Class of 1986 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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RESPONSES FROM THE MEMBERS OF
THE CLASS OF 1986
TO THE LAST QUESTION ON SURVEY ASKING FOR
"COMMENTS OF ANY SORT ABOUT YOUR LIFE
OR LAW SCHOOL OR WHATEVER"

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Law school did not prepare me very well for the dissatisfaction I now feel in my practice. Some additional emphasis on career counseling would be helpful -- i.e., to give students a reality check before they sign on to the big firms.

Michigan Law School was one of the best experiences I ever had. I still keep in touch with many classmates. I'm proud to be an alumnus. I have fond memories of my law school experience. I think, however, the School should offer more practical classes to help better prepare law students for practicing law.

I was extremely disappointed in the intellectual mechanics of the law, both in school and in practice. For the most part, I did not find my classes interesting, although they were challenging, and I did not appreciate the paper exercise of litigation in private practice.

Having said that, I consider my U-M training to be invaluable, and my time spent in a law firm environment critical to my career development in Washington. A non-attorney could staff my present position, but my legal training (which I know and others respect as top-notch), gives me a different perspective. I'm glad to have it, don't regret the time or expense, but if I have to go back to drafting complaints and appeals I will surely be wanting to do something else.

With same Federal agency since law school, but in two different cities.

With my present position, I really lucked out with a wonderful boss who has been very generous regarding maternity leave (11 months) and part-time work (3 days a week -- indefinitely).

If I had to do it over, I would not have become a lawyer.

Most of the time I enjoy practicing law. Since I became a mother, however, I find it more difficult to balance my home life with my work life. The expectations of the firm and the expectations of my husband frequently conflict. Unfortunately, I continue to want to be "perfect" in all areas of life. Hence, the dissatisfaction and frustration.

I have been thinking of going part time or taking "of counsel" status. My husband prefers that I work part time. I, however, feel damaged by such an arrangement.
It is all a matter of priorities. But I want it all. Some times I think that I should not have chosen such a demanding career. If I were not in a profession that measures performance largely on billable hours, I would be the perfect employee. As it is, I am highly thought of but am told that I should put in more billable and nonbillable time. Much of my time is spent feeling guilty about my work and the time I am away from my daughter.

(Incidentally, I have never met a man who felt the same level of responsibility for child care. Why is that?)

I could go on, but I think you have a flavor for how my life is going.

In general, I would say law school did not give me much training for the job I found myself in, litigation in the insurance defense ride. For the most part, the real life practice of law is far removed from the philosophical/theoretical approach of law school.

Also it has been my experience that there is no correlation between performance in law school and success in the practice of law. The vast majority of exams I took in law school contained severe and artificial time constraints which rewarded quickness as much as anything. I have yet to encounter a situation (in either appellate or trial advocacy) where I was asked to read and fully digest a several page fact scenario and then identify and explain all inner and every conceivable ramification in a 45 minute time period.

I think law school could have been a much richer, more rewarding experience if the traditional testing/evaluation techniques were changed to alleviate some of the artificially induced stress.

Generally, my law school experience was satisfactory, however, my biggest complaint regarding law school is that there was far too much emphasis on theory with too little emphasis on practice; practice of law and law firm operations.

When I left law school, I went to work for a large Washington, D.C. law firm. The law firm consumed my life, did not appreciate or utilize my skills or try to teach me how to be a lawyer. Left a year ago to take a position as a criminal assistant U.S. attorney in the midwest. I love my new job. I feel like I'm one of the few lawyers who actually likes her job. My job is challenging, socially beneficial and leaves me time to have a life.

When I look back at my decision to go to a large law firm after school, I don't know if it was a wrong decision. I don't think I could have gotten my current position without having "paid my dues" at a legal sweatshop. But it extracted a large personal cost. Of my friends who have not left the large firms, most are
in therapy. I think that women are especially affected by the enforced deferral of life.

I don't think the problem is the structure of the legal profession. I think that the problem is a need to succeed in competitive environments that seems to be bred into me and the other people who attend schools like U of M. I don't think anyone can be happy and have a balanced life in a large private law firm. We have to learn to "just say No."

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I am currently practicing law in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, working for a law office affiliated with White & Case in New York. Most of our work involves providing advice on Saudi law for companies doing business in Saudi Arabia.

There are few opportunities for pro bono legal work in Saudi Arabia. In any event, as my type of practice is not entirely conventional, it may color my answers to the questionnaire.

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I look back on my years at law school with mixed feelings. My education was probably as good a legal education as is to be obtained outside Yale Law School, but I am still astounded at how little practical training we were given. To go through law school never having been brought to court to observe a trial, written or read an entire contract, conducted an interview or written a brief under the supervision of a professor is astounding. We should be forced to do these things; they should not be part of a clinical program viewed with suspicion by the law school faculty. My impression that the faculty cared little about student body members not on Law Review has only been strengthened since I left law school and dealt with normal mentors. I will never forget the institutional indifference to a classmate's suicide, which was only an extremely bad example of the institution's attitude. Fortunately, a portion of the student body made up for that attitude.

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I have been particularly fortunate in my career so far. I work with very bright and relatively humane people in an area of the law that is growing rapidly. My responsibilities have always far exceeded my years and the work with which I have been entrusted is both stimulating and highly respected. As careers go, I have achieved a tremendous amount in five years.

Having said this, I believe that my career, as it is and as it promised to be in the coming years, is not conducive to a full and well-rounded lifestyle. I view it as a phase of my life, rather than a long-term endeavor. Perhaps it is my personality and my desire to do and learn a variety of things throughout my life that forms the basis of this belief, but I sense that I am the majority rather than the exception among my colleagues. The demands of my career and the stress it engenders makes it almost impossible to include family, friends, culture, education and self-exploration in my life to any significant degree. I find that in order to succeed in the long run as a private
practitioner in a large city, one must become totally dedicated to the practice and must suppress virtually all desires to introduce non-legal aspects into one's life. It is not how I choose to live in the long run.

What I have learned from my career so far, however, will, I believe, prove invaluable throughout my life. I have learned that there are five sides to every story, that successful people and not so successful people are pretty much alike, and that kindness and respect go a long way. My ability to communicate with people has been refined as well as my ability to understand what people are saying to me. And most of all, I have become much more self-confident about my place in the world and my capabilities to succeed in this society. As such, the five years I have spent practicing law have been productive and I do not regret having decided on the law as my first career. I only hope that I will not become so tied to the financial and emotional benefits provided by my career that I will not be able to move on to a new phase of my life when the time is right.

One last thing: law is not about statutes or rules. Whether one is practicing for a large law firm or the public body, law is about people and the key, I believe, to a successful career in the law is to remember that humanity must prevail over all else.

Unfortunately, I took law school (and room 200) far too seriously. Law school does not adequately expose students to the broad range of careers available to lawyers. Nor does law school convey, as it should, the mind-numbing existence in a large law firm. The money ain't bad, but you've got to have a hobby.

I have not regretted my decision to go with a corporation rather than a big firm. I was given a lot more responsibility early on than my counterparts at firms, and I was made to feel part of a team. Almost all of my friends who went to big firms quickly became dissatisfied and changed jobs at least once. I think the Placement Office should continue to encourage students to examine alternatives to big-firm practice.

I am very happy because I have found a specialized area of practice that I find very interesting -- land use law. I went back to school to obtain an urban and regional planning degree (Masters) and my work combined legal work with land use planning work.

Practicing law, however, is much different than I thought before entering law school and even upon leaving school. Several people I know have become disenchanted with law, and have pursued alternative careers.

