreed since 2008 that their program was intellectually challenging and stimulating (93-95%) and the law school encourages the ethical practice of the law (96-98%). While at least 70% of graduates reported that their program prepared them well for their profession, the percentages in agreement have dropped since 2008. The lowest percentages of respondents (about one-half) reported agreement regarding the wide range of courses to choose from, a consistent finding since 2008.

Table 6. Student Perceptions of Faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The courses I took were well taught.</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty were willing to meet with me to discuss my academic performance.</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty in the Law School were interested in the welfare and professional development of students.</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is good communication between faculty and students regarding student needs, concerns and suggestions.</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are many opportunities outside the classroom for interaction between students and faculty.</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N varies for each item due to the exclusion of missing data. Four response choices were provided: “Strongly agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” Percentages are for “Strongly agree” and “Agree” combined.

Table 7. Student Perceptions of Peers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The intellectual caliber of students in the program is high.</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are students from different social, cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds at the Mason Law School.</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N varies for each item due to the exclusion of missing data. Four response choices were provided: “Strongly agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” Percentages are for “Strongly agree” and “Agree” combined. Responses for 2013 are not displayed due to a reporting error.
Table 8. Perceptions of Academic Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My program was intellectually challenging and stimulating.</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My program prepared me well for my profession.</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses listed in the catalog are offered frequently enough for</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>timely completion of degree requirements.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a wide range of courses to choose from.</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The writing program has helped me improve my legal writing skills</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Law School encourages the ethical practice of the law.</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Law School has given me sufficient support to succeed academically.</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N varies for each item due to the exclusion of missing data. Four response choices were provided: “Strongly agree,” “Agree,” “Disagree,” and “Strongly disagree.” Percentages are for “Strongly agree” and “Agree” combined.

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

As expected, part-time graduates largely participated in enriching educational activities at lower rates than full-time students (see Table 9). Most full-time graduates reported participating in other student organizations and clinical internships or externships. At rates of 53-61%, 2011-2013 part-time graduates were more likely to report participating in other student organizations, yielding an increase of at least 12 percentage points compared to 2008. In general, full-time and part-time graduates were least likely to report being a legal writing fellow and serving on a student-faculty committee.

Table 9. Participation in Enriching Educational Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other student organizations</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical internship or externship</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason Law Review/other journal member</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer or pro bono work</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work on a legal research project with faculty outside of course or</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>program requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moot court team</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal writing fellow</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve on a student-faculty committee</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Percentages are for “Have done” and “Currently doing” combined.

SATISFACTION

Students Satisfaction with Advising and Support

Graduates were asked about their level of satisfaction with four advising and support areas: career counseling, academic advising, mentoring, and level of financial support (see Table 10). Overall, graduates were most satisfied with academic advising (over 72% in the past three years compared to 61% in 2008) and generally least satisfied with the level of financial support for law school (42-44% between 2011 and 2013, down from 51% in 2008). Advising and support areas were also examined according to enrollment status. The most noticeable difference between full-time and part-time students was with level of financial support. Higher percentages of part-time students reported satisfaction with the level of financial support than full-time students.
Student Satisfaction with Services/Facilities

Survey respondents were generally most satisfied with the law school library, law school computing resources, and the campus bookstore. Moreover, substantially more respondents reported being satisfied with the bookstore since 2012, compared to 2008 respondents. However, lower percentages of respondents reported satisfaction with the law school computing resources in recent years compared to 2008. Another stark increase in students reporting satisfaction occurred with campus parking. Compared to 2008 respondents (25%), 54% of respondents in 2013 reporting being satisfied with campus parking. In the most recent survey years, respondents were least likely to report satisfaction with campus food services.

