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THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN LAW SCHOOL:
A REPORT ON THE CLASS OF 1995
FIVE YEARS AFTER GRADUATION

"Law school was a very rewarding experience, both for the wonderful intellectual stimulation - which I miss - and for some great friendships which I have mostly preserved."

"Michigan's highly politicized curriculum must change if it is to be of any use to its majority of students who seek a professional career, rather than a 'Jesuitical' calling of social activism."

"I believe U-M law school is a deeply flawed institution despite the presence of many wonderful people. It is obsessed with elitism, and is excessively biased toward justifying rather than challenging the short comings of American and global society."

"Let me start by saying that I am one of the happiest attorneys I know. I work for a Fortune 500 company and while I am paid less than many of my classmates, I have a very well-balanced life, with time to reflect."

"I absolutely hate my job. I am looking for another position but the areas that would appeal to me require a significant pay cut. I'm not in a position to do that because of my student loans. Law seems to self-select for aggressive personality types who are willing to bend, manipulate and even abandon altogether principles of justice, civility, sportsmanship and compassion in favor of the almighty dollar. . . . Suffice it to say, I enjoyed law school a great deal more than I am enjoying the practice of law."

Introduction

In the spring of 2000, the Law School mailed a survey questionnaire to the 403 persons who graduated from the Law School in calendar year 1995 for whom we had at least some address. Two hundred fifty-five class members responded — a response rate of 63 percent.

Here is a report of our findings. We begin with some tables that sketch a profile of the class five years after graduation and follow with a more detailed look at class members before law school, during law school, and in the settings in which they are now working. We end with the comments class members wrote in response to the last question on the survey, which asked for views "of any sort about your life or law school or whatever." A few examples are at the top of this page. As you will see on the next page, five years after law school the great majority of the class is married, practicing in law firms, living prosperously but working long hours. On the other hand, of course, many in the class have never married and a few have married and divorced, many practice law in settings other than law firms and many others do not practice law at all.

Table 1
A Profile of the Class of 1995 in 2000
 Total respondents: 235 of 403

Gender

Women	44%
Men	56

Ethnicity

Black/African-American	8%
Hispanic/Latino	7
Native American	1
Asian American	4
White/Caucasian	80

Family Status

Never married, no partner	33%
Married once, still married	57
Living with Partner	4
Divorced	1
Remarried after divorce	2
Other	3

Children

None	75%
One	15
Two	8
Three or more	3

Population of City Where Now Work

Under 100,000	10%
101,000 - 1 million	27
Over 1 million	63

Nature of Work

Class Members Practicing Law

Solo practitioners	2%	
Partners in firms	4	
Associate in firm	58	
Counsel for business/financial institutions	6	85%
Legal services/public interest attorneys	5	
Government attorney	9	
Other	1	

Class Members Not Practicing Law

Government Official	4	
Business	4	
Law School Teacher	2	15%
Full-time parent	2	
Others	3	

Average Hours Worked per Week by Workers

Less than 40	6%
40-49	26
50-59	41
60-69	27
More than 70	7

Earnings in Fourth Year (1999)

Up to \$40,000	6%
\$40,001-\$60,000	15
\$60,001-\$80,000	17
\$80,001-\$100,000	19
\$100,001-120,000	16
\$120,001-140,000	11
More than \$140,000	<u>16</u>
	100%

How Class Members

Compare Themselves with Other Attorneys About the Same Age	Less than most**	About average	More than most**
Skillful at arranging deals	15%	28%	67%
Effective as writer	6	10	84
Aggressive	32	30	38
Compulsive about work	34	26	43
Concerned about impact of their work on society	18	41	42
Honest	4	9	87
Concerned about making a lot of money	46	34	20
Compassionate	6	18	76
Self-confident	14	22	65

**Questions asked on a 7-point scale. We have combined responses 1, 2, and 3 as indicating a person to be "less than most," and 5, 6, and 7 as indicating "more than most."

Political Attitudes

Proportion of Class Who Consider Themselves:

Very liberal	30%
More liberal than conservative	27
Middle of the road	19
More conservative than liberal	17
Very conservative	7

Life Satisfaction

Proportion Who Report Themselves:

	Quite Satisfied*	Middle	Quite Dissatisfied*
Their legal education at Michigan	49%	45%	7%
Their current family life	64	31	5
The intellectual challenge of their work	51	44	5
Their income	58	32	10
The balance of their family and professional lives	26	56	19
The value of their work to society	36	51	14
Their career as a whole	47	50	3

*Questions asked on a 7-point scale. We have combined responses 1 and 2 as "quite satisfied," 3 through 5 as "middle" and 6 and 7 as "quite dissatisfied."

