

10-1-2014

Finding Success One Student at A Time

UB Law Forum

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Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (2014) "Finding Success One Student at A Time," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 29 : No. 1 , Article 5.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol29/iss1/5

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“When temporary, school-funded positions are excluded from the data, SUNY Buffalo ranks second among all New York State law schools – behind only Columbia – in the percentage of active job seekers who are employed.”

— *Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers, a legal education advocacy group*

Finding success one student at a time

The numbers tell the story: Recent graduates of SUNY Buffalo Law School are finding jobs at a rate that is, by some measures, better than other major law schools.

For the Class of 2013, 190 of 233 grads had secured employment within nine months of graduation, according to **Lisa M. Patterson**, associate dean for career services. That proportion, at 84.1 percent, is on a par with the national average of 84.5 percent, as reported by the National Association for Law Placement (NALP). The figures reflect graduates who are either employed or enrolled in an academic degree program.

SUNY Buffalo’s employment figures score above the national average when factoring in one major difference in the way other law schools compile employment data, Patterson notes. Many law schools hire their own graduates or fund their fellowships at nonprofit organizations, then include these positions in their employment figures. This accounts for 4.7 percent of all jobs held by the Class of 2013 nationwide, NALP data show.

SUNY Buffalo Law, on the other hand, does not hire its own graduates, nor does it fund graduates’ fellowships at nonprofit organizations, Patterson notes. When temporary, school-funded positions are excluded from the data, SUNY Buffalo ranks second among all New York State law schools – behind only Columbia – in the percentage of active job seekers who are employed, according to *Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers*, a legal education advocacy group.

Nationwide, according to NALP, 11.2 percent of law graduates from the Class of 2013 were still seeking work nine months after graduation; among SUNY Buffalo Law School grads the figure is just 8.4 percent. In addition, Buffalo Law grads enrolled in graduate academic programs at a much higher rate than the national average – 4 percent, compared with



Of the 233 students in the Class of 2013:

- 82%** Are employed nine months after graduation.
- 4%** Are pursuing an advanced degree full time. This includes LL.M. degrees, Ph.D candidates and a master’s of public health.
- 3%** Decided not to seek employment due to illness, family obligations, a recent move or other personal reasons.
- 8%** Are actively seeking work.
- 3%** Did not respond.

1.8 percent nationwide.

The employment data also show that 69 percent of Buffalo’s 2013 graduates hold jobs which required that they pass a state bar exam, indicative of traditional careers in law practice, Patterson says. The nationwide average is 64.4 percent.

This good news comes in the midst of a protracted difficult job market for new lawyers. “The market continues to be a challenge,” Patterson says. “There’s going to be a new normal. The bigger firms that set the industry standard are seeing changes, and they’re not temporary changes.” Law firm managers, she says, are imposing new fee structures as clients have balked at paying high legal fees; changing the structure of their partnership tracks for new associates; and creating positions for staff attorneys who will never be on a partnership track.

Nevertheless, she says, legal hiring – which

had been falling for four or five years – appears to have leveled off.

“We’re cautiously optimistic about the outlook, for a number of reasons,” says **Marc Davies**, the Law School’s associate director for career services. “The number of applicants to law schools is down, and presumably that will be projected in the future as fewer attorneys going into the profession. At the same time, we think positions in state and federal government will be opening up as baby boomers’ retirement portfolios recover and they begin retiring in large numbers.”

Recent SUNY Buffalo Law graduates are working in locations from Florida to Alaska, Hawaii to South Korea, as prosecutors, public defenders, associates at private firms or solo practitioners, as well as in corporate settings, nonprofit agencies and federal government positions.