

Beyond Tokenism to Diversity in Law Firm Summer Classes

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Back in the day, the only way you could become a lawyer was by first becoming a lawyer's apprentice. It was a glorious time when the old would teach the young until the young were strong enough to throw the masters into the reactor core.

Now, some lawyers are lucky if they have a "mentor" who will show them how the phones work. Law schools and law firms invest a lot of blood and treasure in recruitment, but how are they doing on mentoring? Once you are in the door, who is around to help you find your way about the room?

Last month, Above the Law conducted a survey of its readership concerning the current state of mentorship in the law firm universe. Here's what we found.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

366 Respondents ... Law students: 33% ... Lawyers: 67% ... Male: 54% ... Female: 46% ... Minority: 22%

Do you (or did you) have a mentor at your school or firm?

Yes: 65% (29% reported multiple mentors)

No: 35% (44% of this group looked for a mentor outside their school or firm)

Is/was your mentor the same gender as you?

Yes: 59% ... Same race: 66% ... Same sexual orientation: 84%

How important is (or was) your mentor to your career progression and satisfaction?

	Overall	Minority	Women
irrelevant	16%	15%	12%
unimportant	20%	17%	18%
somewhat	31%	26%	33%
important	29%	37%	27%
crucial	4%	5%	7%

How important is (or was) it that your mentor "look like you"?

	Overall	Minority	Women
irrelevant	46%	33%	34%
unimportant	35%	30%	38%
somewhat	16%	26%	23%
important	4%	12%	5%
crucial	0%	0%	0%

How important is it to you to mentor someone younger than you?

	Overall	Minority	Women
unimportant	22%	17%	18%
slightly	8%	2%	13%
moderately	28%	35%	24%
very	26%	24%	25%
extremely	16%	22%	20%