Class of 1978 Fifteen Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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I am very satisfied with my career. I believe I am doing just about exactly what I would be most happy doing professionally. I spend considerable time counselling clients. Similarly I spend considerable time advocating administrative public policy issues. I am pleased to be recognized as an expert in my field among colleagues and in my community. I have surprised myself by my success participating in and organizing community groups. I greatly enjoy giving speeches to lay audiences. Looking back, it's difficult to think of any way in which law school prepared me for anything I am now doing. Yet I do not dispute that it was a useful intellectual experience. I still stress Michigan Law School would be far more valuable if it did not steer nearly all students to careers representing corporate clients and wealthy individuals. More excellent lawyers are needed to provide excellent representation to small businesses and middle-income clients as well as the poor. These client groups should not be shunned by lawyers from prestigious law schools. Their legal issues are no less stimulating nor important. Should Michigan Law exist just to provide a fast track to financial success for its graduates and to provide a pool of talented lawyers for the country's corporate elite?

I feel U-M Law School provided an excellent education. I have achieved more in my life than I expected in terms of prestige, income and satisfaction with my career and related activities.

Law school was a rather dismal experience for me. None of my first-year law professors conveyed any real enthusiasm for what they were trying to teach. Perhaps it was the general malaise of the mid 1970's, but I felt that my professors were doing little more than going through the motions. My classmates seemed to be polarized into two camps -- one devoted to doing everything possible to land a prestigious, high-paying job; the other to various political causes, notably feminism and environmentalism. I tended to identify with the latter group, although I felt somewhat alienated by both. That's probably why I formed no lasting friendships at law school, although I still keep in touch with friends from my college years. All in all, Michigan Law gave me an adequate legal education, but I can summon up no fond memories of happy days in the Law Quad.

U-M is doing a disservice to its students, alums and supporters by following fad and fashion into a "deconstructionalist" world with profs such as MacKinnon -- why not show some independent direction?
I felt I got a great education at the University of Michigan and my education has allowed me to structure a life-style and working situation that I am overall very happy with.

I am concerned about the cost of legal education today. I feel it limits students from being more adventurous in working opportunities and from working or devoting time to more meaningful activities personally or societally. It limits students because the debt load mandates work in larger firms in order to pay back the debt. In addition the stress or importance of the interviewing process and the options available there also limit thinking of other possibilities.

I think too many students from the top law schools select big firms, which in many cases represent the larger business firms and institutions in a manner that, while promoting the interests of their clients, may not be promoting societal interests as a whole. Too much brain power diverted from working on the world's problems in a more focused direct manner.

Our products liability litigation system is a joke. It's got about as much honesty as a Mafia extortion ring. We as lawyers should be ashamed of what we've allowed it to become. It has little to do with truth or justice -- it's a lottery to make millionaires out of plaintiffs' attorneys who are unethical liars who don't care about their clients unless they can make money off them. Other than that, we've got great jobs.

Your questions indicate that the U of M continues to focus upon a politically correct view of the world and its problems. Adding "correct" courses and counting perceived inequities tends to re-inforce perceptions, not to correct them. A focus on the future and its potential, and not the past and its failures, is required. Hire some professors with real life experience and optimism about the future. Woe be me, intellectuals (pseudo) are not the answer. The 1st Amendment believes in a free market in ideas, not regulation. It may suffer setbacks, but "truth" and wisdom will, over time, prevail.

Also note that lawyers are becoming the blue collar workers of the information age. This is not "good" or "bad," but it has clear implications for law schools and the profession.

During law school I felt very alienated from many of my classmates, because they seemed so focussed on making lots of money. I really felt a kinship with my professors and appreciated their support and guidance, especially Joe Vining, Ted St. Antoine, Yale Kamisar and Virginia Nordby.

The longer I'm out of law school, the more I find the marginal utility of what I learned there declining, and the more I see large gaps in what could have been taught (or areas to which we could have been exposed), but weren't. Realistically, this is in
substantial part a function of education: it's preparation in how to think rather than in what to know. Nonetheless, it's an essential part of professional education to offer students a wide variety of clinical experiences so they can see the settings in which their law school knowledge and way of thinking can be applied. Given the large number of lawyers in non-practice settings, these clinical experiences should not be restricted to purely practice settings.

