

2011 Survey of Law School Experiential Learning Opportunities and Benefits: Responses from Government and Nonprofit Lawyers



This report is available as a downloadable PDF on the NALP website at www.nalp.org/lawyer_student_PD and on the NALP Foundation website at <https://www.nalpfoundation.org/uploads/2011ExpLearningStudy.pdf>.



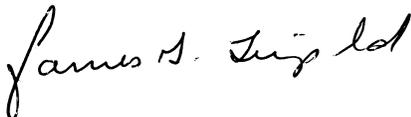
Acknowledgments

This informative study is the second of its kind and addresses law school experiential learning opportunities, participation, and benefits from the perspective of lawyers practicing in the nonprofit and government sectors throughout the United States. The counterpart to this study was conducted in 2010 and explored these same issues with lawyers in law firms. This public interest-focused project was made possible by the support and participation of many organizations and individuals. First among them are the lawyers working in public service who took time to complete the online survey. Their insights and factual responses provide valuable perspectives on the practice-oriented courses and clinics offered in law schools and the perceived advantages provided by these courses in preparing new lawyers for public practice.

Special thanks are extended to Steve Grumm, NALP's Director of Public Service Initiatives. Steve's oversight and guidance allowed us to reach the many public interest legal employers and law schools who served as liaisons for distributing the survey. We would not have accomplished our goals for distribution and responses without Steve's support and assistance. For more information about NALP's public service programs and the PSLawNet job database, visit www.nalp.org/publicservice.

In addition to those responsible for distributing and participating in this study, NALP and the NALP Foundation would like to thank the members of NALP's Lawyer and Law Student Professional Development Work Group for their vision and dedication to this research project. Specifically, we extend our sincere gratitude to Kris Butler (Holland & Knight LLP), Sandra "Sandee" Magliozzi (Santa Clara University School of Law), Gillian M. Murray (Bryan Cave LLP), and Margaret E. Reuter (New York Law School) for their expertise and valuable contributions to this project.

Finally, we extend our gratitude to Judy Collins, NALP's Director of Research. As with the private sector survey, Judy expertly guided the development of the survey instrument and conducted the analyses of the results.



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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	5
Executive Summary.....	7
Part I: Participation in Legal Clinics	9
Part II: Participation in Externships/Field Placements	14
Part III: Participation in Practice Skills Courses	18
Part IV: Participation in of Pro Bono Work During Law School	21
Part V: Usefulness of Learning Experiences in Preparing for the Practice of Law	26
Key Findings	31
Appendix.....	32
Methodology	32
Respondent Demographics	32
Survey Instrument	35

Index of Tables

Graph 1:	Participation in Experiential Opportunities.....	10
Table 1:	% Participation in Legal Clinic(s) by Practice Area.....	10
Table 2:	% Participation in Legal Clinic(s) by Current Employer Type	11
Table 3:	% Participation in Legal Clinic(s) by Years of Practice	11
Graph 2:	Length of Legal Clinic Participation	12
Graph 3:	Details of Involvement in Legal Clinic(s)	12
Table 4:	Supervision during Legal Clinic(s)	13
Graph 4:	Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s).....	14
Table 5:	% Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s) by Practice Area	15
Table 6:	% Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s) by Current Employer Type.....	15
Table 7:	% Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s) by Years of Practice.....	16
Graph 5:	Hours Worked per Week in Externship/Field Placement(s)	16
Graph 6:	Externship/Field Placement(s) Settings	17
Graph 7:	Participation in Practice Skills Courses.....	18
Table 8:	Participation in Practice Skills Courses by Practice Area	19
Table 9:	Participation in Practice Skills Courses by Current Employer Type	19
Table 10:	Participation in Practice Skills Courses by Years of Practice.....	19
Table 11:	Practice Skills Courses Taken	20
Graph 8:	Participation in Pro Bono Work.....	21
Graph 9:	Law School Required Pro Bono Work	22
Graph 10:	Law School Required Pro Bono Work by Population of Metropolitan Area in Which Law School is Located	23
Table 12:	Number of Pro Bono Hours Required	23
Graph 11:	Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work.....	24
Table 13:	Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work by Practice Areas	24
Table 14:	Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work by Years of Practice	25
Table 15:	Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work by Gender and Ethnic Minority Status	25
Table 16:	Number of Pro Bono Hours Volunteered During Law School	25
Table 17:	General Usefulness of Learning Experience in Preparing for Practice of Law.....	26
Graph 12:	Average Usefulness Rating.....	27
Graph 13:	Average Usefulness Rating – Regulatory v. Litigation Practitioners.....	28
Graph 14:	Average Usefulness Rating of Pro Bono Work Based on Number of Hours Worked During Law School	29
Graph 15:	General Usefulness of Learning Experience in Obtaining First Job in Public Interest or Government Setting.....	30

Introduction

So much is being written about the gap between law school preparation and actual practice that the Lawyer Professional Development and Law Student Professional Development Sections of NALP decided to launch an investigation into this subject. Legal employers desire new lawyers with practice-ready lawyering and professional skills. Law faculty teach these skills in clinics, externships, and simulation courses, but just how many students take advantage of such courses? Is their learning from those courses valuable in making the transition to practice? And how valuable for law students are law school pro bono programs? A nationwide survey was called for — one that would assess the usefulness of several features of law school education, specifically these “hands on” or experiential courses. The two NALP sections sought the direct assistance and participation of NALP and the NALP Foundation to produce such a study.

Tammy Patterson, the NALP Foundation President and CEO, along with the Sections’ Work Group reached out to clinical faculty and law school curriculum committees to elicit information that would be meaningful. The group determined that two studies would be conducted over a period of two to three years. The first survey would be sent to law firm lawyers and the second to lawyers practicing in the nonprofit and government sectors. The private sector lawyer study was concluded in 2011. The study was based on 930 survey responses from law firm lawyers. A copy of the final report can be obtained through the NALP (www.nalp.org) and NALP Foundation (www.nalpfoundation.org) websites.

This publication contains results and analysis of the second study, the survey for which was sent to lawyers with nonprofit and government law offices in fall 2011. One thousand two hundred and twelve public service lawyers responded to the survey. This report offers a look at how public service lawyers value the array of law school experiential learning programs, and also offers an opportunity to compare findings with those of the first report from law firm lawyers.

Finally, it is important once again to recognize the vision and support of the members of NALP’s Lawyer and Law Student Professional Development Sections. The project grew its wings with the attention and support of Gillian Murray, chair of NALP’s Lawyer Professional Development Section, and Sandee Magliozzi, chair of the Law Student Professional Development Section and NALP Board member. Stacey Kielbasa, our Board liaison, was a vital source of encouragement. The collaboration between firms and schools and among NALP members, Board of Directors, and staff has been thoroughly gratifying. The result is this study, which we hope will provide insights to law firm leaders and law school deans, recruiting managers and career services deans, professional development directors, and clinical faculty, as well as all other stakeholders in the education of tomorrow’s lawyers.

The NALP Lawyer / Law Student Professional Development Collaboration Work Group

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Executive Summary

“I believe these [experiential learning] programs are essential to a quality legal education and are critical to landing a first legal job. Skills-based courses give new lawyers confidence to jump into new situations knowing they have been prepared for similar situations and are armed with the skills necessary to prevail. My clinical and externship experiences, while undoubtedly valuable as experience, were perhaps most valuable as resume-builders because they stood out to potential employers as a sign of my commitment to certain law subjects. I believe the reason I was employed at graduation is because my resume gave my employer confidence that I had been armed with the appropriate legal skills and had obtained appropriate related experience which would help me to succeed.”

— Female public defender with less than one year of experience

It is clear that experiential learning programs and courses offered during law school can provide a variety of benefits and advantages for students and new lawyers, but how often are students taking advantage of these offerings? And, just how effective and useful are these “hands on” or simulated opportunities in preparing new lawyers for the practice of law? These are the primary areas of focus of this study, which features responses for lawyers in nonprofit and government legal positions. Overall, the data from this study suggest that these experiential learning opportunities, whether required or optional, can play an important role in preparing new lawyers for the demands of the practice of law.

Participation in and Benefits of Legal Clinics

Over one half (55.5%) of the lawyers responding to the survey reported that they had participated in at least one legal clinic during law school. Within this group, lawyers currently practicing in civil legal services, policy/advocacy organizations, and as public defenders were considerably more likely to have participated in legal clinics than the lawyers currently practicing in a state attorney general’s office or other state government office. Specifically, over 60% of the responding lawyers currently practicing in civil legal services, policy/advocacy organizations, or as public defenders stated that they participated in legal clinics in law school. However, only 39% of the lawyers working in a state attorney general’s office, and 42.9% of the lawyers working in other state government offices took part in a legal clinic.

Approximately 83% of participating government and nonprofit lawyers rated legal clinics “very useful” using a scale of 1 to 4 (with 1 being “not useful at all” and 4 being “very useful”). Less than 1% of the respondents in this group regarded the clinics as “not useful at all.”

Participation in and Benefits of Externships/Field Placements

Just over one-half (52.6%) of the respondents reported having taken part in an externship or field placement during law school. Lawyers currently practicing law in the federal government reported the highest percentage of participating in this type of experiential training (66.7%). Overall, 72.4% of the participating lawyers rated their externship or field placement experience as “very useful.”

