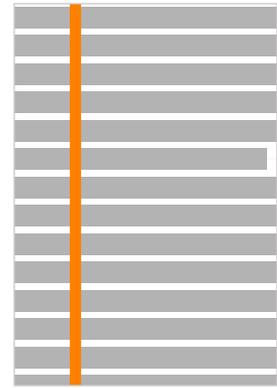
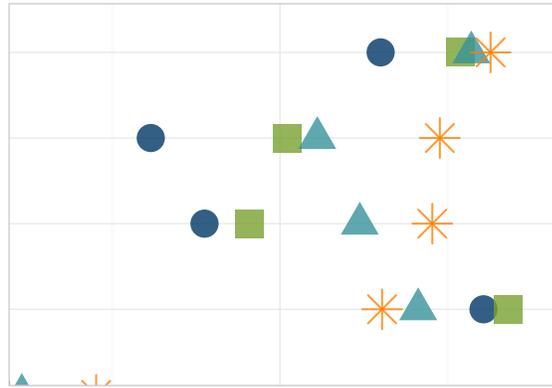
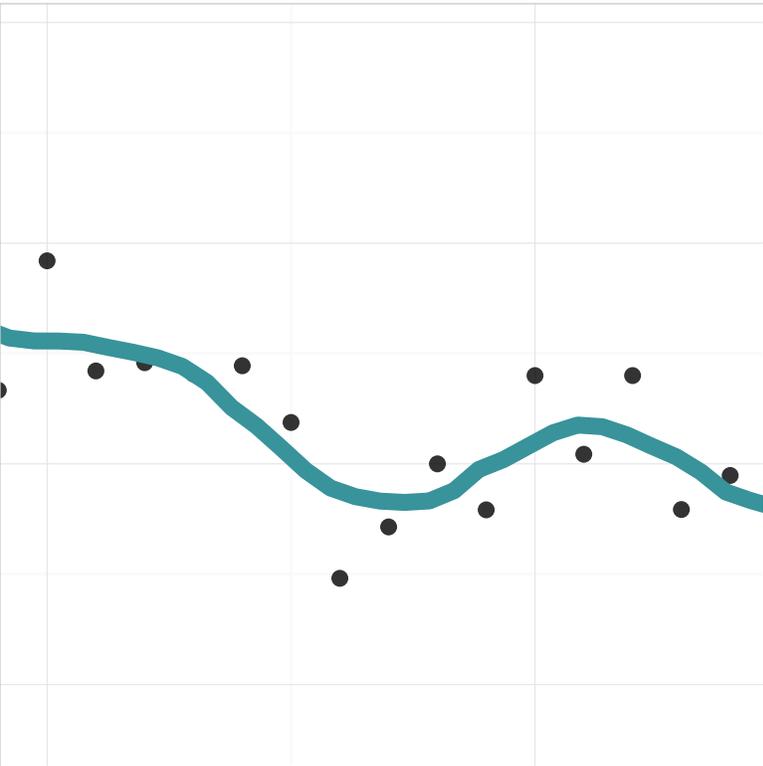
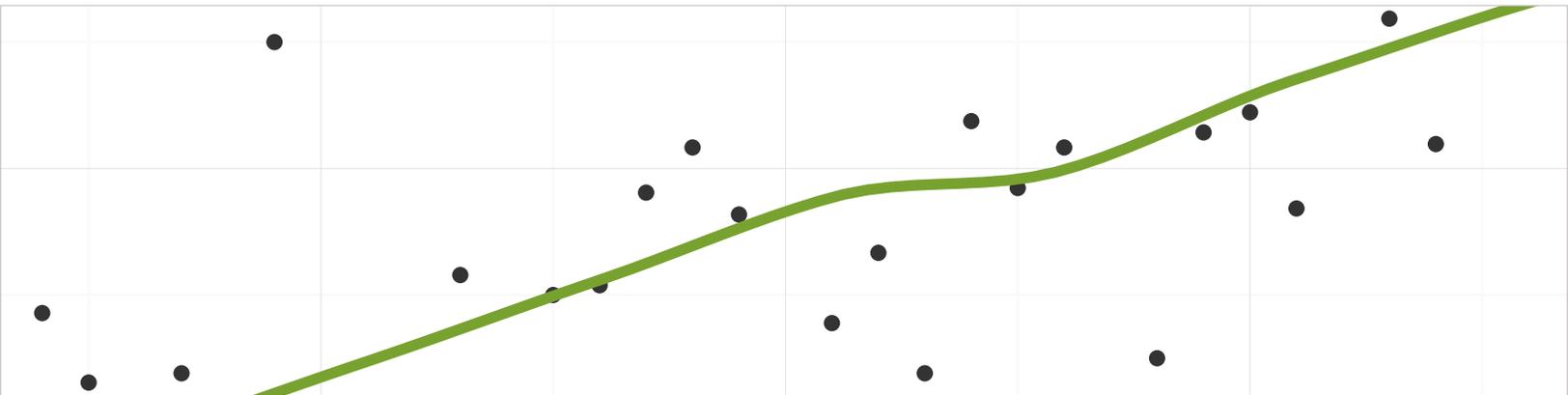


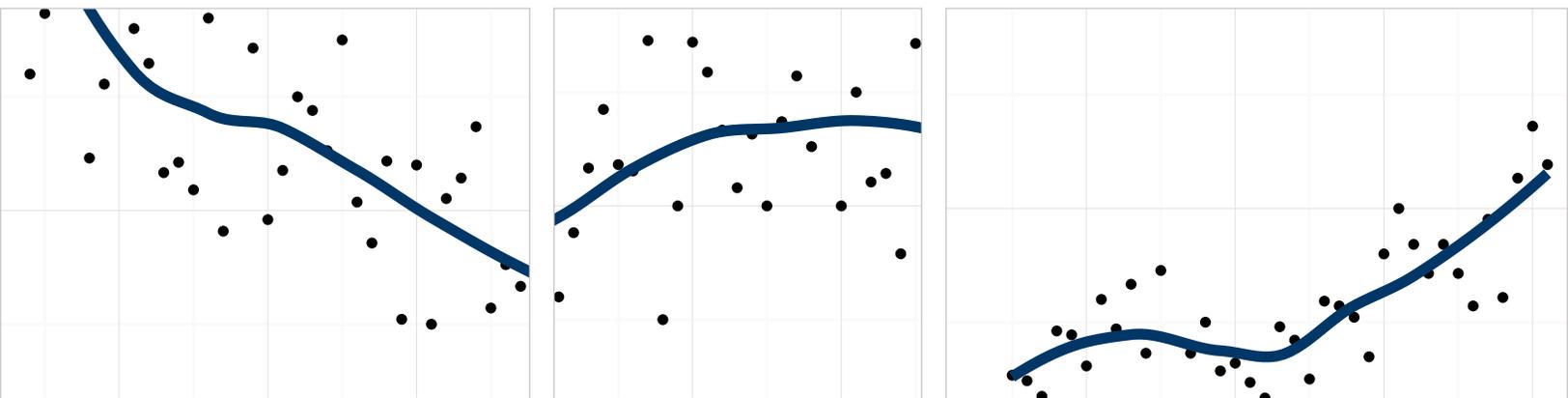
Alumni/ae Survey Results





IN THE FALL OF 2014, NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW LAUNCHED A SURVEY OF ITS ENTIRE ALUMNI/AE POPULATION.