I was surprised that there were so few public interest jobs and firms that allow attorneys to work for pro bono or reduced fee clients.
I think working in a medium-sized city is ideal because it allows one to maintain a better balance between work and family. Of course, the individual firm's philosophy is also very important. 

After law school and practicing for 5 years, I would recommend that people interested in becoming attorneys should gain a true picture of what attorneys do, and decide they really do want to be lawyers. Three years and five figure debt is a lot to go through to then learn that being a lawyer may be less than it is cracked up to be. To people that ask my advice about law school, I tell them to think hard about it: there are definitely aspects of the profession that are not fun .... billable hours for one!

Another comment I have about the profession is affected by not only the economics of law, but the general economy. It seems to earn a comfortable living, a lot of emphasis is placed on billing and keeping the cash flow coming in. While attorneys certainly moderate disputes, I do think they are unable to devote more time to being productive in overall society in attempting to devise methods to reduce conflicts in general, and this is prevented by that desire/need to earn money. I think, however, this is also due to general economic conditions, where more families require two wage earners to keep afloat. I find this unfortunate, but there is not a lot which can be done about it.

My only other comment is exactly what I wrote in Question no. 9, on page 4 -- the demands on litigators are enormous. The only way to really be successful in this field is total commitment--a price I am not willing to pay.

Career choice -- I accepted a job offer with a large firm over an offer I had received over a corporation based on advice I received from others. Everyone said it was better for my career to start at a big firm and move to a corporation. By the time I was ready to leave the firm I was so miserable my quality of work had plummeted and I had a difficult time finding a job.

The mind set of the typical Michigan law student is that the "best" jobs are with the big firms. They look down upon most other ventures. I had to learn the hard way that I do not share this perspective.

Time -- Even though I like my current job a lot more than the job I had with the large firm, I still struggle to find a balance in my life. It is hard to comfortably work only 40 hours a week. The work load inherently requires more than the average. (Of course, I am beginning to observe that more and more employers in every field of work are demanding more work hours from their workers. There seems to be a trend towards expecting employees to spend more than 40 hours or even more than 5 days working each week for the same amount of pay as is paid for 40 hours. I think employers view their base salaries as being generous enough to warrant their employees' extra time.)
Student loans -- My student loans are like a noose around my neck. Although I make a decent salary, most is used to pay off student loans and debts accumulated while working at the large firm--accumulated when I had to buy clothes, furniture, and I tried to buy peace of mind.

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I like the practice of law. In fact, I like it much more than I liked law school. I do, however, believe that young attorneys who seek the intellectual stimulation that law practice provides must often pay a very high personal price in return. While law firms and law school questionnaires can speak to a "proper balance" between personal and professional lives, which the onus is presumably on the attorney/law school grad to achieve, the fact is that the balance is dictated by the employer's work requirements. This leaves all too little discretion to the attorney who is not senior enough to say no to do what is necessary to achieve a "proper balance." I suppose the fact that it is 8:30 pm and I'm at the office writing this in order to avoid having to do the other work in front of me has tainted my outlook on the subject at the moment.

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I am very pleased with the legal education I received at Michigan, although I did not enjoy it very much. If there were ways to reduce the level of pressure and competition -- perhaps giving midterm exams, or exam writing workshops might help -- it would be a good thing.

I practiced law with a large D.C. firm for three years after law school. I have since left practice to continue studies in environmental economics. I see this as a continuation rather than an abandonment of the career I was pursuing with my legal education. Frankly I feel practice in large firms is nothing less than insane. Peoples' lives and health are destroyed by the pressure and hours. You literally could not pay me enough to continue working for that kind of firm. This is not to say I dislike the law -- quite the contrary. I find law to be intellectually challenging and as a lawyer I have repeatedly found myself at the heart of many crucial public debates. I derive a great deal of satisfaction from providing service to indigent clients, particularly refugees and recent immigrants in my pro bono work.

I was shocked by the level of sexism in the firm I worked in. Nothing in my life prepared me for that. There is absolutely no question in my mind that it is far less likely that women in my firm will advance to partnership than men. Even those who choose not to have children so that they can devote their entire energy to practice.

It was clear with younger associates that different kinds of work were given men than women. Women's work was more clerical in nature. It took women two to three years longer than men to be allowed into court, for example. This pattern made gaining the experience required for partnership more difficult. From what I
observe in academia, sexism is not limited to law. I am grateful
for having my eyes opened. My reaction to it is to take my
career far less seriously than I did before. On the other hand I
take political work, personal life, and professional service more
seriously. I see women and minorities in a long struggle, not
only to gain a more fittingly significant place in society, but
to try and change some things like 80 hour work weeks and lack of
parental leave which are unhealthy for individuals and for
society. I am grateful that corporate law practice helped me see
more clearly the need for change. I am far more radical now than
I was when I entered law school. The inhumaneness of much of the
law school experience and of law practice as well as the degree
to which both do act to protect and foster formation of an
economic elite in this country really pushed me in this
direction.

I was too afraid of my own deficits to seek the help I needed. I
didn't enjoy law school because I put myself under too great
expectation. I was a single parent of 4 children. I would never
attempt the task knowing what I know now.

I have found law firm life more congenial, interesting and
rewarding than I had expected when I chose a large firm, which I
did mainly because of my $50,000+ debts. I have a great deal of
respect for my colleagues at the firm and the other large-firm
lawyers I have worked with. I also think that the people at my
firm are great to work with and that the firm has tried hard to
be a "good place to work."

With a young baby, despite all of the positives cited above, I am
not sure I will stay in this type of practice. There's not
enough left over for life outside work, at least while children
are pre-school. I am concerned that re-entry into the "top
ranks" may not be possible, but I still think I'll opt for going
part-time for a while because you can't recapture the time when
children are young. I like the law but not to the exclusion of
everything else in life.

Law school, while demanding and competitive, gave me little
preparation for the emotional realities of law practice. I do
exclusively litigation, and I find the atmosphere, both within my
firm and outside it, to be generally inconsistent with my former
idea of an honorable profession in which lawyers are constrained
by the facts and by logic as well as by a basic sense of decency.
I have found the lawyers for whom I work to be as often callous,
manipulative, and purposely unhelpful as the reverse. I have
found the sense in which lawyers interpret their ethical
obligations, including the obligation to be honest to one's
adversary and the court, to be extremely generous in terms of
what is permitted. In short, people do whatever they can get
away with, and they get away with quite a bit.

Taking more law school courses, including clinical courses,
would, I fear, simply make it that much harder to adapt to the
jungle mentality that prevails in the world of law practice. Law school should not become more jungle-like, but should focus on imparting a few fundamental techniques and principles to govern the conduct of those heading out into the jungle. The rules are constantly changing, but students are not assisted by being taught numerous sets of rules in class after class in different subject areas. Stimulating as law school was, I've learned 90% of what I know about practicing law by doing it.

P.S. -- Filling out this questionnaire has taken me about 90 minutes.

I am probably typical of the middle class law graduates about whom one reads ever more -- so saddled with debt at graduation that my options were restricted to big firm practice. Personal factors, such as starting a family, have delayed the day when other options will be available, but my plan remains to pay my debts and then reconsider my career. Business holds little appeal for me, and I'm not sure that I was put on the Earth to practice commercial law. Of course, a commercial law practice has advantages -- responsibility, modest independence, income -- which can turn one's head. When the time comes to contemplate a change, I hope to be able to harken back to my way of thinking when I started law school.

I have not been financially "blessed" by my law school education. Why does the University insist on harassing me for more money?