Law school was not a high point. I felt that I got off to a slower start than necessary. It would have been helpful to have had some context for the first-year courses.

After four years of practice, I spent ten in the investment/merchant banking world. I am now self-employed (starting a business) and at the same time semi-retired. Law school provided me with a very powerful intellectual foundation for everything I have done since. Ironically, however, I believe my success has been a result of un-learning attitudes, behavior, and constructs common to lawyers. It has been my ability to function in the legal/financial world without sharing its cultural perceptions and attitudes that has made possible the life I now enjoy. A paradox!

If I had it all to do over, I think I would go into medicine rather than law. With the current glut of lawyers, I feel that the work I am doing could easily be done as well by someone else. I worry that we lawyers have contributed to the fractious, combative, angry, non-collaborative tone of modern society. I fear that we will ultimately burden American enterprise with so many constraints and counter-productive rules and regulations that it will be unable to compete with the Japanese, Koreans, Spanish, Germans and maybe even the Mexicans, and the nation and the world will suffer as a result.

I would rather be a healer than a fighter. But it is too late to change course (I have too many children to support), and my current employment is honorable (I work as Assistant General Counsel for a very reputable and honorable family-owned business enterprise). The people I work with are good friends as well as delightful co-workers. I should not be disheartened, and I should not complain about my lot in life.

I am grateful to the University of Michigan for hiring excellent law professors who taught me conscientiously and built a reputation for the Law School that has opened career doors to me and to my fellow students.

1. Law school was not a pleasant experience.

2. I have come to see the law as a system for centralizing, maximizing, and preserving capital. It necessarily excludes from
consideration certain social values and ethical standards which I consider more important than helping the rich get richer.

I think that the most valuable experience I had at the Law School was my involvement as a student attorney at Campus Legal Aid. I believe that some kind of clinical experience should be required for graduation. The amount of credit hours would have to be adjusted to a higher level than I remember (3 hours) to reflect the amount of time required to perform the work required, despite the fact that this is usually a pass-fail course, to avoid overburdening students.

I am generally a happy person but I am often dissatisfied with my job and career. Clients want me to assure certainty but are willing to pay only a discounted cost. Every situation is a negotiation; with adverse practitioners; with clients regarding fees; with partners over compensation; with my children over bedtime.

I thought law school was intellectually stimulating and I made a number of friends and had social experiences that were of lasting value to me. However, I do not believe that the Law School experience prepared me very well for "life after law school." As someone who came in with little idea of what lawyers actually did and no idea, for all practical purposes, of what I would like to do upon graduation, I found myself steered through the interviewing process to large-firm private practice. At the time, without a good sense of what options were available to me, I measured my success by the prestige of the firms I was able to interview with and the big-firm job I ultimately took. Knowing what I now know about this type of practice, the demands in terms of work load and lifestyle, the attitudes and prejudices (there were few women when I started and none with children when I had my first child) and the type of work generally, I would never have taken that first job. Not that it was an entirely negative experience, but it was not compatible with my personality and interests. I wish I had had some intervention or a better sense of the resources available and how to use them, to have found a career path that would have been more satisfying and lasting. I am fairly satisfied with my life at this point, yet I am disappointed that I am not pursuing my career in some manner.

U of M Law is a factory. It takes talented kids and provides them with the least possible support and education to enable them to educate themselves. With a few notable exceptions like Hart Wright and Tom Green, the faculty was disinterested and elitist. I came to Ann Arbor with enthusiasm (and, obvious naivete) and left with no feeling of allegiance, except perhaps to the athletic department, which did manage to beat Woody Hayes once while I was there.

Classes are too big. Educators are too aloof. Quite clearly, it is the caliber of students attracted that maintains the School's reputation.
Attending the Michigan Law School was the best thing I ever did. It is the only law school I ever wanted to attend.