Backgrounds and Life Before Law School

The class of 1995 was much more diverse by sex and race than the classes who entered a generation before it. As has been true throughout the history of the school, a majority of the class was white and a majority was male, but 49 percent of the class were women (the highest in the history of the Law School before or since) and 20 percent of the class were Black, Hispanic, Asian or Native American. As recently as the late 1960s, fewer than 5 percent of the graduating classes were women and only about 1 percent were Black, Hispanic, Asian or Native American.

The fathers of most class members were businessmen or professionals. Eleven percent of class members' father were attorneys, about the same as in most years. The fathers of 15 percent were blue collar or clerical workers, again about the same as in other recently surveyed classes. About a quarter of the mothers of classmates worked as homemakers. (A dozen years earlier, in the class of 1983, 39 percent of the mothers had been homemakers.) Of those whose mothers held jobs outside the home, 59 percent were teachers, other professionals, or business managers. Five were attorneys.

As in preceding classes for many years, about half of the class began law school immediately after finishing their undergraduate education. In the classes of the 1970s and 1980s there was a trend toward classes with higher proportions of members who began law school after a break. By the class of 1995, that trend had somewhat receded. About 20 percent of the class of 1995 started law school three or more years after finishing as undergraduates.

Few classmembers had ever been married at the time they started law school. Only 14 percent had ever been married and only 4 percent began law school with children.

The Law School Experience

A quarter of the class started law school without a plan for what to do with their law degree. Of those who did have a plan, about half expected to enter private practice and most of the rest hoped to work in government, politics or legal services. Only two percent planned to work in a corporate counsel's office. Eight years later, five years after graduation, the great majority of those who planned to work in private practice are working there, but so also are two-thirds of those who had no plans and over half of those whose longterm plan was to work in government or public interest work.

When they looked back from the vantage of five years out, most class members had positive feelings about their law school experience--57 percent strongly positive, a total of 78 percent more positive than neutral or negative. Class members were most likely to regard with satisfaction the intellectual aspects of law school, displaying somewhat more skepticism about the law school as career training. (Seventy-four percent had strongly positive views about the intellectual experience but only 34 percent had strongly positive views about the law school as career training.)

When asked for advice about areas of the curriculum that ought to be expanded, class members far more frequently listed areas of skills training than substantive subjects.

Recommendations to increase offerings in legal writing, clinical law, and trial techniques were each more common than recommendations for any substantive subject. (The most commonly mentioned substantive subject were corporate and commercial law.)

A distinctive feature of the lives of the class of 1995 has been the educational debts many faced upon graduation. Year after year during the 1980s and 1990s, the average debts of classmembers have grown and, even though initial salaries after law school also rose greatly during the same period, debts grew at an even faster pace. Seventy-six percent of the class of 1995 had some debt on graduation. Of those with debt, the average debt was \$63,000, and 37 percent of those with debt had debts of \$75,000 or more. (In the class of 1988, only 7 years earlier, a smaller proportion of the class had any debt and the average debt of those with debt was \$29,200, less than half as much.)

In the years since law school, 47 percent of those with debts in the class of 1995 say they have experienced little or no difficulty in paying them off (categories 1 or 2 on a scale of 7 in degree of difficulty), but 28 percent report considerable difficulty (categories 5,6 or 7), a figure that has also been growing steadily over the years. At the end of this report, where we reprint the responses to our open-ended question about life since law school, you will find many discouraging comments about the impact of debts on our graduates' lives. Payment has been particularly difficult, not surprisingly, for those with the largest debts. It has also been especially difficult for our African-American, Latino, and Native American graduates.

Life Since Law School

The Class as a Whole

We pointed out above that few members of the class began law school married or with children. By five years out of law school, 57 percent of the class had married and another 4 percent lived with a partner. Of those with spouses or partners, 44 percent of the women and 38 percent of the men have a spouse or partner who is an attorney. A quarter of the class now has children, a much lower proportion than was the case in earlier classes.