I work at home full-time. I also share in caring for our child. One of the reasons I stopped working in a law office was to be home with him, but I have simply rearranged by work day to make that possible.

(1) I believe that the Law School should connect up recruits or new students with IL or 2L early on.
(2) More clinical experience should be given.
(3) The Ethics class should be more "real world."

I am now certain that law school should only be two years. In that time it is easily possible to learn the fundamentals upon which later to build a career as a top-flight lawyer. Such a vast proportion of what we learn is "on the job" that I see little reason to spend the final year in law school.

I learned more about the law during my Bar Review course than I did in three years of law school. Though I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation I experienced at Michigan, I would have preferred more exposure to the nuts and bolts of the legal profession.

In the five years since I've graduated, I've become increasingly aware that law firms have no place for women. The women in my firm have all felt discriminated against -- we're never going to be part of the "club." One partner constantly makes comments
about the sexuality of the women attorneys -- like "she's too attractive to be an attorney -- she'll distract all the clients." To make partner, you have to be a member of the "club" -- you have to be like the other partners so they'll feel comfortable with you, or a superstar. Some firms make a conscious decision to expand their partnership to diverse groups but most don't. Additionally, since most firms are self-insured for medical expenses, there is increased hostility towards women who get pregnant. Not only do the women take time off but frequently the firm picks up the direct costs as well. Finally, once a woman makes partner, she still has to keep on her toes so that she isn't thrown out of the partnership. It's insane. A friend of mine was interviewing recently for a lateral position and had two separate firms ask her if she planned on having children. So the end result is that women all end up in-house -- as I am certainly heading -- but I plan on remembering which firms have bad reputations for their dealings with women and minorities and won't ever hire them.

I believe that the Law School should be less concerned about hiring and promoting faculty with the "correct" political philosophy and more concerned with finding faculty who have practical experience in areas of the law where most of us practice. The Law School will quickly become an anachronism if it continues to hire faculty who are more interested in promoting their own political agendas than in teaching their students how to be lawyers.

I regret that I did not think more seriously about the consequences before borrowing so much money to go to law school. I have chosen not to practice law, and I earn much less than I would as a lawyer. If it weren't for the University of Michigan's Debt Management Program, I'm not sure what would have become of me in the first few years after graduation. Even now my debt shapes and restricts my life, and it will continue to do so for some time to come.

UMLS should consider giving credit for legal work (i.e., research assistant, paralegal work, etc.) done while attending law school -- sort of a work-study scenario.

Also, it should be noted that students without enough money can't apply or be on the more "prestigious" publications because of time commitment to work (in order to pay tuition). This hits middle class, limited or non-scholarship students the hardest, and limits their ability to get clerkships, teaching positions, etc.

A year ago I left my first job out of law school. Although there are aspects of the practice of law that I enjoyed, overall I didn't enjoy what I was doing. I am in a period of transition right now. For the time being I am getting by (financially) by managing political campaigns and working occasionally on a legal hotline.
I have been amazed at the number of attorneys who have told me that they too are dissatisfied with their work life. I think that there are many reasons for this dissatisfaction, but the problem is large enough that it needs some attention.

Overall, I would have to say that law school was a generally interesting experience and somewhat challenging, I suppose. However, being a securities lawyer is not only the most mundane, tedious and worthless work I have ever experienced but also the largest waste of time I can imagine. Therefore, I suspect you will find on the 15-year survey, if I respond, my answers will be entirely different.

I have mixed emotions about the Law School. On the one hand, I believe that I experienced my greatest intellectual development at the Law School. On the other hand, I look back on the 3 years spent at the Law School as the most agonizing and depressing of my life. Does learning and intellectual challenge have to be so painful? I don't think so. I just hope that the faculty/administrators/students will take a fresh look at the Law School environment and work together to make it less bleak. The law doesn't have to be as dreary as the gothic Law Quadrangle on a gray Michigan winter's day.

Although the Law School provided me with an excellent foundation in law, my three years were not happy. I came from a background in literature and the arts, where I had to be both analytical and creative, and I had done very well. Law school emphasized the analytical. My grades were not nearly as good as they had been in college or graduate school, even though I found much of law to be not nearly as intellectually challenging as courses in philosophy. Added to my intellectual frustration were concerns about finances and severe marital problems. Sue Ecklund, Nancy Krieger and others as well as classmates helped me get through this particularly rough time in my life, and I will always be grateful.

I'm glad I went my own way after law school and joined the Air Force as an attorney. I've been practicing as a lawyer for almost five years now and for the most part I've been very happy in my work. In law school, my imagination, common sense and ability to deal with people didn't make a difference on those horrible three-hour exams, but as a legal counselor and defense attorney for military members those qualities have enabled me to make a difference for my clients. (And I haven't had to give up writing poetry.)

Eventually I'd like to start my own practice, focusing on people rather than corporations. For now, I'm applying to teach law at the Air Force Academy.

In an overall sense I think law school, no matter how good, prepares people poorly for the day-to-day challenges faced as a
lawyer. I think areas such as stress management, life and time commitment, firm politics and career planning should get more attention in school. I think the first five years out are tougher because of the lack of attention to such issues.

As I wrote in response to question 9, I am leaving my current job very soon. My answers to this survey apply to my current job; my reasons for leaving are (1) to work less hours in an effort to bring more balance into my life; and (2) to use some of my time pursuing writing projects, which I tried to do while practicing law but found I didn't have the energy. So while my answers here are accurate, you should note that I am leaving that job to practice less than full-time on my own and to pursue other interests as well.

I am much less optimistic about the practice of law than I was immediately after graduation -- more for my husband's sake than my own, but also because I think it is still very difficult for women to combine a rigorous legal career with a family.

Since the mid-1980's, the market for corporate attorneys has been getting progressively softer. Now, it is extremely difficult for my husband to find work as an attorney after an absence from the U.S. of 14 months (to accompany me on a foreign assignment required by my job). Apart from the economic cycle, it seems that the practice of corporate law has changed, and become much more cut-throat. Rather than reduce corporate or general partner shares at the end of the year, firms lay off attorneys. It would certainly make more sense to spread the pain through pay cuts or smaller profits in lean years than to fire attorneys en masse as has occurred in New York and other cities. The practice of law is simply less appealing now than it was five years ago, taking all of the benefits and risks into account.

I also find myself less able to take part in community activities than during a comparable period three years ago, but I think that this narrowing of focus and having less time to spend on charitable and other organizations is a function of getting more involved in career demands, and being married, which is time-consuming. I am still disappointed in my current lack of involvement in a range of activities that I considered absolutely essential a few years ago, and am going to work to try to do more.

In this vein, I don't see how it is possible to have a family and to be a successful attorney married to another attorney with both working full time. I now have the luxury of working for the federal government, with a reasonable assurance of leave without pay, at worst, for child leave. How many attorneys can take a year or two of leave and be welcomed back? How much have expectations about women's work at home with children really changed in the workplace -- not much.

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As a woman who wanted to work part-time because of child-rearing responsibilities, I had to spend a lot of energy and effort in defining a satisfactory work arrangement. I would like the career placement office of the Law School to become a resource for part-time work opportunities and feedback from other attorneys with similar work needs/experiences.

Overall, I find my work to be very satisfactory and have never regretted my career choice. I work in a small public interest organization in the South. The one thing that law school did not prepare me for, as a litigator, is the day-to-day activities. How to do a deposition, what are contention interrogatories, etc. Because so much of civil practice rides on discovery, I recommend a more practical course on the mechanics of discovery. Clinics should be encouraged rather than discouraged. I took the Child Advocacy Clinic and found it to be a very practical and helpful course. Another thing I found to be most helpful was my clerkship with a federal district court judge. Everyone should try to get a clerkship.