Participation in and Benefits of Practice Skills Courses

The vast majority of public service lawyers participating in the survey (82.8%) reported that they had taken at least one practice skills course, and almost all of respondents with less than one year of experience practicing law (94.8%) stated that they had taken at least one practice skills course during law school. The most common practice skills course taken by this group was Trial Advocacy (62.8%). Practice skills courses focused on leadership and business management and planning were the courses least likely reported taken by this group — less than 1%. Less than half of the lawyers who reported participating in at least one of these courses (47.6%) considered them to be “very useful.”

Participation in and Benefits of Pro Bono Work during Law School

Similar to participation in legal clinics and externships, just over one-half of the respondents (54%) reported doing pro bono work during law school either on a voluntary basis or as part of a curriculum requirement. Within the group, only 9.5% of the responding lawyers stated that they had a pro bono requirement in law school. Roughly 60% of these lawyers had a requirement between 21 and 60 hours. When asked to rate the general usefulness of pro bono work in preparing them for private practice, responding public service lawyers ranked the experience(s) 3.2 on a scale of 1-4 (with 1 being “not at all useful” and 4 being “very useful”), similar to the usefulness rating given to practice skills courses.

The full report which follows contains many more findings on all topics noted in the table of contents and greater detail on the key findings noted in this summary.

I. Participation in Legal Clinics

“My clinic experience in law school was critical in preparing me for work as an attorney. It helped me synthesize the academic courses with real-world work, while still under the supervision of a faculty member. I can’t emphasize enough how important that is.”

– Female legal services lawyer with 3+ years of experience

The debate over the importance of theory-based curriculum versus experiential learning opportunities provided by law schools has been an ongoing one for many years. However, during recent years, the discussion has escalated due to the financial pressures and struggles felt throughout the legal industry. The original premise for this study was developed and initiated in response to layoffs and downsizing in private law firms and the increased scrutiny they are facing from clients to deliver quality legal services as efficiently as possible. In fact, many law firm clients have turned up the pressure by openly stating that they are no longer willing to absorb the cost of training new lawyers hired by their outside counsel. It is clear that the private sector is not alone in dealing with these issues. Legal employers in public service face the same needs and demands for better prepared, “practice ready” lawyers. Thus, the second phase of this project and the results included in this report are dedicated to participation in and the experiential learning opportunities provided by law schools and the usefulness of these offerings as viewed by over 1,200 lawyers in the nonprofit and government sectors of the legal industry.

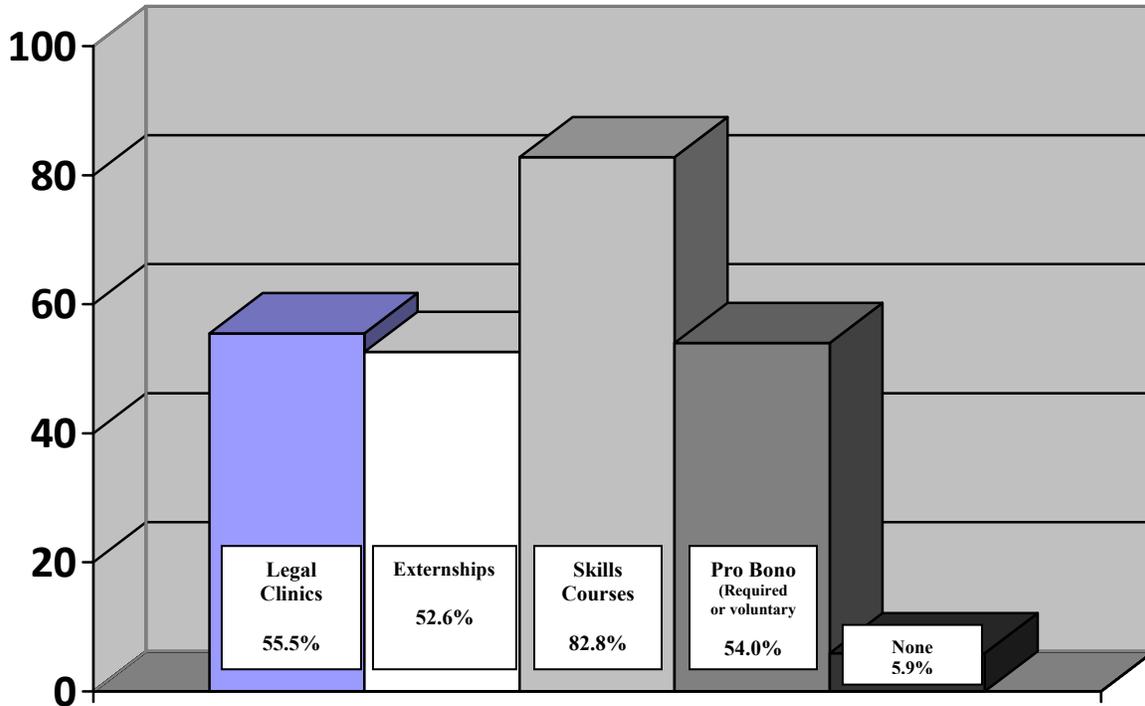
During the last decade, many law schools have made significant changes and additions to their curriculum to address the demands for more “hands on” or experiential training opportunities. But, how often and to what extent are students taking advantage of these offerings, particularly those students who are now practicing in government or nonprofit jobs?

For the purposes of this study, experiential learning opportunities were defined and divided into four categories: legal clinics, externships, skills courses, and pro bono work. We begin by taking a look at participation legal clinics. Law schools often offer clinical programs to provide students with hands-on experiences and, in turn, furnish a variety of clients with free legal services. Students gain experience researching legal issues, drafting documents, and meeting with clients. These clinics can be supervised by a member of the law school faculty, an outside practicing attorney or both. Many jurisdictions have “student practice” rules that allow law-clinic students to appear and argue in court.

As indicated in Graph 1, over one half (55.5%) of the lawyers responding to the survey reported that they had participated in at least one legal clinic during their law school tenure.

Graph 1: Participation in Experiential Opportunities

% of Respondents



Note: Figures based on 1,212 responses; since respondents could check more than one item, percentages do not add up to 100.

Table 1 below details the participation in clinics by the responding lawyers' current general practice area. The results reveal slight differences in the level of participation in legal clinics based on practice area with those lawyers in litigation, lobbying, or transactional practices somewhat more likely to have participated in a legal clinic than those practicing in the regulatory area.

Table 1: % Participation in Legal Clinic(s) by Practice Area

Litigation (N = 937)	57.2%
Regulatory (N = 155)	45.8%
Lobbying or transactional (N = 104)	58.7%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their practice area, counts do not add to the total.

However, when results are further broken down by current employer type, differences in participation levels are apparent. For example, lawyers currently practicing in civil legal services, policy/advocacy organizations, and as public defenders were considerably more likely to have participated in legal clinics than the lawyers currently practicing in a state attorney general’s office or other state government office.

Table 2: % Participation in Legal Clinic(s) by Current Employer Type

Policy/advocacy organization (N = 76)	69.7%
Public defender (N = 64)	65.6%
Civil legal services (N = 422)	64.9%
Federal government (N = 57)	59.7%
Other local government (N = 34)	58.8%
Local prosecution (N = 115)	51.3%
Other state government (N = 42)	42.9%
State attorney general (N = 323)	39.0%
Other (N = 76)	56.6%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their current employer type, counts do not add to the total.

Table 3 below indicates the responding lawyers’ participation in legal clinics by years of practice. The data in this table reveal a slight increase in legal clinic participation for those lawyers with three or fewer years of practice, suggesting an increase in the number of clinics being offered by law schools in recent years.

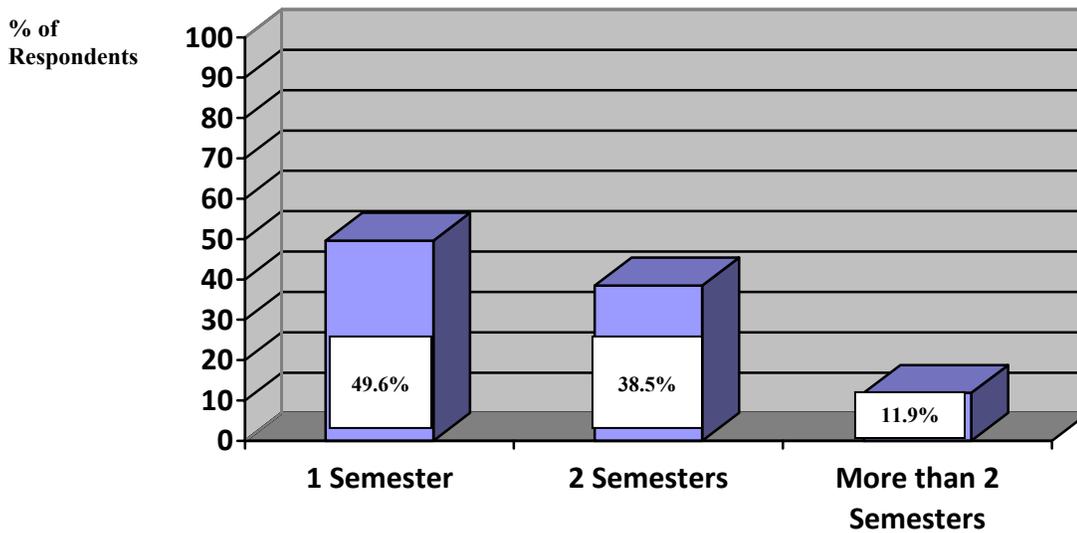
Table 3: % Participation in Legal Clinic(s) by Years of Practice

Less than 1 year (N = 96)	68.8%
1 year (N = 62)	71.0%
2 years (N = 92)	66.3%
3 years (N = 56)	66.1%
More than 3 years (N = 904)	51.2%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their years of practice, counts do not add to the total.