Overall Satisfaction

The survey included several items related to students’ overall satisfaction with their Mason Law School experience. Generally, over 75% of graduates reported being satisfied overall with Mason Law School (see Figure 3). Respondents also reported their levels of agreement with other satisfaction related items (see Table 12). On the whole, respondents were more likely to report agreement with recommending Mason Law School to prospective students and attending Mason Law School again if they were starting over; however more recent survey respondents have been less likely to report wanting to enroll at Mason if starting over compared to 2008 survey respondents. Consistently, part-time students were noticeably more likely to report recommending Mason Law School to prospective students and wanting to attend Mason Law School again if starting over compared to full-time students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10. Student Satisfaction with Advising and Support</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Advising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of financial support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The N varies for each item due to the exclusion of missing data. Four response choices were given: “Very satisfied,” “Satisfied,” “Dissatisfied,” and “Very dissatisfied.” Percentages are for “Very satisfied” and “Satisfied” combined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 11. Student Satisfaction with Services/Facilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law school library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law school computing resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus lounge facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus bookstore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus food services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus parking</td>
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</table>

Note. The N varies for each item due to the exclusion of missing data. Four response choices were provided: “Very satisfied,” “Satisfied,” “Dissatisfied,” and “Very dissatisfied.” Percentages are for “Very satisfied” and “Satisfied” combined.

Figure 3. Overall Student Satisfaction

Office of Institutional Assessment
January 2014
According to Table 13, graduates were more likely to report looking for employment after graduation. More recent respondents reported looking for employment at higher rates compared to 2008 respondents. A small percentage of graduates reported that they would not be employed, would be self-employed, or return to a previous employer in a new or previous position after graduation, a steady trend since 2008.

In terms of specific employers (see Table 14), respondents were most likely to expect to work at a law firm, a choice among nearly half of the respondents. However, percentages of graduates working at law firms are down in the past three years compared to the 2008 data. Respondents were least likely to report that they expected to be employed by an academic institution, trade association or lobbying firm, the military, other non-profit organizations, and other places of employment.
STUDENT COMMENTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND OBSERVATIONS

The Survey of Law School Students asked graduates to elaborate on their experiences at the Mason Law School. At least two-thirds of respondents provided written feedback in the final comment areas of the survey (2011: 71%, 2012: 74%, and 2013: 66%). Following is a selection of prominent themes with verbatim comments from the 2011-2013 surveys that pertain to the areas previously mentioned in this report: law program evaluation, educational experiences, and student satisfaction. For a complete list of comments, visit http://assessment2.gmu.edu/data-and-reports/data/GraduatingLaw/law.html

Law Program Evaluation

Faculty

A highlight of students’ experiences with faculty was the quality of instruction with adjunct faculty. According to some students, adjunct faculty provided real-world expertise to courses and access to important networking opportunities.

- "The quality of the adjunct faculty was outstanding. I often found that they had far more practical knowledge to share than the full-time faculty."
- "Overall, I found the quality of instruction in the evening classes to be superb, especially in elective courses. Having a high proportion of adjunct faculty provides students with both theoretical and practical instruction and also provides valuable networking opportunities."
- "I generally felt that I got the most out of my higher level courses taught by adjuncts. While the core curriculum will obviously always be taught as theory-based courses, and by tenured faculty, I would like to see GMU continue to cultivate top tier adjuncts that teach from experience and a diversity of viewpoints/ideologies."

Areas in need of improvement for faculty include diversity, interaction, and instruction. Of the greatest concern across all three years was diversity in viewpoints among faculty, as numerous respondents provided feedback related to the perceived politically conservative landscape of the law school.

- “First of all, the lack of diversity surprised me, and I think it holds Mason back. I speak not only of the lack of diversity in the student body, which definitely hurts us, but also in the viewpoints of professors. I have tried to recommend Mason to several of my friends who are going to law school in the DC area, but they all opted for lower ranked schools because of how conservative they understood the Mason faculty to be.”
- “Professors should not say offensive things about different cultures, and students should feel comfortable despite their diversity. Students also have different political views, but there is a clear preference for conservative and libertarian views among faculty that many students are reluctant to present different views on exams, for example.”
- "There is very little interaction with professors outside a few connections with some students. The professors aren't expected or encouraged to come to events, participate in activities, or take a general interest in students. I feel like the campus environment does not encourage (or demand) professors to do anything with students."
- “The school's ideology has infected the curriculum in a way that makes the quality of instruction very poor. Professors' positions are transparent in class and students who disagree are intimidated, several professors who were obviously unqualified to teach did so for years...My interest in law school was diminished by the sense that my interpretations and positions were unacceptable and that my answers had to pander to my professor's positions.”

Students

Respondents from all survey years were most vocal about perceptions of student diversity within the law school. Many students noted that there was a lack of diversity (e.g., ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, politically) and that they desired a more diverse community for learning.
• “The profile of the law student community was not diverse. There really needs to be a focused effort to attract a more diverse student body, both culturally and politically.”
• “I think that in order to provide a better and more challenging academic experience, you need a more diverse student body.”

