Applications Surge for Class of 1991

UB Law Forum
Career Development Office Reports
Latest Trends

More and more UB Law graduates continue to choose careers in public interest law: 10 percent, or 27 of 272 employed graduates in the class of 1987 entered public interest practice last year, reports Audrey Koscielnik, director of the Career Development Office. (The category includes public defender, legal services offices and other publicly and privately funded organizations.) This is an increase of 3 percent over the class of 1986, which has 208 employed graduates, and 2 percent over the class of 1985, which has 244 employed graduates. According to the National Association for Law Placement, 3 percent of all American law school graduates select public interest practice.

Another trend is the increase in the number of graduates who choose private practice. UB Law grads are earning higher salaries in private practice than ever before — and they’re staying in Buffalo.

While a growing number of our law students show an interest in public practice, the percentage of Buffalo students who enter private firms — 60 percent, or 162 graduates in 1987 — compares favorably to the national average, which is 64 percent, according to Koscielnik. That 60 percent is an increase of 6 percent over the previous year and 3 percent over the class of 1985.

Approximately 40 percent (109) of the class of 1987 remained in the Buffalo metropolitan area. In the class of 1986, 32 percent (68) remained in the area, and in the class of 1985, 36 percent (87) stayed.

Koscielnik also reported a new record high for a starting salary — $82,500 in New York City. The average starting salary for the class of 1987 was $29,547, up from $28,294.

While salaries have gone up, “I don’t think it’s the starting salaries that keep graduates in Buffalo,” Koscielnik says. “A lot of the firms that are hiring our recent graduates are not the high paying firms that you read about in the headlines. Most pay only around $22,000 to start.

“But many of our graduates like the quality of life in Western New York and want to stay in Buffalo, so they’re joining the small — and very small — general practice firms that are so prevalent here.”

In the business and industry category, which includes corporations, financial institutions, insurance companies and public accounting firms, there was a decline in interest for the class of 1987. Only 5 percent (13) selected that employment option, down from 11 percent in the class of 1986 and 7 percent in the class of 1985. Nationally, about 9 percent of all law graduates are classified in business and industry.

“But the situation appears to be changing for the class of 1989. In Fall ’88, public accounting firms were pleased by the number and quality of Buffalo applicants on their interview schedules,” Koscielnik reports. “We have an excellent tax program, and employers find Buffalo graduates attractive candidates. It also helps that Buffalo graduates in accounting firms have done a fine job of encouraging their firms to recruit our students.”

There was also a slight decline in government employment. The class of 1987 had 11 percent (31 graduates) go into government service, which includes federal, state and local levels. This was down 2 percent from previous years.

However, the percentage of students pursuing advanced degrees — both non-law and law — increased after a decline in 1986. Four percent of the class of 1987 (12 students) are studying for MBA’s and Ph.D’s, and 2 percent (5 students) went on for LL.M’s.

Applications Surge 16 Percent for Class of 1991

UB Law School enjoyed a 16 percent increase in the number of applicants this year, up from 1,435 in 1987 to 1,723 in 1988. Aundra C. Newell, assistant dean for law school admissions, says this rate reflects the nationwide surge of 16 percent reported by the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC).

Of the applications received, 540 students were extended offers to study at UB. An unprecedented 304 students paid tuition deposits and 262 ultimately enrolled.

Last year, 663 applicants were extended offers and 258 enrolled. Most entering classes in recent history have fallen between 250 and 270 students.

“Getting into a good school is tougher today, and more people recognize that UB is a quality school,” says Newell, commenting on the dramatic increase in the number of applicants.

“When students compare UB to other law schools, they quickly discover that we have a notable history. We are the only law school in this area. We enjoy a national reputation. Last but not least, the tuition is comparatively low.”

The larger applicant pool makes UB increasingly more competitive as well as more diverse, she points out. “We are in a position to pick and choose.”

Newell reports that the class of 1991 is comprised of 140 males and 118 females. Fifty-six are non-white. Of the minority students, 29 are male, 27 female.

The median Law School Aptitude Test scores of all students is 31. The highest possible score on the test is 48. Their median Grade Point Average is 3.23.

While 238 of the new students hail from New York, UB Law has attracted students this year from 11 other states as well. Foreign students also arrived from Brunei, Canada, France, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, United Kingdom, and Zaire.

The large number of applications was “unexpected and surprising,” Newell says. According to Law Services Report, the newsletter of the LSAC, during the past four years “legal education had prepared itself for a continued decline in applications, or at best for a period of stability.”

So why the rise? Some observers think the stock market crash in October prompted many prospective M.B.A.s to switch course, and it was too late in the game for them to try for medical school.
Dr. Chester J. Gary is a Williamsville dentist and over the past ten years has developed a comprehensive general practice. After graduating from UB Law School, he intends to specialize in health law.

"Failure to anticipate the discrepancies between changing dental practices and legal demands has led to a crisis in the malpractice area," Dr. Gary wrote in his statement. "I would use my D.D.S. and J.D. degrees to research, write, and teach dentists the law as it monitors daily practice. I would strive to expand the dental jurisprudence curriculum to include a more comprehensive review of risk management techniques. My goals also include defending dentists through clarifying dental-legal issues, and if possible, attempting to work for positive trends in legislation at the local and state level."