I was a transfer student (University of Florida) and I worked very hard to make friends. My classmates were all very bright, but the only thing they all had in common was that they could tell you how long they were on the waiting list at Harvard. Being made a member of the Barristers Society helped a great deal. I hope that you do a better job (and I don't know how to do it) orienting transfer students.

I don't think I would have made it without Jerry Israel. He was a good friend to me.

I never understood a word J.J. White ever said. I adored Bill Bishop.

I loved Michigan.

I am highly compensated to put up with being stressed out, burned up and wondering when I'll get to have a real life again. Add insidious and continuing gender discrimination within my own firm to the mix (although my billings average $750,000-$1,000,000 per year), and the recipe gets volatile. Each time I hear a young woman insist that things will be easier for her generation than mine, since so many of us have now "made it," I realize that she has no notion of the prices we have paid (and continue to pay) for professional success. I am tired of being a role model!

Horrible then, not as bad now. If it weren't for the money and my incompetence to do anything other than practice law, I'd love to quit. Still, practice is less offensive than was law school. I was immature then, didn't know what to expect, and have changed only a little with the passage of time. Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be lawyers. Nothing personal -- I just never did fit in. Wish me better luck in my next incarnation!

I am employed by the largest privately held chemical distributor in the world. It has over 43 locations in the United States and Canada. Of its 800 employees in the United States and Canada, I am only one of two people of color who are not clerks; the other is an office manager in San Francisco.

My corporate clients are managers and regional managers across the country. Skin color does not appear to be an issue among those approximately my age. It is certainly an issue among those of senior management, white males in their 50's to mid-60's -- but I've learned to ignore the hurt.

My dissatisfaction is restricted to the attitudes of my senior management clients. They'd be happier if I were a married white male who lived in the suburbs instead of the single ethnic male
who lives in the city and enjoys a lifestyle which appears irresponsible to them.

Although I am better qualified than my present associate to be the next general counsel of my company, I suspect that the color issue will prevent me from becoming so. He's a white, Irish Catholic with a wife and three children. I've overheard senior management say he's "more deserving" of salary increases because he's a family man. Can you believe that? And I'm in charge of EEOC defense litigation! Although I do think of my options if I am bypassed, I am not obsessed. I've learned to "go with the flow."

Being an attorney protects me from a world which is sometimes hostile. I suspect I'd be less well treated if I were a bank clerk or middle manager. Knowing I am better prepared than most gives me a confidence which I wouldn't otherwise have.

I felt that the University treated us as students quite poorly. I had extensive disagreements with the Law School and University administration regarding my tuition. I feel to this day I was overcharged by $3,500. Accordingly I have treated it as a $100/year donation to the School -- up front. I have not and absolutely will not donate anything to the U of M until 35 years have passed. I weakened at one point -- planned to go to an alumni reunion, paid the refundable fee and then could not attend -- despite requests, the money was never refunded. I still get upset thinking about it.

Within the Law School I was very pleased that the cut-throat competition which took place elsewhere did not occur and that there existed quite a bit of respect for each other among the students. I also felt that the attitude of the School that a student who does not complete the course of study is a negative reflection on the admissions committee was healthy and made for the opportunity to study with the intent of learning rather than avoiding failure.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond -- overall the law school years were the most unpleasant of my life. I have heard few people say they enjoyed law school anywhere. I am still trying to learn why.

I found your form difficult to complete honestly. For instance, on discrimination due to ethnicity, I filled in "a little" because I did not feel it was quite up to "a lot."

Generally, I believe that when I was younger I was much less aware of how profound the bias against women practitioners truly is. During my years in a federal prosecutor's office, I have seen the percentage of women attorneys drop. I believe this is changing at present, but progress depends largely on progress in the larger society. Perhaps law schools should do more to prepare women for the battles they will face, and to educate men.
I was recently promoted to a supervisory position. All of the prosecutors I supervise (10) are men. The women Assistant U.S. Attorneys are mostly in civil work.

I did not care for the Socratic method. Many professors missed outstanding opportunities to teach and instead intimidated.