I had no idea of the time commitment required in a large law firm or of the absolute absence of any desire to train you. It was a sink or swim attitude and you were expected to bill no more time on a project than it would take an experienced attorney. Assuming you could even figure out how much time it would take an experienced attorney, you had to determine which was worse, (1) betting all of your active time (which was the stated rule) and being criticized for inefficiency, or (2) eating the extra time (which was the real expectation) and still somehow come up with 2000+ billable hours/year. I found that the 2d and 3d time I did a similar deal I was more efficient than the average attorney, but that I owed that to being thorough the first time. Unfortunately, partners rarely give new associates a second chance (at least in my stuffy, big firm) and the result was a poor evaluation by Partner A on an XYZ deal, but favorable evaluations on XYZ deals by Partners B and C who benefitted from my first "inefficient" experience. "Training" has no place on a timesheet.

The bottom line: any professor that thinks the practice of law is foremost a profession had better realize that graduates going into private practice better understand that that segment of the legal community looks at it solely as a business. A course on legal economics might spare another naive, but very bright and capable (cum laude), student the extreme disappointment I have experienced in my five years of practice. Michigan has to realize that if a "practical" course helps to prepare and retain bright, private practitioners who would otherwise leave the profession, the course does make a scholarly contribution to the profession. Unfortunately, in today's environment graduates have to hit the ground running (or practically kill themselves catching up) if they want to succeed in their first position. In my case my utter disappointment with my first position has made
it difficult to truly enjoy my work since (although intellectually Michigan prepared me extremely well).

My complaints are probably more systemic than a direct criticism of Michigan. I do believe however that Michigan has an especially misplaced aversion to any course of study that might allow its graduates to ease into a unique business setting (large law firms) with equal zeal that they entered law school with. If a student enters the private practice of law without any comprehension of the economics of the private practice of law and leaves the profession because of that frustration, what has Michigan really contributed to the legal profession through its scholarly teachings? Nothing in life is one dimensional, yet Michigan clings to the belief that teaching students how to think is the only necessary objective in preparing students for private practice. I believe it is the most important objective, but will not adequately prepare a student (without a business background) for the extremely competitive road ahead.

It is no small irony that law school and the practice of law are as different from each other as night is to day. I very much enjoyed law school, but find practice to be somewhat tedious, among other things. The most disappointing aspect of practice is the un-dimensional quality of most lawyers. Certainly the conventional cultures at most law firms contribute significantly to the development of this trait. It is a progressive ailment. It is disheartening to see bright and creative law school graduates slowly transform into legal drudges in order to service and satisfy the expectations of the frequently ill-tempered and egocentric senior members of the legal community.

Law school is a bizarre time for many people. The Law School has an obligation to provide a sensitive, humane environment for the students. This means the teachers must care about teaching and about the students, who pay their salaries.

U-M Law School is a great life for 3 years and the recognition of the quality education (by myself and others) continues long after leaving A2.

Law school may be the last preserve from which future legal professionals will have the occasion and leisure to set forth ideals and be critical of the roles of lawyers and legal institutions in our society. The Law School should seize and exploit this opportunity, striving to send forth idealists who, in part by example and in part by gentle prodding, resolve that things shall be changed for the better.

Law students should be reminded regularly of the moral and ethical dimensions of their profession; lacking this grounding, they are destined to become businesspeople, and little more.

Without a lawyer-client relationship, the law is little more than
a theory. Accordingly, every student should be urged to participate in a clinical law program.

The current system of educational loans is one of indentured servitude for low-and-middle-income borrowers. The Law School should do what it can to alleviate some of the wrongs that result, and it should join with other schools to lobby the federal government for more of a commitment in this area, perhaps including a system of forgiveness based on certain kinds of service (i.e., legal services, public defender, providing help in inner-city or remote communities).

I want to thank the teachers, administrators and staff at U of M Law who showed interest in me and my fellow students and tried hard to make us better people and the School a better place.

Now, there is also a pervasive sense of dread that the bottom has dropped out of the legal market. People worry that their incomes and jobs are not secure.

Frankly, I would advise anyone contemplating law school (other than those with a mission to serve the poor or a similar mission) to consider seriously another path.

I think women law students should be required to participate in a seminar on the special problems encountered by women in the workforce. I had two difficult problems: balancing my ambitions and long hours with my home life with my firstborn, and I was physically (sexually) attacked by my partner. I was not prepared to cope with either. Maybe if I had been warned about what may happen I would've known to choose a specialty and/or firm which allows job sharing or part-time for women. Also, I was lulled by the egalitarian atmosphere of law school. In reality an associate, especially a female one, was a second class citizen in my firm. There was no way I could' ve effectively responded to my boss's attack (legally or in the firm). I hope it doesn't happen to others, but I'm sure it will. The only way to effectively combat it is to warn and prepare women to be on guard!

It's a shame. I liked my work (in litigation) but I don't think I could ever work in a law firm again.

I have discovered that I can't do it all! I honestly used to think I could, but of course that was before I actually had to do it. The practice of law, as I pursued it, was very unforgiving of a woman with children. I will go back, but my goals will be less ambitious and my area of practice will be very different. I'm not sure whether I resent "them" for making me believe I could have my career and family too, my firm for making it so difficult for me to have both, or myself for not being able to pull it off. I hope other classmates (particularly the women) have had more luck in achieving that perfect "balance." Thanks for asking!
Although I was generally very satisfied with my law school experience, I believe I (and others) would have enjoyed it more and learned more if there were greater emphasis placed upon teaching and less emphasis placed upon scholarly research. It seemed that any given professor's research interests rarely had an impact upon classwork. The few profs I had who seemed to really care and focus on teaching did so knowing that they might be "penalized" for ignoring research and publication.

What is the purpose of "publishing"? Reputation. I attended a small liberal arts college (Carleton College) which has a tremendous reputation because its graduates are very well prepared, competent, and motivated. Carleton's true products are students, not articles. It might give the Law School a new way to distinguish itself from other schools and a way to attract good faculty to remote Ann Arbor if publishing were supplanted by teaching as a primary focus. Thanks.

Your survey should include a question about adverse treatment for academia; discrimination exists in the ivory tower as well.

I don't know if it would dissuade people, but I would like to have seen some effort made during law school to prepare students for how different practice is from the law school experience. Unlike many students in my class, I was the first attorney in my family so I had no idea about the practice of law; summer jobs do not prepare you because the firms glamorize the job. Law school was a great intellectual exercise, and I enjoyed it; practice, on the other hand, was repetitive, boring, and intellectually unsatisfying. In practice, you are a glorified paper pusher. I wish I had been more aware of the remarkable difference between school and practice. I could have made more intelligent choices.

The questions about loans, in my opinion, ask the wrong questions. It's not that I have had difficulty in repaying my loans; it's that the loans have shaped the jobs I can take. Most public interest jobs pay less than $30,000; many pay in the low to mid 20's. I know because I have looked. I am interested in public interest work, but I cannot afford to take these jobs. I am my sole support, and with my loan and other monthly payments, I cannot live on the salaries paid by most public interest jobs. I think you should add a question that asks people whether their loan payments or burden have prevented them from seeking public interest work.

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1. Dean Sue Eklund is still the greatest in my mind.
2. The Law School's minority enrollment, recruitment efforts and retention programs (particularly concerning Hispanics) remain woefully inadequate, especially when compared to schools of equal and lesser caliber. This is the 21st century.

