STUDYING OUR ALUMNI TO IDENTIFY OUTCOMES THAT REALLY MATTER

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ABSTRACT

U.S. legal education is entering a period of profound tumult and debate over the ability of law schools to adequately prepare students for the practice of law. This article explores the primary criticisms of modern legal education: that law schools are too expensive, that they neglect the training of practical skills, that they focus on impractical areas of scholarship, and that they fail to instill law students with a professional identity or a commitment to social justice. This article responds to these critiques by suggesting that law schools place a greater emphasis on graduate feedback on practical learning.

This short article suggests that legal educators can learn a lot from carefully listening to alumni, and emphasizes the importance of insights from newly graduated law students both struggling and succeeding. The potential benefits of this legal education improvement strategy are illustrated through a study called the Outcomes Assessment Project at Northeastern University. In addition to reviewing this study, this article examines Northeastern University's history as a pioneer in experiential education.

The first part of this article provides background information on Northeastern University School of Law, focusing on the types of students Northeastern Law tends to attract and their experiences once they arrive. The second part of this article discusses the project research design and methodology and how both the research process and the results can provide law schools with the data and insights they need to adapt to changing times.
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INTRODUCTION

U.S. legal education is entering a period of profound tumult. After decades of growth and stability, rising costs and slow-changing curriculums have prompted new debates over the ability of law schools to adequately prepare students for the practice of law. The current critique of legal education is that, in general, law schools are (a) too expensive (Tamanaha 2013 forthcoming; Segal 2011a), (b) neglect the training of practical skills (Dolin 2008; Bennett 2010), (c) focus on impractical areas of scholarship (Edwards 1992; Weiss 2011), and (d) fail to instill a professional identity (Sullivan et al. 2007) or a commitment to social justice (Wizner 2000). Judging from the critics, it is hard to believe that legal education is doing anything right. Yet, legions of loyal law alumni suggest that a substantial number of lawyers believe that they received an outstanding legal education that launched them onto the road to personal and professional success.

This short article suggests that we legal educators can learn a lot from carefully listening to alumni. To the extent they can trace some of their good fortune to their law school experience, this information could provide us with important clues on the types of curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher-student relationships that enable law school to become a truly transformative educational experience. Likewise, struggle of alumni are no less significant, as they may reveal career struggles that could be ameliorated by curricular programming or improved teaching methods—but we will never know if we don’t build a feedback loop with our alumni and engage them on questions related to their legal education and their professional careers. Further, this type of research has even higher value when it facilitates comparison across law schools with similar profiles.

I want to illustrate the benefits of studying our alumni by describing a large-scale study I am currently working on for Northeastern University School of Law. This study has been dubbed the Outcomes Assessment Project (OAP). The impetus for the OAP is the perception of some Northeastern alumni that the School’s history, philosophy and curriculum are markedly different than other law schools and that these differences were instrumental in their career arcs. The distinctive features of Northeastern University School of Law are traceable to the school’s closing in the early 1950s after several decades of operations. With the assistance of young lawyers who aspired to create a different type of law school that departed from the perceived conservatism of traditional legal education, Northeastern Law reopened in 1968 with a mission that would fuse both theory and practice with ethical and social justice ideals.

At a practical level, this mission is evident in the Cooperative Legal Education Program, which requires every upper-level law student to complete four full-time work placements under the supervision of a practicing attorney. Similarly, the School’s eschews the letter grading system in favor of a narrative grading policy that, it is hoped, fosters a more cooperative learning environment.

Over four decades have passed since Northeastern committed itself to this alternative path—a path built upon experiential education. Accordingly, there are two core research
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questions of the Northeastern Outcomes Assessment Project (OAP). First, compared to a
traditional law school experience, has Northeastern’s unique educational approach significantly
influenced the professional development, career paths, and ultimate job satisfaction of
Northeastern Law graduates? And second, if so, in what ways?