The Law School should help promote (maybe even better understand itself) that there is room in life for the practice of law, and the use of legal training, in other than a private firm or governmental agency setting. When I first graduated and didn't get hired by a big firm (or any firm) for some months, I felt myself a failure and let down by the Law School. The first job in a law firm only lasted a few months, and I left dissatisfied, feeling a failure again. I then went to work for my present employer, a large corporation, where I was in-house counsel for thirteen years. I have now been a human resources manager for a year in the same company, but still providing some legal counsel to the company in the ERISA area. The point is to let students know that legal education is valuable for many things, and one needn't be in conventional practice one's whole life. I'm happy with what I'm doing, not worried anymore that I won't make $250K/year, but sometimes annoyed that other lawyers wonder why I'm "not a lawyer" anymore. In fact, we don't need more lawyers in conventional practice -- we need fewer, or doing different things to utilize the skills and education. The Law School should redirect itself to promote such a view of legal education.

I look back on my years in law school as fun and challenging. In fact, I really enjoyed law school much more than the practice of law. My life today, as a full-time mother of four and community and political volunteer and fundraiser, is extremely rewarding. In my present role, I continue to benefit from the skills and confidence I gained in law school and I am very satisfied with my contribution to society.

I believe I received as good a legal education as anyone in my firm. I was very naive about the "business" of law and think perhaps that should be discussed in law school.

Teaching law has been a great career choice that is challenging, rewarding and allows for a healthy balance of work and family. I wish faculty had been more open-minded in suggesting and encouraging it as a career option, even to those who were NOT on law review. Our student body is now 1/3 students of color as well as 50/50 male/female and mix of ages. Classroom discussions are much more fun and stimulating in a diverse student body of highly qualified individuals.

As a professor at a state law school, I worry about legislative attacks on higher ed a great deal. The anti-tax initiatives are even worse. As our salaries drop and compact vis-a-vis private practice, we find it harder to attract good people. And, as we are pushed to do more clinical training (which is good but
shouldn't be just a response to firms which can't train people anymore) and cover more subjects and buy more books in an era of scarce resources, it sometimes is painful and stressful to come to work and wonder what budgetary crisis will hit today. This is especially true as access to school for the underrepresented has opened up.

Last, it is possible to teach an analytically rigorous course in a humane way that provides meaningful feedback over the course of the term.

Everything I read in the Law Quadrangle Notes suggests the Law School is a friendlier place than when we passed through. I hope that perception is correct.

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Fifteen years after I remain as disenchanted as ever about my law school experience. Although there were some wonderful exceptions (L. Hart Wright, Virginia Nordby in Women and Law, and Jerry Israel and J.J. White) few professors were teachers or interested in teaching or, for the most part, in students. The information learned is too abstract to really lead to a good law practice and not abstract enough to be really intellectually challenging. In one year I learned just about all the legal analysis I was going to learn (that was the one unique learning experience, and that was thoroughly done). The rest was a waste of time and money. The students were great, however.

I continue to wonder how a person who loves school, learning, reading and writing as much as I do could be so turned off by a graduate school experience. Undergraduate school was much more rewarding.

Also, you need to make much better strides in getting and keeping women and minority faculty members.

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I got to law school as a fluke, but I'm very happy it worked out. I think the greatest strength of U of M's Law School is the manner in which it trains one to think. The practical lessons of being a lawyer were not taught when I was there, but nonetheless I think learning how to analyze is far more important in the long run. I was thrilled to be accepted to Michigan way back when and I'm proud to say I'm an alumna of Michigan.

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My law school experience prepared me well for facing challenges in the workplace. It allowed me a broad array of career options to choose from when I finished, but, at the same time, my law school experience helped me to narrow my focus to a specific field (tax law) for a post-law school career.

Law school gave me the training and self-confidence to do a number of things during my career, to take risks knowing that I could land on my feet again if they didn't pan out.
Law school, at the same time, tempered my ego. It was the first time I learned that I wasn't among the top 2 or 3 percent of my class. Being in the middle of the class was humbling for me, but I comfort myself with the thought that "it is the University of Michigan Law School, after all."

Any law student expecting to go into litigation should definitely take Conflict of Laws. They won't appreciate this until they have been practicing 5-7 years.

