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# Class of 1995 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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**Responses to Open-Ended Question:  
“We would like your additional comments of any sort  
about life or law school.”**

I loved Michigan my first year. But I must say that was a little frustrated with the school by the time I graduated. Once the law review stars are selected, professors often show a special deference toward those students in class discussion, making the rest of us feel a bit like second-class students. In one class, I loaned a law review friend my outline because he was taking the class pass/fail and did not plan to do much studying. I found out later that the professor asked him if he really wanted the pass, because he had received an A on the exam. I got a B+. Yes, I know there is blind grading, but I have to wonder whether that professor would have offered the A to a student he didn't know from law review. I have heard stories like this from other Michigan grads. Maybe it's just hard to not be at the top of your class for the first time, but I do think the school should value all of its students, especially since it then expects us middle of the pack students who tend to make more money than the superstars (who may be in clerkships or teaching) to donate money to the school. Overall, I still think it was a great school and my classmates were wonderful people (with a few exceptions).

I am really enjoying my legal practice, which is why I plan to return to work full time from my current maternity leave. I have talked to many people, though, who don't enjoy the law and are thinking of changing careers. I did think Michigan prepared me well for my legal career, both socially and intellectually. I think people want to change careers because of the stress, as much as the hours. The stress is one of the few down sides to my job. There are few careers where you face so many intellectual challenges. Being a lawyer has increased my confidence in social and business situations and helped me learn to assert myself. Lawyers love to complain about how terrible their jobs are, but I think there are many upsides as well. I really like my firm. The only things I would change would be to hire more minority lawyers and for the firm to have a set part-time policy.

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Are you kidding? I have 2 kids and work – filling this thing out took my free time up for a whole day. Sorry, but nap time is over and I have to go . . .

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If I had to do it over again, I would have gone to medical school. I prefer individual client relationships, and I would like having skills that are transferable to any culture or location. More generally, I find law firm life bearable at best and litigation in particular overly taxing to both my energy and my personality. I now understand why many professors were down on practice (although I wished at the time they could be more encouraging about the career for which they were preparing us).

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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.

Law school can be difficult when you have small children, so for me, the few people who went out of their way to be kind and helpful really made a difference. Those include Kent Syverud, Dores McCree, Katherine Gottschalk and all the ladies in the Career Center. I am still grateful to them.

University of Michigan law School Graduates of 1995: Responses to Questionnaire item F, "We would like your additional comments of any sort about life or law school"

I am excited to have found a way to use the skills I learned in law school and in my subsequent employment in a non-legal position because this position affords me more flexibility than the practice of law - which I did until last December. The drawback of course is the uncertainty of where this road might lead and the fear that if I stray too far, I might lose my ability to ever practice law again in the traditional sense, if I ever want to. For now, I am happy with my choice and glad to do something I find meaningful. I am helping direct the course of an international union with over 1.3 million members. It is a very interesting and rewarding position. It also pays considerably well, over 90K.

I'd like to see some seminars - Maybe like your spring seminar - about choices outside of practicing law, and ways to keep our skills sharp.

Thanks for inviting my comments.

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I like most about law school:

- the highly intellectual focus, rather than mundane rules-oriented approach
- diverse student body
- camaraderie of each section

I liked least:

- too many adjunct professors
- why has there been so much faculty turnover?
- blatant liberal bias of so many faculty/students
- lack of focus of career office. They were so interested in steering people away from firms (which is fine) that they knew nothing about firms and had no contacts

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The life of a trial lawyer is truly a manic one - the highs are remarkably high and the lows can be unbearably low. This is not something law students generally are able to understand, if they are even told. I've lucked into a job where I haven't been bored in 5 years: I like the people I work with; I've been given great responsibility; I live comfortably and am putting money away for the future; I have a surprising degree of control over my working environment; and yet, not a day goes by that I do not consider doing something else. Despite all the benefits - financial and otherwise - despite the fact that I've been sent to Costa Rica, Italy and France for work, despite the fact that I've had 9 trials, with either first or second chair responsibility and have met with a great degree of professional success, in the end law is inherently dissatisfying because it inevitably is about conflict. I think most law professors - even the really well intentioned and caring ones - forget this - in large part because most academics are so far removed from the real world of law practice.