The survey was part of the law school's Outcomes Assessment Project (OAP), which is designed to measure the impact of Northeastern's unique curricular features, such as its Cooperative Legal Education Program (co-op), narrative grading, and emphasis on social justice. This is a preliminary report of the law school's findings.



SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The Northeastern Alumni/ae Survey was substantially modeled on the After the JD Study (AJD), which is a national longitudinal study of law school graduates who took the bar in 2000.

The reliance on the AJD was done for two reasons. First, we wanted a reasonably substantial reference point to evaluate the careers of Northeastern law graduates (albeit limited to those graduating during the same approximate time period). Second, Northeastern wanted to encourage other law schools to survey their graduates using a standardized instrument. With the advent of the digital age, it is becoming much more cost-effective and feasible to collect and analyze data. By pooling data across a broader swath of law schools, it becomes possible to learn a tremendous amount about the practice of law and how it is changing over time. This is information that law schools need to improve the careers of our graduates and to further affect the broader society.

Despite the heavy reliance on the AJD questions, there were many items specifically designed for Northeastern graduates (e.g., questions related to co-op placements and the 1L Legal Skills in Social Context program). We suspect that other law schools that rely upon the AJD foundation will also create their own subset of questions designed to elicit information related to their unique features and history.

SAMPLE

The surveyed population consisted of Northeastern graduates from class years 1971 to 2012.¹ Of the 4,939 graduates during this time period, the law school database included email addresses for 4,022. This resulted in 833 completed surveys (21%).² The response rates were fairly even across classes, with only one class (2000) below 10% and only one class (1976) above 40%. Because class sizes have become progressively larger over the decades, the overall number of responses tended to be higher in later years (e.g., both the classes of 2010 and 2012 had 47 respondents). The demographics and practice areas of the sample are similar to the background data we have on the graduate population; this suggests that the sample is representative.

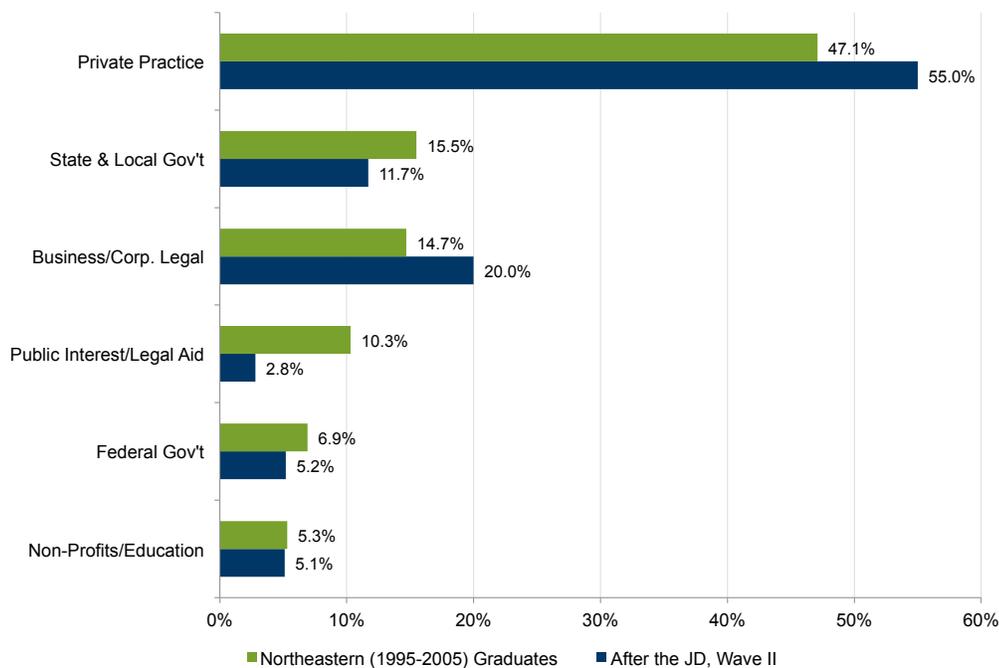
¹ 1971 was the first graduating class following the law school's reopening in 1968.

² An additional 217 alumni/ae provided a partial set of responses.

In reading the results below, readers are bound to ask an important question: **To what extent do Northeastern graduates represent the broader legal profession?**

We don't know the answer to this question as it awaits the collection of data from other law schools. We do know, however, that the career paths of Northeastern graduates differ in significant ways from those recorded in the AJD, which was constructed to be a representative sample of lawyers who entered the legal profession in the year 2000.

Northeastern graduates are more likely to work in government or public interest than graduates from other law schools; yet, as is true across the broader legal profession, private practice remains the single most common practice setting.



Breakdown by Practice Settings, Northeastern graduates (1995 to 2005) and After the JD Wave II.
Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

ANALYSIS

The Northeastern Alumni/ae Survey is the first large-scale study to span multiple decades of the same law school population. The results are remarkably rich and multifaceted. For this preliminary report, we tell a simple, fact-based story about how the Northeastern experience and alumni/ae base has changed—or in many cases, has not changed—over time. Our analysis follows a three-part chronology:

- **Before Law School:** pre-law characteristics and motivations
- **During Law School:** the law school experience
- **After Law School:** job mobility and satisfaction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: KEY FINDINGS

BEFORE LAW SCHOOL

Finding 1. Among Northeastern graduates, reasons for attending law school have remained remarkably stable over time. Four decades of graduates report the same top three reasons: (a) to develop a satisfying career, (b) to help individuals, and (c) to change or improve society. Over time, two additional factors have increased in relative importance—acquiring transferable skills and eventual financial security.

Finding 2. The pre-law career orientations of Northeastern graduates have been similar and stable over time. Perennial top categories include public service, social service, teaching/academia, public policy, and journalism.

Finding 3. Co-op is the most influential factor in deciding to enroll at Northeastern, followed by public interest orientation and geography. These factors have been the top three consistently over time, but factors such as financial aid and law school ranking have become increasingly influential.

DURING LAW SCHOOL

Finding 4. Experiences during co-op altered the career plans of roughly 50% of all Northeastern graduates.

Finding 5. Co-op placements that involve direct courtroom experience—such as public defender offices, judicial chambers, and criminal prosecutor offices—are perceived as more valuable experiences.