The fact that I graduated from UM opened doors after my stint in the JAG Corps. I suspect that but for my UM connection, I would not have been interviewed because it is only now that local firms are addressing the diversity issue, and trying to diversify their lawyers and support staff. For that I am grateful.

I left the law because I felt that I was out of touch with my soul, my passions, my inner self. It's possible that I might have found a way to integrate these things with a life in the law, but at the time I did not think so. My feeling is that law as it is commonly practiced has gotten very far away from the humanity it is meant to serve. Law practice seemed too technical, too formal, too disconnected from life.

I have enjoyed receiving the results of past surveys -- I especially enjoyed David Chambers' article of 5(?) years ago because it affirmed, in a sense, my lifestyle (part-time work, time for children and a family life) as satisfying. I recently told a high school student I met ("You're a lawyer?!?") that I thought I was one of the few lawyers who enjoy the law. I do love the law and am certain that my education at U of M contributed to, and continues to contribute to, this interest. (Of course, on any given day, I feel totally frustrated, stressed to the max, and fantasize about being a full-time mother.)

My father wasn't a lawyer; he really wanted me to be one. I am a lawyer; I really don't want my child to be one.

I sometimes wish that U of M Law had not accepted me. I would be teaching economics in some small college and thoroughly enjoying Life. The law is indeed a jealous mistress.

One of the greatest benefits of my law school education has been the analytical skills it helped me to develop and hone. These abilities have placed me at a distinct advantage in both legal and non-legal settings. I am currently the chief administrator of a county -- a position which does not require a legal background -- however, my Michigan training serves me very well in terms of dispassionately reviewing and analyzing viable options. This training and experience should be made more available to the community at large through a greater involvement of the bar in elementary and secondary education.
On an intellectual level, I have found the practice of law to be very stimulating. The biggest frustration has always been in dealing with other attorneys, quite often within my own firm, who are controlling, compulsive and on a major ego trip. In many cases, I see the people who are the most irritating to work with to be people who lack self-confidence and make up for it with an overbearing manner.

I now am at a stage in my career where client development seems more important than practicing law. It gets difficult when partners elbow each other to be billing partner, and then do all they can to control the client. There is a fear and paranoia in some that they will lose clients if they allow the person doing virtually all the work to have direct client contact. The filtering that occurs is bad for the client and demoralizing for the technician who does the work. Without technicians, there would be no clients.

Long term, I would like to transition out of a large firm practice into either a significant General Counsel role or a full-time Law Professor position for a strong school. Is there anything that U of M can do to assist mid-career law firm types in exploring such a transition?

Clinical law was the best part of law school -- educationally, politically, socially and emotionally (Child advocacy clinic) -- the only practicum (in '78) and the only glimpse of real practice I got in law school (since I did no clerking or internship summers and worked non-law jobs in school).

One of the most annoying aspects of the legal profession today is its concern with the image and reputation of lawyers. The recent plea to stop telling lawyer jokes, because of some imagined connection between lawyer jokes and the shootings at the Pettit law firm in San Francisco, was just embarrassing.

I don't believe the legal profession has an image problem; it has a reality problem. Too many lawyers are trying to make too much money, without providing enough real value to the clients we have, and without providing any services at all to the people who can't afford us. Pro bono work is not going to fill the gap.

I have no problem with some extremely talented lawyers making fantastic amounts of money. What is killing the profession, in my opinion, is the expectation that ordinary lawyers doing ordinary work should earn $100,000 or $150,000 a year, or more. We are strangling the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Economic pressures in law firms with high rents and expensive associates are also forcing intellectual and professional excitement out the door. For too many lawyers, pro bono work is only a disguised form of business development and self-promotion. The "quality" of work has been sustained in many places by recruiting smarter people into the profession, but the
intellectual effort devoted to law practice is on the wane in too many law firms.

Although I enjoyed the intellectual challenge I felt there was too much emphasis on the competition for high-paying (but miserable) jobs merely for the monetary reward. Therefore my good memories of law school are of football games, friends and social gatherings. Nevertheless I feel an obligation to the Law School both morally and monetarily -- if only so future students may also experience the opportunity to attend U-M.