If the Law School wanted to be honest with its students it would place the following inscription over the doors to Hutchins Hall:

"At its heart, the practice of law is about doing distasteful things for unpleasant people on unreasonable time schedules, and in the end, the most one can expect is not a pat on the back and a commendation for a job well done, but rather a complaint about the fee."

And remember - I'm one of the happy and successful lawyers. Just think how the rest must feel.

University of Michigan law School Graduates of 1995: Responses to Questionnaire item F, "We would like your additional comments of any sort about life or law school"

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Finally, 5 years out after a clerkship I have a great salary as a business law professor teaching undergraduates and a new baby. My teaching job has on-site daycare and I can afford to hire help at home. But it was a long struggle to get here and do not feel I would be as satisfied or have a university position if I had accepted the high paying offer from a large firm. I avoided jobs with big firms and overcame a bad reference from a judge who hated me in my clerkship, mostly because of a great mentor here, also a U of M law grad.

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My law school classes helped teach me to think analytically. However, they weren't very useful in a corporate law setting. Unfortunately, corporate law is better learned in the workplace.

Unlike many of my classmates, I love being a lawyer. However, I had to leave the firm rat race to realize this. My advice to law school students is to never have a big ego. Otherwise you'll doom yourself to staying on the law firm tract out of pride.

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I regret attending Michigan. I came to law school to prepare for a career in teaching law, choosing Michigan over Yale. This was a grievous mistake. Michigan does not adequately prepare its students for teaching careers or support them in their candidacies. I wish I had gone to Yale (or Harvard or Stanford), and I would strongly recommend to any person in my position (as it was upon entering law school) that Michigan is an undesirable choice.

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My dissatisfaction with the practice of law and law school are not based upon the University of Michigan but probably rather reflect indecision about career choices prior to law school.

My single biggest regret is taking on the amount of debt I did to attend law school. While I am extremely grateful to the Loan Forgiveness program, I am constrained by it -- moreover by the debt -- into remaining in the legal profession. Without the debt, I would surely leave the law profession as a practice. The debt is my mistake, not the school's.

As an assistant prosecutor in [state name], when applying for jobs, my Michigan degree was not an asset, but rather a liability that I consistently had to explain away, "no really, I'm tough on crime", etc.

Two changes I would suggest to the law school curriculum are more classes where the assignments/projects more closely resemble actual legal products we will be required to produce in the real world. Contracts class should have us draft contracts, Property deeds etc.

The second is more of an emphasis in the beginning on what different attorneys do - throughout my first year I always said litigation - interviewed for those positions because I couldn't conceive of what other attorneys actually, contractually do - what does "business" mean. More business emphasis and financial analysis type classes would have been useful.

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I found the UM's financial aid office terrible to deal with - which has made me resolve never to donate any money to the institution. My undergraduate institution gets the money instead.

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I would have benefitted from more "how to" courses. Procedures/forms deadlines etc. which good legal secretaries and paralegals know all about! Also, more clinical type courses on litigation. The spring break litigation practicum was too intimidating to me at the time I was in law school, so maybe courses which are a little softer.

The only real disappointment I had with law school was with the career placement office - they are only set up for recruitment, people in my situation ( C average) come away from this process with a lot of frustration and many firms are very insulting vis a vis grade point averages. I would have liked to see more support and information/practicums on how to start your own practice. This should be encouraged as a viable option. I have found it so rewarding, personally especially, as well as financially. And, I have also found that the attorneys at the big law firms/the prestigious ones included, are less competent, very bureaucratic and even less scrupulous bordering on slippery. I speak from my experience across the table from them, as well as working in partnership with them. Big law firms are draining legal talent from the system, I feel, and U of M should encourage its students to think bigger than landing a job on Avenue of the Stars in Los Angeles, and having to bill 2,000 hours per year!

Many of my classmates who were successful in landing a summer internship as a 2L, then having their job lined up for them after law school, are leading miserable lives. It's very sad to see.

I couldn't be happier, working with my husband, who is also a U of M Law school grad. I am so proud of him and of the risks we took, and I feel like right now I am leading a dream life!