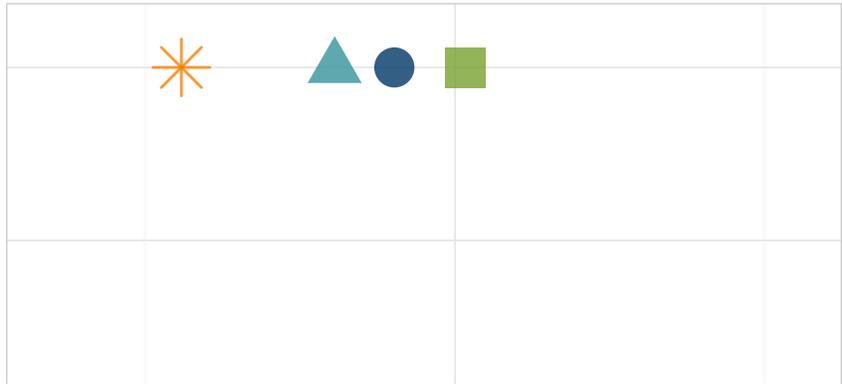
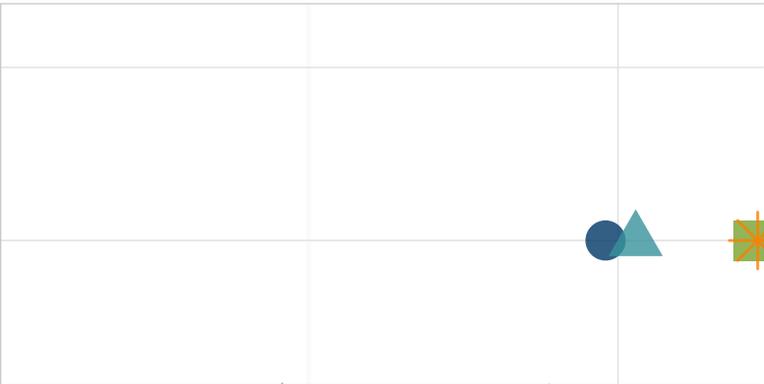
Finding 6. The number of paid co-op placements has been trending downward since the late 1970s, which is a strong indication that the legal market for law students has been tightening for decades along with increased employer use of unpaid interns.

Finding 7. Early career job data does not fully capture the diverse careers of Northeastern graduates. Although private practice is the most common employment sector, by mid-career, nearly half of graduates have spent time working in government and roughly a quarter in public interest law. Since the 1990s, private industry has become a more prominent career path.

Finding 8. Northeastern graduates report the highest levels of satisfaction on factors such as control over how work is done, level of responsibility, substance of work, intellectual challenge of work, and relationships with colleagues.

Finding 9. Although overall levels of satisfaction are comparable, dimensions of work satisfaction vary significantly between practicing and non-practicing graduates.

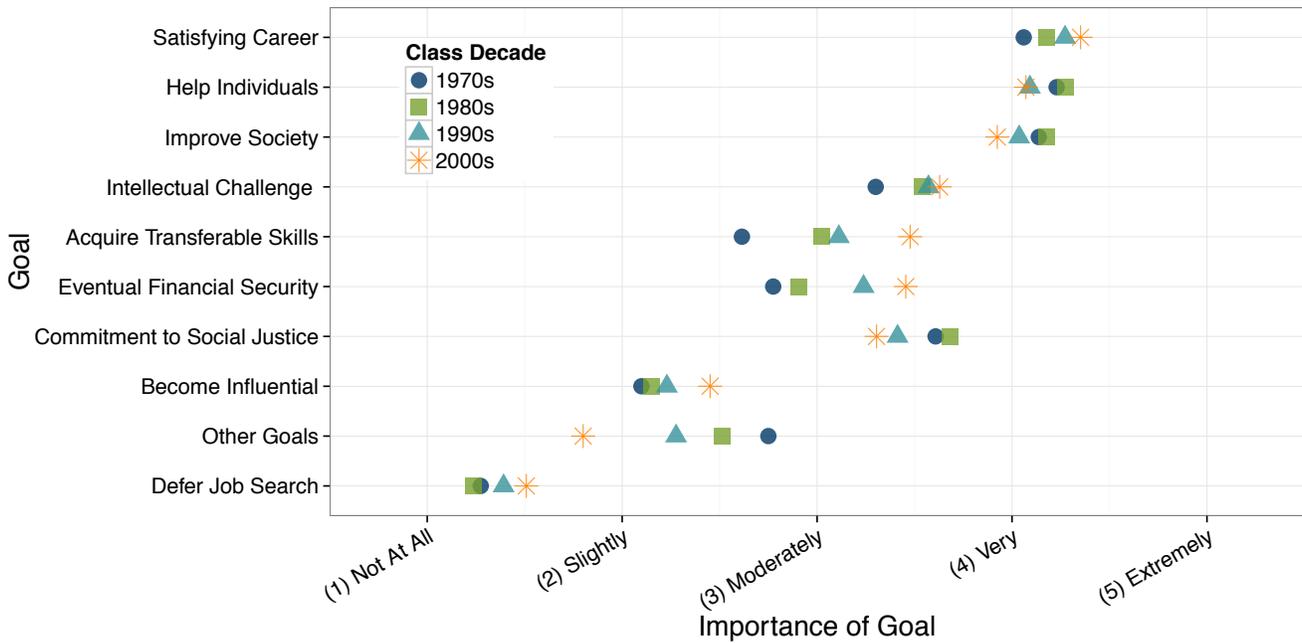
Finding 10. Satisfaction with the decision to become lawyer is significantly influenced by four workplace dimensions: social value of work, intellectual challenge, advancement opportunities, and control of work processes.



BEFORE LAW SCHOOL



GOALS FOR ATTENDING LAW SCHOOL, BY DECADE OF GRADUATION



Finding 1. Among Northeastern graduates, reasons for attending law school have remained remarkably stable over time. Four decades of graduates report the same top three reasons: (a) to develop a satisfying career, (b) to help individuals, and (c) to change or improve society. Over time, two additional factors have increased in relative importance—acquiring transferable skills and eventual financial security.

