



Association of American
Law Schools

Looking at Leadership: Insights from the American Law School Dean Study

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Leadership Matters



Leadership matters to AALS

- Mission to uphold and advance excellence in legal education
- Membership of 176 member and 19 fee-paid law schools
- More than 9,000 law faculty and administrators
- More than 100 sections



Three domains of inquiry

- Career pathways
- Recruitment and selection
- Challenges and opportunities

Project Advisory Group

Alberto Acereda, Executive Director, Global Higher Education, Educational Testing Service

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Tim McFeeley, Partner, Isaacson, Miller

Martha Minow, 300th Anniversary University Professor and former dean, Harvard Law School

Hironao Okahana, Assistant Vice President, Research & Insights, American Council on Education

Jim Rosenblatt, Dean Emeritus and Professor of Law, Mississippi College School of Law

Kellye Y. Testy, President, Law School Admission Council

Sponsors & Research Partners



Methods

Survey

- Fielded between March and June 2021
- Invitees included AALS member and fee-paid law schools:
 - Current deans
 - Former deans (2010 to 2020)
- Supplemental interviews with 12 current deans

Response Rates:

- 84% of current deans participated
- 68% of former deans participated

Highlights for today

1. The Diversification of the Deanship
2. The Search & Selection Process
3. How the Deanship Has Changed
4. Implications for Future Leaders



The Diversification of the Deanship



The deanship is diversifying by gender

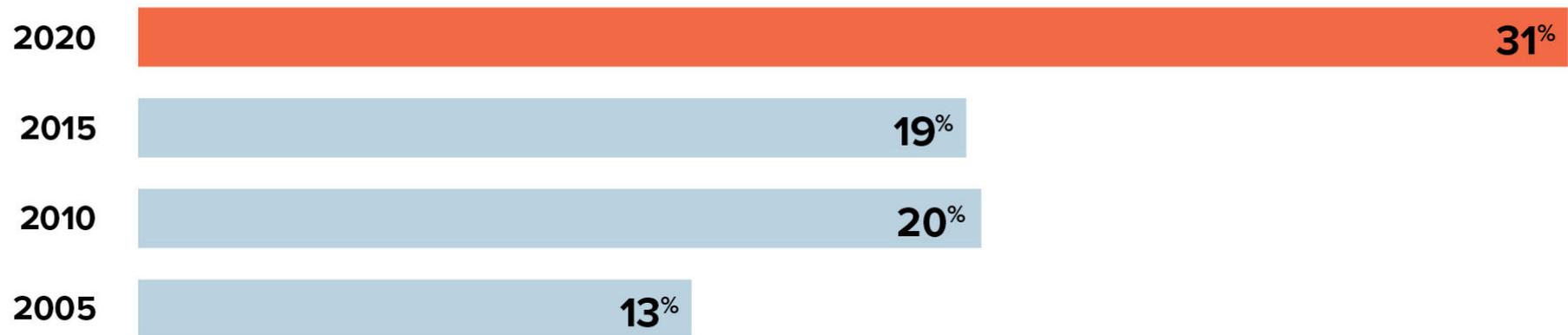
The proportion of deans who are women is growing



Data sources: AALS records, including the *Directory of Law Teachers* and NetForum database, and public records.

The deanship is diversifying by race/ethnicity

The proportion of deans who are Hispanic or deans of color is growing



Data sources: AALS records, including the *Directory of Law Teachers* and NetForum database, and Rosenblatt's Deans Database.

Evidence of diversification is everywhere

At their current law school ...

- 21% are the first of their gender
- 17% are the first of their race/ethnicity
- 38% are the first of their gender and/or race/ethnicity
- 16% are the first of another demographic category

Why now?

Having a diverse group of people making decisions results in better decisions.

- Sean Scott, President and Dean, California Western School of Law

Universities are just more open to the idea that their law school dean does not have to fit the previous mold.

- Danielle Holley-Walker, Dean, Howard University Law School

It's really a bad idea to leave half of your talent on the bench.

- Madeleine Landrieu, Dean, Loyola University New Orleans Law School

The Search & Selection Process



Where deans come from

Undergraduate fields of study

- 45% arts/humanities (English, History, etc.)
- 36% social/behavioral sciences (Economics, Political science, etc.)