Please encourage students to shoot for more than the big firm life, and more importantly, make changes in your career placement process (whether its adding seminars and/or providing a network and information) to support and encourage students to consider their own private practice.

Some business schools I've read about help connect students to potential clients by way of seminars, and social events, and this may be very helpful too. Please put more time and effort into this. Also, please feel free to contact us.

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My only regret about law school was my decision to finance the cost. After four years, I am still struggling to make less than the minimum required payments. I have been treated horribly by the private lenders who are my creditors. I find my law debt more stressful than anything I encounter at work. Please do something to educate young law students about the reality of law loans. It is too easy to obtain loans, when alternatives should be considered (part time jobs especially - even if it extends graduation) I remember being strongly discouraged from working during law school - by U of M. This was bad advice for me.

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My financial picture is a little distorted in the survey. Although I graduated law school with only about \$18,000 in student loan debt, my husband had nearly \$100,000 from college and medical school. That has been a substantial burden, and he only finished his training last year, at which time his income went up dramatically.

When I graduated law school, I wanted to do union side labor law and did for a year. Then we moved so my husband could continue his medical training. Because I was "off-track" (not a first year who had done a firm's summer program and not a true lateral) and because there weren't any openings in union side labor law, I had a tough time finding a job. I finally ended up with 2 similar offers and began working for a big firm, which I had never wanted to do.

University of Michigan law School Graduates of 1995: Responses to Questionnaire item F, "We would like your additional comments of any sort about life or law school"

My job is intellectually stimulating and I like most of my associate colleagues. Now that I have been at it for four years, I also find it manageably stressful. However the number of "yellers" we have, the lack of training and opportunity to "see one" before you have to "do one", and the complete lack of mentoring for mid-level associates are what makes my job difficult. I sought treatment for anxiety before my first year at this firm had ended. I haven't left because (1) I find the stress more manageable now, (2) we are still paying off our student loans, (3) I'm not sure I could find anything else I would like, and (4) I'm hoping to start a family soon and will want to go down to part-time, which is hard to bargain for in a place you just started with as opposed to one from which you've earned some respect.

My job also isn't socially rewarding. I help large corporations, not individuals. I have considered public interest work, but I don't like trial work, and it seems most public interest or government jobs involve a great deal of trial work.

Overall I'm satisfied. My job is my job, but not my passion. This attitude allows me to balance my work and my family life, since I always know which is more important to me.

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The law school needs to adjust to the "New Economy"! Computer facilities must be expanded, non-litigation oriented courses must be expanded (accounting, finance), non-litigation practitioners must be added.

The law school must get much more aggressive about placement. We should have a driven czar of placement like NYU.

Michigan is heavily litigation oriented, but litigation is a dying specialty. Transactional work is much more valuable in the marketplace and the law school should be preparing people for that marketplace.

Dean Lehman is doing a good job.

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More professors like MacKinnon, Pooley, Pildes, Simpson and visiting professor Rasmussen would do the law school proud.

The non-competitive atmosphere of the law school was, I have since learned, a rare treasure among law schools.

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Stop sending me questionnaires.

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Due to the emotional support of my family, I am able to pick and choose the kinds of work that I do. I only want to do work that will make a difference in the lives of the poor and the oppressed - but I consider it a very high priority to retain my mental and physical health. Therefore I trade off some prestige, and LOTS of money, for less stress.

To work for the poor means one's work is never done, as the poor are discriminated against in education, housing, services - and especially in the criminal justice system. I want to work in this type of advocacy all my life so I'm trying to avoid getting burned out now. (At age 31)

I feel quite conflicted, and sometimes have the sense that I'm letting my co-workers and clients down because I take breaks and limit my work hours. On the other hand, when I work more I have the

sense that I'm letting my family (husband) and myself down.

My survival techniques include yoga, travel, gardening, and the vigorous pursuit of interest outside of the law: music, volunteering for local non-profits and political causes, and being of assistance to friends and neighbors.

I passionately feel that my style of life is possible only because my parents were both able and willing to pay the cost of my undergraduate and law school education in full. Without this incredible gift I would be tense and unhappy and feeling trapped like so many other lawyers I know.

I loved law school - in large part because I pursued other interests while a student.

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I hated Michigan Law School because I felt as though we (the law students) were being used as a cash cow for the rest of the university.