An example may illustrate the utility of these two interrelated questions. Specifically,
if the Northeastern pedagogy and cooperative placements are influencing lawyer development in
the ways originally predicted by Northeastern faculty, the project data might reveal evidence of
self-directed learning that accelerates the acquisition of skills, different career choices, or
improved overall career satisfaction. To be attributable to the Northeastern pedagogy and/or
cooperative placements, these differences would need to be meaningfully different when
compared to a reference group from another law school. The answers to these questions,
illustrated with rigorous data and concrete examples, may provide critical insights for how law
schools can cost-effectively retool their existing educational programs.

To illustrate the potential value of this research, in the first part of this essay I will
provide background information on Northeastern University School of Law, focusing on the
types of students Northeastern Law tends to attract and their experiences once they arrive.
In the second part, I will discuss the project research design and methodology and how both the
research process and the results can provide law schools with the data and insights they need to
adapt to changing times.

Part I. The Student View

A. Admissions profile at Northeastern [outline of topic to be covered]

1. Disproportionately female

2. Students report attraction to co-op, but both applying and enrollment

3. But analysis of admissions data suggest growing and relatively large
   influence of U.S. News ranking on Enrollment decisions.

B. Prior Research on the Northeastern Law cooperative placement program

During the early 1990s, two Northeastern law professors, Daniel Givelber and Brook
Baker, collaborated with researchers from the Center for Applied Social Research to conduct an
extensive evaluation of the School of Law’s co-op program (Givelber et al. 1995). The
sample consisted of 165 students from the class of 1991 who completed a total of 532
questionnaires (each completed a survey corresponding to an internship). Respondents also
reflected a diverse array of practice settings: 25.8% in small firms (< 15 of lawyers); 9.2% in
medium firms (16 to 40); 14.1% in large firms (>40); 11.8% in government; 8.9% in legal
aid or public defender offices; 17.7% in judicial chambers; 7.1% in corporate & union
offices; 4.4% in public interest, and 0.8% in other.
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Overall, Northeastern students reported that their co-ops were valuable educational experiences. On a scale of 1 to 10, over 50% reported a score of 9 or 10, and 92% reported a 6 or higher. 94.5% reported improved skills. 85.0% reported work commensurate with their skills and 64.2% reported adequate supervision. Although the diversity of legal tasks tended to vary by employer, 85.5% had opportunities to prepare legal memos; 77.4% engaged in legal research; 54.1% observed court proceedings; 45.1% engaged in fact gathering; 44.4% prepared court briefs; 41.7% drafted pleadings; 22.7% participated in court proceedings; and 10.5% engaged in negotiations. In a multivariate statistical analysis, the practice setting had negligible influence on students’ overall rating of an internship’s educational value. The best predictors of high educational satisfaction were (a) adequate amounts of work, (b) clear instructions, (c) work commensurate with skill level, (d) supervisor honoring the shared expectations of the student, (e) adequate supervision, and (f) in-court participation. Issues of pay and practice settings had either minimal or no effect on student perceptions of educational value.

It is worth exploring whether Northeastern’s cooperative placement program accelerates the development of practical legal skills. An important secondary benefit of the co-op program may be the educational value of exposing students to four different practice settings and, correspondingly, different work styles and varying levels of professional and technical abilities. Multiple experiences reduce the risk that students will over-generalize from one formative internship experience and require students to reflect on the significant similarities and differences across internships.

In particular, this diversity of internship experiences may have a beneficial effect on students’ formation of professional identity. Professor Leslie Levin has found that early career experiences often have a profoundly formative effect on the ethical dispositions of young lawyers, particularly in the solo or small firm setting (Levin 2004). In extensive interviews with New York lawyers, Levin asked lawyers to explain their reasoning for how they handled a particular ethical issue. Levin found a recurring pattern in which the underlying tension was analyzed based upon observation of other lawyers early in one’s career. Levin notes, “It appears … the conclusions … these lawyers reach the first few times they confront a particular ethical problem may provide a template of sorts that is used throughout their legal careers absent an extraordinary event, such as a disciplinary complaint …” (Id. at 464). Levin then recounts several examples in which lawyers rely upon early career experiences to reflexively avoid or rationalize unethical behavior. “Regardless of how lawyers arrive at their initial determination of how to handle an ethical challenge,” Levin reports, “it often continues to guide the lawyer in practice” (Id. at 465).