It is difficult to generalize about the class's work experiences in the five years after graduation. The respondents are geographically dispersed, work in towns of all sizes, in all parts of the United States and in several foreign countries, and, though a majority are in private practice, the settings of practice are remarkably diverse. Some of this diversity is conveyed in the tables at the beginning of this report. Here is more detail.

Where did classmembers work immediately after finishing law school? Twenty-six percent took a judicial clerkship. Clerkships aside, the first jobs people took after law school were overwhelmingly in private practice. Eighty percent of the respondents took an initial job in private practice. Indeed, 63 percent took a first job in a firm with 50 or more lawyers, 43 percent in a firm of 150 or more lawyers. About 13 percent took initial jobs in government, legal services, or other public interest work.

Now five years later, 37 percent of the class as a whole are still in the same job they took immediately after law school (excluding any judicial clerkship). On the other hand, fully a third of the class report having held three or more jobs.

What were classmembers' jobs when we surveyed them five years after law school? As Table 1 above reports, 85 percent regarded themselves as practitioners and 64 percent worked in private practice, all but a few of them in firms. Fourteen percent worked as lawyers in government, legal services or public interest work, about the same percent as worked in such settings as their initial jobs. We will say more about the various settings of current practice below.

About one person in seven in the class did not regard himself or herself as practicing law at all. Several were administrators or officials in government, several more were in business, a few were law teachers, a few more were full-time parents. The rest were scattered across an enormous range of occupations. The diversity of the nonpractitioners makes it nearly impossible to generalize about their careers. One important generalization is possible nonetheless: most nonpractitioners were satisfied with their careers overall, as satisfied as a group as their classmates who are practicing law and significantly more satisfied than those practicing law in a private firm.

The Classmembers Practicing Law

We now shift to a more detailed look at the practitioners. As we have seen, the great majority of this group, over two-thirds, were in private practice. Most of the remainder practiced in government, legal services (or other public interest work), or in corporate counsel's offices. In order to permit some generalizations about the relatively smaller numbers of persons working in settings other than private firms, we have combined the results of our surveys for the classes of 1994 and 1995. The class of 1995 was surveyed in 2000 with a questionnaire identical to the one we used for the class of 1994.

Eight percent of the combined classes— 33 persons in all—were working as government attorneys. Of these, 64 percent worked for the federal government, while the rest worked for state and local governments. The government lawyers report all manner of specialties. Fourteen are prosecutors, four specialize in environmental work, four in civil rights, and the rest are spread in many other areas.

Another seven percent of the combined classes — 30 persons in all—worked in corporate counsel's offices. Two-thirds of this group worked for Fortune 500 companies. Not surprisingly the largest numbers of this group specialized in corporate and securities law.

Two percent of the combined classes—10 persons in all—worked in legal services, public defender or public interest settings. Four of the 10 were working as public defenders.

Table 2 provides some comparisons of these three groups with those working in private firms. Because there were so few persons working in legal services or public interest settings

and because the responses of those in this group are so similar to those in government, we have combined this group with the government attorneys.

As the table reveals, those working in corporate counsels's offices worked as long hours as the private practitioners and averaged slightly lower incomes. (We will later see that there are great differences in earnings among private practitioners that relate to size of firm.) Those practicing in government, legal services or other public interest settings also worked long hours, but earn much less. (In fact, though it is not visible from the table, those working in legal services or public interest settings averaged less than half as much as those in private firms.)

Table 2
Classes of 1994 and 1995
Comparisons of Government Attorneys,
Private Practitioners, and Corporate Counsel

	<u>Government,</u> <u>Legal Services</u> <u>Public Interest</u> N=43	<u>Private</u> <u>Practice</u> N=260	<u>Corporate</u> <u>Counsel</u> N=27
Average work hours per week	50	53	53
Proportion who average over 55 hours per week	36%	50%	41%
Proportion of time spent on litigation activities (mean)	40%	31%	10%
Total pro bono hours worked in preceding year (mean)	74	66	28
Earnings in fifteenth year (mean)	\$61,700	\$100,600	\$94,300

How satisfied were the different groups with their careers? Class members were asked about several areas of satisfaction on a seven-point scale. Table 3 sets forth the proportions of the various subgroups who were quite satisfied with each of four aspects of their careers and with their careers overall. We counted persons as “quite satisfied” if they rated themselves as a 1 or 2 on the 7-point scale. (As Table 1 above indicates, very few persons recorded themselves as quite dissatisfied—a rating of 6 or 7—on any dimension of their careers. Most persons who did not rate themselves as quite satisfied as to any aspect of their career put themselves somewhere in the middle.)