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I would have liked more opportunity for informal contacts with faculty, individually or in small groups.
I did not find Case Club to be a good way to teach legal research.

Overall, I found law school to be an enjoyable and intellectually stimulating experience and a solid legal education.

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I intensely disliked working in private practice. I enjoy working for a corporation and have urged many of my dissatisfied classmates to pursue this career path as well. The work has been much more interesting and intellectually challenging than my private practice experience. The most challenging aspect of working at a law firm was the ridiculous deadlines.

Even with my satisfaction with in-house work, I have discovered that I do not really enjoy practicing law. It disturbs me that I contribute very little to our nation's output. I have begun to think of lawyers as a leech on society's productiveness. Therefore, within the next 4-5 years I anticipate I will make a career change. I think it is a shame that our society encourages its brightest individuals to choose a career in law when there are more productive and beneficial occupations.

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While I wouldn't recommend law school for someone headed for business, law school provided a solid background for making decisions in a business setting.

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I would discourage anyone who is planning to go to law school from going unless they have a real idea of what it is to be a lawyer and that they really want to do it. Anyone who is going because they can't think of anything else to do with themselves should realize that almost any other job is going to provide more of a sense of social justification and therefore satisfaction. People don't like lawyers, and so lawyers try to get satisfaction and power from acting like jerks instead of from outside approval. Most attorneys are mentally stuck in the 2d grade (especially men) and have no real purpose in life other than to push other people around, sometimes for no good client-based reason. Attorneys generally have their priorities all screwed up -- it just happens without a person realizing it. They think they are having a career and children too, but what I see is people patting themselves on the back for being able to juggle their schedules so carefully. Attorneys don't spend enough time with non-attorneys to see that if your kid sees you are treating him or her simply as one part of the schedule, you still aren't really thinking about the problem right. And throwing money at the problem (i.e., hiring people to do all the things you don't have time to fit into your schedule) just teaches your kid that money is what is really necessary for life. Real responsibility can only be taught by real caring, and attorneys quickly seem to lose the ability to care, really, about others. Possibly this is simply because they are working too damn hard to get anything else into their minds. If you just stand back and think about it, it is absolutely incredible how much importance is attached to, and how much time is spent thinking about, things that
ultimately don't have any real societal or personal value whatsoever.

The gender bias I have encountered within the firm has become much more pervasive since I had a child. I have encountered a problem with middle-aged male partners who believe that mothers have only one role. As a result I am sometimes not considered for work which would conflict with their view of a mother (including even small amounts of travel).

I often hear the remark that law school does not prepare one to be a lawyer; this is false. Law school did prepare me to be a lawyer. It taught me how to read a case or statute, how to argue persuasively, and how to conduct myself in a courtroom. In fact, law school did too much vocational training. Only after I have been out of school have I seen the myriad of forces in society which govern and change the law. Michigan should give its students a wider view of how the law is influenced. For example, instead of only carefully examining Blackmun's opinion in Roe v. Wade, a professor should guide a class through the political battles in the statehouses of Louisiana and Pennsylvania to show why legislators openly defy the high court's mandate in an attempt to change the law. This would teach students that the law is not a world unto itself administered by lawyers or judges.

I have left law but am building upon it -- I am now in business school and plan to be an entrepreneur or venture capitalist -- my life has improved 300% since I left the corporate law practice.

I have been reading the results of such law school alumni questionnaires as this since my own third year in law school, and have been pensively awaiting the arrival of this one. I think that I have had, in the back of my mind, the question, "What will I have to say when the survey comes around? Will I be happy? Prosperous? Balanced?"

Those questions are particularly poignant in my own case, because I have been involved in a difficult and emotional career change during the last two years. Two years of large-firm practice ended with great unhappiness, tension and fear; I quit my job and spent a year doing part-time free-lancing and teaching, and was eventually so fortunate as to turn down a job at a state attorney general's office in favor of a full-time position at a little-known undergraduate institution. Now, at 1/3 my former salary, teaching basic legal principles to business majors who have a hard time understanding the simplest part of them, I have, amazingly, found work I can constantly enjoy. With my wife, I shall now try to find a house and start a family.

The only real dissatisfaction I have with the current state of affairs is the amount of time it seemed to take to get here. I keep wishing that I could have catapulted myself into some job such as this earlier in my career, but I do not realistically see, given who I was at the time, how I could have arrived here.
any sooner. I don't imagine that law school really could have done anything to help in that regard. In point of fact, I knew how unpleasant large-firm practice was going to be before I entered it.

When I was in law school, I felt that practicum courses were the most important aspect of legal education. I still feel that every law student ought to be able to take a clinical course if s/he wishes to do so, but I have come to understand that the intellectual experience of law school is what has stuck with me the longest. Especially in its interdisciplinary courses, Michigan was a marvelous opportunity for the mind. If anything, I think that Michigan should enhance its reputation as a place where law and other disciplines find common ground.

Michigan's best teachers are, by far, those who do not stick to the traditional "socratic" method, but instead use alternative structures and approaches. Law school would have been far less rewarding without Christina Whitman, David Chambers and James Boyd White.

I cannot wait until I have paid off my law school loans so I can stop being a lawyer. The law firm route -- high pay/high hours -- exacts a terrible price, which if I had to do it over, would not agree to pay. However, I was willing to sign up for huge loans to get a J.D. at Michigan.

When I am asked now I advise college students not to even consider going to law school until they're at least 30, and not then unless they have a) extraordinary self confidence and b) financial security. If they do go to law school, they should take no loans, and avoid traditional firms unless they want a) to sacrifice their personal life to their careers; b) to work long hours in an environment of persistent sexism (and I perceive racism) practiced with constant and corrosive subtletly; and c) to immerse themselves in a world ruled by the greedy and the neurotic.

In short, although practicing law has taught me much of the world and myself, I would say, as Thomas Moore to any J.D. wannabe, "Be a teacher."

Putting my thoughts about my law school experience on paper is difficult, as I find so much to be critical of. I disliked law school while I was a student, and my criticisms have only gotten stronger and clearer with the passage of time. On my first day of law school, I was told I needed to brief cases. Unfortunately, I was never told how to brief cases or why it was important to brief. This incident typifies my experience with U of M Law. Nobody seemed to know how to explain what we were supposed to do. My "Senior Judge" for case club had no clue of what he was doing (something which has become patently clear with time); the tutors I went to had no idea why they did well in school, much less what to tell another person to do to improve in
school; professors seemed unable to explain what they wanted on their exams. This was a sure formula for frustration and, ultimately, anger with the whole experience. As a result, I lost (even though I sought help, no one told me how to raise my grades above average), and the Law School lost (I can't imagine giving money to a school which didn't educate me as it was supposed to). The frustration with law school extended itself into my career, as I discovered I didn't know how to do proper legal research, how to properly approach a legal problem, or how to write a legal brief.

Yet I was eventually lucky -- lucky enough to happen into a federal clerkship which by rights of grades I had no business having. In that clerkship I learned the fundamentals of law and legal thinking which law school had failed to teach me. And I wrote, wrote, wrote until I mastered the writing techniques which I should have learned in law school. My biggest discovery was that law was written in a specific format: Issue, Rule, Analysis, Conclusion. This should have been taught in my "case club," but it wasn't. Following my first clerkship, I took a clerkship with a second judge. These clerkships gave me an excellent working knowledge of civil procedure on top of teaching me most "lawyerly" skills. I worked on nationally reported litigation, having the satisfaction of seeing opinions I'd written summarized in U.S. Law Week on several occasions. And, I heard compliments on writing I had done in difficult areas of law such as antitrust, patent, and labor. Could this writer possibly be the same person who had done poorly as a law student?