C. Law School Survey of Student Engagement

On the Law School Survey of Student Engagement, several of Northeastern Law’s scores suggest that the student experience is quite distinctive.

1. Northeastern students are significantly more likely ask questions in class (all three years).
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2. Include diverse perspectives in class discussions or writing (all three years)

3. Report higher levels of satisfaction over career counseling (all three years)

4. Report levels of class preparation and study that do not trial off during the 2L and 3L year of law school, yet declining levels of involvement in school-sponsored activity during 2L and 3L years. [Why?]

5. Report higher levels re the acquisition of job or work-related knowledge or skills?

6. Report higher levels of working effectively with others.

7. Tend to rate their law school experience highly (compared to other law schools, all three years).

1. The Alumni View

Many Northeastern Law faculty and staff believe that the School of Law’s nonconventional curriculum and pedagogy provide students with an accelerated development of practice skills and a more fully formed professional identity. Yet, two conditions must also be present to convert institutional lore into more concrete empirical evidence.

(1) Common Beliefs. Northeastern alumni can describe how the School’s educational model positively influenced their legal careers and professional identity. Ideally, these descriptions need to be put into a set of narratives that coalesce around the most recurring themes.

(2) Peer Reference Groups. These positive benefits have to be observable in a rigorous empirical analysis that compares Northeastern students and graduates with students and graduates from law schools, including other institutions with similar demographic profile.

The Outcomes Assessment Project is based on the following structure.

A. Characteristics of Baseline Sample.

Whether studying Northeastern Law graduates or a peer reference group, it is important to first understand baseline characteristics of Northeastern Law alumni/ae. To make this determination, we need to assemble and aggregate information on the overall population of Northeastern alumni, which would include: date of birth, gender, race, undergraduate institution, residence prior to law school, prior work experience, a summary of law school academic performance (to the extent possible), a breakdown of internships, and (if possible) employment status upon graduation from law school.

The primary purpose for assembling an alumni database is to ensure we have baseline
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information to assess the suitability of various samples used during various phases of the OAP study. Relevant differentiators for building a sample might include year of graduation, practice setting, gender, and ethnicity. The contact information included in the database also will reduce the logistical challenges of building appropriate samples and thereby increase the efficiency of the project.

Setting aside these practical considerations, there are good reasons beyond the Outcomes Assessment Project to assemble information on former students. Bryant Garth, Dean of Southwestern Law School and former director of the American Bar Foundation, recently observed that “in the coming years it will be educational malpractice for a law school not to study its alumni” (conversation with Dean Garth). The experiences of alumni are essential to understand changes in the profession. Further, the alumni are themselves vexed by the process of change. Studying alumni thus has the potential of creating a feedback loop that simultaneously informs faculty, alumni and students.

B. Building Vocabulary to Discuss Skills, Competencies and Other Law School Outcomes

Comparative assessments on educational quality require researchers to define the relevant criteria to evaluate progress and attainment. To provide a concrete example, before Northeastern Law can claim that its graduates are better prepared for practice, it must first enumerate the skills and behaviors of a competent early career lawyer and provide credible evidence that its graduates, on average, are more advanced.

For better or worse, there is no canon of professional skills, behaviors or values that is accepted, or even routinely referenced, by legal educators, legal employers, and bar licensing officials. One possible solution is to delegate the task of defining the relevant competencies to the advisory board or the project executive. The advantage of this approach is speed and efficiency. The disadvantage, however, is the resulting competencies may lack a personal and emotional connection to the Northeastern stakeholders. A second solution is to involve the Northeastern stakeholders in the process. This can be accomplished through a simple survey on lawyer effectiveness that combines qualitative and quantitative elements.