As Table 3 reveals, there are some substantial differences in satisfaction among the groups of practitioners. Those in private firms tended to be quite satisfied with their current incomes but far less satisfied with the balance of their private lives, the control over the work they do, and the value of their work to society. By comparison, few persons working in government or legal services are highly satisfied with their incomes, but most are highly satisfied

with the value of their work to society. In fact, except for their incomes, those in these settings are more satisfied with all aspects of their careers than are those in firms. They are also much more likely to say that they are certain that they would attend law school again. At the same time, by a slight margin, the most satisfied group with their careers overall were those working in corporate counsel's offices. (In a section at the end of this report, we will say more about changing patterns of career satisfaction of the alumni in our five year surveys over the past two decades.)

Table 3
Classes of 1994 and 1995
Comparisons of Government Attorneys,
Private Practitioners, and Corporate Counsel

	Government, Legal Services <u>Public Interest</u> N=43	Private <u>Practice</u> N=260	Corporate <u>Counsel</u> N=27
Percent of group who are <u>quite satisfied*</u> with:			
The balance of their family and professional life	47%	15%	45%
Their control over the work they do	56%	34%	82%
The intellectual challenge of their work	56%	51%	54%
Their current income	9%	66%	61%
The value of their work to society	79%	17%	22%
Their careers overall	56 %	35%	64%
Find current job quite stressful**	24%	45%	21%
Expect to be in same job in 5 years	27%	52%	66%
Agree strongly that they would attend law school again*	65%	32%	28%

* categories 1 or 2 on a 7-point scale.

** categories 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale.

Class Members in Private Practice

Two-thirds of the classes of 1994 and 1995 were in private practice at the time of our survey, but the settings in which they work vary greatly. We can convey some of this diversity by dividing the class into groups by the size of the firm in which class members worked.

For purposes of this analysis, we divided the firm practitioners into four groups—those in solo practice or in firms of up to 10 lawyers, those in firms of 11 to 100 lawyers, those in firms of 101 to 250 lawyers and those in firms of over 250 lawyers. Our divisions by firm size were necessarily arbitrary. There are no natural dividing lines between small and medium or medium and large firms. Some small, very specialized firms have practices that more closely resemble the practices of the largest firms than they do the practices of most other firms their own size. Moreover, what is regarded as a big firm in Ann Arbor or Colorado Springs would generally be regarded as a small or medium-sized firm in New York or Los Angeles. Nonetheless, as we will see, in very broad ways, firm size is revealing.

As table 4 shows, when we do divide the private practitioners into these groups, we find that a substantial number of graduates worked in firms in each of the ranges of firm size (though, if we were looking at a national sample, we would see that many fewer of the graduates of Michigan work in solo practice or small firms than is the case among lawyers nationally.)

Table 4
Classes of 1994 and 1995
Private Practitioners
Fifteen Years After Graduation
Size of Firm

<u>Persons working:</u>	<u>N=</u>	<u>% of total</u>
Solo or in firms of 10 or fewer lawyers	34	13%
In firms of 11-100 lawyers	67	26
In firms of 101-250 lawyers	57	22
In firms of 251 or more lawyers	<u>104</u>	<u>40</u>
	263	100%

Table 5 provides some information about the typical settings and types of clients of the persons working in firms of the various sizes. As the table reveals (and as no one will find surprising), the larger the firm, the more likely the lawyers are to be practicing in a very large city and to serve large corporations rather than middle income or low income individuals.

Table 5
Classes of 1994 and 1995
Private Practitioners
Settings of Work and Type of Clients

	Solo or Firms of 10 or fewer N=34	Firms of 11-100 N=67	Firms of 101-250 N=57	Firms of more than 250 N=104
Mean number of other attorneys in same firm	4	45	177	502
Proportion working in cities of under 200,000	48%	15%	11%	3%
Proportion working in cities of over 1 million	23%	62%	65%	80%
Proportion of time serving Fortune 500 or other large businesses (mean)	19%	57%	71%	78%
Proportion of time serving low or middle income individuals (mean)	33%	7%	3%	1%

Although the nature of their practices differed greatly, in many ways the work habits of the lawyers in the various sizes of firms were much the same. As table 6 reveals, they all tended to work long hours (55 hours per week is the equivalent of five 10 hour days on the weekdays, plus another 5 hours on the weekend), although, as we've seen, the same could be said for most of the government attorneys, legal services attorneys and corporate counsel in the survey. Despite these similar efforts as measured by time, the economics of practice varied greatly by firm size. Those in the largest firms earned about 70 percent more than those in the small firms. (On the other hand, even those in the small firms earned, on average, considerably more than most attorneys in the United States five years after law school.) Attorneys in the smallest and largest firms gave the most time to pro bono work.