Too many bad adjunct faculty (e.g. Roberta Morris)

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Improve your health law program.

I would suggest integrating with the medical school and Public Health School to develop health law programs and inter-disciplinary programs.

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Many I went to school with (including myself) felt trapped by our loans into working at big private firms. Please work on improving the loan forgiveness program - it's hard to take advantage of.

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Being of the class of 1995, I feel resentment about the grading curve that was in place my first year. I had poor grades my first year and that tarnished my feelings about the law school for the rest of my time there. It took me a while after I started practice in a firm to realize that I had actually done well educationally in law school and that I could be a top-notch lawyer. However, if I ever try to switch jobs I think my transcript will hurt me. The only reason I give money to Michigan Law School is pressure from a partner in my firm.

On another note, I think the fraternity/sorority system of socialization of American youth creates a culture of closed-mindedness in the business world. I was surprised by the number of "frat boys" and "sorority girls" who go to Michigan law School and create a high-school-like scene.

Despite my negative comments, I have grown to appreciate Michigan Law School because I did get a great education there. The best aspect of the education was learning to always question the policy reasons behind a law or regulation. The professors at the Law School make the students think.

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Looking back, I do not feel that law school adequately prepared me to practice law. Sure, I learned how to think like a lawyer, but what about acting like a lawyer. There is so much more to being a lawyer than discussing the theory behind cases. I would definitely like to see more of an emphasis on the practice aspects of lawyering. I don't regret going to Michigan, because I do believe I received a good basic legal education. But I should have received more than that, given what I paid to attend that

prestigious school.

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The #1 complaint about U of M Law School is the placement office. I feel that in comparison to other top schools, our school has done little to help students and alumni secure their desired employment.

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I truly enjoy my practice and respect most of the lawyers with whom I work. Two individuals at my firm have taken great interest in my development and have been largely responsible for my continued success and willingness to stay with a big firm. I still feel like I am learning a lot and will stay as long as I feel that way, unless a great in-house position presents itself to me.

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I appreciate the opportunities my UM law degree has given me. It is certainly a door-opener. And I believe my training was good - if not particularly practical for a non-litigation practice. I formed extremely strong friendships at Michigan and am confident that I could depend on my less personal Michigan friendships in a professional contact sense.

I was a summer starter and I value that experience highly even though I feel that summer starters are often given less consideration by the law school administration.

I wish the law school had provided a more balanced career development approach. The overwhelming focus was NALP firms and the only real alternatives mentioned were nearly non-paying public interest jobs or clerkships. A more balanced presentation of other career options (including mid-small firms, federal government jobs and business positions) would have been appreciated.

I was disappointed in the Law School's hiring record regarding women and minorities. Hiring the latest boy wunderkind from Harvard or Yale does not distinguish the school and does not help as a recruitment tool. Michigan should not only have a well-qualified and distinguished older faculty but also a well-qualified and exciting younger faculty. It is Michigan's responsibility as a top 10 law school to lead, not follow.

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Perhaps most frustrating is the consistent use of the legal process as a hammer (with financial repercussions) used to bludgeon adverse parties into submission without a clear goal, an honest approach or a cooperative or problem-solving ideal. Both attorneys and clients have improper expectations and intent regarding legal process. Great stress and dissatisfaction results.

Additionally, many times I have found myself saying that attorneys can make the process bad, judges make it worse. Inattentive, unwise or ego-driven judicial action or (more often) inaction make my job a constant torment.

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Practicing law has been rewarding - not many other fifth years are running around negotiating deals in the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong and India with no partner supervision. However, it leaves no time for anything else in life - I want to have time to run every day, work on my creative writing, spend time

with my spouse. There are too many other interesting things to do in life than be a lawyer. For me, a job at a smaller firm would be much less exciting/stimulating - I feel like I have to be out here doing those cutting edge deals, or not practicing law at all. I wouldn't be satisfied with anything in between.

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Law school is way too expensive.

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I participated in the "new" section and enjoyed the experience with the significant exception of being required to take Public Law rather than having an elective during the first year. I am convinced that Public Law is the worst class offered at the University and if students were not required to take it, the course would not exist.