Lawyers were asked to provide the length of time they participated in these legal clinics. Approximately one-half (48.6%) of the responding lawyers reported that they participated in a clinic for just one semester, while 38.5% said that they participated in their legal clinic(s) for two semesters.

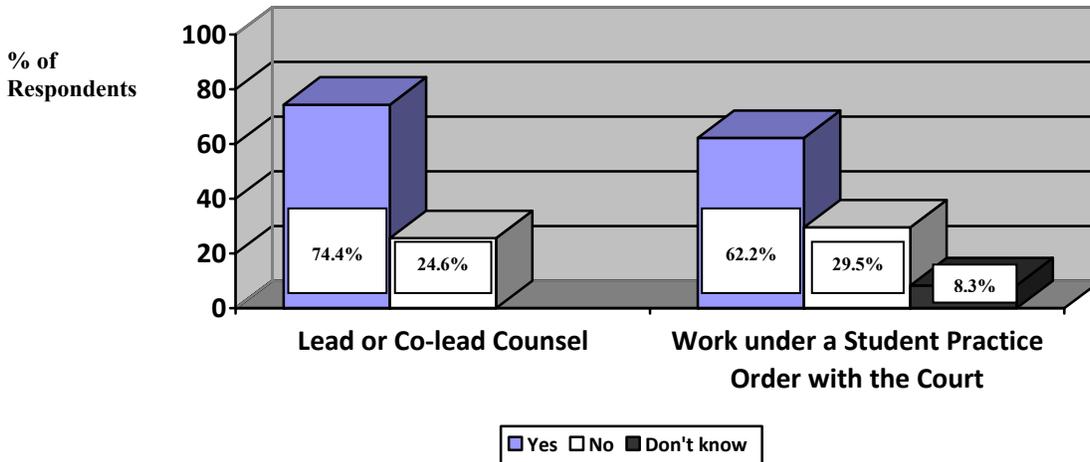
Graph 2: Length of Legal Clinic Participation



Note: Figures based on 671 respondents who participated in one or more clinic and answered this question.

Lawyers were also asked to provide details regarding their responsibilities and the supervision provided in their legal clinic(s). Nearly three quarters (74.4%) of the responding lawyers reported that they served as lead or co-counsel during their clinic and 62.2% worked under a student practice order with the court.

Graph 3: Details of Involvement in Legal Clinic(s)



Note: Figures based on 662 respondents who participated in one or more clinic and answered this question.

Table 4 below details the supervision received during their legal clinics as reported by responding lawyers.

Table 4: Supervision during Legal Clinic(s)

Supervisor (N = 664)	
Faculty member	68.8%
Outside attorney	9.6%
Both	21.5%

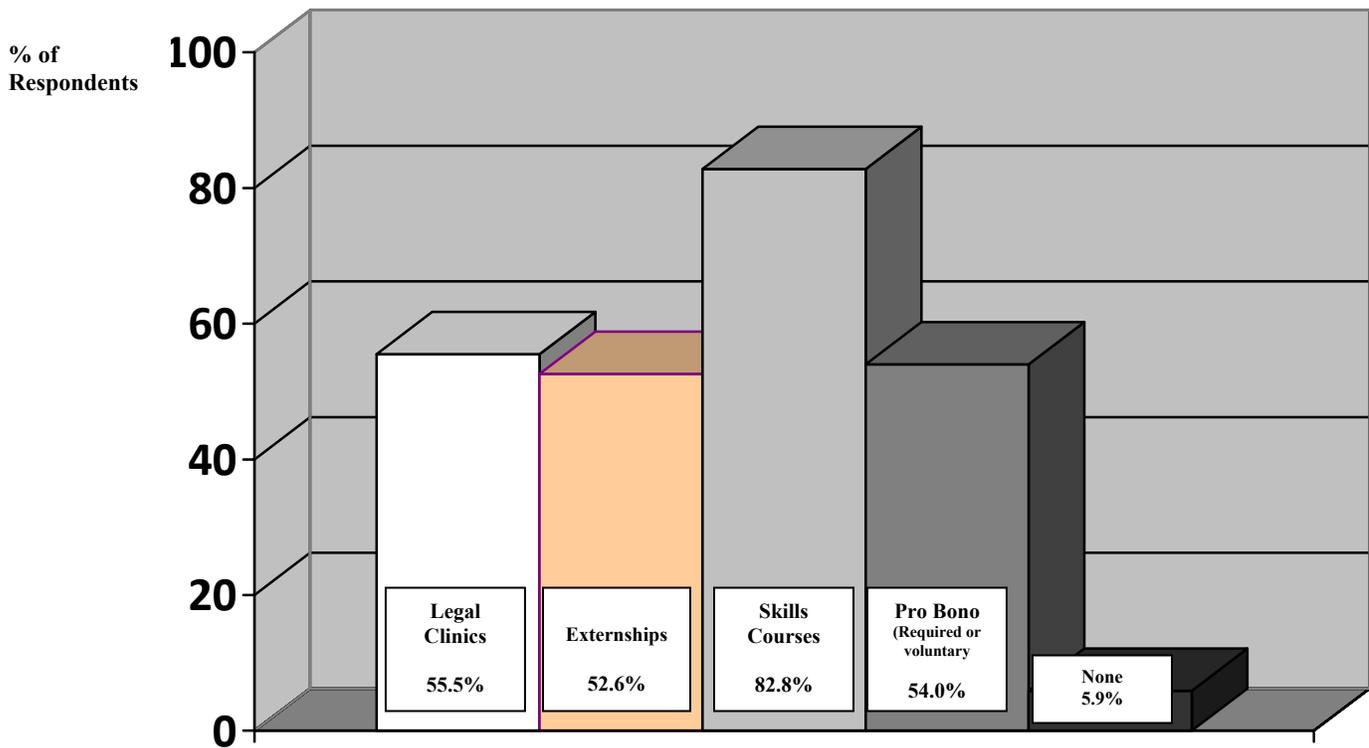
Note: Figures based on 664 respondents who participated in one or more clinic and answered this question.

II. Participation in Externships/ Field Placements

“While I am not currently practicing in the areas in which I volunteered and served in an externship, those experiences taught me invaluable lessons regarding interaction with clients and the practical application of the law.”

– Female government agency lawyer with 3+ years of experience

Graph 4: Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s)



Note: Figures based on 1,212 responses; since respondents could check more than one item, percentages do not add up to 100.

Like legal clinics, externships or field placements provide law students with valuable, hands-on learning opportunities and work experience. These courses give students the ability to work in a legal setting outside of school in a variety of work places that meet their particular educational goals and interests.

Slightly more than one-half responding lawyers (52.6%) reported having taken part in at least one externship or field placement during law school. Over one-half of the responding attorneys in either a litigation or regulatory-based practice stated that they had participated in at least one externship or field placement during law school (litigation — 54%, and regulatory — 52.9%).

Table 5: % Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s) by Practice Area

Litigation (N = 937)	54.0%
Regulatory (N = 155)	52.9%
Lobbying or transactional (N = 104)	43.3%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their practice area, counts do not add to the total.

Data collected regarding participation in externships or field placement by current employer type reveal that lawyers in the federal government, public defender office, or legal services offices were more likely to have taken advantage of this opportunity than lawyers in other employer types.

Table 6: % Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s) by Current Employer Type

Federal government (N = 57)	66.7%
Civil legal services (N = 422)	64.9%
Public defender (N = 64)	64.4%
State attorney general (N = 323)	61.8%
Local prosecution (N = 115)	54.0%
Other local government (N = 34)	51.6%
Other state government (N = 42)	50.8%
Policy/advocacy organization (N = 76)	48.8%
Other (N = 76)	49.1%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their current employer type, counts do not add to the total.

Table 7 below indicates participation in externships or field placements according to the responding lawyers' years of practice. Much like the participation in legal clinics, lawyers with three or fewer years of experience were more likely to have participated in an externship or field placement than those lawyers with more than three years of experience.

Table 7: % Participation in Externship/Field Placement(s) by Years of Practice

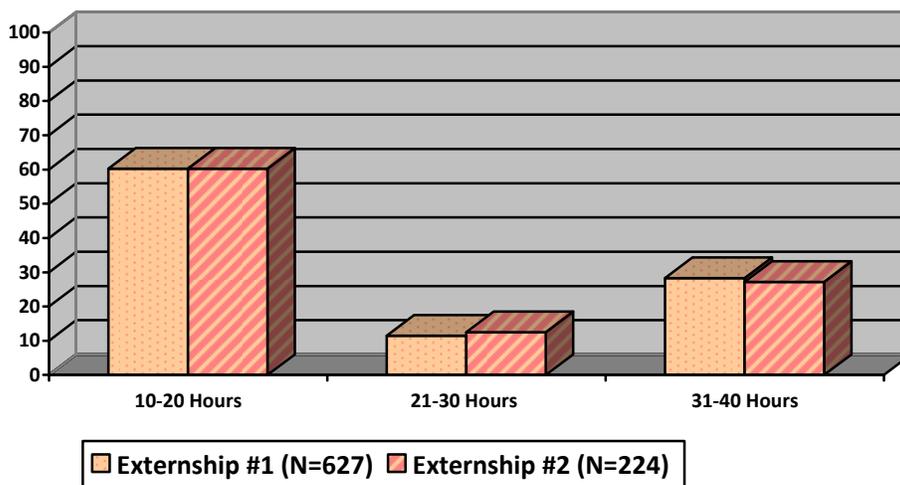
Less than 1 year (N = 96)	71.9%
1 year (N = 62)	69.4%
2 years (N = 92)	58.7%
3 years (N = 56)	55.4%
More than 3 years (N = 904)	48.8%

Note: Since all not respondents reported their years of practice, counts do not add to the total.