Table 6
Classes of 1994 and 1995
Private Practitioners
Hours, Fees and Earnings

	Solo or Firms of 10 or fewer N=34	Firms of 11-100 N=67	Firms of 101-250 N=87	Firms of more than 250 N=104
Mean number of hours worked each week*	50	53	53	55
Proportion who average 55+ hr. work wks	36%	47%	44%	58%
Proportion who spent over half their time on litigation	22%	38%	36%	34%
Pro bono hours worked per year (mean)	95	38	49	76
Usual hourly rate (mean)	\$155	\$165	\$179	\$227
Income from practice in fourth year (mean)	\$69,400	\$91,200	\$99,700	\$116,100
Proportion who earned \$120,000 or more	10%	19%	27%	43%

*Instructions were to count all work hours, whether billable or not.

How satisfied were the various groups of private practitioners with their careers? Table 7 offers some comparisons. As the table reveals, only a minority of persons in firms of any size were quite satisfied with the balance of their family and professional life and with the value of their work to society. In our surveys over the years, these are persistently troubling aspects of life for those in law firm practice. In general the larger the firm, the fewer the numbers of persons who were quite satisfied with the balance of work and family or the value of their work to society. Those in small firms were the least dissatisfied with the balance and the least likely to report their work was highly stressful, but also least satisfied with their incomes. Since they work nearly as long hours as those in the large and very large firms, it appears that their higher satisfaction with the balance of work and family is related to their higher satisfaction with their control over the work they do. Those in the largest firms are, however, more satisfied with their incomes than any other group, which is unsurprising since, on average, they earn substantially more than the others.

Table 7
Classes of 1994 and 1995
Private Practitioner
Satisfaction

	Solo or Firms of 10 or fewer N=33	Firms of 11-100 N=67	Firms of 101-250 N=57	Firms of more than 250 N=110
<u>Percent who are quite satisfied* with:</u>				
The balance of family and professional lives	33%	21%	9%	8%
Their control over the work they do	52%	40%	32%	26%
The intellectual challenge of work	58%	57%	51%	45%
Their current income	33%	54%	65%	83%
The value of their work to society	36%	15%	14%	15%
Their careers overall	46%	36%	29%	33%
Find current job quite stressful**	34%	30%	44%	60%
Have worked for another firm before this one	50%	55%	37%	43%
Expect to be in this firm in 5 years	65%	64%	50%	41%
Strongly agree that they would attend law school again	33%	31%	30%	33%

*That is, who circled categories 1 or 2 on a 7-point scale.

**That is, a 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale.

Two Special Reports

The Careers Patterns of Women and Men

Women first began attending Michigan Law School in substantial numbers in the early 1970s. At the beginning of the decade women represented only 6 percent of the graduating class. By the end of the decade they were 29 percent of the class. In the classes of 1994 and 1995, the proportion who were women had reached 44 percent.

Except in a very few respects, the career paths of women and men have become more and more similar over the years of our surveys. In the classes that graduated in the 1970s, many fewer women than men began their professional careers in private practice and many fewer women than men worked in private practice 5 years after law school. (In the classes of the 1970s, five years after graduation, 44 percent of women and 71 percent of men in the classes of the 1970s were working in private practice.) In those classes, a substantially higher percentage of women than men worked in government and in settings in which they did not regard themselves as practitioners. Today, the differences between men and women have shrunk considerably, though they have not disappeared. In the classes of 1994 and 1995, a slightly lower proportion of women than men still begin their careers in private practice – 78 percent of women and 84 percent of men – and five years after law school somewhat fewer women than men – 68 percent of men and 57 percent of women are working in private practice, but the differences are no longer statistically significant.