For example, the survey might consist of four questions:

1. In your current practice setting, describe the skills, behaviors and/or attributes needed to become successful.

2. Describe the attributes of a lawyer who you greatly admire. What are his/her greatest skills and attributes?

3. Describe a lawyer who you would be willing to hire to handle a sensitive estate planning issue for you [or handle a private adoption or the sale of business or a criminal matter involving a false charge]. To what extent is that person different than the persons described in Questions #1 or 2?”
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4. Please select up to 10 skills, qualities and/or attributes that you feel are very important in determining a lawyer’s overall success in your current practice setting. Refer to the competency list below for the detailed competency definitions.¹

[Consider the 26 Berkeley Effectiveness Factors]

There are several advantages to the survey approach. First, it involves stakeholders and interests them in the results. Second, the survey results can be categorized by respondent characteristics, thus enabling researchers to identify how responses vary by age, practice setting, and gender. Third, the answers to the open-ended questions (#1 to #3) can be mapped to the ranking questions (#4), thus enabling researchers to rewrite the most significant skills and competencies in language that mirrors the words of the Northeastern respondents.² Fourth, this exercise can be easily and cost-effectively repeated with other law school populations, thus facilitating useful comparisons across law schools. (For example, it would be important to know how recurring words and the ranking of skills/competencies varied from school to school after controlling for all relevant demographic factors.) Fifth, it is a very simple and cost effective way to engage and communicate with stakeholders—most will want to hear or read about the results.³ Sixth, it provides a sound basis for building a competency model that is likely to enjoy the support of the vast majority of stakeholders, including faculty.

The underlying data from this process should be analyzed, highlighting the key patterns and language. The goal of the process is to create a set of key words and categories that (a) accurately describes essential lawyer skills, behavior and values, (b) have the internal support and buy-in of Northeastern law graduates, (c) can be used for future portions of the Outcome Assessment Project, and (d) can be easily mapped onto other lists of lawyer skills and competencies (ideally lists generated using the same simple survey process).

Although the sample for this phase of the project will be primarily purposeful (i.e., comprised primarily of devoted stakeholders who are likely to greet the project with enthusiasm), efforts also will be made to ensure that the sample is fairly representative of the underlying population. Because individual responses can be tied to respondent characteristics, responses can also be analyzed for unexpected and significant subgroup differences.

C. Students and Recent Graduate Focus Groups

During the initial stages of the Outcomes Assessment Project, the research is largely

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¹ The questionnaire would contain a definitional list.
² As a validity check, researchers will attempt to create a mapping exercise that asks subgroups to categorize responses based on a standardized rubric. This would help researchers better understand respondents’ perspectives and, assuming the same methodology is followed, provide a basis for comparing samples across other law schools.
³ In our own experience, many alumni will ask for copies of the results to use in their own workplaces, which is strong evidence that they found value in the underlying process and results.
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exploratory in nature (see Edmondson & McManus 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). Part of this process is obtaining a better understanding of how the Northeastern Law education is experienced and understood from the perspective of law students (both current students and recent graduates). A simple and effective method is to convene a series of focus groups. Some groups would be randomly populated with the exception of class year. Other groups would be selected based on potentially influential individual differences, such as prior work experience or reasons for attending Northeastern Law. Some useful preliminary questions, which could be asked at the beginning of the sessions, include:

- Why did you enroll in law school? Why did you enroll in Northeastern?
- To date, what has been your most influential law school experience?
- Rank the following educational experiences in terms of getting you ready for practice:
  (1) classroom learning, 4 (2) co-op experiences, (3) law school clinics (pick n/a if you have not enrolled in a clinic), (4) mentoring from faculty, (5) mentoring from law school staff, (6) mentoring outside of law school, and (7) other.

This information could be aggregated in real time with the results reflected back to the group to generate an open-ended dialogue on the questions and other topics of interest to students.

To facilitate content analysis, these student focus group sessions would be video recorded and, to the extent necessary, transcribed. This segment of the research would achieve at least four objectives. First, it would provide a sound basis for constructing a questionnaire that could be used on a larger population of Northeastern students and recent alumni. Second, it could identify useful lines of inquiry in structured interviews of Northeastern employers and alumni. Third, if sufficiently broad-based, the focus groups could generate interest and buy-in among students. Fourth, the results of this phase of the study may warrant publication, thus generating interest in the Outcomes Assessment Project among outside law schools.