A total of 638 respondents reported one or more externship experiences. Of these about 35% reported more than one externship, 13% reported 3 externships, and a few reported 4 or 5 externships. Graph 5 below details the hours worked per week for those participating in one or two externships or field placements. This data reveal that the number of hours worked per week during for the first and second externships or field placements were virtually the same.

Graph 5: Hours Worked per Week in Externship/Field Placement(s)

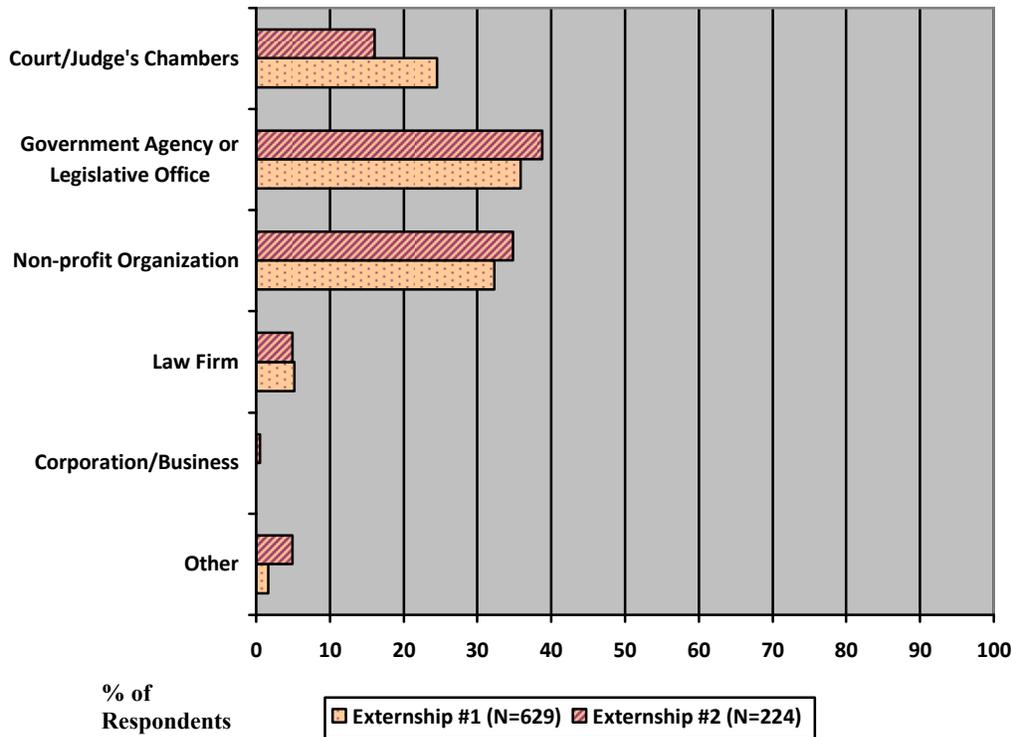
% of Respondents



Note: Figures based on respondents who participated in one or more externships and answered this question.

The most common setting for the first and second externship/field placements was a government agency or legislative office. Graph 6 below lists the other settings reported by responding lawyers. For respondents reporting three or more externships, the typical setting was a nonprofit organization.

Graph 6: Externship/Field Placement(s) Settings



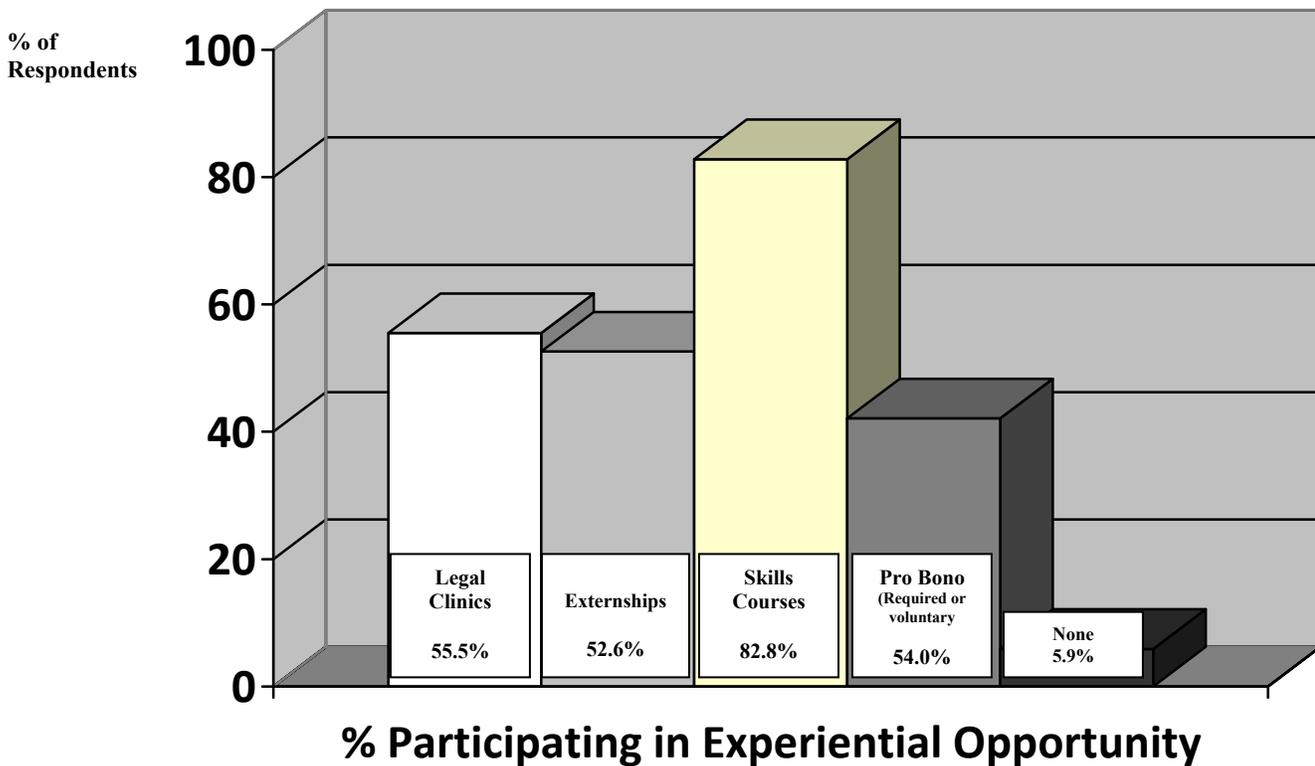
Note: Figures based on respondents who participated in one or more externships and answered this question.

III. Participation in Practice Skills Courses

“I would have LOVED to have had more legal skills courses, which would have been tremendously beneficial. Sadly, my law school didn’t offer much beyond trial advocacy and the episodic ADR or client interview/counseling course. Those skills would have served me far better and been a better use of limited law school time than my law journal experience. Law schools, in general, don’t do enough to develop professional lawyering skills for those of us — the majority really — that will not become litigators.”

– Female government agency lawyer with 3+ years of experience

Graph 7: Participation in Practice Skills Courses



Note: Figures based on 1,212 responses; since respondents could check more than one item, percentages do not add up to 100.

In addition to clinical experiences and externship/field placement opportunities, law schools typically offer courses that are designed to teach students in a simulation format many of the skills they will use in practice. Although these courses have various titles depending on the law school, they often tend to focus on practice skills such as, but not limited to, trial advocacy, negotiations, client counseling and interviewing, and law practice management.

A large majority of lawyers responding to the survey, regardless of their current practice area, reported that they had taken at least one practice skills course during law school.

Table 8: % Participation in Practice Skills Courses by Practice Area

Litigation (N = 529)	83.8%
Transactional (N = 301)	82.6%
Lobbying or regulatory (N = 98)	75.0%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their practice area, counts do not add to the total.

Table 9 reveals that, regardless of the responding lawyer’s current employer type, almost all reported having taken at least one practice skills course during law school.

Table 9: % Participation in Practice Skills by Current Employer Type

Other state government (N = 42)	92.9%
Public defender (N = 64)	92.2%
Local prosecution (N = 115)	86.1%
Other local government (N = 34)	85.3%
State attorney general (N = 323)	82.7%
Civil legal services (N = 422)	82.5%
Federal government (N = 57)	80.7%
Policy/advocacy organization (N = 76)	80.3%
Other (N = 76)	68.4%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their current employer type, counts do not add to the total.