There has also been a convergence in the proportion of women and men who are married by five years out of law school. For women, from the classes of the 1970s until today, a steady proportion of around 58 to 60 percent had been married. For men the percentage was about 70 percent in the classes of the early 1970s and has slowly dropped to about 60 percent. Both men and women are much less likely to have children today than in the early classes we surveyed. In the classes of the mid-1970s, 42 percent of women and 48 percent of men had at least one child. In the classes of 1994-95, only 22 percent of women and 24 percent of men have had a child. The one major difference that remains between women and men is in the responses to having children of those who have become parents. At the time of our survey, 14 percent of mothers but no fathers had left the labor force at least temporarily to take care of their children. Another 24 percent of the mothers and 5 percent of the fathers were working part-time to care for their children. For the fathers, though the numbers are small, the 5 percent who are working part-time nevertheless represents a great increase over the past. Until the classes of the 1990s, no father reported working part-time to care for children.

What about career satisfaction? Are men more satisfied with their careers than women? Across the years of our surveys, there has been, as we will discuss more below, a general and substantial decline in reported career satisfaction by both women and men, but at any given point in time the reported satisfaction of women has been remarkably similar to that of men and in no pair of years has there been a statistically significant difference between them. That has been true for all women and men in the class as well as for just those women and men in private practice. In addition, women with children and men with children have, almost throughout the

period, been somewhat more satisfied with their careers overall than those without children. Indeed in the classes of 1994 and 1995, the women with children are somewhat more satisfied than any other group – than men with and without children and than women without children.

Changing Patterns of Career Satisfaction: Downs and Ups

In every year since 1981, we have asked the members of the 5-year classes how satisfied they are with their careers overall. We now have information on career satisfaction for the 5-year classes for twenty consecutive years, from the classes of 1976 through 1995. When we examine responses of lawyers in various work settings, we find quite different patterns of satisfaction over the years. Consider table 8. Here we show the proportion of graduates, by pairs of graduating years, who were working in private practice, in government, legal services or public interest firms, or in corporate counsel's office who indicated they were quite satisfied with their careers overall after 5 years. (The mean level of satisfaction for each group tracks quite closely the proportion who were quite satisfied. We use the proportion who were quite satisfied because it is easier to understand.)

Look first at the column of persons in private practice (that is, in solo practice or in a firm). When the classes of the late 1970s were surveyed in the early 1980s, about half of those in private practice reported themselves quite satisfied. That pattern continued for a few years, but changed abruptly with the classes of 1984 and 1985 when they were surveyed in 1989 and 1990. In those classes and in the succeeding classes through the classes of 1991, in eight consecutive years of surveys, private practitioners became progressively less satisfied. The classes of 1994 and 1995 also report satisfaction at these lower levels. The one pair of recent years that was a happy exception has been the classes of 1992 and 1993 when surveyed in 1997 and 1998. We will say more about the pattern in private practice when we look at satisfaction by firm size below.

Table 8
 Classes of 1976 through 1995
 Full-time Practitioners
 Five Years After Graduation

Proportion of Class Members
 Quite Satisfied with Careers Overall*

	<u>Persons who were in:</u>		
Classes of:	<u>Private Practice</u>	<u>Government, Legal Serv. or Public Interest</u>	<u>Corporate Counsel</u>
1976-77	48%	46%	42%
1978-79	46%	49%	47%
1980-81	47%	54%	65%
1982-83	46%	59%	58%
1984-85	38%	60%	40%
1986-87	32%	71%	38%
1988-89	34%	53%	46%
1990-91	32%	70%	48%
1992-93	47%	63%	58%
1994-95	35%	56%	64%

* Categories 1 or 2 on a 7-point scale.

As Table 8 displays, the pattern of satisfaction is more erratic for those working in government and public interest work and those working as corporate counsel than it is for those working in firms, but in each case in the surveys of the last 10 years, persons working in those settings have been substantially more satisfied than working those in private practice. That was true even for the classes of 1992 and 1993, the years of the highest satisfaction in private practice since the classes of a decade earlier. The pattern for corporate counsel and for those in government and public interest work have diverged in the six most recent surveys: in the six classes of 1990 through 1995, those working in government and public interest work have reported somewhat declining levels of satisfaction while the satisfaction of those in corporate counsel's offices have been steadily increasing.

Table 9 displays the levels of reported satisfaction over time for the various sizes of private firms.