Law school

- 69% from one of the most selective law schools

Other education

- 18% another, non-JD law degree
- 20% MBA
- 8% PhD or equivalent

Where deans come from

More than 80% of deans come from inside the legal academy

Deans from Inside the Legal Academy

81%

from Inside the Academy:

Men

75%

Women

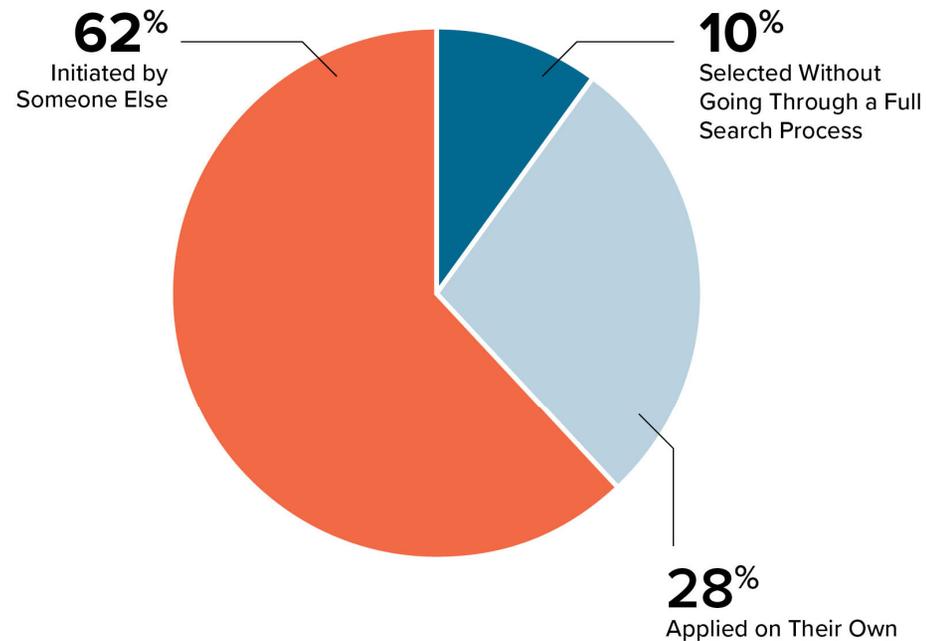
84%

**Deans First of Their Gender and or Race/
Ethnicity to Serve as Dean of their Current
Law School from Inside Academia**

90%

Successful candidacies come from within

The most successful candidacies are initiated by someone other than the candidate



Data source: *American Law School Dean Study*

Search firms are being used

- 59% of deans report a search firm was used
- Tend to result in more White deans, more men deans

A firm can also give an outsider's perspective to candidates as to what the school is like, which can be very helpful.

- Mark West, Dean, University of Michigan Law School

Selection, Negotiation, and Contracts

Selection

- 90% report that scholarship played some role in their selection
- Particularly important for deans from another institution

Negotiation

- 69% negotiated terms with provost or senior academic officer

Contracts

- 82% have a contract
- Of those, 81% have specified contract lengths (most often 5-years)

How the Deanship Has Changed



Scope of the deanship

- 61% have 1-10 direct reports
- 58% meet with university leaders once or twice per month
- 79% of deans are satisfied with their position