The responses, broken down by the participants’ years of practice, show that almost all lawyers with three or fewer years of experience had taken at least one practice skills course in law school. Approximately 80% of the responding public service lawyers with more than three years of experience had taken at least one practice skills course — a significantly higher percentage than had participated in legal clinics or externships.

Table 10: % Participation in Practice Skills Courses by Years of Practice

Less than 1 year (N = 96)	94.8%
1 year (N = 62)	88.7%
2 years (N = 92)	90.2%
3 years (N = 56)	92.9%
More than 3 years (N = 904)	79.7%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their years of practice counts do not add to the total.

Similar to responses received from associates in private law firms, trial advocacy was the most common practice skills course taken by the survey participants (68.2%). Appellate advocacy (24%) and negotiating skills (23.6%) were the next most common skills courses taken.

Thirty-eight percent of responding lawyers reported that they took just one practice skills course while in law school, while 33.7% took three or more skills courses. For those lawyers who reported taking more than one practice skills course, the most common combination of courses reported was trial advocacy and appellate advocacy (6%).

Table 11: Practice Skills Courses Taken

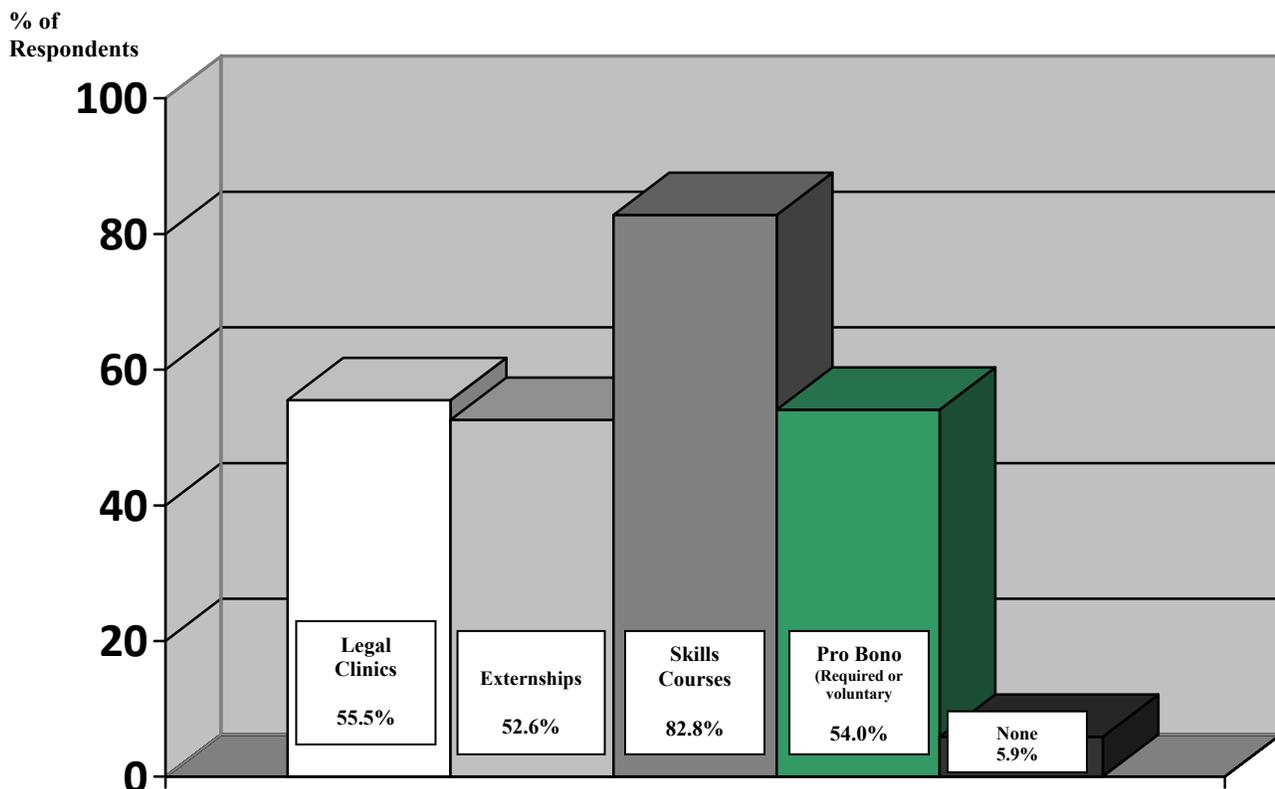
Courses taken (1,003)	% taking course
Trial advocacy	68.2%
Appellate advocacy	24.0%
Negotiating	23.6%
Subject matter specific skills	21.6%
Alternative dispute resolution skills	21.2%
Pre-trial litigation	17.7%
Counseling and interviewing	16.2%
Advanced drafting	14.9%
Transactional practice	5.8%
Law practice management	2.3%
Leadership	0.8%
Business management and planning	0.5%
Other	5.9%
Note: Percentages are based on respondents taking skills courses, a total of 1,003 responses.	

IV. Participation in Pro Bono Work

“Participating in a clinic and doing pro bono work help to foster a passion for access to justice. These experiences were invaluable and are what kept me in law school.”

– Female working in state attorney general’s office with 3 years of experience

Graph 8: Participation in Pro Bono Work



Note: Figures based on 1,212 responses; since respondents could check more than one item, percentages do not add up to 100.

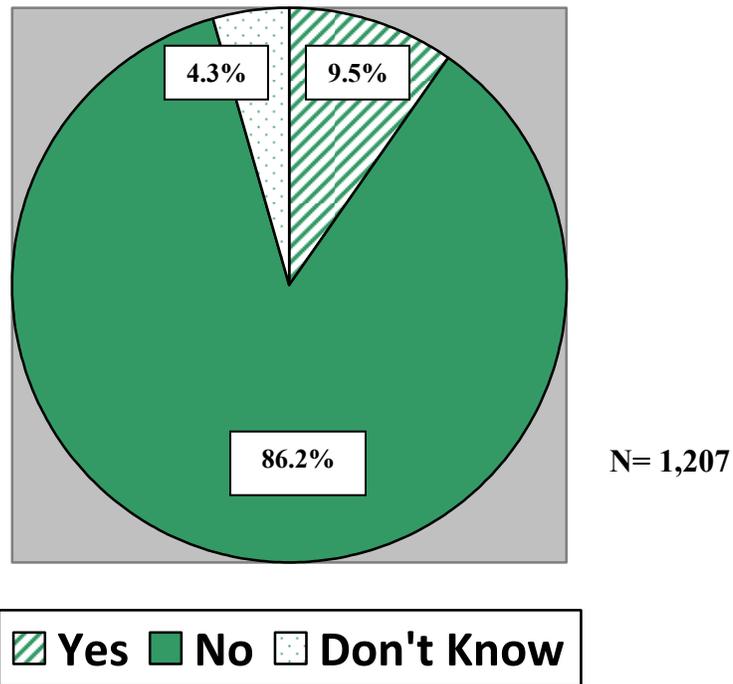
Pro bono work has become an important part of ensuring access to justice for the indigent and under-represented. The American Bar Association (ABA) encourages all lawyers to render, without fee, at least 50 hours annually of pro bono legal services.¹ The ABA also requires all law schools to offer students substantial opportunities for participation in pro bono activities, **requires** substantial opportunities for “live-client or other real-life practice experiences, appropriately supervised and designed to encourage reflection by students on their experiences and on the values and responsibilities of the legal profession,

¹ See Model Rule of Professional Conduct 6.1 (available at http://www.americanbar.org/groups/professional_responsibility/publications/model_rules_of_professional_conduct/rule_6_1_voluntary_pro_bono_publico_service.html)

and the development of one's ability to assess his or her performance and level of competence.² Most law schools offer students the opportunity to perform pro bono work as an introduction to this important form of public service, but also as another way for students to obtain hands-on experiences in practicing law.

While some law schools require pro bono service as part of the curriculum, most students perform this work on a voluntary basis. Over 86% of the lawyers responding to the survey reported that pro bono service was not a requirement at their law school.

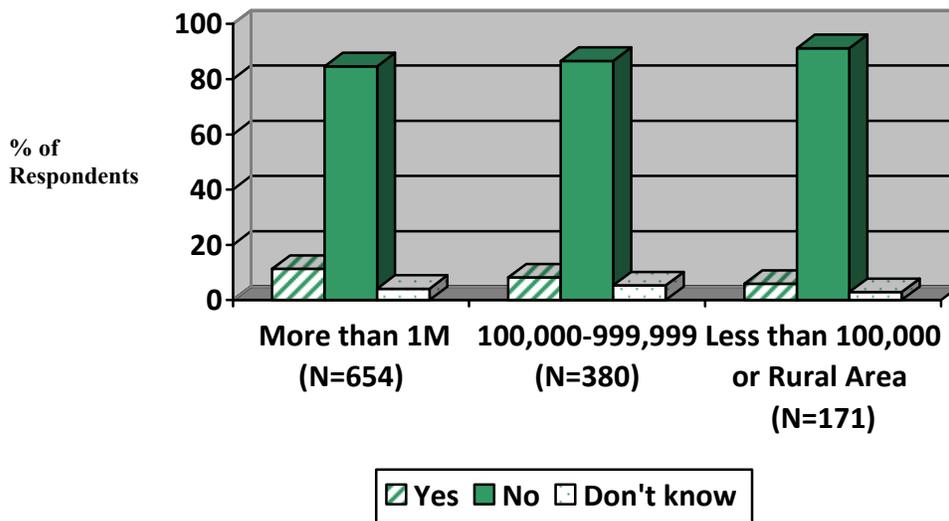
Graph 9: Law School Required Pro Bono Work



² See ABA Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools 302(b)(2) (available at http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/misc/legal_education/Standards/2012_standards_chapter_3.authcheckdam.pdf)

Graph 10 represents a breakdown of responses, based on the population of the metropolitan area in which the respondent's law school was located, to the survey question asking if the lawyer's law school required pro bono service. Not surprisingly, perhaps, lawyers who attended law school in urban areas were somewhat more likely to have had a pro bono requirement in law school than those who attended law school in a rural area.