**D. Interviews, Survey of Alumni**

If Northeastern Law’s nonconventional curriculum, pedagogy and tradition of social justice have a truly transformative effect on the lives of students, the personal stories and career histories of Northeastern alumni will eventually become the core of the Outcomes Assessment Project. Such strong claims, however, cannot be made without following a careful methodology that can, to the extent possible, isolate and separate out alternative explanations (e.g., self-selection in admissions, lack of an appropriate reference group, unrepresentative sampling).

For the Outcomes Assessment Project to have credibility within the legal education community, the research design has to carefully follow established social science methodology. Yet, once this threshold has been met, the actual results need to be communicated to

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4 Classroom learning can take many forms. Researchers would probe this concept in subsequent group discussions.
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stakeholders through examples and stories that exemplify the key statistical findings. The rigorously gathered empirical data are necessary to address lawyers’ and legal educators’ trained and seemingly inherent skepticism; but the stories are necessary so they truly grasp and understand the educational mechanisms at work. Researchers should follow a mixed method approach for gathering data on alumni (Edmondson & McManus 2002; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004). First, convene a series of alumni focus groups (two to three focus groups with six to eight participants) that are grouped by approximate year of graduation but have a roughly representative sample of alumni by practice setting. Some of the exploratory questions, which could be aggregated in real time and reflected back to the audience, might include:

- What was your reason for attending law school?
- Why did you enroll in Northeastern?
- What is your strongest memory of your law school years [phrased in a way that does not discourage discussion of co-op internships, which occurred outside of law school]?
- How did you obtain your first job out of law school?
- How did your experience at Northeastern compare to your peers in practice who graduated from other law schools?
- What were the key iterative steps, if any, that enabled you to build your current career path?

These sessions will be video recorded and, to the extent necessary, transcribed. In addition, the content should be analyzed for overlap with the vocabulary of skills, behaviors and values referenced above. The purpose of these exercises is to begin building theories on the types of experiences that augment law students’ professional development.

The second step in a mixed-method approach is to use the data from the focus groups to develop a structured questionnaire that can be used in interviews with a representative sample of alumni (approximately 60 interviews). Whenever practical, the actual alumni interviews should be digitally recorded. This is necessary for two reasons. First, the interview may provide vivid examples of the types of experiences that produce significant professional development and growth. Second, researchers need to generate actual transcripts so that the content can be coded and analyzed, using the vocabulary of skills, behaviors and values discussed in earlier.

Regarding this second point, the alumni interviews are the lynchpin for establishing the importance of Northeastern’s most unique educational features—the cooperative placement program and the narrative grading policy. Toward that end, it is critical that the initial questions of the alumni interviews are broad and open-ended and attempt to elicit the most significant, formative experiences of the alumni’s law school years. Because no other U.S. law school has a comparable program, the volume of words devoted to the cooperative placement experiences

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5 In the theory building stage, qualitative interviews seldom produce significant new information after 20 to 30 interviews (Mason 2010; Creswell 1998). This alumni sample, however, is very diverse in age range (spanning four decades of graduates).
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or other unique features of Northeastern, such as its narrative grading policy, is a useful variable for comparison to other law school population. The relative importance or influence of the internship program can be ascertained by using the same structured questionnaires in interviews with Northeastern alumni and graduates of a peer law school, matching respondent attributes (e.g., on age, gender, practice setting), and then comparing data between school populations.

The third step in the mixed-method format would be to use the structured interview results to construct a survey instrument that could be sent to all Northeastern graduates. This final step could be used to test and validate the research questions related to the co-op experience and other aspects of the educational experiences revealed through the prior steps. An effective communications plan, completed in conjunction with steps one and two, would likely drive up the response rate (ideally > 50%). The survey results should be analyzed and shared with Northeastern stakeholders. Definitive results, however, require a reference group from another law school.

E. Developing a Reference Group

[Forthcoming]
About OAP

In early 2012, Northeastern University School of Law launched an Outcomes Assessment Project (OAP) — an initiative to evaluate the impact of Northeastern University School of Law on the careers of its 6,400 living graduates.