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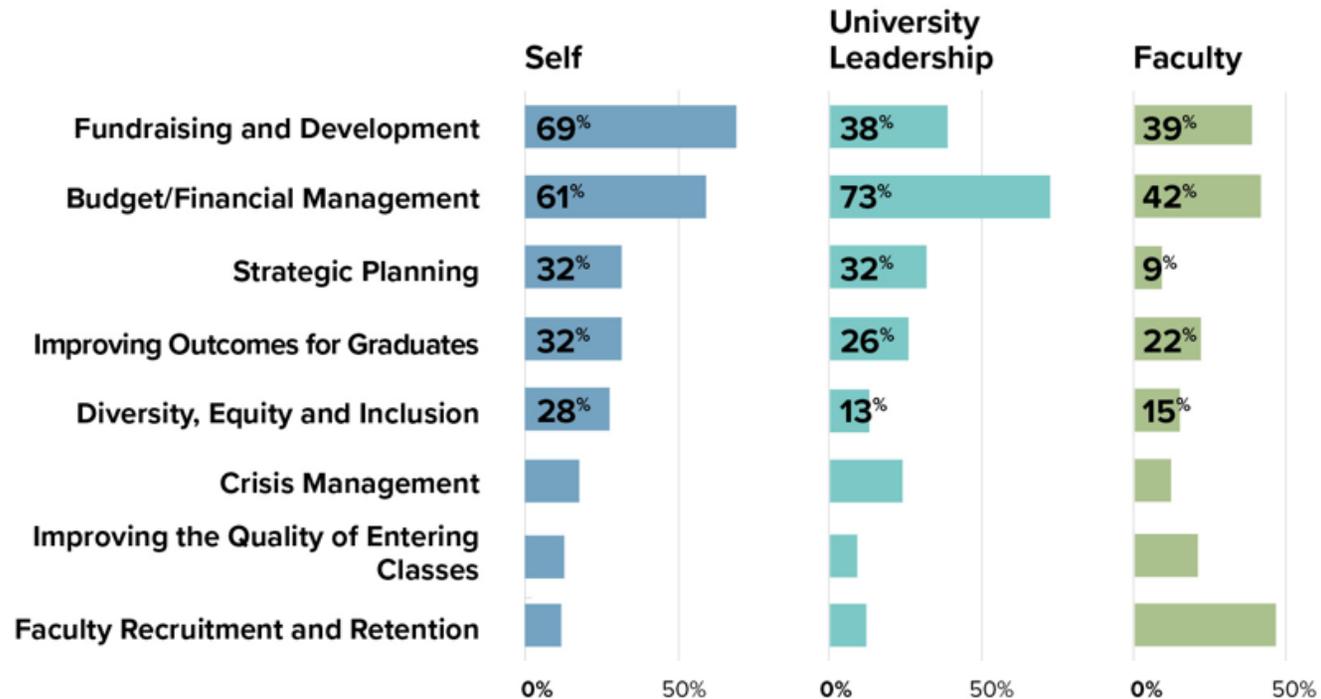
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We're not going to be liked all the time for everything we do. It's not that you're not going to feel uncomfortable or pain, say, delivering bad news or holding people accountable. But you have to understand, that's the job. That's what you have to do.

- Michael Hunter Schwartz
Dean, McGeorge School of Law
University of the Pacific

What's most important to whom

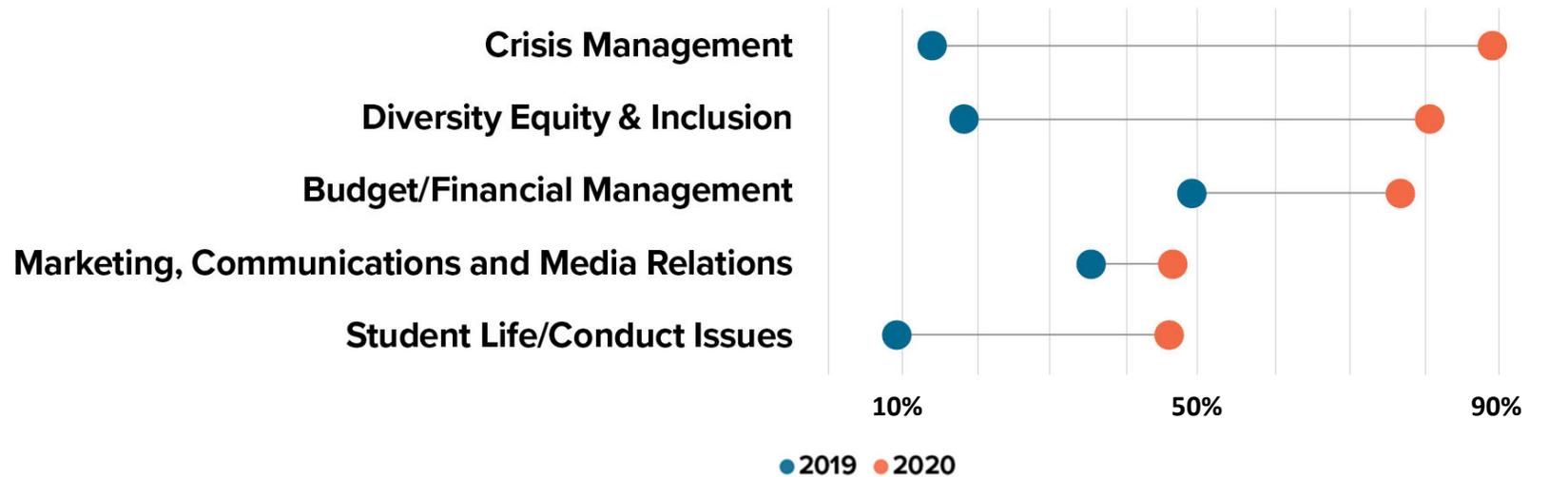
Deans think their most important priorities are not shared by university leaders or faculty