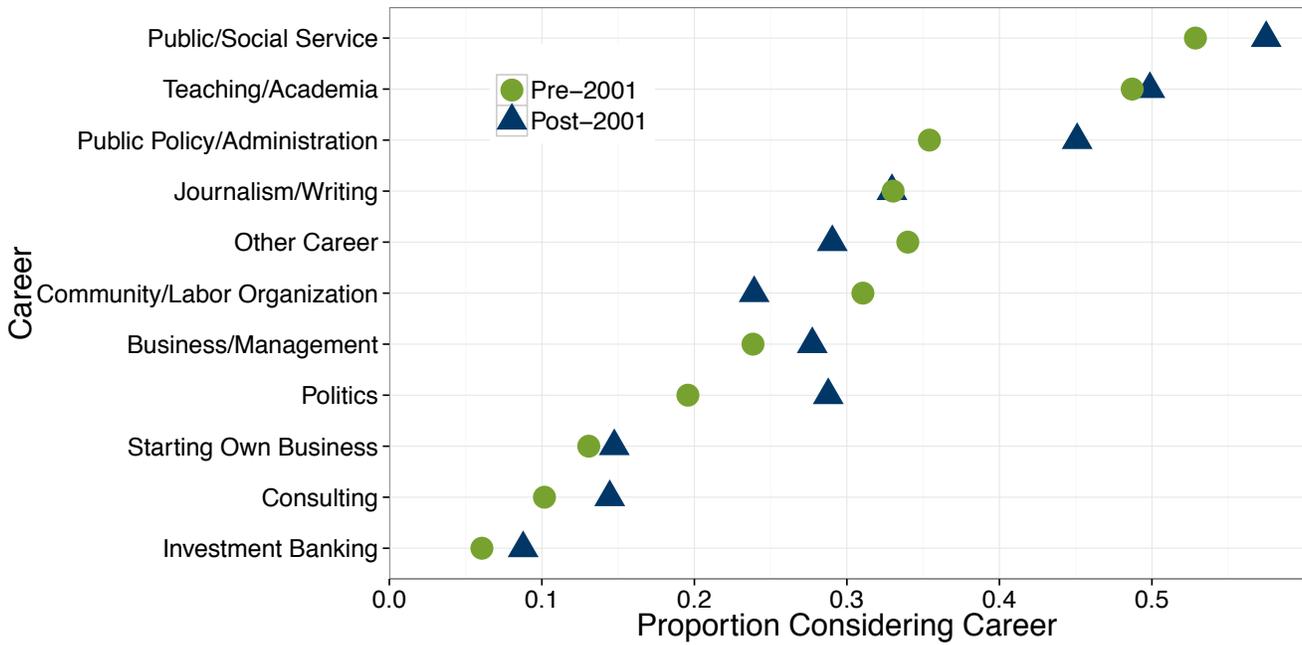
The decision to attend law school is personal and complex. Yet, among Northeastern graduates, the most important reasons for attending law school appear to be remarkably similar over time. As shown in the figure above, graduates from the 1970s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s listed the same top three goals:

- Desire to develop a satisfying career;
- Desire to help individuals; and
- Desire to change or improve society.

In contrast, the data reveal that the goals of eventual financial security and acquiring a set of transferable skills have become progressively more important over time. As a group, Northeastern graduates from the 1970s reported these factors to be slightly to moderately important. In contrast, graduates from the 2000s reported them to be moderately to very important. Of course, this shift in the mindset among more recent graduates may be attributable to changes in the competitive environment that affects all knowledge workers.

Survey Question: How important were the following goals in your decision to attend law school?

OTHER CAREER PATHS CONSIDERED BY NORTHEASTERN ALUMNI/AE

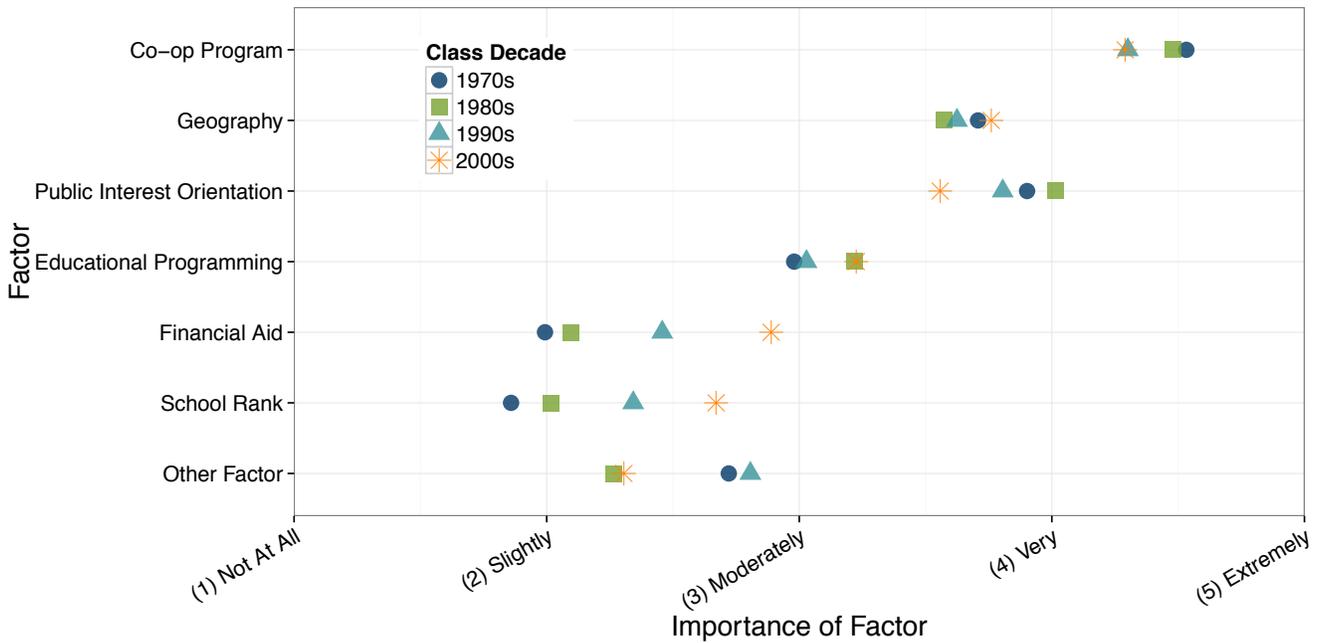


Finding 2. The pre-law career orientations of Northeastern graduates appear to be remarkably similar over time. Perennial top categories include public service, social service, teaching/academia, public policy, and journalism.

The top three career paths considered by Northeastern graduates prior to enrolling in law school are public/social service, teaching/academia, and public policy/administration. To assess whether choice of careers varied over time, we divided the respondents into pre- and post-2000 graduates (42% versus 58% of all respondents). Despite wide-scale changes in our society, the career orientations of those who enroll at Northeastern appear to be remarkably stable over time.

Survey Question: Prior to applying to and enrolling in law school, did you consider any of the following other careers in addition to or instead of law? Choices were yes or no for each listed career path.

IMPORTANCE OF FACTORS IN THE DECISION TO ATTEND NORTHEASTERN



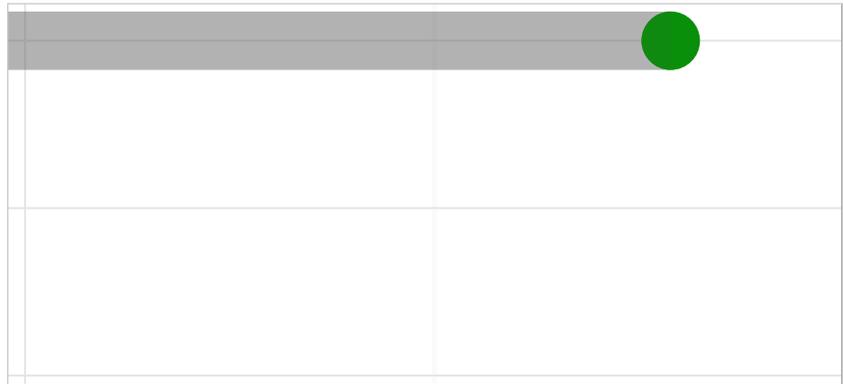
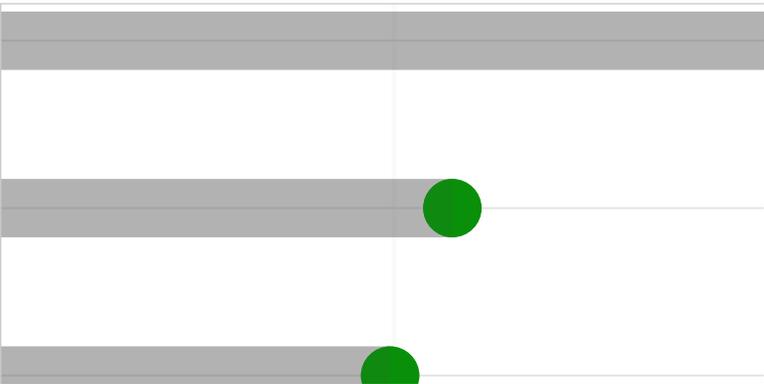
Finding 3. Co-op is the most influential factor in deciding to enroll at Northeastern, followed by public interest orientation and geography. These factors have been the top three consistently over time, but factors such as financial aid and law school ranking have become increasingly influential over time.