In an even odder quirk of fate, I became a faculty member at a law school. I teach research and writing to first year students, and I teach a special course on exam skills. It's certainly an ironic turn that a person who performed erratically at best on law school exams is now teaching other students how to do well on their exams. Well, I learned something on the way to this job -- how to IRAC! With that simple format imposed on my writing and analysis, my legal work became exemplary. To say that I bear a modicum of resentment that this simple, basic technique was not taught to me in law school is putting it mildly. I really wondered why many people who seemed like the most bright of my fellow students were not doing well in law school; I know why they weren't now, and I think it inexcusable! U of M must begin to teach all of its students to think in the format required of attorneys. It's not sufficient to take the attitude that everyone should struggle through and figure this format out on their own; the competition for jobs in the legal marketplace is too fierce to let people without this basic understanding of law out into the fray. Further, the damage done to students' self-images from working harder than others to do well -- and then failing to do well -- can be irreparable. Should this be allowed to happen just because the proper format wasn't taught to a student? A decent writing program could solve these problems. Further, it would teach correct brief writing and research. Dump the third year students; they don't have enough experience to
teach others! Get professionals in there; faculty members whose job is to teach legal analysis/format. This step would solve a lot of problems which U of M Law has -- not the least of which is alumni like myself who will not give money to the School until it makes some changes. As a faculty member in a nationally recognized writing program, I know how far U of M Law must go before it is competitive in the area of legal writing; the School would be wise to take corrective steps now before it causes another set of students untoward grief.

I have started a unique transportation/wheelchair limousine company. It's rough now as a start-up but I hope to franchise the idea in 7 years. I have served as legal counsel (and president) for the corporation SELF RELIANCE, INC. for 3 years. The J.D. after my name gives me instant credibility and leverage in negotiations ... the fact that it comes from UML has had more impact on others than I had anticipated it would.

I feel what I am doing now, providing 24-hour/7-day private transportation to wheelchair users, is more important and gives more benefit to society than I could as a lawyer. One lawyer, more or less, will not make a difference, especially in California. But the industry I am creating is changing hundreds of lives for the better, now; and I hope to impact on millions through franchises.

The overall training I received at UML has been a valuable tool and asset ... I am all the better for having attended.

One client said she chose me by looking through Yellow Pages until she came to "Schmitt, such a good German name." I still get a chuckle when I think of that one.

I usually like being a lawyer -- and after 5 years I now think of it as "my practice" rather than "my job." I find it interesting, however, that in the new leaner legal services market, the people who actually run law firms seem to be very far removed from their product. A law firm sells the creativity, intellectual ability, dedication and personality of its employees. It does not sell refrigerators. Accordingly, "bottom lines" aside, you have to care more about loyalty and morale to have a successful firm. Lay-offs may help to delay a cut in the partners' draws, but in the end I believe they do irreparable damage to the product. I like being a lawyer more than I thought I would, and I like lawyers less than I thought I would. Do these people really think firing their employees will recharge the 1980's gravy train?!

I hated law school. I cried on my graduation day more than I had in a long time. I felt like I had been released from prison.

I guess my greatest disappointment with law school (and, I have to say, I generally enjoyed it) is the lack of enthusiasm for law as an intellectual pursuit. Too often discussions among students
boiled down to knowledge of hornbook law -- few students cared to analyze why a certain rule existed or why it should be continued. I found that this was, to some extent, encouraged by some faculty who either gave simplistic exams or graded based on whether the answer was "right," not on whether the analysis was good (regardless of outcome). This strikes me as particularly dangerous during the first year.

How has this affected law practice? The practitioners with whom I am most impressed use superior analytical skills to challenge or distinguish existing rules.

I loved my law school experience -- I found it intellectually exciting and, odd as it sounds, fun. I was struck when I was a student by how friendly and supportive the Law School environment was -- the professors, the administration, the staff.

I felt I got much more out of my law school education than I paid for. My husband, also a law school graduate, feels the same way. We donate to the Law School every year, and anticipate that our donations will continue to rise with our income. What concerns me is the attitude of current law students that I talk to -- they seem to be very disenchanted by their law school experience -- they feel that the administration is uncaring and inaccessible, the environment is not supportive, etc. Many of them have commented to me how they would never give a dime to the Law School after graduation, based on their horrible experiences. I don't understand how there can be such a radical change in 5 years -- what is going on?

Law school was not particularly relevant to my day-to-day practice, but that's fine. I don't currently have the luxury of extra time to think much about first amendment issues or jurisdictional issues -- but I'm glad I did in law school.

I believe a course in administrative law should be mandatory or strongly, strongly encouraged.

I was very disappointed in my academic experience at Michigan. Many classes were merely exercises in memorization or how can I repeat what the professor said without being a sycophant. Few classes had sufficient practical application of theoretical concepts.

I would also like to see more real estate and small business courses. Clinical coursework should be a requirement and available to each student more than once in his or her 3 years at Michigan.

Finally, I felt that the administration was not effective at enforcing academic rules, particularly with respect to attendance and test-taking, while they were very strict in academically irrelevant areas such as housing and dining services.
I would hope Michigan remains (or becomes) more nonsectarian in its political outlook. Michigan has a tendency to suffer from "political correct" syndrome, both in its teaching and students.

After three years of practicing in a large firm, I took a job in the legal department of a money center bank in May, 1989. This was the best move I ever made. I knew I was trading money for time, and the trade has been well worth it. The last 20% marginal hours are far more valuable than the next -- and these are the hours I bought back by accepting a lower salary.

I was surprised to find that the in-house work was also more interesting, the clients were friendlier (largely because they believe they're getting good value for their legal dollars) and the work distribution and hiring policies were fairer.

I'm one of the happiest lawyers I know. I suppose this is mainly due to my move in-house. But my expectations were also more reasonable, I think, than some of my friends'. I didn't expect to get rich or save the world, and I'm not doing either. But I am making a good salary and doing substantial pro bono work in my free time. And I have plenty of time left over for sports, music, theater and hanging out in coffeeshops.

U of M gave me a good education. I am glad I went there...even though I took the BAR exam 4 times!

The most difficult work-related question I face is how to maintain a challenging, intellectually-stimulating work life without sacrificing my home life.

The following comments relate to each year of my law school experience.

1st Year. An intellectually stimulating and rewarding experience of discovery. Professors uniformly impressive and invigorating, some extraordinary and inspiring (Krier and Kamisar most notably). Course work quite manageable, general camaraderie among classmates. Exciting interaction socially and academically with many very bright people from diverse backgrounds and points of view.

2nd Year. Lustre begins to wear off the newness of the grand law school experience. Courses become more dull and tedious, and detached from practical application, camaraderie among students wanes as job hunting becomes sole priority for many, professors much less inspiring although more published (many have the charisma of foot fungus). Disillusionment sets in.

3rd Year. Everyone is ready to progress from tedious casebook instructional method to actual practice. Clinical courses are not a viable or worthwhile option for students pursuing any area of law other than litigation. 80% of 3rd year is an absolute waste of time and this is a real shame since it should be and
could be the most valuable year in preparing students for practice as they focus their targeted areas of practice.

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Overall, I am working much harder than I prefer. I feel trapped in a job in which I don't believe so that I can earn enough money to pay my educational loans (which are still staggering five years out of school). Law school is a financial catch-22.