I am not at all sure that my comments and/or responses should have any value to anyone.

With respect to my law school experience, my entire "career" there was affected by the fact that my first husband and I separated and "reunited" frequently during that time. My second year and the semester that was my third year were so colored by my personal problems (and the alcohol I consumed to deaden the pain) that I can barely remember them as educational experiences. I wish I could come back and take some courses again with a clear head! Were it not for the kindness of Professors Whitman, Payton and the help of Dean Eklund, I might not have graduated.

My responses to the questions about my current legal practice must all be considered in light of the fact that what I do with most of my time is take care of three bratty boys. My husband's income allows me the luxury of choosing to help more organizations and individuals that appeal to me. In the last six months, I have been spending a considerable amount of time "practicing" in this way. I know that this lifestyle is not available to most people -- even law school graduates! -- so it is "unreal" in the sense that there is no "bottom line" other than the limits on my time and energy.

In between law school and my housewife/"equalizer" career, I did practice law for six years, working on various kinds of financial transactions. I had the good fortune to work for one large firm and one very small firm in which virtually all of the other lawyers were extremely supportive. Note, however, that I devoted my entire life to these firms and did not even try to "balance" career and personal life. I am not sure that my relationships with these firms would have been as wonderful had my dedication to the practice been less than 100%.

1. The Law School should offer career counseling to assist students in choosing areas of practice which are suited to their personalities, e.g., using Myers-Briggs Type Indicator or a similar tool.

2. With the strong emphasis in law firms on client development and service, it would help to have classes related to the "business" of a legal practice.
3. The focus now in law firms is keeping costs down through better use of systems (a la TQM) and better use of highly specialized low cost personnel (staff attorneys and legal assistants). It would be a real headstart for an attorney to have had training in total quality management and computer software systems. It wouldn't hurt to have a class on time management either.

The clear highlight of my years at the University of Michigan Law School was the close friendship I developed with a great group of people. I remain very close to many of them.

I firmly believe that in life the highest goal to which we all aspire is love. No professional experience remotely compares to the joy I derive from spending time with my wife and children.

I still think of Yale Kamisar every time I hear Dick Vitale. I'm seeking professional help for this problem.

Although I practice law on a very limited basis, I personally have always been happy and proud that I went to Michigan's Law School. I do feel that being a Michigan grad has made it easier for me to do the "volunteer" activities that I'm involved in.

Perhaps (and I've spoken with other women attorneys who do not "practice") over time, our community involvement will be of as much or more value to society than that of those who work full-time. I do hope that the School does not view my education as a waste, I certainly do not.

I found law school intimidating, alienating, impersonal and with little intellectual stimulation ("Other than that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?").

Law school was a great experience for me and I have fond memories of Ann Arbor. Not only was I pleased with the education I received but I made life-long friends.

I am disappointed that I have had little contact with the Law School since graduation. Unfortunately, my time has been spent engaging in the practice of law and trying to survive financially.

I would have liked and still would like more assistance in career counselling and placement than has been and is being provided.

Having practiced law in a legal services program for 15 years, and routinely working with summer law students and recent law graduates in permanent positions, I am increasingly appalled by how ill-prepared law students and law graduates are to actually practice law. Although the students and graduates are very bright, enthusiastic and hard-working, they come with virtually no understanding of how the real world of law operates. They haven't a clue as to proper legal procedures in almost any area
of law -- ranging from how one obtained and enforces a money judgement, to how one initiates eviction, to how one obtains child custody, child support or a divorce.

Granted that law school is intended to teach students how they can learn to practice law, as opposed to actually practicing law, it still seems that the balance is far out of kilter. Ultimately, the practice of law is intended to provide a "service" to a client -- whether that client is a corporation, wealthy or middle-class individual, government agency, or indigent person. Yet, law students are systematically denied virtually any opportunity even to observe, let alone perform, how lawyers provide this service to their clients. Instead, law is taught as if the ultimate consumers of this service were law professors, rather than the people and entities who make up society.