Perceptions of Academic Experiences

Several issues emerged from student feedback related to the curricular experience at Mason Law School. Some curricular experiences in which respondents’ elaborated upon greatly involved course credit and offerings, specific courses, grading, and experiential education.

Course Credit and Offerings. Some students commented that there should be more course offerings that align with students’ academic needs and interests, such as an increase in the number of credits per course and expanded course offerings during the day.

• “There needs to be more 4-credit options. The current selections were scant and made choosing classes very difficult.”
• “I feel like the schedule heavily favors night students once you hit your last year. It is pretty much impossible to fill a schedule with day classes that don't conflict, or that you haven't already taken. I am a full time day student, but end up taking night classes 3 nights a week. That is not what I expected going in, nor what I wanted to do.”

Legal Writing Courses. Students from the 2011-2013 graduating classes often provided comments about the legal writing course. Most comments pertained to the number and usefulness of the courses, instruction by writing fellows, and grading. Reactions to the legal writing courses were mixed, such that positive comments often provided additional ways in which the courses could be improved.

• “The writing program was very frustrating. It was extremely time consuming and the instruction was poor, especially from the writing fellows.”
• “While the writing curriculum was useful (if dreadfully long) for improving my writing skills, I did not feel that the writing fellows program was necessarily useful. Grading in the writing classes, particularly first year classes, seemed, quite frankly, rather arbitrary.”
• “While I generally enjoyed the legal writing program in the first two years, I take similar issue with having writing fellows as teachers; while peer review can be beneficial, the instruction and grading in writing fellow classes were too inconsistent to be taken seriously, and I felt a more seasoned professor would have been better.”

Grading. The grading curve was a commonly cited issue among Mason Law School graduates. Graduates from 2011 articulated their dissatisfaction with the low grading curve due to the potential impact on competitiveness among law school graduates in the area. However, when the curved changed, some 2012 graduates expressed their concern with the change occurring during their matriculation.

• “Raise the curve! We’re competing with better-ranked school in the DC area.”
• “The ‘Mason curve’ is doing a lot of damage to hardworking, bright law students who are struggling against [other local university] students to find jobs in this economy. I don't understand what possible good can come from such a low curve -- all it does is hurt the students.”
• “I was disappointed and thought it was unfair that [they] changed the curve in the middle of our 2L year and didn't retroactively change the grades. I am on the cusp of having a 3.0 which is required for many government jobs, and am worried about being barred if I end up getting a 2.98 which certainly would have passed the 3.0 mark had the new curve been applied. It’s also going to be awkward to explain to employers.”
Educational Experiences

Practical and Experiential Education

Respondents were interested in gaining more practical experience in the classroom and through internships/externships. Some students suggested that the curriculum should be structured to further support these opportunities.

- “I think the George Mason faculty needs to seriously consider the fact that students in their 3rd (or 4th) year are not being prepared properly for the real world if they are prevented from engaging in externships by the small amount of allowable P/F credits.”
- “I wish that classes had a little more of an eye toward the practical application of the law. I recognize that law school is a very slow changing pedagogical model, but I disliked my classes where the professor did not care about the practice of law and only cared about what the law should be.”
- “[T]he class curriculum could be improved with more practical courses to prepare students for the actual practice of law.”

Mentoring

A desire to participate in meaningful mentoring activities with peers, professionals, and alumni was noted among graduates across all three survey years, particularly to create a sense of community within the law school and among professional networks.

- “Create a required (1L year) student-faculty or student-attorney mentorship program that is graded and worth one credit hour. Focus the program on first-year success and obtaining a summer internship. Grading would reflect student engagement with the mentor.”
- “I appreciated being set up with a mentor. I met with her several times and it was really helpful. It also started my networking opportunities.”
- “While the peer to peer mentoring program was helpful for some 1L students, I think it would be more beneficial to set up a mentoring program between alumni/professionals and students so that the students have someone to talk to about future planning. Such mentoring program would also be helpful to meet and network with other professional.”
- “I would like to see additional mentoring programs through the alumni network because I feel that we have great alumni that we do not always utilize. Many of us begin law school feeling that we know exactly what we want and then it changes. It would be nice to meet with alumni in the area of law we are interested in - in order to learn more about it.”