The working, commercial world is disillusioning and deadening. In comparison, law school was a dream. I did not go to law school in order to "grease the wheels of commerce," and yet, I have no alternative for the next five years (at least).

I think Michigan Law School provided an excellent education and opportunities for most anything. In retrospect, I think I would have benefitted more had I been older, with a more varied world experience prior to going to law school.

Despite the intellectual ambitions of the professors and some students, law school is a trade school. Most of us go on to become regular working Joes and Josies. It's a drag.

I'm not sure what you can learn from these comments, except:
1) provide more grants (and fewer loans);
2) encourage (as do business schools) applicants to live some between undergrad and law school;
3) spell out the economic realities of post-law school employment with a $40,000 debt to pay.

Finally, in terms of preparing law students to become law practitioners, clinical, hands-on practical experience is the most valuable training.

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I had many misconceptions upon my graduation from law school. For example, I thought that working in the "real world" would make me more politically conservative. This has not been the case. After two years at an M&A/LBO firm in the go-go 80's and 3 years in-house at a Fortune 500 company, my views have shifted further to the left. When I look back at the excesses of the 80's and the exploitation (of resources, people, trust, etc.) by the corporations with which I have worked, I realize that major changes are in order. I am currently exploring left libertarian ideas for possible solutions. Who knows what will come of it?

I also thought, in '86, that it would be really 'sexy' to work at a big firm -- and this was before L.A. Law was even on the air! This also turned out to be a misconception. Although the big firms paid very well, what they demanded in return was ridiculous; dedication to the law and the firm only, at the expense of family and private life is too much to ask, regardless of salary level. Thankfully I was able to find a job at a major corporation with decent hours and no pay cut. This was fortunate indeed, as it seems the bottom has fallen out of the legal market. My old law firm recently laid off 30+ associates. I have
attorney-friends who are out of work. I think the American Lawyer was right; a career in the law, even after attending a prestigious law school, is "no longer risk-free."

One last comment re faculty. I don't think I'll ever get over the Rosenzweig incident. Also, I heard that one of my favorite professors, Jessica Littman, was passed over for tenure (I use passive voice so as not to be accusing). I thought her level of scholarship was high, and her teaching skills very good. We needed a good intellectual property/computer hacker person on the faculty, too. I know that tenure decisions are not alumni decisions, but I thought you would like to know how I felt about these two non-appointments.

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General comments: a) I wish I could have practiced law 3 years and then gone to law school; b) Generally, U. of M. prepared me well for law practice.

I do almost no "pro bono" work (according to the definition given) but I contribute to the betterment of society in many ways through my work. It is hard to describe in few words, but the concept is that if you treat all persons with respect, try to improve the system, try to help people, provide competent services at a fair price and lead a balanced life, then perhaps you're more worthy than an otherwise bad person who does a few guilt-relieving pro bono cases. Note: This is not a diatribe against pro bono work or those who perform pro bono work. However, I feel a sense of frustration at possibly rating myself "low" on what some might consider a goodness scale.

Final comments: 1) My children are the most important persons in my life; 2) Having a competent, bright and hardworking secretary. The importance of that probably can't be overrated.

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Lawyers and corporations need to be more open minded and flexible regarding job sharing, part-time work and family leaves.

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The practice of law is increasingly demanding in terms of both time and stress. Although I often think back to my decision to become a lawyer and wonder if it was correct, I have no regrets over attending Michigan. I am convinced that it is an extraordinary law school and that it provides the highest quality of legal education.

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As I have relayed to Don Regan, document production is decidedly not a part of the Good.

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I've experienced much more sexism from clients than I expected.

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Perhaps I was naive when I entered the big firm arena, but I never expected to receive the kind of treatment that I have received, mainly from the all-male partners in my office. These men "bond" well with incoming male associates who fit the typical "all-man-jock-type person," but are very uncomfortable in dealing
with women. The track record for women in my office is horrible -- women are hired and leave within relatively...short periods of time. Currently, I am the longest-lasting survivor with 5 years under my belt.

I have been told in the past that the reason I was not receiving as much work as my male counterparts was that the partners did not want me to be away from my family because I had to work long hours -- this despite the fact that my children -- at 17 and 24 -- were probably in much less need of care than the children of the other male associates -- those children being preschool ages.

I was also told that because my husband has a good job and has inherited money that the partners felt I didn't really need this job.

Until this year I have been consistently required to do all the non-billable work in the office such as seminar preparations, writing articles for publication (always with a partner receiving either top billing or sole credit), and recruitment responsibilities for this office. Each time I was given a new non-billable assignment, I was assured that I would receive "credit" for my non-billable. Yet each year when the firm's evaluation committee met to review my evaluations, the promises of credit for my 300-500 non-billable hours was never adequately conveyed and I was always told that it was nice that I do so much for the firm but that I had to also have the 1800-2000 billable hours to get ahead. As a result, this year I was not advanced. Instead I was asked to inform the partners of what I believed my future should be here. I responded in writing by stating that I should be treated the same as all the other associates in terms of work assignments. I also requested that my non-billable work be redistributed for a change.

The results have been dramatic but despite the changes I do not feel that this firm is a place that I can work and be appreciated over an extended period.

When I respond that I experience "a lot" of discrimination due to my gender, many of the attorneys in my firm might be surprised. This, however, is the problem. Discrimination today generally does not take the overt forms that it did in the past. Women are not paid less, they are not held back from partnership, etc. The subtle forms of discrimination, however, are rampant in many law firms. This is true particularly for women who have taken maternity leaves.

There is a pervasive notion that you can't be a successful lawyer and mother at the same time. It starts when other attorneys in the office become aware of a pregnancy. The first thing half of them think is that the attorney won't return after her leave. When she does return, many people think that she won't be as reliable, in the office as much, etc. In short, women attorneys
with children are perceived as not having the commitment their male counterparts have.

There also tends to be discrimination in terms of career opportunities. While women are often given equal responsibility as men, the areas in which they are encouraged (or permitted) to practice are often limited. While we don't necessarily see women limited to the "probate," or "divorce" areas of firms, we still don't see them breaking into many traditionally male dominated areas, e.g., collective bargaining.

1) I think law school would be more useful if it were less theoretical and more practical.

2) Most lawyers I know are at least somewhat (and many substantially) dissatisfied or disillusioned with private practice. Personally, I am both. Most of it arises from my firm's focus on being a thriving business (i.e., make money -- it drives everything), and a surprising amount of intellectual dishonesty and lack of common courtesy among members of the bar.

3) I don't know what I'll be doing 5, 10 or 25 years from now, but I do know I definitely don't want to remain a lawyer in private practice for the duration of my career.

The prestige associated with the U of M law degree has been very beneficial. Also, student life in Ann Arbor (I spent all 7 years there) is fantastic.

I have chosen to take several years off from practicing law to be with my children. Looking back, that decision was one of the easiest and best I've ever made. Although of course I miss the income, my stress level has fallen markedly since leaving big-firm practice. I, like many other attorneys at my firm, was highly dissatisfied with the apparent lack of interest in most associates other than for their billable contributions. Additionally, the female associates often felt like outsiders around the powers that be at the firm. At times the firm seemed like a fraternity from which women were subtly excluded. My firm had only 2 female partners out of approximately 70 partners, and I never found a mentor in any of them. With my fellow associates it was a different story; in my section of the firm we felt a great sense of fellowship and cohesiveness.

All this is not to say that I look back at my years at Michigan with regret -- I do not. The education I received at U of M is invaluable and I will draw on it for the rest of my life. I would do it again in an instant. What I am saying is that big-firm practice is not the way to go for many law school graduates, but the vast majority either chooses it for falls into it, and many end up regretting it. I'm just glad I got out when I did!