Although the years of graduation span more than 40 years, the top reason among Northeastern graduates for deciding to enroll at Northeastern was remarkably consistent. For all four groups of graduates, the co-op program was cited as very important to extremely important in the decision to enroll at Northeastern. For all four groups, the next two factors have consistently been the public interest orientation of the law school followed by geography.

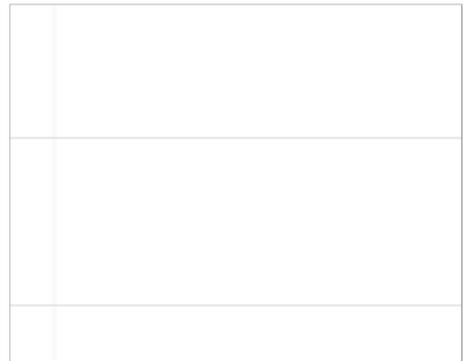
Survey Question: Looking back on your decision, how important was each of the following in your decision to attend Northeastern Law?

Yet, also noteworthy is the clear pattern in which both financial aid and law school rank become progressively more important over time. For both choices, responses by decade move steadily from slightly important to moderately important, resulting in a full point differential between the 1970s and 2000s graduates.

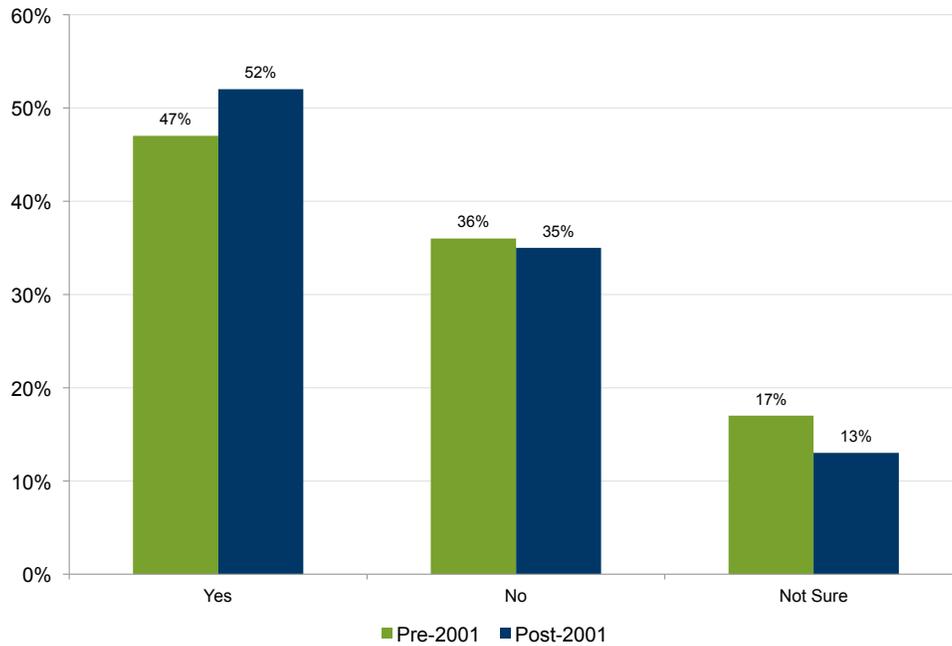
These patterns suggest that the pressures and challenges facing prospective students are changing over time. Northeastern and other law schools have to adapt to these changing conditions.



DURING LAW SCHOOL



DID CO-OPS ALTER THE CAREER PLANS OF ITS PARTICIPANTS?



Finding 4. Experiences during co-op altered the career plans of roughly 50% of all Northeastern graduates.

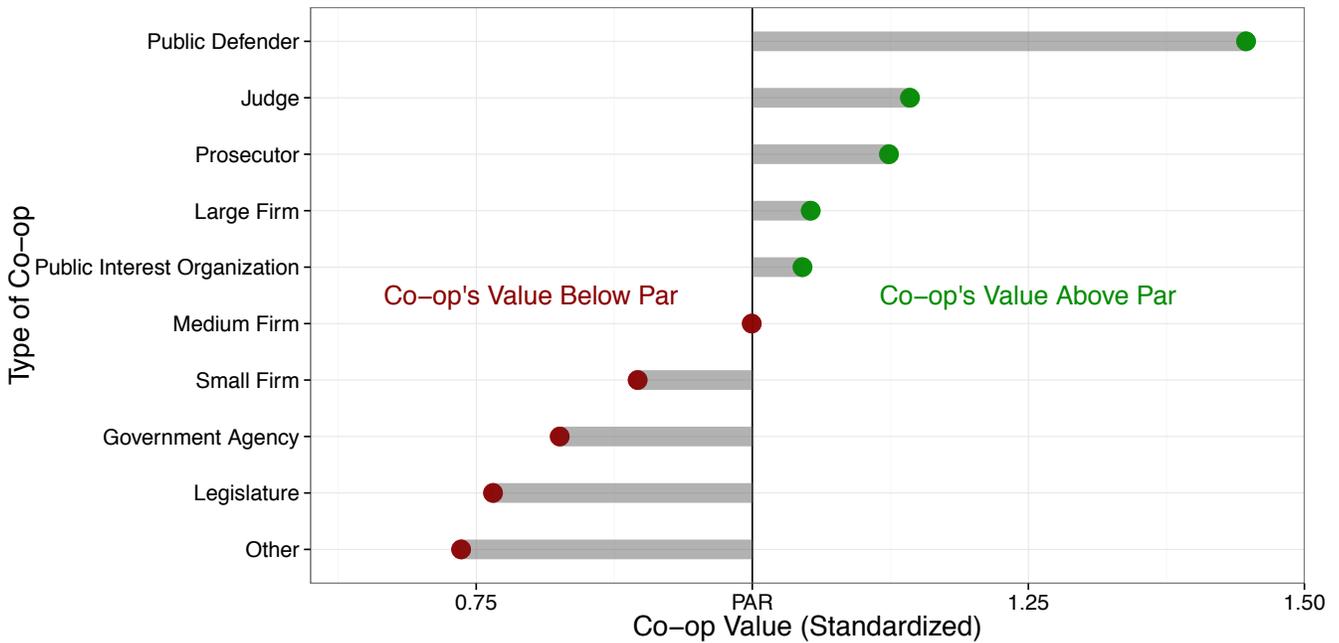
Respondents who stated that the co-op experience altered their career plans were also asked to provide specific examples as to how. The most common examples fell into three broad categories:

- The co-op increased awareness concerning their interest and the substance of work in different practice areas;
- The relationships developed through the co-op created professional opportunities; and
- Co-op experiences made the profession exciting and relevant (as compared to the classroom experience).