I never understood the rationale for having a separate grade curve for first years than for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students. I believe this has been changed.

Practicing law by the 1/10 hour is a terribly stressful way to make a living. Personally, billing time is the least enjoyable part of law firm practice.

Researching Corporate and International taxation is the most intellectually stimulating part of my practice.

I worry about future opportunities for young lawyers to practice international taxation at law firms due to the encroachment of the Big 5. I believe the Big 5 is a bad environment for most lawyers and a threat to lawyer's independent practice of tax law.

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I also received a public policy degree. I had always intended to do government/policymaking. I was an odd person out in law school between law firm types and more traditional legal services types. I have no friends who I retained from law school, but many very close friends from grad school.

I overall enjoyed law school and am fond of Michigan.

It is my abiding shame and embarrassment that Michigan utterly fails in hiring professors of color and women. THIS IS INEXCUSABLE. I do not buy that no qualified people from these backgrounds are willing to take professorship at one of the nation's leading law schools. SHAPE UP.

Keep funding and improving the status of the clinics.

I believe more help with what to expect the first year would have been helpful - similar to that provided to students of color.

Case club was a ridiculous way to teach writing - what do 3<sup>rd</sup> year law students know about legal practical writing? Not much.

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I am one of those graduates who might have been expected to write a bitter recrimination at this, the five-year mark, railing against my law-school internment and subsequent indentured servitude in a legal career. However, I'm in a pretty good place, both personally and professionally. As a third-year, I was frustrated and apprehensive. I didn't want to practice law, but I was afraid of being unable to pay my loans and support my family. I almost went to work for a firm. I did some interviews and did a little contract work, but I resisted and pursued what I wanted, which rendered me financially strapped and dependent on others. You have no idea what it's like to live with in-laws for 8 months with a colicky

infant and rather than tell them you finally have that big-firm law job, you instead tell them you're still a contract freelancer and another baby is on the way and oh yes, may we borrow money for a down payment? So I am sympathetic to those who give in to pressures and get that big law job. And I feel bad not only for those feel pressured into doing something they don't want (I can name quite a few from my class), but also for those who love the law but have come to hate the lifestyle. Somehow, I have, by luck and by stubbornness, managed to find a flex-time kind of job that allows me to be there for my kids while my wife leaves early and comes home late (if at all) from her medical residency, and also allows me to do what I really want to do (write books) in my spare time. This is a pretty modern arrangement, one that I suspect is not prevalent among most law-school five-year grads, but I guess I don't know. Maybe others are willing to make sacrifices (no benefits, no 401K, no advancement, meager salary, etc) in order to find their niche in the tough job environment. My wife, now about to complete her residency, is choosing to work a 4-day week, for less money, in order to be with the kids (and to recover from residency). Between our massive combined loans and the cost of child care and the stagnation of the real wage, we will still be breaking even month to month. On the other hand we are not living for retirement or complaining about our lives. I guess we'll see what happens at the 15-year mark . . . . .

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Most people who were unhappy in law school (and now hate being lawyers) seemed to have a tough time maintaining a balance in their lives. Many job opportunities for lawyers are not conducive to finding and sustaining a balance. Yet, the best way to enjoy the profession, I think, is to also make time for friends, family, working out, reading for pleasure, hobbies, etc.  
[95215]

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Embrace technology throughout the law school experience. Focus more on involving high technology companies in the law school experience. Leverage the multi-disciplinary opportunities with the business school, particularly with respect to entrepreneurialism.

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Up until very recently I was an Assistant Prosecutor in a small community. I now practice exclusively criminal defense (same community). My clients consist mostly of low-income individuals, many of them court-appointed, that is, indigent. I enjoy my work a great deal and consider it very important. It would have been impossible for me to enter this line of work and remain as I have without the Debt Management Program.

I am most grateful to the Law School for its support with my student loans. I intend to repay the Law School by making significant contributions in my area of law. I also hope to be in a position to contribute financially to this excellent program in the future.

On another note - I find myself dealing with ethical concerns almost on a daily basis. I have learned to spot potential problems through trial and error, constant discussions with other attorneys, a thorough reading of the rules of Professional Conduct, and advice from the State Bar. Based on my personal experience, ethics and professional responsibility should be the most important subject in law school. A good course in the subject would include practical information on how to get the best information and advice.