Graph 10: Law School Required Pro Bono Work by Population of Metropolitan Area in Which Law School is Located



Note: Since not all responses included size of the metropolitan area, sub-categories do not add to the total number of responses to the question of whether or not pro bono service was required for graduation.

Among respondents reporting that their law school had a pro bono requirement, the vast majority reported that their law school required more than 20 hours of pro bono work, with approximately one-third stating that they had a requirement of more than 60 hours.

Table 12: Number of Pro Bono Hours Required

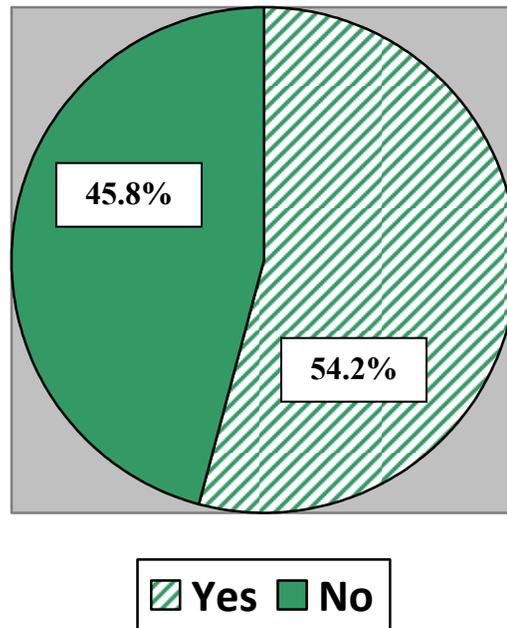
Number of Hours Required (N=115)	Percentage
20 hours or less	8.7%
21-40 hours	39.1%
41-60 hours	20.0%
More than 60 hours	32.2%

Note: Not all those who indicated that there was a requirement answered the hours required question.

Involvement in pro bono work early on can signal a long-term commitment to pro bono service, as well as provide opportunities for students to practice various legal and client counseling skills. Therefore, the information provided by public service lawyers regarding pro bono work that was done on a voluntary basis during law school is of great value. Note that the following tables are based on responses from lawyers who reported that their law schools did not have a pro bono requirement.

Just over one-half (54.2%) of responding lawyers reported that they participated in pro bono work on a voluntary basis in law school.

Graph 11: Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work



Note: Figure based on 1,171 respondents. Respondents may or may not have also had a pro bono requirement.

Tables 13 and 14 represent the survey respondents’ voluntary participation in pro bono work by their current practice area and by years of practice, respectively. Data broken down by respondents’ years of practice reveal that lawyers with one or fewer years of experience were much more likely to have participated in voluntary pro bono work than lawyers with more than three years of experience.

Table 13: Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work by Practice Areas

Litigation (N = 903)	55.6%
Regulatory (N = 149)	42.3%
Lobbying or Transactional (N = 103)	54.4%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their practice area, counts do not add to the total.

Table 14: Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work by Years of Practice

Less than 1 year (N = 95)	82.1%
1 year (N = 62)	83.9%
2 years (N = 88)	69.3%
3 years (N = 55)	70.9%
More than 3 years (N = 869)	46.6%

Note: Since not all respondents reported their years of practice, counts do not add to the total.

Table 15 details responses about voluntary pro work by the respondents' gender and ethnic minority/non-minority status. These data indicate that women were more likely than men to participate in pro bono work — 58.8% compared to 46.5% of men. The data also reveal that more ethnic minority lawyers performed volunteer pro bono work (64.8%) than the non-minority lawyers (52.5%).

Table 15: Voluntary Participation in Pro Bono Work by Gender and Ethnic Minority Status

Men (N=383)	46.5%
Women (N =765)	58.8%
Ethnic Minority (N = 199)	64.8%
Ethnic Non-minority (white) (N = 947)	52.5%

Note: Survey respondents may or may not have also had a pro bono graduation requirement. Individual category counts do not add to the total because not all respondents answered all the demographics questions.

Lawyers who performed pro bono work on a voluntary basis during law school were asked to provide the total number of volunteer hours they recorded. While 17% of respondents reported more than 100 hours of volunteer service, well over one-half (59.3%) reported pro bono work totaling 40 hours or less.

Table 16: Number of Pro Bono Hours Volunteered During Law School

Number of Hours Volunteered (N=631)	
Less than 10 hours	8.4%
10-20 hours	15.1
21-40 hours	12.7
41-60 hours	12.0
61-80 hours	7.6
81-100 hours	7.1
More than 100 hours	37.1

V. Usefulness of Learning Experiences in Preparing for the Practice of Law

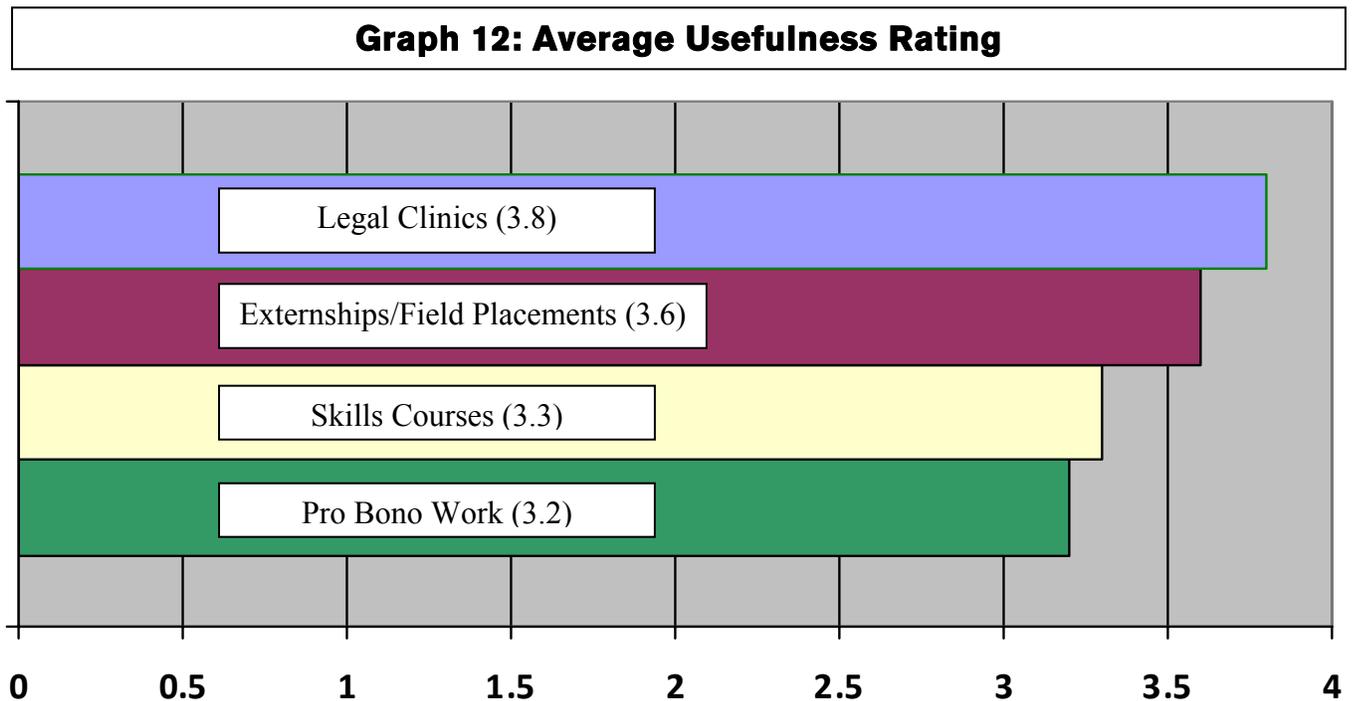
In addition to exploring participation in various experiential learning opportunities offered in law schools, this study also explored the “usefulness” of these courses as viewed by the responding public service lawyers. Survey participants were asked to rank each experiential program they took part in on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being “not at all useful” and 4 being “very useful.” Table 17 below details the general “usefulness” rating for each of the opportunities examined in this study. Overall, legal clinics and externships were ranked significantly higher in terms of “usefulness” compared to legal skills courses and pro bono work. A large majority (83.2%) of the responding lawyers rated legal clinics as “very useful” (83.2%), and 72.4% ranked externships or field placements as “very useful.” In contrast, only one-half of the lawyers rated pro bono work as “very useful,” and even fewer lawyers rated practice skills courses as “very useful” (47.6%).