Survey Question: Did one or more of your co-op experiences alter your career plans?

Choices were yes, no, or not sure.

COMPARISON OF MOST VALUABLE CO-OP TO TOTAL NUMBER OF CO-OPS.



Finding 5. Co-op placements that involve direct courtroom experience—such as public defender offices, judicial chambers, and criminal prosecutor offices—are perceived as more valuable experiences.

To identify the most valuable types of co-op experiences, we compared the total number of co-ops by type to the number of co-ops by type that graduates listed as the most valuable to their professional development.

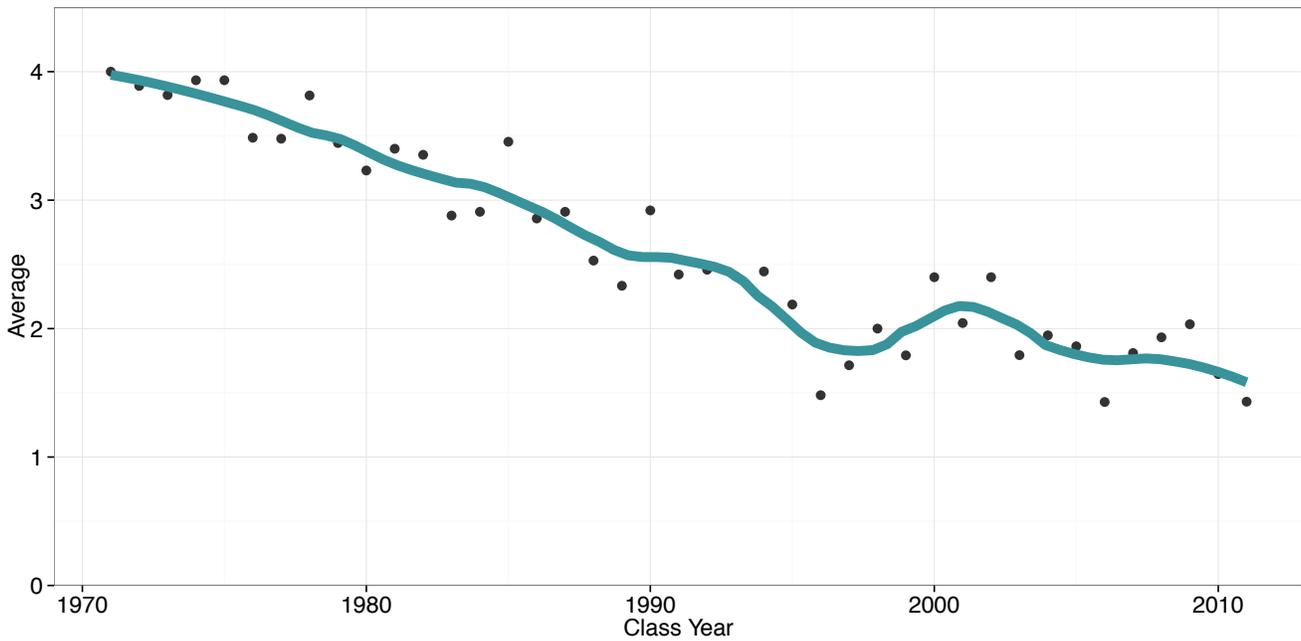
The most common co-ops were public interest organizations (19% of all co-ops), small firms (17%), and judicial chambers (14%). Yet, only one of these three (judicial chambers) made the top three for most valuable co-op placements. The other two are public defender and prosecutor offices, which garner between 13% to 45% more than their proportionate share of mentions for most valuable co-op.

Graduates were asked to explain why a particular co-op was more valuable to them. The table below summarizes some of the most common reasons by co-op type.

Survey Question: Among your co-op placements, which one was the most valuable to your professional development?

Public Defender	Judicial Chambers	Criminal Prosecutors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to work with difficult clients • Exposure to high-stakes work • Obtaining in-court experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning to be an advocate • Insight into trial process • Legal writing and research • Mentoring and networking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to trial work • Opportunities to make important contribution • High quality mentoring

NUMBER OF PAID CO-OP PLACEMENTS BY YEAR OF GRADUATION

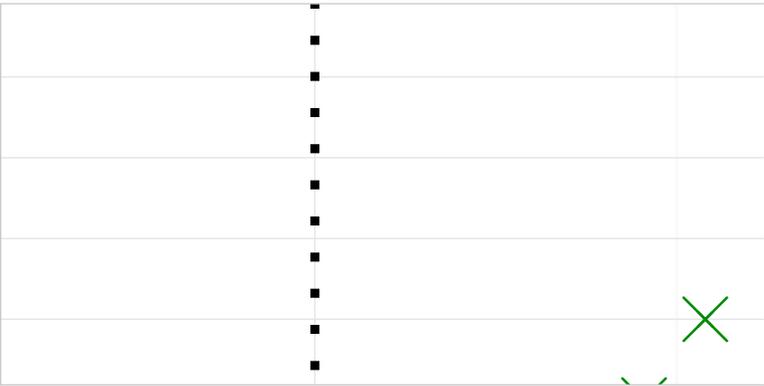


Finding 6. The number of paid co-op placements has been trending downward since the late 1970s, which is a strong indication that the legal market for law students has been tightening for decades along with the increased employer use of unpaid interns.

The data presented here suggest that the 1970s were a completely different time for law students. Despite being a recently opened law school in the 1970s, graduates from that era report that virtually all of their co-ops were paid. However, responses from subsequent class years show a steady decline in paid co-op employment.

Survey Question: To the best of your recollection, how many of your co-ops were paid?
Choices were 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4.