Drawing upon rigorous social science methodology, the OAP seeks to improve legal education by better understanding the relationship between the law school experience and lawyers’ career paths, civic engagement, and overall personal and professional satisfaction. Areas of particular interest include the Cooperative Legal Education Program, which has been running continuously for almost 45 years, and the School of Law’s longstanding emphasis on serving the public interest.

Equally important, the OAP will give the legal academy and profession a more realistic, evidence-based analysis of what works and what doesn’t, resulting in models for how to best allocate resources in the years ahead.

Where do Northeastern law graduates work?

One of the OAP’s first steps was to determine whether Northeastern law graduates, when compared to practicing lawyers from other law schools, tend to gravitate toward specific practice areas. Based on our preliminary findings, the answer appears to be “yes.”

There are approximately 6,400 living Northeastern law graduates; our alumni/ae database contains current employment information on 4,939 (77.2%). A breakdown by practice setting is presented in Figure 1.

One of the best sources for comparative data on the legal profession is the After the JD study¹, a national sample of lawyers who graduated from law school in 2000. To compare Northeastern law’s breakdown by practice setting with the profession as a whole, we contrast the After the JD sample with Northeastern law graduates who graduated within five years of 2000. In total, we assessed data on

(continued on page 2)

Figure 1: Alumni/Ae by Practice Setting (n=4,939)

Private Practice 48.8%
Federal Government 6.5%
State & Local Government 16.2%
Public Interest/Legal Aid 9.6%
Nonprofits/Education 6%
Business/Corporate Legal 12.9%

¹See Ronit Dinovitzer, et al., After the JD II: Second Results from a National Study of Legal Careers (American Bar Foundation, 2009) [known as “AJD Wave II”].
1,718 Northeastern law graduates in the classes of 1995 through 2005.

As shown in Figure 2, many Northeastern law graduates do, in fact, tend to gravitate toward public interest (defined as legal aid, public defender and nonprofit advocacy organizations) and public service (defined as jobs in federal, state and local government) careers. In total, 32.7% of Northeastern law graduates go into these fields, compared to 19.7% nationally.

Although private practice is the largest source of employment for both Northeastern and After the JD lawyers (47.1% and 55%, respectively), Northeastern law graduates are:

- 33% more likely to work in federal, state or local government
- More than three times as likely to work in the public interest/legal aid sector

In summary, Northeastern law appears to be distinctive in at least one post-graduate outcome: practice setting.

As we mine the relationship between legal education, career paths, personal and professional satisfaction, and lawyers’ broader impact on society, we look forward to sharing our findings with the Northeastern community, the academy and the profession.

FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to learn more about the OAP, or if you are interested in participating in the project — for example, attending a focus group, being interviewed or hosting an event to review interim findings — please contact OAP Administrator Claudia Zickell at c.zickell@neu.edu or (617) 373-5149.
Outcomes Assessment Project

ABOUT OAP

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Equally important, the OAP will give the legal academy and profession a more realistic, evidence-based analysis of what works and what doesn’t, resulting in models for how to best allocate resources in the years ahead.

HERE, THERE AND EVERYWHERE: Northeastern Law Graduates by Employer and Location

Students who choose Northeastern University School of Law seek the school’s unique opportunities for professional development and to make a difference in broader society. Where does that drive and ambition take NUSL graduates? Inquiring minds – particularly current students – would love to know.

As reported in Research Bulletin No. 1, there are approximately 6,400 living Northeastern law graduates; our alumni/ae database contains current employment information on 4,939 (77.2%). This group defies stereotype.

ALL OVER THE MAP

Although some might categorize Northeastern law as a regional law school, a majority of our graduates (51.6%) work outside Massachusetts. At present, there is at least one Northeastern University School of Law graduate working in all 50 US states. Following Massachusetts, the next largest concentrations of Northeastern graduates work in New York (9.4%), California (6.4%) and Washington, DC (4.8%). The adjacent New England states of New Hampshire (2.2%), Connecticut (2.1%), Rhode Island (1.8%), Maine (1.6%) and Vermont (1.1%) collectively account for 10.7% of the alumni/ae employers, though similar concentrations of our graduates work in Florida (1.9%), Washington (1.7%) and Alaska – yes, Alaska (1.5%)!