Data source: *American Law School Dean Study*

How time was spent, 2019 vs 2020

COVID-19 and other events of 2020 changed how deans spend their time



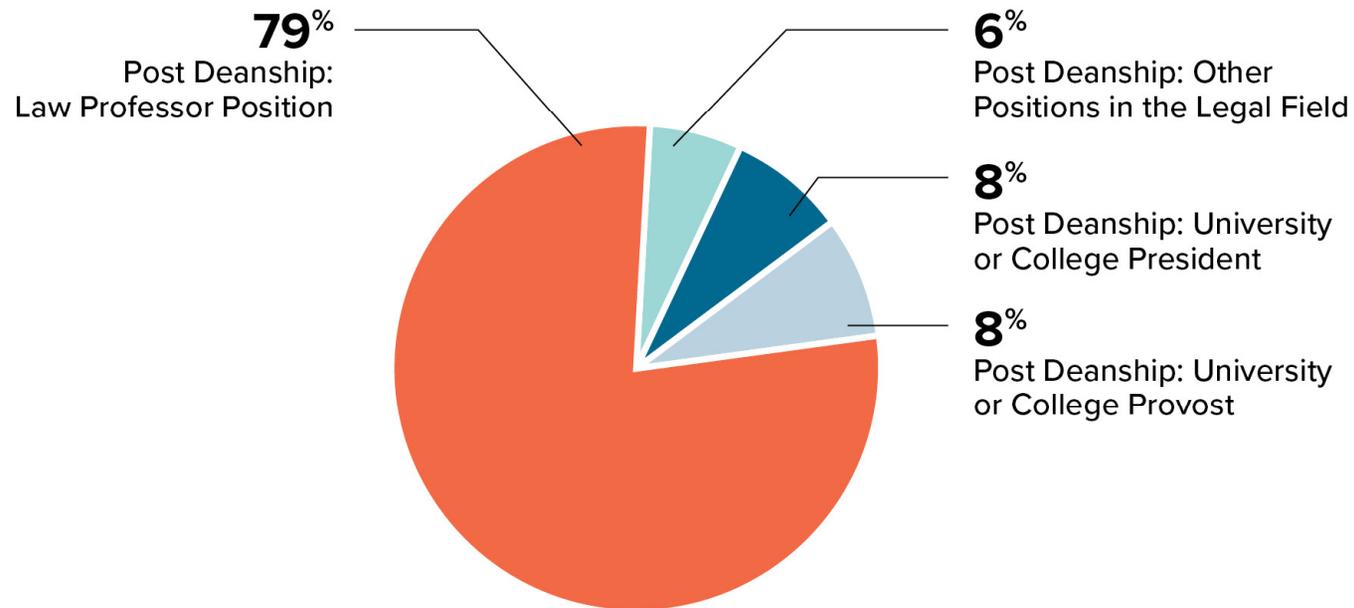
Data source: *American Law School Dean Study*

