

Class of 1976 Follow-up Survey

(Back in the early 1970's, UW Sociology Prof. Howard Erlanger decided to study the attitudes of law students toward social change and pro bono activities. To that end he surveyed the Class of 1976 before they started their first year, and again at the end of their second year of study.)

Kathy Beisel, a doctoral student at the University of Chicago, has worked with Professor Erlanger in developing a follow-up survey of the class, ten years after graduation. In this first report of her findings, she compares UW Law School students to the national norms, and looks at the extent to which they have retained many of the attitudes toward social issues that they had upon entering Law School.

The subject of the study must have been particularly interesting to Prof. Erlanger. In 1979 he too became a UW Law student, graduating in 1981 and has now joined our faculty.)

In the spring of 1985, the Class of 1976 participated in a follow-up of a study in which they had taken part in 1973 and 1975, at the beginning and middle of their legal education. It was clear from the two previous surveys that many of these graduates had been interested in working toward social change, donating their legal services, and servicing poor and indigent clients. The current study reveals that in spite of the usual time and financial pressures in the work place, and governmental changes such as cuts to social programs, many members of the Class of 1976 have retained this service orientation to some extent. The following pages summarize the career histories and pro bono activities of these graduates.

First and Current Jobs

The graduates' first and current jobs are displayed in Table 1. These results are fairly similar to those of a national sample of lawyers who graduated in either 1976 or 1977 (ABA Young Lawyers Division, "National Survey of Career Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction," 1983). In the

national sample, lawyers are somewhat more likely to be in private firms of more than thirty lawyers or in private industry and less likely to be in government and service-oriented jobs like legal aid and public defense.

Those law students who expressed interest in jobs in which they could help

under-represented people were more likely than their classmates to take their first job with the federal government or in a legal aid or public defender's office (see Table 2). Table 3 shows that a similar, although less pronounced, pattern exists for current jobs.

Table 1
Number of Law School Graduates in Various Job Settings for First and Current Job

Job Setting	First Job		Current Job	
	Number	%	Number	%
Solo	14	7	22	12
Small firm (< 10)	48	24	51	29
Medium firm (10-30)	48	24	51	29
Large firm (> 30)	15	8	14	8
Federal judiciary	4	2	1	.5
Federal government	10	5	6	3
State/local judiciary	11	6	4	2
State/local government	33	17	25	14
Private Industry	8	4	13	7
Private association	4	2	4	2
Legal aid/public defender	21	11	9	5
Education	7	4	6	3
Subtotal**	198	102*	179	99.5
Non-legal position	14		36	
Unemployed	0		2	
Total	212		217	

* Percents do not add to 100 due to rounding error.

** The column percents are calculated from the lawyer subtotals which do not include individuals in non-legal positions. This was done in order to compare the current sample to other samples of lawyers.

Donation of Legal Time

The service orientation of the lawyers in this study is particularly clear in regard to the amount of time they reported donating. The amount of legal time the lawyers currently donate was measured by the question: "During the last 12 months, have there been any groups or individuals for which you have done free or reduced-fee legal work, such as the Scouts, a charitable agency, a legal aid office, individual clients or acquaintances and relatives?" The figures reported for this question are clearly higher than the figures reported for a similar question in a national survey. During 1983, approximately 34% of the national sample reported donating an average of five or more hours per month (including both work and non-work hours). Forty-two percent reported donating one hour or less per month. In this sample of UW graduates, 51% donated an average of five or more hours per month and 33% reported monthly donations of one hour or less.

Although the amount of time the lawyers currently donate is relatively high, in general the amount donated is less than the amount they initially intended (see Table 4). Prior to attending law school, 60% of the 110 students who responded to all three surveys planned to spend at least 10% of their work time on pro bono activities. The intention to donate time decreased somewhat during the second year in law school with 53% of the students planning to "tithe" on pro bono work. Currently only 5% of the lawyers report donating 10% or more of their work time on pro bono work in the last twelve months. Twenty-three percent of the sample stated that they did not donate any time during the last twelve months. During the first and second phases of this study, only one and four percent, respectively, planned not to donate any time.

The graduates not only donated less time than they had intended, but their attitudes toward pro bono work have changed as well. For example, the statistical means for the question "Giving free or reduced cost legal work to individuals or groups who cannot afford legal help is part of a lawyer's professional obligation" have declined for those who answered the question all three times ($n = 133$). The means were—4.23, 4.05 and 3.74. From these results one can conclude that experiences following graduation led to a less positive orientation toward donating legal services, in regard to both attitude and action. Nevertheless, a comparison be-

tween the University of Wisconsin and national samples show that the amount of pro bono work that UW graduates have done is relatively high. Furthermore, the comparisons also reveal that the percentage of graduates who are currently in legal aid and public defense is

Table 2

Lawyers' Liberal-Reformist Intentions and First Jobs

<i>Job Setting</i>	Liberal-reformist Intentions			
	Low		High	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Private practice	65	58	16	34
Federal government	2	2	5	11
Legal aid/public defender	2	2	10	21
Private Industry	6	5	2	4
Other legal jobs	36	34	14	34
Non-legal jobs	6	5	0	0
Total	113	101	47	100

Table 3

Lawyers' Liberal-Reformist Intentions and Current Jobs

<i>Job Setting</i>	Liberal-reformist Intentions			
	Low		High	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
Private practice	66	56	23	49
Federal government	1	1	4	9
Legal aid/public defender	0	0	3	6
Private Industry	11	9	2	4
Other legal jobs	20	17	10	21
Non-legal jobs	19	16	7	11
Total	116	99	47	100

Table 4

Percent of Work Hours Graduates Intended to Donate (1973 & 1975) and Percent Actually Donated (1985)

<i>Percent of Work Time Donated or Intended to be Donated</i>	Intentions				Donations	
	1973		1975		1975	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
0%	1	1	5	4	25	23
1-9%	43	39	47	43	79	72
10%+	66	60	58	53	6	5
Total	110	100	110	100	110	100

higher than the national average. Thus, while the initial idealism of the Class of 1976 may have faded somewhat, these initial intentions can still be recognized in the graduates' career choices and pro bono efforts.