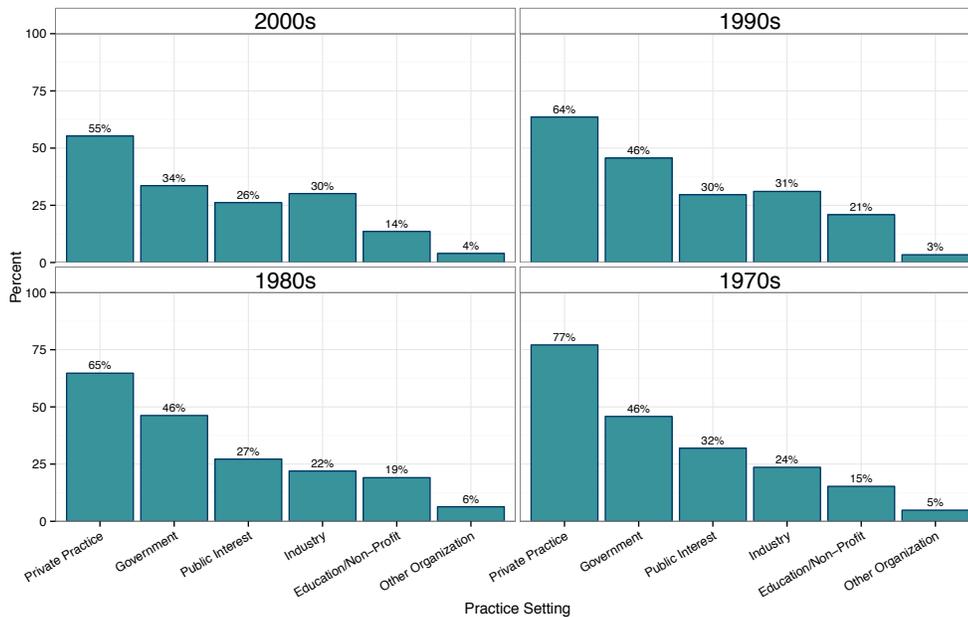
These data on paid versus unpaid co-ops are perhaps one of the best barometers for measuring true, systemic change in the employment market for law students. It is quite possible that this change also reflects the expansion in the market for unpaid interns—in law and in other areas—that has been widely reported.



AFTER LAW SCHOOL



PERCENTAGE OF GRADUATES WHO HAVE WORKED AT LEAST ONE JOB IN PRACTICE SECTOR, BY ERA OF GRADUATION



The sample is broken down by decade of graduation (2000s includes 2011 and 2012).

Because a large proportion of graduates have worked in two or more practice sectors over their careers, each set of bar graphs totals more than 100%.

Finding 7. Early career job data does not fully capture the diverse careers of Northeastern graduates. Although private practice is the most common employment sector, by mid-career, nearly half of graduates have spent time working in government and roughly a quarter in public interest law. Since the 1990s, private industry has become a more prominent career path.

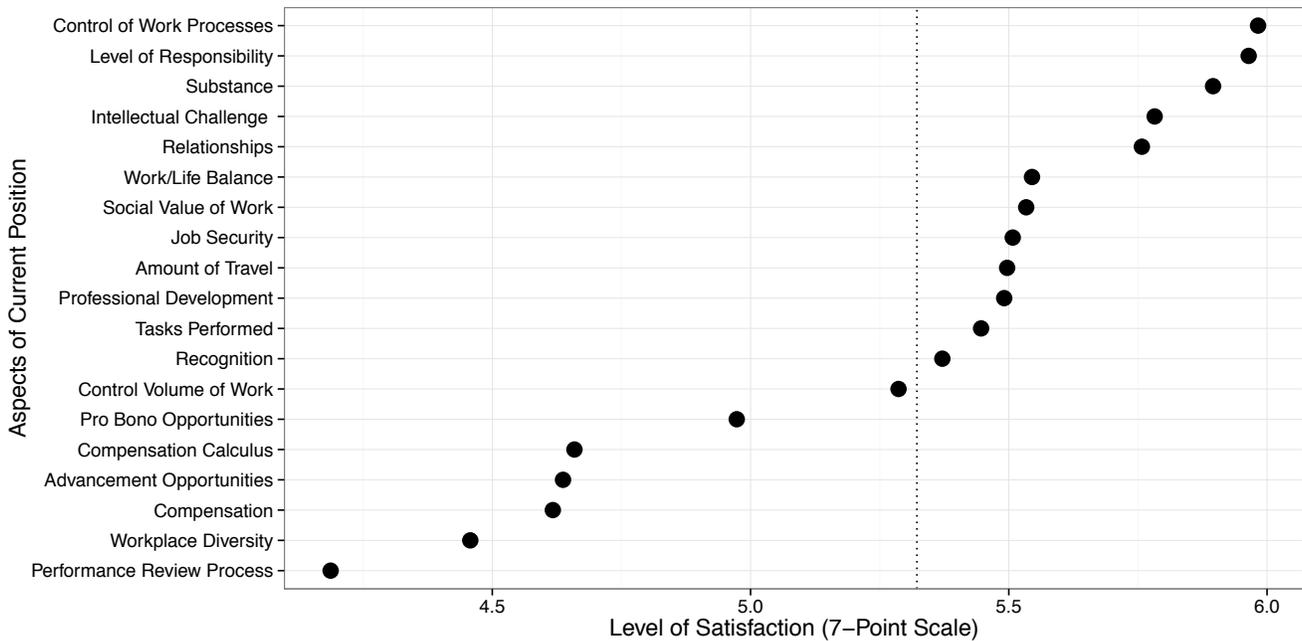
It is often said that a legal education enables a graduate to pursue a wide range of career paths, yet there is little research data that documents the typical diversity of work experience over a lawyer’s 20-, 30-, or 40-year career.

The figure above summarizes the types of work experience of Northeastern graduates; it is broken down by decade of graduation. The data suggest that with each passing decade, graduates are accumulating a more diverse array of work experiences. Remarkably, 46% of graduates of the 1970s, 80s, and 90s report having worked in government. For graduates of the 1970s and 80s, over a quarter have worked in the public interest sector. Likewise, more than 20% have worked for private industry.

It is noteworthy that early- and mid-career grads appear to be accumulating more private industry experience than their senior career counterparts: 30% for 1990s and 2000s grads compared to 24% or less for those graduating in the 1970s and 80s. This may be the result of broader, more ecological changes occurring within the legal industry.

Survey Question: Describe your previous employment history starting with your most recent employer first.

DIMENSIONS OF WORK SATISFACTION, 1 TO 7 SCALE



Finding 8. Northeastern graduates report the highest levels of satisfaction on factors such as control over how work is done, level of responsibility, substance of work, intellectual challenge of work, and relationships with colleagues.

Using a seven-point scale, where 7 equated to “highly satisfied,” graduates reported an average level of satisfaction of 5.3, though there was considerable variation on specific dimensions. As shown in the figure above, five dimensions were 5.75 or higher:

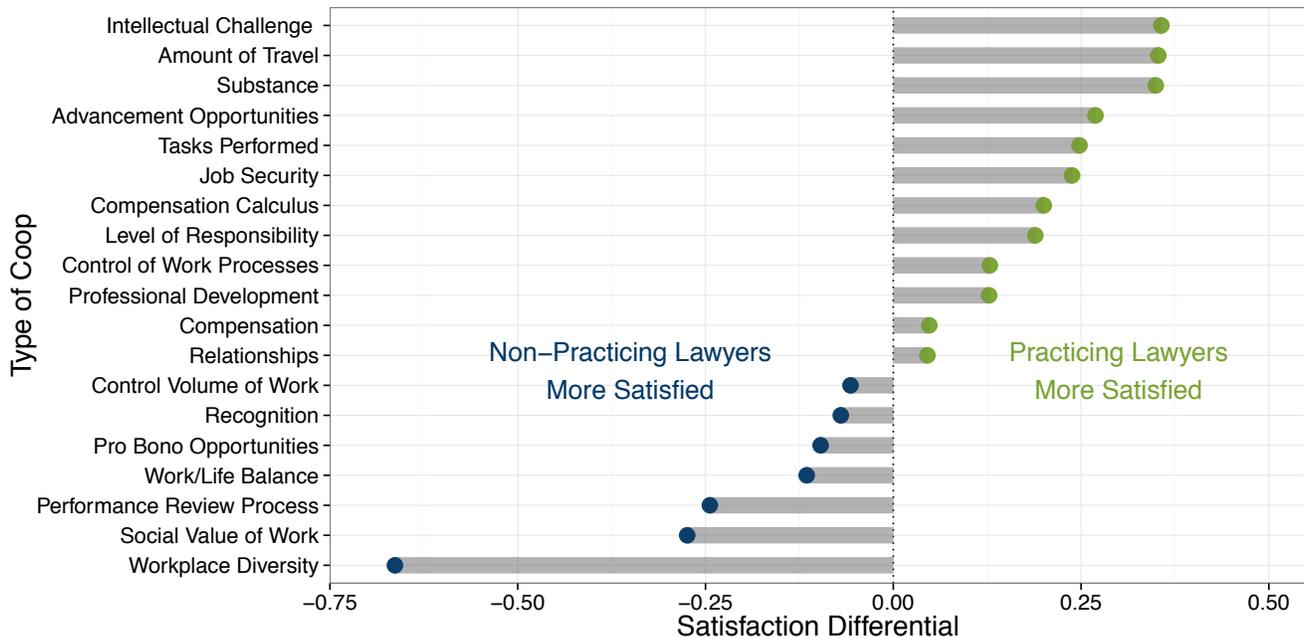
- Control you have over how you do your work (6.0)
- Level of responsibility you have (6.0)
- Substantive area of your work (5.9)
- Intellectual challenge of your work (5.8)
- Relationships with colleagues (5.8)

Survey Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your current position?
 Choices ranged from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 7 (highly satisfied) on 19 different dimensions.

Five dimensions had averages that were only slightly higher than neutral (4):

- Performance evaluation process (4.2)
- Diversity of the workplace (4.4)
- Compensation (4.7)
- Opportunities for advancement (4.7)
- Method by which compensation is determined (salary, benefits, bonus) (4.7)

COMPARISON OF DIMENSIONS OF WORK SATISFACTION, NON-PRACTICING VS. PRACTICING LAWYERS



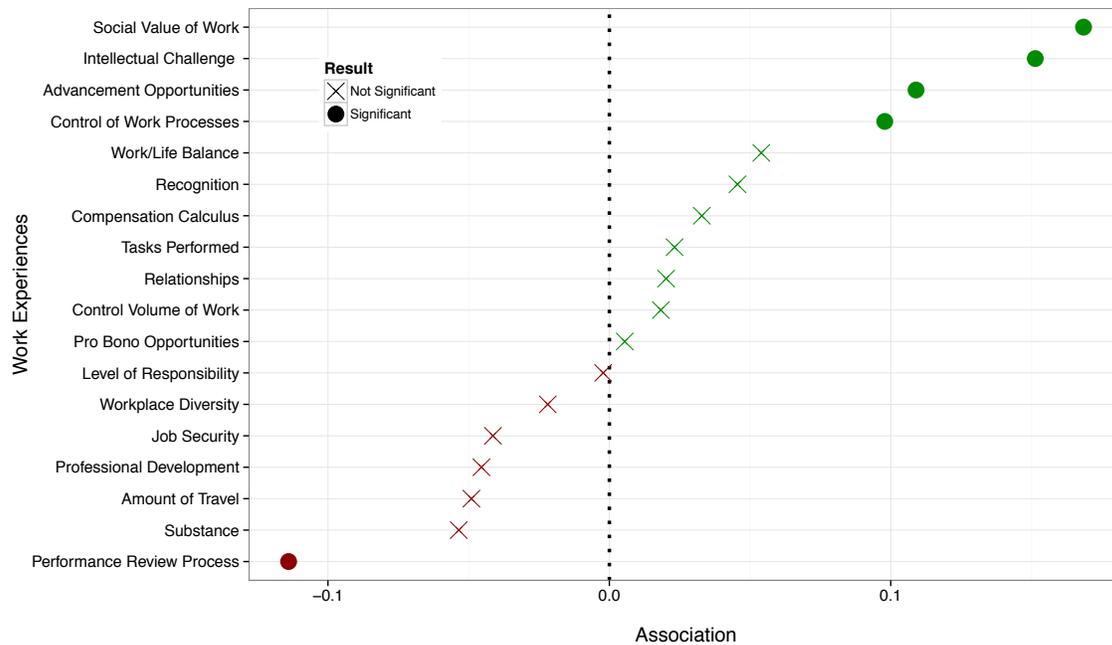
Finding 9. Although overall levels of satisfaction are comparable, dimensions of work satisfaction vary significantly between practicing and non-practicing graduates.

Northeastern is similar to other law schools in its proportion of graduates who are not practicing law. Although practicing and non-practicing alumni/ae reported similar levels of overall satisfaction, the figure above reveals that the dimensions of satisfaction vary significantly between these two groups.

Although practicing graduates report higher levels of satisfaction related to intellectual challenge, amount of travel, and substance of their work, non-practicing alumni/ae report higher satisfaction for workplace diversity, the performance review process, and the social value of their work. This latter finding is significant because the most important driver of satisfaction with the decision to be a lawyer is the social value of one's work.

Survey Question: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your current position?
 Choices ranged from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 7 (highly satisfied) on 19 different dimensions.

**FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE SATISFACTION WITH THE DECISION TO BECOME A LAWYER
(CONTROLLING FOR INCOME AND CLASS YEAR)**



Finding 10. Satisfaction with the decision to become lawyer is significantly influenced by four workplace dimensions: social value of work, intellectual challenge, advancement opportunities, and control of work processes.

When asked about their satisfaction with becoming a lawyer, using a five-point scale where 5 equated to “extremely satisfied,” Northeastern graduates averaged a 4.2 (“Moderately Satisfied”). Graduates from the 1970s and 1980s reported slightly higher levels of satisfaction, while graduates from the 1990s and 2000s reported slightly lower levels. It is difficult to ascertain whether these differing responses are a function of age and perspective or changes in the broader economy that disproportionately affect younger graduates. This latter possibility is a topic that is receiving further study within the Northeastern community.

Survey Question: How satisfied are you with your decision to become a lawyer?

Choices ranged from 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied).

The figure above reports the results of a multivariate regression model that shows the positive or negative relationship between various dimensions of workplace satisfaction and an alumnus/a’s decision to become a lawyer. There are four workplace factors that are positively associated at statistically significant levels with the decision to become a lawyer:

- Social value of work;
- Intellectual value of work;
- Opportunities to advance; and
- Control over how work is done.

Note that the model controls for income (which generally boosts satisfaction) and class year (more recent years are less sanguine).

The low negative score given to the performance review process means that, all else equal, graduates who are more satisfied with how they are being evaluated by their employer are, overall, less satisfied with their decision to become a lawyer.