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I am fortunate to work at a firm with a great part-time policy. People actually go part-time without repercussions. I can see doing this down the road because I have no interest in continuing to work this hard.

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I think Michigan did a poor job of fostering loyalty of its students while we were in law school. The "caring" about us and our futures came only after graduation and only in the form of requests for monetary contribution. While I was in law school I felt the school only had time and cared about its top 10%. The rest of us just passed through. I resent that since many of us are quite talented and had a lot to give to the law school. Now, with an \$80,000 debt and without a sense of emotional attachment to Michigan, I do not feel a need to contribute money to the law school or its programs. You should have cared about me when I was there. With a few exceptions, most of the faculty was arrogant and detached. I always felt like they were doing me a favor by listening to me. Yes, I received an excellent education but I paid for every cent (and continue to), in addition to earning my spot as an alum.

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I wish Michigan Law School would've offered me at least a little bit of non-loan financial aid, considering my modest background.

I'm very happy in my current job (in-house counsel). I was not happy working long hours in a large private law firm at my previous job.

Having a Michigan law degree helped me attain my current and previous job.

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I am grateful for the opportunity to have gone to the University of Michigan Law School, and thought that I received an outstanding education.

I hope that the University will place greater resources in the law school so that it can regain the reputation as a top 5 law school.

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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.

Also you will never, ever, ever get a dime from me in contributions after charging such outrageous tuition.

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Working in a large law firm has more to do with business skills, administrative tasks and completion of tasks (discovery, etc.) that have very little to do with the subjects offered at law school - the subjects I found intellectually challenging and fulfilling. I would like the placement department to do more to locate legal positions that have more to do with the legal reasoning skills we learned in school and to focus less on large corporate law firm opportunities.

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The one aspect where law school loans have affected my life the most is that I will not consider jobs in public interest groups due to the low pay.

\*\*\*\*\*

The central complaint I had during law school was that there were not enough resources for students who were interested in working outside of major law firms. There are so many opportunities for persons with a legal background that have absolutely nothing to do with the traditional practice of law. I would hope that these opportunities would be more readily available and accessible to the student body.

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Law school was a mistake for me.

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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.

If I could change one thing about law school, though, I would throw away all of the law books we used (with case law used to illustrate rules of law), and take a more practical approach to teaching law. When I took a bar review course after law school, I felt like everything finally made sense in a way it never did in law school, and I wondered why we didn't learn law in a similar way in my first year classes.

I think the reason we didn't learn the nuts and bolts of practicing law in law school is that law school professors, for the most part, have never practiced law, and they are less interested in the rules of law than in the exceptions to the rules and the policy reasons for those exceptions. I don't share that interest. I came to law school to learn how to practice law, and I am proud to be practitioner.

I would also like to say that I cannot understand why my (in-state) tuition increased 20% from my first to my second year, and 16% from my second to my third year. I don't remember the cost of living increasing that much from 1993-1995. That said, I wouldn't trade my law school experience for anything, because my law school classmates are the most interesting and diverse group of people with whom I have ever had the privilege of spending time.

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1. I do not know if the extremely hard time I had finding work after/during law school was due to my being an "older" law student or my "merely good" grades. One odd thing: I got numerous clerkship offers. Law firms, on the other hand don't want much to do with me.

2. Related to point #1, on-campus law school interviews - 21 rejections - may have been the single most humiliating and traumatic experience of my professional life. Can't you head that off at the pass by specifying, for example, if an employer has a GPA cut-off? (I had something like a 3.3)

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I appreciate the law school for making my legal education such a positive experience. The law school (administrators, professors, classmates, cleaning staff etc) taught me that (a) the basic lessons in

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life ( BE NICE to others and they will be to you, etc.) are applicable in a professional setting; (b) the value of a diversity of ideas and opinions, ©) a little personal attention and interest in others goes a long way. Thanks again.

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I find little career satisfaction practicing law at a large law firm. Public service is much more rewarding.