(continued inside)
Nearly 2% of Northeastern graduates work abroad, in nations including Afghanistan, Australia, Brazil, Bermuda, Canada, China, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, England, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Kuwait, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Palau, the Philippines, Russia, Senegal, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and the United Arab Emirates.

PRIVATE PRACTICE LEADS
When compared to other ABA-accredited law schools, a large proportion of Northeastern law graduates work in public interest and government service jobs (see Research Bulletin No. 1). Yet, similar to other law schools, private practice remains the single largest area of practice, employing 48.8% (2,483) of Northeastern law graduates. Among these lawyers, approximately two-thirds work in law firms while one-third are solo practitioners.

GOVERNMENT MATTERS
Federal, state and local government comprise the next largest practice setting for Northeastern alumni/ae (892, 22.7%), including more than three dozen graduates who serve as judges at the state or federal level.

As shown in Figure 3, graduates working in state and local government are almost evenly divided between Massachusetts and other states. In contrast, approximately one quarter of our graduates employed by the federal government work in Massachusetts, with the largest concentration based in Washington, DC (approximately 100 graduates, or 31% of all alumni/ae working for the federal government).
### FIGURE 2: ALUMNI/AE IN GOVERNMENT BY CONCENTRATION

#### Federal Government
- US Department of Justice: 7.5%
- Federal Public Defender’s Office: 7.1%
- National Labor Relations Board: 6.5%
- US Department of Labor: 6.5%
- US Environmental Protection Agency: 5.6%
- US Attorney’s Office: 4.0%
- US Securities and Exchange Commission: 4.0%
- US Department of Health & Human Services: 3.4%
- All others: 55.3%
- Total: 100.0%

#### State & Local Government
- Committee for Public Counsel Services: 8.9%
- Massachusetts Attorney General: 3.1%
- Suffolk County District Attorney: 2.6%
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts: 1.9%
- Middlesex District Attorney: 1.5%
- City of Boston: 1.4%
- New Hampshire Public Defender: 1.3%
- All Others: 79.2%
- Total: 100.0%

### FIGURE 3: ALUMNI/AE IN GOVERNMENT BY LOCATION

#### Federal Government
- Inside MA: 23%
- Outside MA: 77%

#### State & Local Government
- Inside MA: 53%
- Outside MA: 47%
GOING IN HOUSE
Corporate, business or in-house legal departments comprise the third largest employment sector: 12.9% of alumni/ae (roughly 650 lawyers). These employers are not as concentrated as compared to law firms and government. Nonetheless, the largest private sector non-law firm employers include many well-known companies and nonprofit organizations, such as Ernst & Young, Fidelity Investments, Liberty Mutual Insurance Group, State Street Bank and Trust Company, Boston Children’s Hospital, Fresenius Medical Care and General Electric. Some variation of “vice president” is the most common job title in this category (> 70).

SERVING AND TEACHING
Public interest is the fourth largest employment sector for Northeastern graduates. Among the 9.6% (475 lawyers) working in legal aid and as public interest lawyers, the top employers include Greater Boston Legal Services, Legal Aid Society, Service Employees International Union, Disability Law Center, Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts and the American Civil Liberties Union.

The fifth largest sector for Northeastern alumni/ae – and also disproportionately large compared to other law schools – is higher education and academia, which employs 250 graduates, or roughly 5% of the alumni/ae population. Approximately 43% of these graduates are employed in Massachusetts at institutions including Brandeis University, Boston College, Boston University, Harvard, MIT, Northeastern, Suffolk University and Western New England University. The majority of this sector, however, is distributed among approximately 150 colleges and universities outside of Massachusetts, including faculty appointments at nearly two dozen ABA-accredited law schools.

So, if you were curious where a Northeastern University law degree might take our students, the most accurate answer may be: here, there and everywhere.

FIND OUT MORE
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Northeastern University
School of Law