Student Satisfaction

Advising and Support

Academic and career advising was a critical issue in which many students provided mixed feedback. Respondents articulated that career and academic advising was paramount to their success in law school both academically and personally. Most students who provided comments about advising focused more on areas of improvement; however, there were some instances in which a specific member of the advising staff was praised for the level of support she offered to students.

- “Christine Malone saved my law school and likely entire legal career. After crashing down after my first semester, I went to see her to discuss how I could become a better law student and also to see if law was even the right thing for me. Not only did she help me find renewed confidence in my career choice, but her advice going forward regarding how to study, prepare, and take exams helped me to turn my scholastic record around. Without a doubt, [this advisor] helped me to become the successful law student I am today.”
“Mason’s Career services was extremely helpful and attentive even to our larger than normal class.”

“The law school needs better advising at the very beginning of law school to assist students in determining what classes they want to take throughout their time.”

“The only part of my GMU experience that I did not think was excellent was career advising. I think GMU needs to develop this service, particularly in light of the current economic situation. This is not to say that all students will have jobs, but GMU should strive to develop opportunities to harness the Northern Virginia region and help students obtain job opportunities.”

“Academic and career advisers need to be prepared and equipped to help people at the bottom half of the class maintain some level of confidence. Telling those individuals what options are closed to them merely causes them to stop seeking the advice of academic and career advisers.”

**Community and Belonging**

Sense of community was important to survey respondents. In student responses, community encapsulated the general campus environment and culture of Mason Law School. Some respondents believed that more opportunities to connect with peers would enhance a sense of community.

“... I never felt part of a community or made strong friendships at Mason. The school would benefit from having more social events that allow students to get to know each other.”

“I think Mason has a decent “community” feel, but that is one thing that could certainly be improved ... I think students would like to see the school facilitate more community ... But I think if there were more weekly or monthly events that would help.”

**Tuition and Financial Support**

While some students commented on the affordability of Mason Law School, the cost of law school education raised concerns for other graduates. Additional concerns mostly pertained to student perceptions of tuition expenditures.

“Mason provided me with a top legal education at a reasonable price.”

“Additionally, I am also disappointed in the tuition raises during my time at the school. When I first applied, one of the big draws to Mason was its relative value.”

“My biggest grievance is about how my money is being spent. Tuition has increased substantially every year and for what benefit? I have seen none as a law student.”

**Services and Facilities**

There were several services and facilities that respondents commented on in their surveys: bookstore, food, recreation facilities, and parking.

**Facility Hours.** The hours of operation for bookstore and library facilities was a concern for some respondents, their limited nature was inconvenient.

“First, I believe that the library hours should be extended both during the semester and most especially during finals time. The fact that the library closes so early is actually quite inconvenient for students.”

“Wish the bookstore were open more hours. Odd that it doesn't open before classes start on weekdays (if you needed something for a class) and isn't open on Sunday and only open for three hours on Saturday.”

**Food.** The lack of on-campus food options and hours of operation were of great concern. Many students stated that what currently exists does not meet their needs and are inconvenient.
“While the Arlington campus' facilities have suited my needs in general, I find it sorely lacking in food services ever since the downstairs cafe closed. Now, the only food available on campus is convenience store/vending machine fare and bagels, which I find to be an unacceptable lack of variety considering that many students come straight from work to class and need to have dinner options.”

“More options should be available to students and staff, even if that means encouraging more food trucks to park outside campus. I think that by encouraging food trucks to park out front, Mason could provide a wide variety of options to students, faculty, and staff, as well as people who work in the surrounding area. This would greatly increase the number of options and variety of food at very little to no cost to the school.”

Recreation Facilities. Numerous students addressed their concern over the absence of recreation facilities at the Arlington campus. Respondents who commented about recreation facilities believed that such spaces would improve student satisfaction and wellness among the Arlington campus student population.

“[F]acilities such as a small gym are mandatory in order to facilitate a healthy lifestyle and reduce stress. I am confident that there must be some relatively unused space in theFounder's Hall or Hazel Hall, which could serve as a gym for both the graduate and law students. This is very important and it will generally increase the satisfaction of students.”

“The Arlington campus should have a well-equipped gym. This is essential for stress relief and the promotion of health living among law students.”