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I will be resigning my job as a prosecutor to care for my new baby. This has been a difficult decision because I am still saddled with extensive debt from law school. Law school funding is geared toward those who will make a lot of money upon leaving law school. Because I had a clerkship and then became a prosecutor, I never made enough money to pay down the debt and give me career mobility. I was able to make the monthly payments and live on what I made, but was not eligible for any debt forgiveness. I know fellow workers in my profession who went to different schools which had graduated debt forgiveness programs based on how much you made at your government public interest job. While in law school, I was disappointed in Michigan's financial aid and career placement programs, and I have become more so as I compare my experiences with those of others I meet.

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Student loans are some of the biggest problems currently in my life. I simply did not expect the burden to be so high - I have \$45,000 debt and my husband graduated with \$65,000. It is difficult.

While many graduates from U-M end up in large law firms with a steady progression of responsibilities, I would like to see the U-M also teach students some of the mechanics in a practical skills course that helps students put together simple transactions which are necessary in the small and medium sized law office - how to write a simple will, or a contract, or a real estate closing, or the rudiments of how misdemeanor court works.

Also the law school might touch on some aspects of coping with stress in the practical skills course - particularly since attorneys tend to have high rates of depression and substance abuse.

Stanley Schwartz's medical malpractice course was the only course that came close to actually showing the students how a litigation case is actually put together. It was great. I would love to see more courses which did such a great job teaching theory and practice.

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Although my responses to the questionnaire indicate that I am very unhappy in my present position, overall I am extremely satisfied with my decision to attend law school, and UM Law School. I am seeking a position which will be as stimulating as my large firm job I held after law school, but will require closer to my government-job hours. Until I find it, I am putting up with the boredom and social isolation because my job gives me time to devote to my family and a "pet project", an arts organization which trains teachers to incorporate the arts into their curricula.

My only "regret" is the extent to which my choices are constrained by my student loans, but that's life, and economic reality is part of all decisions for anyone.

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University of Michigan law School Graduates of 1995: Responses to Questionnaire item F, "We would like your additional comments of any sort about life or law school"

- (1) Tuition is ridiculous and prohibits many from pursuing rewarding careers.
- (2) Compared to undergrad professors and those in other disciplines (I did joint-degree in [graduate school concentration]), law school profs are less accessible and given unfettered discretion over all aspects of class.
- (3) Ann Arbor is a great place to go to school and I don't regret going to the law school, but I wouldn't do it again if I'd realized how much debt I'd have and how unfulfilling my job would be. I would have gotten a job after undergrad and then become a teacher (which is what I always wanted to do but never had the guts to do. Everyone always told me I was too smart to be teacher, not enough prestige, money, etc. What a sad commentary on life, huh?)

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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.

In particular, U-M law school has abysmal environmental law course selection - its saving grace in this regard has been the Environmental Law Clinic, but this amounts to charging students \$20,000 per year to do pro bono work at a Public Interest NGO.

I have no regrets about the life I have chosen in the law, despite wishing that I were better compensated in comparison to those attorneys who perpetuate the exploitation of natural resources and labor. I understand the irony of wanting to get rich by trying to achieve the collective good. But I do regret my naivete in thinking that U-M would help prepare me for this life. If I knew then what I know now, I would never have wasted my money on U-M - because I never wanted to go through the initiation rites necessary to large-firm practice or small-firm pomposity. I only wanted to learn how to be a lawyer, and that I have essentially had to teach myself.

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There are at least 100 "non-practicing lawyers" in my company (of 360,000 employees worldwide) who are "contracts advisors" or other sort of transactional "advisors" and approximately half our paralegals are attorneys. This is a common and growing trend that disturbs me because it's a distinction without a difference, e.g. many internal businessperson "clients" refer to the transactional advisors as their lawyers. Many official lawyers do the same jobs as the transactional advisors.

The trend is to pay less and to limit exposure by having an equal number of non-counsel staffers perform work which should only be done by corporation counsel. (1) The ethical issues are very disturbing - clients don't understand how bad it is to refer to such staff as their "lawyers", especially when dealing with other companies. Only corporation counsel should speak to warranty, liability, intellectual property, or indemnification issues (even if non-counsel has practiced law for many years) because corp counsel is the FIDUCIARY! (2) It's quite easy to pay non-counsel attorney staff less than they'd make at large and mid-sized law firms, but more than they'd make anywhere else.