As a result, I have worked for years with law students and law graduates who cannot answer even the most basic question from a client. True, most of them could eventually look up and find the answer, and often this will suffice. However, in the real world of law practice (and certainly in legal services practice), the pressure of too many clients and too little time do not permit the luxury of "looking it up" each and every time.

The truly alarming thing about this, especially with the current glut of law graduates, is that someone can go through law school, pass the Bar, and open up a law practice without the slightest idea of how to really practice law. Perhaps this explains the extraordinary number of times I have seen fellow attorneys take legal positions and advance legal arguments which have absolutely no merit whatever, and appear to be taken merely because the client has asked that they be taken, regardless of whether they are supported by facts and law. The disrespect which the public has for attorneys cannot completely be laid at the feet of the inadequate training received in law school; however, it is a good starting point.

Michigan Law School, although an unpleasant experience, has been a great credential.

Discrimination against women in law firms is still a major problem even after reaching partnership.

In general, law school courses were invigorating and excellent, but did little to prepare me for the actual practice of law. More practice-directed courses should be mandatory -- i.e., how to deal with clients, judges and other lawyers, courthouse procedures and practices, and negotiation.

Michigan Law School should place more emphasis on preparing graduates for public service, not only as public attorneys but as future office holders and judges. Public law has been very rewarding in my 15 years of practice, particularly in
environmental law, yet when I was in law school all the emphasis was on the money and prestige that could be obtained through the "right" firm practice.

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I thought law school was terrific! Thank you.

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Legal Education: I remain grateful for a splendid legal education, a solid grounding in essential commercial subjects, and encounters with gifted classmates and faculty members.

Although I learned few practical skills, the acquaintance with a wide range of important subjects taught by able professors to talented classmates was valuable -- as much for the intellectual exercise as for the substantive knowledge, which dissipates and is soon out of date. The skills and intellectual discipline have greater staying power.

The best courses were those taught by the best instructors, almost without regard to subject matter. I never knew any faculty members particularly well, but remain grateful to the likes of Professors J.J. White, Tom Kauper, John Jackson, Gerry Rosberg, Frank Allen, Allan Smith, Eric Stein and others. They took teaching seriously, knew their stuff, came prepared, were accessible and (as important as anything else, and more important than I then knew) they seemed models of professional integrity and ability.

They succeeded despite the limitations of conventional law school teaching, to large classes, using casebooks and some variation on the Socratic method.

Appellate opinions and intense questioning have their place, are indifferent and incomplete preparation for advocacy, counseling, negotiation and other essential aspects of the lawyer's art -- and great lawyering, to which we all aspire, rises above mere craft or skill. The law is an academic discipline as well as a profession, and practice can only be mastered through practice, with the scrutiny and example of experienced colleagues, but surely law school can and should do more. In our day, at least, law school resembled medical school without a hospital, patients or (apart from moot court) cadavers. Spotting issues on exam papers is all very well, but our counterparts in the medical profession have to counsel and treat, as well as diagnose -- and so do we!

Clinical work added to the curriculum during the past fifteen years has doubtless helped, though I wonder whether domestic relations, criminal appeals, landlord-tenant disputes and other staples of clinical practice at many schools offer sufficient breadth and depth. Externships for lawyers and judges, "subcontract" work for practicing lawyers, corporate legal departments, public agencies or legal aid and other public service groups, and other exposure to the world beyond the law quad might be invaluable.
Preparing a case or appeal, or negotiating a transaction, can be far more dynamic and creative than one might ever imagine in class, as one marshals the facts, develops legal theories and strategies, weaves evidence and law together, and prepares papers while trying to cope with the vagaries of human nature amid conflict and stress.

The academic experience would be better, and would better prepare students for professional life, if it included more written problems that confront the student with a contract, a deed, or an indictment, some other pieces of evidence, and compel the student to prepare a memorandum, a brief, or written advice. This may be impractical or uneconomic for larger, conventional courses, but seminar courses might substitute exercises like these for the conventional research paper. In this way, students might learn not only to write, but to advocate. Many new graduates write poorly, and have little conception of the advocate's art.

