

Location, Location, Location – Geography Matters in Law School Employment 2010-2011

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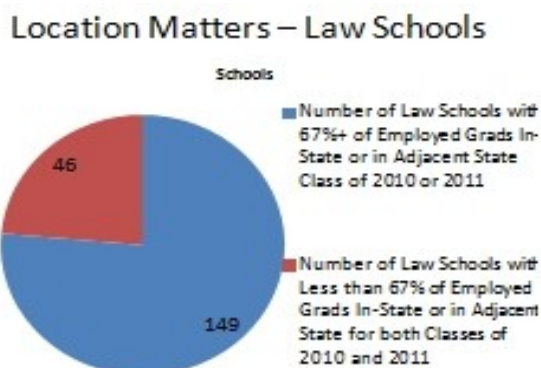
NALP notes that for the Class of 2010 -- and the Class of 2011 -- two-thirds of all employed graduates were employed in the state in which their law school was located. This suggests location matters.

Is location important to employment results at a large number of schools? Are some law schools more national than others? Are some states more “local” in hiring than other states? The answers are yes and yes and yes.

ANALYZING SCHOOL SPECIFIC DATA

This analysis is based on the Class of 2010 and Class of 2011 employment outcome data reported on the ABA Section of Legal Education website, excluding the law schools in Puerto Rico. This means there are 195 law schools in this analysis (if the two Widener campuses are combined).

The law schools were asked to report the three states with the most employed graduates and the number of employed graduates in each of those three states. Taking those totals as a percentage of employed graduates, and paying attention to the states identified, one can get some idea of which schools are “regional” and which schools might actually have a more “national” footprint. The simple result of the analysis is that the vast majority of schools are “regional” rather than “national.”

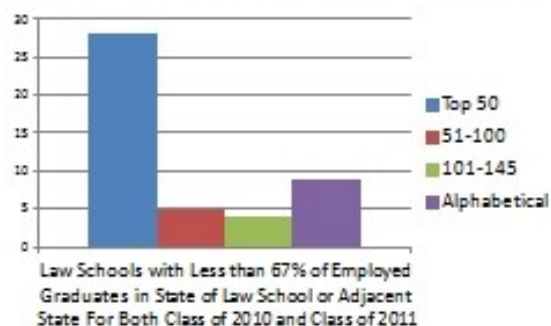


1. For both the Download Class of 2010 and the Download Class of 2011, there were 117 law schools for which more than 67 percent of their employed graduates are employed in the state in which the law school is located.
2. For the Classes of 2010 and 2011, there were 144 and 145 law schools, respectively, for which more than 67 percent of their employed graduates are located in the state in which the law school is located or an adjacent state, and 104 law schools for which more than 80 percent of their employed graduates are located in the state in which the law school is located or an adjacent state.
3. There were only 46 law schools for which less than 67 percent of their employed graduates were employed in the state in which the law school is located or an adjacent state for both the Classes of 2010 and 2011.

Notably, 28 of these 46 law schools are in the USNews top-50, for which it is easily imaginable that the employment geography is much more national than regional. For many of these 46 law schools, two of the three states with the most employed graduates generally are not adjacent to the state in which the law school is located, suggesting some national reach. The three non-adjacent jurisdictions reflected most frequently should not be surprising – California, the District of Columbia and New York. Of the 18 other law schools, nine law schools are ranked in the alphabetical list of schools -- schools one generally would consider regional – while nine are ranked

between 51 and 145 in USNews.

Law Schools with Less Regional Geographic
Distribution of Employed Graduates 2010 and 2011



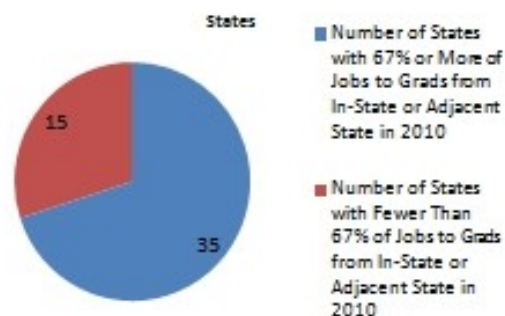
Perhaps most significantly, due to the incomplete nature of some of the data sets, this summary probably understates the number of law schools for which the employment outcome data suggests the law school is more regional than national. Several of these 46 law schools come in with 60% or more of their employed graduates employed in the state of the law school or an adjacent state for both years -- Boston College, Minnesota, NYU, Ohio State and Penn State – and if the data were to include graduates employed in all adjacent states, the total for these schools well might exceed 67 percent.

In sum, then, more than 76% of all law schools and more than 87% of law schools outside the USNews top-50 had more than 67% of their employed graduates in the state in which the law school is located or an adjacent state for either the Class of 2010 or the Class of 2011.

LOOKING AT STATE SPECIFIC DATA

NALP also notes that for the Class of 2010, there are 30 states in which two-thirds or more of the jobs were taken by graduates from law schools in those states. (Jobs & JDs, Class of 2010, p. 69) Taking NALP's state-specific data for the Class of 2010 in conjunction with the ABA's data for the Class of 2010, there actually are 35 states in which two thirds or more of the jobs were taken by graduates of law schools in those states or an adjacent state and 30 states in which three-quarters or more of the jobs within the state were taken by graduates of the law schools in the state or in an adjacent state.

LOCATION MATTERS -- STATES



Again, this data likely understates the results. For example, in Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Tennessee, and Virginia, roughly 65-75 percent of jobs within the state were taken by graduates from law schools within the state or an adjacent state. But with several schools in adjacent states not counted in the tallies because these states were not one of the top three states for employed graduates from those schools, one could infer that were graduates from all schools from adjacent states included the percentage might exceed 75 percent. (Notably, 13 of the 15 states with less than 67 percent of jobs taken by graduates of the law school in the state or law schools in adjacent states are states with modest populations and only one law school (or no law school) – Alaska,

Delaware, Hawai'i, Idaho, Maine, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia. The other two states are Utah and Virginia. The District of Columbia also falls into this category.)

LOCATION MATTERS

In sum then, location matters. For the vast majority of law students at the vast majority of law schools, the vast majority of reasonable employment prospects associated with going to a given law school are going to be in the state in which the law school is located or an adjacent state. In the absence of a unique or specific aspect of a law school's program that might make a particular law school very appealing, this suggests that location should matter when considering a law school, perhaps more than ranking.

For example, if a prospective student has a choice between going to a higher ranked regional law school in a state in which the student does not anticipate practicing or living (and perhaps paying more in tuition), or a lower ranked regional law school in the location in which he or she hopes to live and work professionally (and perhaps paying less in tuition), the prospective law student should give serious consideration to attending the lower-ranked regional law school in the location in which he or she hopes to live and work professionally. This will make it easier to begin networking while in law school and to facilitate employment opportunities in the region in which the student is interested in practicing law and living. (And it may help the prospective student save money if the lower-ranked regional school happens to cost less (if it is a public school, for example), or if the prospective student has a more competitive LSAT/GPA profile at the lower-ranked regional school such that the student may be eligible for a scholarship.)

Source: Location, Location, Location – Geography Matters in Law School Employment 2010-2011, <http://lawprofessors.typepad.com/legalwhiteboard/2012/09/location-location-location-geography-matters-in-law-school-employment-2010-2011.html>, September 3, 2012