Table 9
Classes of 1976 through 1995
Full-time Private Practitioners
Five Years After Graduation

Proportion of Class Members
Quite Satisfied with Careers Overall*

Classes of:	<u>Solo or Firm of 10 or fewer</u>	<u>Firm of 11-100</u>	<u>Firm of 101-250</u>	<u>Firm of 250 or more</u>
1976-77	47%	44%	57%	#
1978-79	34%	47%	55%	67%
1980-81	53%	48%	40%	60%
1982-83	47%	46%	44%	50%
1984-85	44%	40%	35%	37%
1986-87	48%	33%	25%	30%
1988-89	42%	28%	37%	31%
1990-91	41%	26%	34%	32%
1992-93	56%	53%	44%	39%
1994-95	46%	36%	29%	33%

* Categories 1 or 2 on a 7-point scale.

Fewer than 10 persons worked in firms of more than 250.

Several different observations can be made about the patterns that appear. Perhaps the most important and discouraging is that across the 14 years of surveying beginning in 1982, in almost every pair of years, in almost all ranges of firms sizes, fewer than half of the respondents in private practice report being quite satisfied with their careers overall. (Only in one pair of years, 1992 and 1993, and only then for the smaller and mid-size firms did more than 50 percent of respondents reported themselves as quite satisfied with their careers overall.) A second overall point is that for all ranges of firm sizes except the smallest, the numbers of persons reporting high satisfaction has declined markedly from the earliest years. It is not in the largest firms only that our alumni are reporting comparatively lower satisfaction.

What explains the downward turn in satisfaction among the classes of the mid and late 1980s, the sudden rise in satisfaction of the classes of 1992 and 1993 (across firms of all sizes) and then the receding satisfaction in the two most recent classes?

That is a question we cannot entirely answer. The decreasing happiness of lawyers in private practice, and particularly large-firm private practice, is echoed frequently in the open-ended comments that follow this statistical report (though there are somewhat fewer sour comments in this report than there have been in the past few). For more and more of our graduates in private firms, professional life is not much fun. The decline in satisfaction almost certainly has multiple sources.

One aspect that we have observed is that during the period that overall satisfaction has declined (and then risen again and fallen), we have also followed the changes in satisfaction with other components of private practitioners' careers -- satisfaction with the balance of work and family, income, intellectual challenge, relationships with co-workers and so forth. For those working in firms, and particularly those in large firms, satisfaction with income has not changed much over time. It has in fact remained generally high while overall satisfaction declined and rose again. On the other hand, over the years, during the years of decline in overall satisfaction, there *was* a comparable decline among those in firms in their satisfaction with the intellectual challenge of their work, with the balance of their family and professional lives, with their relationships with superiors and coworkers at their place of work, and with their perception of the value of their work to society. In the classes of 1992 and 1993, when surveyed in 1997 and 1998, some of these aspects of work turned significantly around. (There was no change in the satisfaction with the balance of work and family. It began low, went lower, and remains abysmal.) But there was a large increase in the satisfaction of private practitioners with the value of their work to society and with the intellectual challenge of their work and a more modest but significant increase in satisfaction with control over work and relationships with coworkers.

There was also a huge increase in the classes of 1992 and 1993, for lawyers in firms of all sizes, in the proportions who thought it was likely that they would be in the same firm in 5 years. Among lawyers in small firms, for example, about 55 percent of lawyers in the classes of 1988 through 1991 said "yes," or "yes, probably," in answer to a question asking whether they expected to be in the same firm 5 years later. For the classes of 1992 and 1993, this figure jumped to 74 percent. Among the lawyers in large and very large firms, the proportion expecting to stay went from 39 percent for the classes of 1988 through 1991 up to 53 percent for the classes of 1992 and 1993. Of course, for many, saying that they expect to be in the same firm was simply another way of expressing their satisfaction with their work, but, for many, it probably also reflects greater optimism that they would be *invited* to stay, greater confidence that the firm was prospering and would make a place for them.

In the classes of 1994 and 1995 surveyed in 1999 and 2000, the levels of satisfaction with the value of their work to society and the intellectual challenge of their work as well as their expectation that they would be in the same firm in 5 years have all dropped back to about the levels that they were before the class of 1992 was surveyed in 1997. Perhaps the years 1997 and 1998 were unusual years. The economy was particularly strong. Many firms were raising salaries. Times were good. Let's hope we get back there soon.