This kind of teaching may call for a greater leavening of professional experience among the faculty. When we were students, the law schools seemed inclined to hire talented young scholars who had completed, at most, a year or two in practice with a major firm after a judicial clerkship; and few of them, despite their intellectual gifts, had much experience trying cases, advising clients, negotiating settlements and transactions, or otherwise applying legal scholarship with clients, public agencies or the courts.

Scholarship and professional experience are not polar opposites, and the law schools might profit if, from time to time, their faculties included scholars who had several years' experience, or especially for commercial courses, adjunct professors drawn from practice, outstanding older lawyers or judges who have taken sabbaticals or early retirement. Cy Moscow's securities course was one of the best in the Law School because he brought theory and practice together in an interesting, stimulating and challenging manner.

Fifteen years in practice lead me to offer two suggestions concerning the curriculum.

First, in the next century, national borders will matter less than ever before. More and more controversies and transactions have international dimensions, so perhaps traditional courses should touch upon pertinent international subjects. A labor course might, for example, deal with immigration; civil procedure with international arbitration under the New York Convention; administrative law with the workings of the International Trade Commission; and so on. Friends in Europe tell me that their firms may no longer have "European law" groups; as European Community law affects competition, banking, company law and so on, so lawyers in those fields must master Community law, as well as domestic law. The same will be true here in the United
States, and the Law School's traditional strength in international law should permeate the whole curriculum.

Second, we are in the midst of a new industrial revolution as telecommunications and computing -- information technology, if you will -- transform the whole economy. Conventional methods for protection of intellectual property, transfers of funds, documenting agreements, regulating communications and the like are already changing. The curriculum should reflect these developments in courses like contracts and commercial transactions, and there should be a second or third year course or courses concerning these developments.

Professional Experience and Satisfaction: None of this can be quantified. Nor, for that matter, can personal qualities, or even the variety of one's own practice. The time devoted to a particular substantive area, or to research as opposed to meetings and telephone calls, varies unpredictably from one week to the next.

Many of the questions probe professional satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Much has been written about "shakeouts," malaise and the rest.

Without doubt, dissatisfaction is widespread. Many reasons are apparent. They include oppressive hours; sometimes brutal pressures to "produce" hours, billings and the like; the waste, stress, unpredictability and inefficiency of litigation as a means to resolve disputes; the obligation to merge one's own position with the client's; the stress is inherent in disputes, which bring out the worst in many people; the decline of civility; alienation from friends in part because of those stresses; and much else.

Many people enter the profession for the wrong reasons: in order to enrich themselves, or perhaps to indulge tastes for conflict and power. The contentious folk may never be happy at anything. Those seeking riches are likely to be dissatisfied. Even the most lucrative practices are less so than in the recent past, and the rewards are more heavily taxed. More fundamentally, no financial reward can compensate for the stress, or for the personal and emotional commitment that effective representation demands. Often outwardly successful lawyers midway through their careers seem to ask themselves, "Is this all there is?" Too often, it is.

For too many, the "bottom line" has become an objective instead of a result, and the pursuit of money -- elusive and ultimately unsatisfying -- tends to obscure the satisfactions of service, comradeship and excellence that can be the profession's greatest reward.

Curiously, the present crunch -- itself a product of fundamental and permanent changes in the market for legal services, as well
as the business cycle -- may lead to greater professional satisfaction as talented lawyers and law students reconsider their prospects, and look beyond the large private practices that have attracted so many young lawyers in the past twenty years. Some may find greater satisfaction and better balance for their lives as they consider a wider range of professional choices in private practice, companies, public service and government or charitable work. Large firm practice has many attractions, but is not right for everyone.

Law schools are not career counselors or psychology clinics, but they might do more to acquaint students with the range of professional choices, and from time to time remind students of the need for balance in life, and to take time to smell the roses (though not this year for the Wolverines!). At the end of my civil procedure final exam, the late Professor Jim Martin added a witticism to the effect that we should lighten up, and this was not anyone's life. It was a nice touch.

I hope these comments have some interest, and I appreciate the School's desire to follow its graduates and solicit information from their experience. I also appreciate the School's commitment to treat alumni responses as confidential and anonymous.

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