Personally, as a UM grad, I hated that I was in the minority of such non-counsel attorney staff regarding the quality of legal education; but now I'm ironically also quite concerned that there are even more such positions being filled by those who have graduated top 10 law schools.

And, as this survey indicates, most lawyers don't or won't believe that such non-counsel attorney staff actually practice law (including my friend, a partner at a prestigious mid-sized law firm until recently, when he realized the Tech Practice Group at his firm didn't know how to handle software licenses, etc.) It's difficult to go to a "practitioner" position after having decided to "practice law" in a position which doesn't afford one the title or the credit, so that one can pay their bills doing legal work,

rather than having to choose one or the other.

In my industry -- Technical, Computers, Engineering -- this is a widespread practice. Most of the people that do transactional work in this industry are in-house, but were non-lawyers until approximately 5 years ago. The depth of attorneys who have this expertise is beginning to be appreciated in the private practice firms. ("Tech" to private practice firms = anything from M & A to Business Counseling to Securities to R.E., but no one can do strategic planning and Tech IP, not patent, there). So I hope this trend wanes in the next few years.

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I had a very positive experience at the school. I am typically amused by stories of other attorneys who describe their misery and hatred for their law school experience. I thought U-M had a great mix of bright students, limited competitive stress and fine facilities and faculty. I encourage the school to continue to seek out a broad range of students from different schools and geographic areas.

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I enjoyed law school intellectually and socially.

I do not feel that the school provided students with approaches to working in alternative areas or arrangements. Rather, the focus was on finding a job with a large law firm or with an established public interest organization. I am currently practicing on my own and have learned through trial and error the different arrangements available, the skills necessary for running a business, etc.

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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. I am desperately searching to make sense out of my legal career and to find a higher meaning and purpose for my work. Suffice it to say, I enjoyed law school a great deal more than I am enjoying the practice of law.

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When I was an undergraduate, studying political science, I told my academic advisor that I wanted to go to law school. He got an odd look on his face. I asked him what he thought about me going to law school. He replied, "It sucks up a lot of talent". I asked what he meant by that. He explained that most of the people going to law school were smart and talented people who all had various fields in which they could excel. Unfortunately, these people would all wind up spending their potential in the legal field. I came to realize (and still hold to be true) just how right he was. I met people in law school who could have been musicians, engineers, teachers, scientists, or business people. Instead, they were all on the path to becoming attorneys. I can't help but feel that this was (and is) a terrible waste. I also met people at law school who felt they had a "true calling". Some were 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation lawyers, others just lived and breathed "the law". However, these people were a small minority of the people I knew at the University of Michigan Law School. Since graduating from law school I have attempted to dissuade several people from applying to law school. Some listened, most did not. I didn't like law school, and have no intention of practicing law. What I took away from law school was a bad

attitude and an insurmountable debt. Well, this was certainly cathartic. Thanks.

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Law school seems to acculturate idealistic do-gooders into money-seeking yuppies. We need to carefully analyze how the "measure" of success is promoted to students and alums. From so many friends who wanted to do public interest when we entered, only a handful are actually doing it now. While the law school experience was socially enjoyable, most of the class work after first year is a joke. Students should be required to complete at least one clinical course and more legal writing even though I didn't enjoy the latter, it's most reflective of what real lawyers do.

The Loan Repayment program is very generous now and has really let me choose an alternative path. However, this office has consistently lost my application and supporting documents every time I've applied. Either I'm cursed or they need to think a little more about "customer service".

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I am very happy with my current work as an attorney for [university name]. However, I hated being a law firm lawyer. I wish I had learned about alternative practices more when I was still in school. Also, I think there should be more financial aid opportunities for middle class students whose parents are not funding law school. I didn't get any financial support from UM since you thought my parents "should" be able to afford it. My parents, however, didn't give me any financial support so I ended up doing it all on loans - something should be available to people like me.

Overall, I really enjoyed my experience both intellectually and socially at the law school and consider it one of the best experiences I've had. While I hated my job for the first 3 years, I am now glad I am a lawyer.

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My three years at The University of Michigan Law School were the most significant educational experience in my life.

Before I went there, a former student (now a professor at [law school name]) said she would do it all over again if she had the chance. So would I.

Thank you.