Table 17: General Usefulness of Learning Experience in Preparing for the Practice of Law

	Legal Clinics (N =665)	Externships/Field Placements (N = 626)	Skills Courses (N = 885)	Pro Bono work (required or volunteer) (N = 578)
1 Not at all useful	0.9%	1.4%	1.2%	4.0%
2	5.1%	5.9%	15.1%	18.0%
3	10.8%	20.3%	36.1%	28.0%
4 Very useful	83.2%	72.4%	47.6%	50.0%

Note: All figures are based on respondents who reported participating in the activity and rated its usefulness.

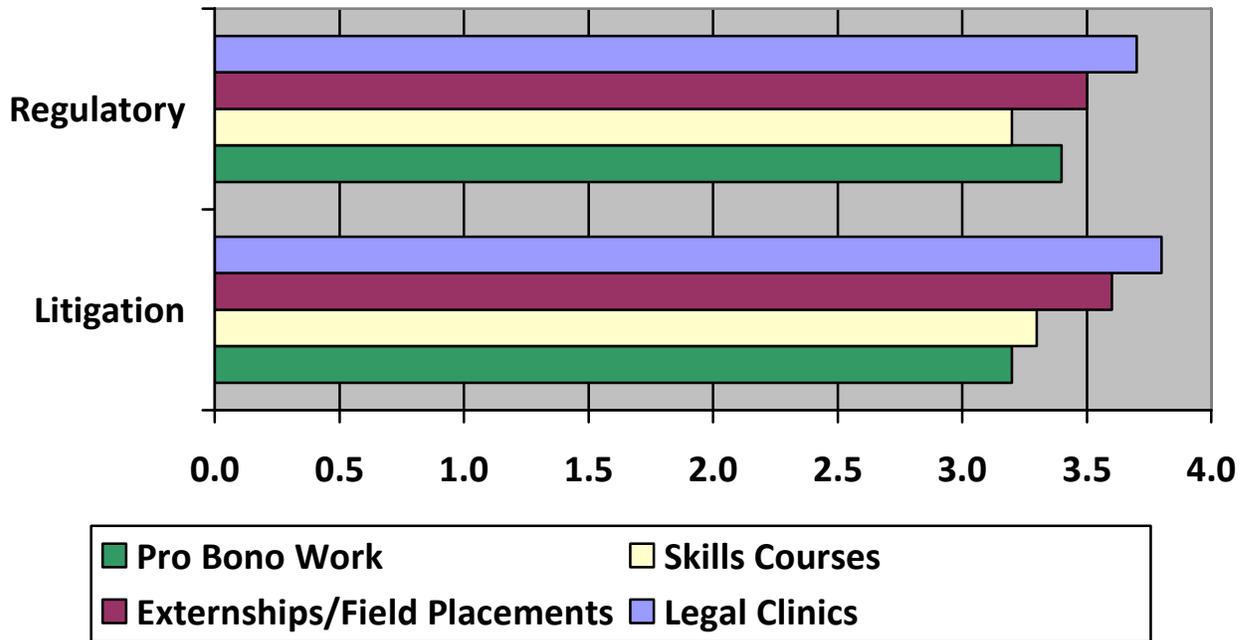
Graph 12 shows the average “usefulness” rating for each experiential opportunity on a mean scale.



Note: All figures are based on respondents who reported participating in the activity and rated its usefulness.

A closer look at these “usefulness” rankings based on whether the responding lawyer is currently working in a regulatory or litigation practice reveals that both litigators and regulatory lawyers generally feel the same about the “usefulness” of legal clinics, externships, and skills courses. Surprisingly, however, lawyers currently practicing in the public regulatory area felt that their law school pro bono work was slightly more useful than their litigation counterparts. (The average mean “usefulness” rating for litigators was 3.2 and the average mean rating for regulatory lawyers was 3.4.)

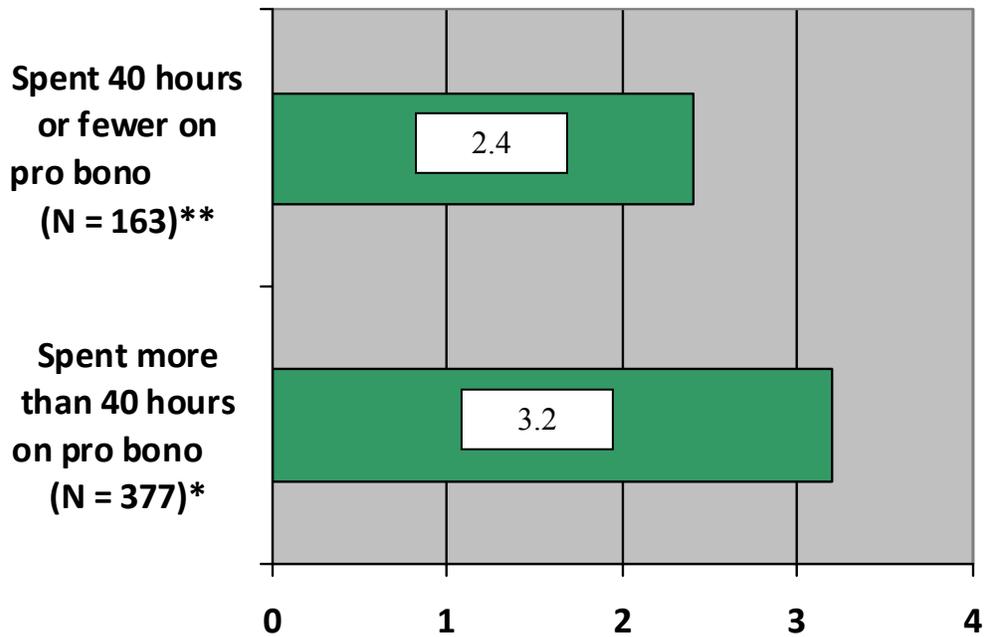
Graph 13: Average Usefulness Rating – Regulatory vs. Litigation Practitioners



Note: All figures are based on respondents who reported participating in the activity and rated its usefulness.

It is important to look more closely at the “usefulness” ratings given by the responding lawyers based on the number of pro bono hours they worked during law school, either required or voluntary. As indicated in Graph 14, not surprisingly, lawyers who spent more than 40 hours of their time in law school working on pro bono matters rated that work significantly more useful than those lawyers who performed 40 hours or fewer of pro bono work.

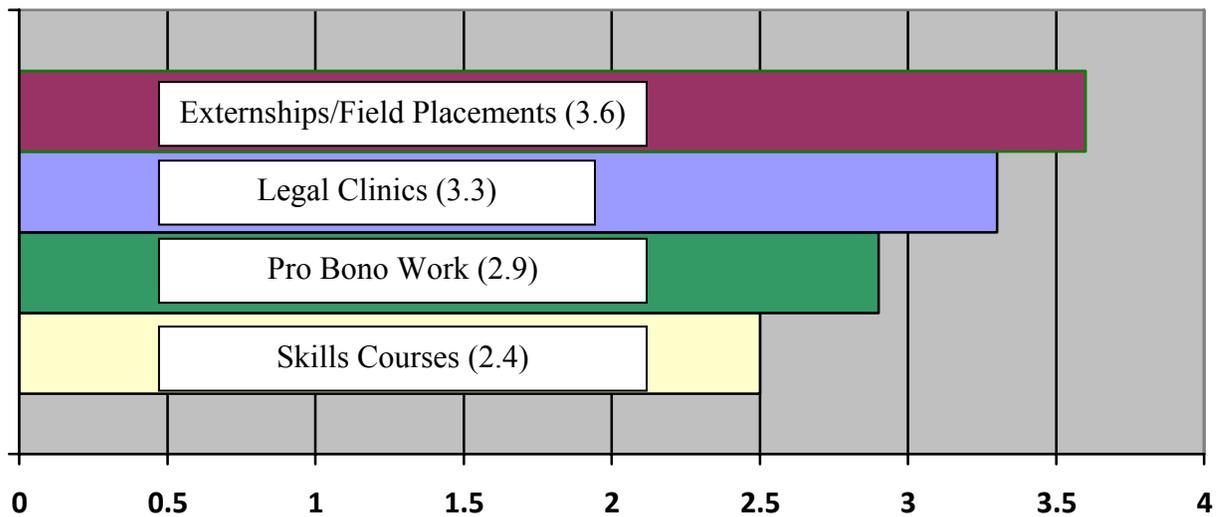
Graph 14: Average Usefulness Rating of Pro Bono Work Based on Number of Hours Worked During Law School



- * The survey asked for the amount of required pro bono hours and the amount of volunteered pro bono hours separately, and did not ask for the total hours of pro bono work. Figures are based on respondents who worked more than 40 hours either on a required or voluntary basis, and who rated usefulness.
- ** Figures are based on those who worked 40 hours or fewer, either as a requirement or on a voluntary basis. Some of these respondents may have worked more than 40 hours total, but that information was not requested on this survey.

Survey participants were also asked to rate each experiential learning program they took part in on the 1-4 scale (1= not at all useful; 4= very useful) based on how useful they felt the experience was in obtaining their first job in a public interest or government setting. As detailed in Graph 15, respondents rated externships/field placements as the most useful experience (3.6 rating) in helping them obtain their first job with government or nonprofit employers. Respondents rated practice skills courses as the least useful experience (2.4 rating) in landing their first public service job.

Graph 15: General Usefulness of Learning Experience in Obtaining First Job in Public Interest or Government Setting



Note: All figures are based on respondents who reported participating in the activity and rated its usefulness.