Implications for Future Leaders



Where deans go next

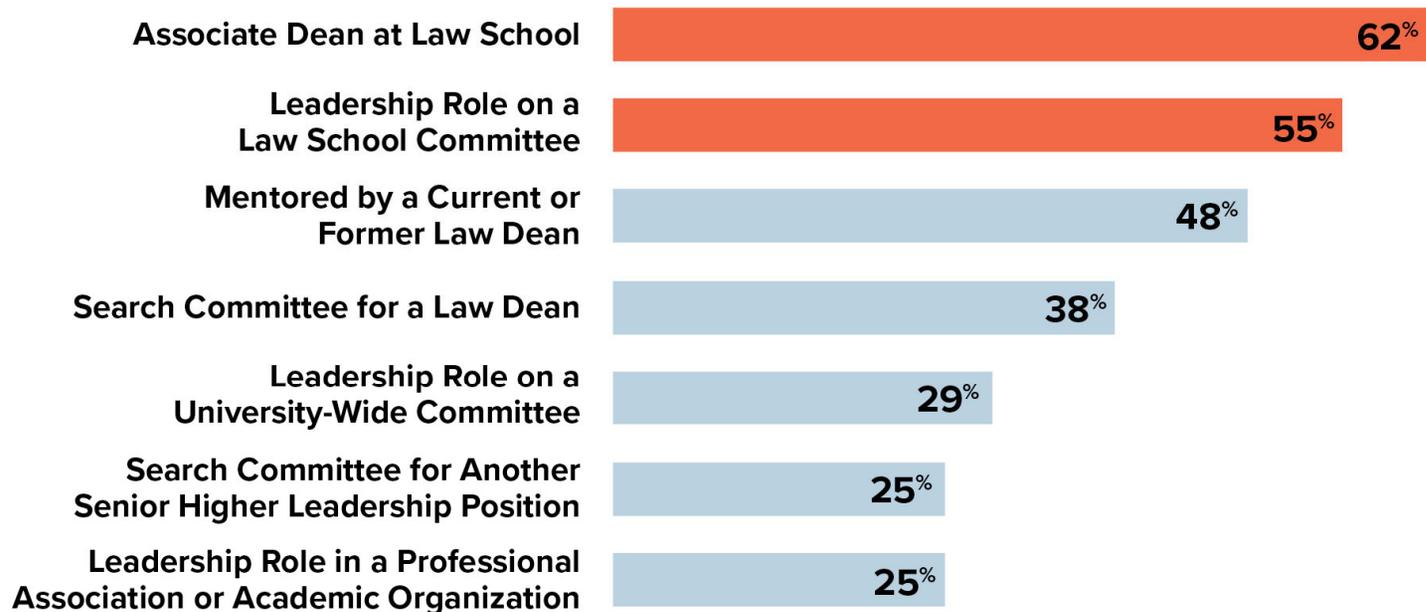
More than 75% of deans return to the faculty after their deanship



Data source: *American Law School Dean Study*

Implications for future leaders

The two most helpful preparatory experiences were being an associate dean and being in a leadership role on a law school committee



Data source: *American Law School Dean Study*

Implications for Future Leaders

Top attributes deans consider important in helping them succeed in their role as dean



Data source: *American Law School Dean Study*

The experience of the past 18 months has underscored the importance and value of legal education. Whether it's the pandemic itself, the reckoning with racial justice, climate change, rapid technological change, or a host of other issues, virtually every significant human problem in the world today has a legal dimension to it.

- Trevor Morrison
Dean, New York University School of Law

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Highlights from the American Law School Dean Study



Understanding the law school deanship is more important than ever

As legal education reaches another watershed moment in its evolution, understanding the American law school deanship has become more important than ever.

This study, one of the first comprehensive studies of law school deans' career pathways, day-to-day responsibilities, challenges and opportunities, reveals key findings including increasing diversification of the law school deanship, the primarily academic pathways to the position, and changes in how deans spent

their time before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For current law deans, the Study is a point of reference as they navigate their own careers and responsibilities. For aspiring and prospective deans, this study demystifies key elements of the deanship. We hope the Study contributes to further diversifying the ranks of deans by education, experience, race, ethnicity, gender, and age, and thereby increases the quality of leadership in the nation's law schools.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN LAW SCHOOL DEAN STUDY

The American Law School Dean Study is based primarily on a survey of the 197 law school deans who were serving at AALS member and fee-paid law schools in the spring of 2021, as well as 222 former deans who served between 2010 and 2020. The survey was conducted for AALS by NORC at the University of Chicago. The survey yielded responses from 84 percent of the 154 current law school deans. In addition to the survey, a diverse group of twelve deans participated in in-depth individual interviews.



Questions?

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