Like many of my classmates, I went to law school not out of a burning desire to be a lawyer, but because I did not know what
else to do. Until actually going into practice, I never had strong feelings one way or the other about the value of the present legal system to our society. Today, my feelings about the profession are extremely negative. It appears to me to be a self-perpetuating, self-aggrandizing behemoth which the average person feels powerless to stop. There are far too many lawyers in this country, but no one appears willing to make the radical changes in the system, which would bring things back under control, but would also require many fewer lawyers.

I am leaving the profession for good this Fall. I will be attending graduate school for a Master's degree in Human Relations. I hope to spend the rest of my working life working with others towards creative solutions, rather than destructively fighting others on matters I either don't care about, or else actually disagree with.

Generally I am satisfied with my law practice but wish I had more control over it and over my life. I would ideally work fewer hours and more regular hours. I believe my satisfaction stems from the fact that I am a specialist in a "hot" area. It gives me the ability to deal with clients/partners/other lawyers that I might not get if I was just another corporate or real estate attorney.

My other major objection to the firm I work for is that the constant pressure of billable hours makes it difficult to do a satisfying amount of pro bono work. I would like to see more of such work (although I am against mandating it).

My responses may be somewhat skewed due to the fact that I currently work for a Japanese law firm in Osaka, Japan.

The time pressures, long hours, and stress involved in private practice have steadily increased in my experience, and in the view of my lawyer friends and colleagues. Non-lawyer friends and family members cannot comprehend why it is necessary to devote so many hours at work (@ 60 hours/week) and without any ability to determine our own schedules.

This experience makes us cynical, perchance, but it has not escaped my notice that more and more newly-admitted lawyers remain unemployed or under-employed while we with jobs are expected to add 100 billable hours with each successive year. I believe that those partners who control the large firms across the country (and, thus, the market with respect to salary and performance standards) are under the mistaken impression that we associates prefer to sacrifice our personal lives to obtain higher salaries. As a result, firm practice provides virtually no opportunity to combine reasonable hours with interesting and challenging work at a lower salary level. Those who demand fewer hours, including pregnant women and new mothers, are almost universally moved out of the high-profits, tenure track positions, and are given routine assignments and are sometimes
given implied threats of impending dismissal if they do not demonstrate a renewed "commitment" to high billable hours.

Although my observations are anecdotal, I thought you might be interested in my experience since I graduated from UMLS. As I indicated in my questionnaire answers, I work as in-house counsel for a large life insurance company. My in-house "clients" are the employees of the internal business groups and subsidiaries that handle real estate investments for the company's Investment Corporation.

Although this is a difficult time to be a real estate professional and to work for a life insurance company, I love my job. I work directly with my clients and my fellow attorneys all the time regarding all types of real estate matters, both large and small. I counsel and advise regarding deal structure, negotiation tactics, documentation requirements, specific legal concerns and internal policies and procedures. When I work with outside counsel, I am "The Client," so I receive close attention from experienced senior partners who provide excellent training in a variety of skills and substantive areas.

My current situation is the exact opposite of my experience in a large law firm. When I graduated, I did not really want to work for a large law firm, but at that time I did not know where else I could work and still make enough money to make my loan payments. The branch office in which I worked was fairly small at that time, and I liked the people I met there, so off I went.

My law firm experience is far enough behind me now that sometimes I think I could go back into private practice and enjoy it. It might even work out o.k. in a small firm as a more senior attorney, but a large law firm is usually no place for green lawyers to learn anything about the practice of law. On the one hand, I was often the classic drone, shuttled all over the country at a moment's notice to handle small portions of gigantic document production and do diligence projects. On the other hand, when I did get "good assignments," I was sent off with very little supervision or guidance to negotiate, document and close deals that involved types of transactions that I had never heard of in law school or anywhere else. I still worry that one of those deals will end up in litigation and my unintentional malpractice will be revealed.

I'm sure that you will hear from attorneys in large law firms who love their jobs, and that's great. (I know that one of my classmates still works happily in the same office I did.) However, my overall experience has been that many attorneys hate their jobs. This is particularly true about private practice because there is no time for a personal life. My positive answers to the questions in the questionnaire regarding my satisfaction with the balance between my work and my personal life are completely due to the fact that I changed jobs. I know a lot of my classmates who did the same thing -- moved in-house,
or to the government, or to solo practice, or out of law all together -- because big law firm practice is not all it's cracked up to be.

I suppose that in many respects, none of this is the Law School's problem -- we choose to come to law school, we choose our jobs after graduation, and off we go. I also suppose that some people choose to work like crazy, 2500 billable hours a year or much more, because they like it, and they think it's worth it. It's a fundamental lifestyle choice that most adults have to make -- money and power, etc., or leisure time and family, etc., which will it be?

The relevant point for you, however, is that the choices are much more limited than most students coming to law school ever realize. There are very few jobs around any more, at least in major cities, that don't require the 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week commitment. The jobs that are more humane usually don't pay, and yet the competition is tough to get them, because my experience has been that most people will take more free time for less pay if they can at all afford it. I feel that I am very lucky -- together my husband and I make enough to pay the $500+ we pay each month in student loan payments, and we each found one of the few jobs around that is in that middle range of legal jobs -- pays well enough but doesn't require a Faustian pact.

In conclusion, my concrete suggestions for UMLS regarding this situation are as follows:

1) **Loan Forgiveness.** Institute a loan forgiveness program for graduates who work in "the public interest" (very tough to define, I'll grant you that) but only for so long as they continue such work. I definitely would have considered public interest work if I hadn't had too many loan payments (even though I might have eventually decided that the time demands were too great).

2) **Career Counseling.** There must be more choices upon graduation than judicial clerkships for Law Review types, public interest for people who can afford it, and law firm jobs with firms that interview in Room 200 for all the rest. When I graduated I knew that there must be alternatives, but it seemed very difficult to find out just exactly what to do to get a different type of job. I read in the American Lawyer that Room 200 firms aren't showing up quite like they used to, and that seems like all the more reason to work with students regarding creative placement opportunities, maybe even through a 1 or 2 credit P/F course entitled "Career Opportunities" or something like that, with speakers with different types of legal jobs giving advice about alternative opportunities and how to go after them. (I know, I know -- not on the cutting edge intellectually, you couldn't write a Law Review article about it, attendance would probably be the main component of a passing grade, but I think it would be useful.).
Since I truly am a lawyer at heart, I have a lot of other ideas and things that I could say, but I must end this. Feel free to contact me at my office if you want more information for your survey.

While private practice may be a rational choice for some, I cannot get excited about working so hard simply to transfer wealth. Law school should help to fight the institutional inertia that funnels law students through Room 200 to big law firms. It is our fault for allowing it to happen, but the Law School has the resources and experience to shock us into a more rational choice.

Am presently unemployed due to downturn in transactional business and partner-earnings consciousness.

Small classes are instrumental in assisting students to develop legal skills and self-confidence. Recommend that law school programs provide for more than one small class (up to 30 students) per semester during first year of law school.

I have worked out a special agreement with my law firm whereby in exchange for a substantial salary reduction, I can devote 1/3 of my time to my own interests.

I don't think law school prepared us very well for the practice of law. I don't think the Writing & Advocacy course is sufficient to prepare students for legal research & writing. I think it should be a 1 year, 2 credit/semester graded course.

I also think we should have received training on how to take law school exams. I did poorly on law school exams because I did not understand what was expected. I don't think I fully understood until I took my bar prep course.