Key Findings

- Just over one-half of the lawyers responding to this study reported that they had participated in at least one legal clinic (55.5%) and/or externship/field placement (52.6%).
- Fifty-four percent (54%) of the respondents stated that they had participated in pro bono work either on a voluntary or required basis. Within this group, 54.2% reported that the pro bono work they performed in law school was voluntary.
- Over 80% of these lawyers took at least one practice skills course in law school (82.6%). Trial advocacy was the practice skills course taken most often by the respondents with 68.3% stating that they had taken this course.
- Legal clinics were reported to be the most “useful” experiential learning opportunity provided in law school according to responding lawyers. On a scale of 1-4, with “4” meaning “very useful” in preparing the lawyer for practice, legal clinics were rated as 3.8.
- Pro bono work was considered to be the least “useful” by the respondents, rating a 3.2 on the “usefulness” scale.
- Respondents rated their externship or field placement experience(s) as the most “useful” in helping them to obtain their first job in the government or nonprofit arena, rating a 3.8 on the “usefulness” scale.

Appendix

Methodology

An invitation to participate in this study was disseminated through various outlets including:

- The NALP public service email lists (asking school members to send to employer contacts);
- A blast email to approximately 11,500 organizations profiled in the PSLawNet database;
- Emails/member communications via the Legal Services Corporation, the National Legal Aid & Defender Association, the National Association of Attorneys General, and the Government & Public Service Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association;
- A Washington, DC-based listserv for nonprofit and government lawyers;

A total of 1,212 lawyers provided complete or partial responses to the survey.

Respondent Demographics

Respondents by current employer type:

	Count	Percent
Civil legal services	422	34.9%
Policy/advocacy	76	6.3%
Local prosecutor	115	9.5%
Local public defender	64	5.3%
Other local government	34	2.8%
State attorney general	323	26.7%
Other state government	42	3.5%
Federal government	57	4.7%
Other	76	6.3%

Respondents by years of practice:

	Count	Percent
Less than one year	96	7.9%
1 year	62	5.1%
2 years	92	7.6%
3 years	56	4.6%
More than 3 years	904	74.7%

Respondents by gender:

	Count	Percent
Female	792	66.6%
Male	397	33.4%

Respondents by race/ethnicity:

	Count	Percent
American Indian/Native American	6	0.5%
Asian/Pacific Islander	55	4.6%
Black/African-American	57	4.8%
White/Caucasian	980	82.6%
Hispanic/Latino	55	4.6%
Multi-racial	33	2.8%

Respondents by location of law school:

	Count	Percent
Metropolitan area, population 1M or more	657	54.3%
Metropolitan area, population 100,000-999,999	380	31.4%
City or metropolitan area, population less than 100,000	124	10.3%
Rural area	49	4.0%

Respondents by current area of practice:

	Count	Percent
Litigation-based	937	78.3%
Transactional-based	65	5.4%
Regulatory-based	155	13.0%
Lobbying/legislative	39	3.3%

Survey Instrument

The NALP Foundation for Law Career Research and Education
and
NALP-The Association for Legal Career Professionals

2011 Survey of Law School Experiential Learning Opportunities and Benefits

This survey is designed to learn which practice-oriented course(s) you took as a law student and how they have prepared you for practice as an attorney.

This survey takes no more than 10 minutes to complete. All information will be submitted on an anonymous basis, and no information that could be attributed to an individual will be released.

If you have questions, please contact Judith Collins, NALP's Research Director, at jcollins@nalp.org.

Please submit your survey by December 9, 2011.

1. Which of the following JD-credit bearing courses did you take during law school? (Check all that apply.)

[Note that law schools offer a broad spectrum of courses using various titles and that they often have content that falls into more than one of the choices provided below. Choose the description(s) that best describe the most significant content of the course(s) you took.]

- Clinic(s) representing individual clients [Please also complete 1a on the next page]
- Externship(s)/field placement(s) [Please also complete 1b on the next page]
- Legal practice skills or simulation course(s) [Please also complete 1c on the next page]
- None of the above

1a. For any clinics that you took, answer each of the four questions.

How many terms/semesters did you participate in this clinic?

	1	2	> 2
Clinic 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Were you lead or co-lead counsel?

	Yes	No
Clinic 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Did you work under a Student Practice Order with the court?

	Yes	No	I don't know
Clinic 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Who supervised your work?

	A faculty member	An outside attorney	Both a faculty member and an outside attorney
Clinic 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clinic 6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1b. For each of your externship/field placement(s), please tell us:
How many hours per week did you work?

	10-20 hours	21-30 hours	31-40 hours
Placement #1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What was the setting for this placement?

	Court/judge's chambers	Government agency or legislature	Not-for-profit organization	Law firm	Corporation/business	Other (describe below)
Placement #1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement #6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Describe other setting(s) _____

1c. Which of the following practice skills courses did you take? (Check all that apply.)

[Law schools offer a broad spectrum of courses using various titles and they often have content that falls into more than one of the choices provided below. Choose the description that best describes the most significant content of each course you took. Please choose only one description per course.]

- Advanced drafting (beyond the 1L course)
- Pre-trial litigation (e.g., deposition skills)
- Trial advocacy
- Appellate advocacy
- Alternative dispute resolution skills
- Counseling and interviewing
- Negotiating
- Transactional practice (e.g., business formation/governance, licensing, closings)
- Law practice management skills (e.g., running a law firm)
- Subject matter specific skills (e.g., Education Law practice)
- Business management and planning
- Leadership
- Other (please specify) _____

2. At the time you attended, did your law school have a pro bono service graduation requirement?

- Yes (indicate hours requirement below also and complete items 2a and 2b)
- No [please also complete items 2a and 2b]
- I don't know

If yes, how many hours of service were required?

- Fewer than 10 hours
- 10-20 hours
- 21-40 hours
- 41-60 hours
- 61-80 hours
- 81-100 hours
- More than 100 hours
- I don't know/don't recall

2a. Did you perform voluntary (as opposed to required) pro bono service during law school?

- Yes [if yes, please also answer item 2b]
- No

2b. If yes, how many hours did you volunteer?

- Less than 10 hours
- 10-20 hours
- 21-40 hours
- 41-60 hours
- 61-80 hours
- 81-100 hours
- More than 100 hours

3. How useful in general was each of the programs or experiences listed below in preparing you for the practice of law?

	1 Not at all useful	2	3	4 Very useful	NA--did not have this experience
Clinic(s) representing individual clients	<input type="radio"/>				
Externship(s)/field placement(s)	<input type="radio"/>				
Legal practice skills or simulation course(s)	<input type="radio"/>				
Required or voluntary pro bono hours	<input type="radio"/>				

4a. To what extent was your experiential learning useful in obtaining your first job in a nonprofit or government setting?

	1 Not at all	2	3	4 Very useful	NA Did not have this experience
Clinic(s)	<input type="radio"/>				
Externship(s)/field placements	<input type="radio"/>				
Legal practice skills or simulation course(s)	<input type="radio"/>				
Required or voluntary pro bono hours	<input type="radio"/>				

4b. Are you currently practicing in any of the same subject matter areas as your experiential learning activities?

	Yes	No	NA-did not have this experience
Clinic(s)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Externship(s)/field placements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal practice skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Required or voluntary pro bono hours	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The remaining questions request background information about you, your school, and your employer. All responses will be used for statistical purposes only and will remain anonymous.

5. Which of the following graduate degrees do you currently hold? (Check all that apply.)

- Juris Doctor (JD)/Bachelor of Law (LLB)
- LL.M
- Joint JD/MBA
- Other joint degree program (describe below)
- Law degree from a country other than the US or Canada

Please describe other joint degree program

6. Where is your law school located?

- Metropolitan area (central city(ies) and suburban areas) with a population of 1 million or more
- Metropolitan area (central city(ies) and suburban areas) with a population of 100,000-999,999
- A city or metropolitan area of less than 100,000
- A rural area not part of any metropolitan area

7. Is your law school located in a state capital?

- Yes
- No

8. How would you describe your primary area of practice? (Choose one.)

- Litigation-based
- Transactional-based
- Regulatory-based
- Lobbying/legislative

9. How long have you been practicing law?

- Less than one year
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- More than 3 years

10. What type of organization do you work for?

- Civil legal services (defined as an organization that PRIMARILY provides direct legal services to low-income clients in civil matters)
- Policy/impact/advocacy organization (defined as an organization that PRIMARILY works for changes in legislation, regulations, and other types of systematic change including impact litigation)
- Local prosecutor
- Local public defender
- Local government-not prosecutor or public defender (Please specify in the 'Additional Information' box below)
- State Attorney General
- State government-not attorney general (Please specify in the 'Additional Information' box below)
- Federal government (Please specify in the 'Additional Information' box below)
- Other (Please specify in the 'Additional Information' box below)

Additional information

11. Including yourself, how many lawyers work in your organization?

- 25 or fewer
- 26-50
- 51-100
- 101-250
- 251-500
- 501-1,000
- More than 1,000

12. State where you currently practice law. (Scroll to end to find Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and Trust Territories.)

- Alabama
- Alaska
- Etc.

13. Your gender

- Male
- Female

14. Your race/ethnicity

- American Indian/Native American
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African-American
- Hispanic/Latino
- White/Caucasian
- Multi-racial

Please use the box below to make any comments on the topics covered in this survey.
