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Class of 2019 Attains Highest Employment Rate in 12 Years as Uncertainty Looms for Class of 2020

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Association for Law Placement, Inc. (NALP) today released its *Employment for the Class of 2019 — Selected Findings*, a synopsis of key findings from the upcoming annual *Jobs & JDs: Employment and Salaries of New Law School Graduates*. The release of the full Jobs & JDs report is anticipated in October 2020. This year's Selected Findings show that the Class of 2019 experienced the highest employment rate in the dozen years since the start of the Great Recession, as the overall employment rate for the Class of 2019 was up 0.9 percentage points to 90.3% of graduates for whom employment status was known, compared to 89.4% for the Class of 2018. This marks the highest employment rate recorded since the 91.9% rate for the Class of 2007.

“The good news is that employment outcomes and salary findings for members of the Class of 2019 are among the strongest ever measured and set several new highwater marks,” noted James G. Leipold, NALP’s Executive Director. “The bad news is that they are not likely to be predictive of the employment outcomes for the next several classes, as the recession and other changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to provide a much more challenging job market for some years to come.”



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Selected Findings — Other Highlights:

- The percentage of graduates taking jobs for which bar passage is required or anticipated grew by 3.4 percentage points, increasing from 72.8% in 2018 to 76.2% in 2019, following a one percentage point increase in the previous year.
- 74.3% of graduates with known employment status were employed in a full-time, long-term bar passage required job.
- Well over half (55.2%) of employed graduates obtained a job in private practice, a slight increase of 0.4 percentage points over the previous year and the closest the percentage has come to the 55.9% figure for 2009 since then.
- 96.3% of jobs were full-time positions. The percentage of jobs reported as part-time has declined for eight years in row, and now accounts for just 3.7% of jobs, compared with 4.5% for 2018. Less than two percent (1.5%) of jobs were both temporary (defined as lasting less than a year) and part-time, compared with 1.9% for 2018.
- 30.2% of law firm jobs were in firms of more than 500 lawyers.
- The national median salary for the Class of 2019 based on these reported salaries was \$72,500, up 3.6% compared to the Class of 2018, and finally surpassed the previous all-time high of \$72,000 for the Classes of 2008 and 2009.
- The national mean salary for the Class of 2019 was \$100,540, up 2.4% when compared to \$98,150 for the Class of 2018.
- The national median law firm salary for Class of 2019 graduates was \$125,000, up 4.2% over the previous year. Additionally, 35.0% of all law firm salaries were reported as \$190,000.
- Employment in business declined to 11.3%, down from 12.9% in 2018 and now stands at its lowest percentage since the Class of 2002. Business has dropped from being the second most popular employment sector for new law graduates in recent year to the fourth most frequently reported sector for the Class of 2019.



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- Of employed graduates from the Class of 2019, 11.3% were seeking a different job, the lowest this figure has been since 2001 when it was also 11.3%. This figure has fallen in each year since the record high of 24.6% recorded for the Class of 2011.
- The percentage of jobs that are solo practice was at a historic low of 1.5% of all law firm jobs and 0.8% of all jobs.
- The total number of public interest jobs, which includes jobs as public defenders and in legal services offices, remains higher than it was prior to 2009, in no small part because of the presence of law school-funded jobs in this sector, which accounted for 10.4% of all public interest jobs taken by the Class of 2019.

NALP's employment and salary findings for the Class of 2019 are based on data submitted from 196 law schools that were recognized by the ABA in the United States, not including the three schools in Puerto Rico, at the time that class graduated. The full text of *Employment for the Class of 2019 — Selected Findings* can be found at www.nalp.org/classof2019. The findings of NALP's Employment Report and Salary Survey for the Class of 2019 will be provided in much greater detail — including salary detail and analyses of employment and earnings by geographic market — in *Jobs & JDs: Employment and Salaries of New Law School Graduates — Class of 2019*, to be published in October 2020.

About NALP

NALP is an association of more than 2,500 legal career professionals who advise law students, lawyers, law offices, and law schools in North America and beyond. What brings NALP members together is a common belief in three fundamental things. First, all law students and lawyers should benefit from a fair and ethical hiring process. Second, law students and lawyers are more successful when supported by professional development and legal career professionals. Third, a diverse and inclusive legal profession best serves clients and our communities. That's why NALP members work together every day to collect and publish accurate legal employment data and information, and champion education and ethical principles for recruiting, professional and career development, and diversity and inclusion. For nearly 50 years, NALP has played an essential role in the success of our members and the lawyers and law students they serve. NALP maintains an online archive of press releases at www.nalp.org/pressreleases. For additional information, contact NALP at info@nalp.org or call (202) 835-1001.