

## Appendix: Survey of Law School Deans

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## APPENDIX

### SURVEY OF LAW SCHOOL DEANS\*

FRANCIS X. BEYTAGH\*\*

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The amount of attention focused in recent years on the continuing high turnover rate among law school deans suggested the desirability of a relatively brief survey that would attempt to obtain some first-hand information (on an anonymous basis) about the attitudes of current deans toward their jobs. Of the 176 law school deans solicited to participate in this survey, eighty-three responded. Typically, a dean provided more than one answer to each question except where there was allowance for only one response per question. Thus, in some cases more than eighty-three responses may be found in the grouping of questions.

#### II. WHAT FACTORS LED YOU TO ACCEPT YOUR CURRENT DEAN'S JOB?

A total of twenty-nine different reasons were noted by the respondents. Significantly, over fifty percent of the deans responded with two rather divergent reasons for their decision to accept a deanship. The most frequently stated factor, expressed a total of forty-five times, was the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the institution or of legal education. Forty-three deans indicated that they felt they "were the right person for the job." Twenty-one deans listed characteristics of the institution (its reputation, size, faculty composition, makeup of the student body, or location) as factors.

Thirteen indicated that they had been urged to accept the position by either the university administration, faculty, students, or alumni. Eight deans felt that a deanship would allow them to more fully utilize their abilities, while six indicated that discontent with

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\* This survey was conducted with ABA assistance in the fall of 1989, and reported at the 1990 Deans' Workshop in Los Angeles. It is reprinted with permission of Dean Francis X. Beytagh.

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teaching and research fueled their acceptance. Six deans mentioned salary as a factor.

### III.

#### *A. What Do You Regard as the Most Satisfying or Rewarding Aspect of Your Job?*

There were ninety responses indicating aspects internal to the law school as the most gratifying. These aspects included the opportunity to improve the school or legal education (53), satisfaction in seeing improvement (11), and working with faculty and students (7).

There were twenty-five replies indicating external aspects such as obtaining public support for the institution (12), working with alumni (6), and improving external relations (5). Three deans either found nothing rewarding or were at a loss for words to indicate anything rewarding about deaning.

#### *B. Conversely, the Most Frustrating or Discouraging?*

Thirty-two deans listed difficulties in dealing with faculty as the most frustrating part of their job. Twenty-six indicated that dealing with the university hierarchy was most discouraging. Twenty-five noted paperwork, routine details, and excessive time demands.

Apart from those aspects, the listings became far less significant in numbers. Examples include failure in fundraising (4), inability personally to continue scholarship (4), failures in minority recruiting (1), and stress on family (1). Three deans (not composed entirely of the three noted in Subpart III.A) found nothing or listed nothing discouraging about their job.

### IV.

#### *A. What Do You View as the Greatest Challenge of Deaning?*

Thirty-three deans indicated that situations involving relations with faculty were the most demanding challenges of deaning. Fundraising was indicated as the greatest challenge by eighteen deans. Twelve listed balancing of the school's role respective to its various constituencies. Gaining support from the university and effective use of time each were listed by ten deans.

Other responses included maintaining one's temper during trying times (6), remaining focused on the primary objectives of the institution (4), and administrative details (3). There was only one "no response."

*B. Conversely, the Easiest or Most Manageable?*

Forty-four deans indicated activities which could be classified as "internal." These included faculty relations (11), internal administration (10), dealing with students (8), and dealing with staff (6). This group also included one "pointed" response of "sharpening pencils."

External activities were noted by nineteen deans and included dealing with alumni (9), promoting the school to benefactors (3), dealing with external relations (3), and going to conferences (1).

Twenty-one deans either gave no response (15) or indicated that there were no easy challenges in deaning (6).

V.

*A. What Advice Would You Give to Colleagues Considering Law School Deanships?*

This question resulted in significant diversity in responses. Forty-seven different pieces of advice emerged, many of which defy easy grouping.

Twenty-two deans suggested that positive "people skills" (sense of humor, unselfishness, optimism) are a requirement for successful deaning. The need to understand the school's organization and power structure was noted by fifteen respondents. Seven deans advised prospective deans to have a tough skin. Another seven warned that deans must be willing to be away from home for long hours. Seven suggested that the candidate look carefully into the school's financial and operational system before accepting a deanship.

Other suggestions included: "know thyself" (6), talk with other deans (2), "put your ego in the drawer" (4), develop a strong ego (1), try associate deaning first (2), consider the effect upon your scholarship and research (4), develop a personal relationship with faculty (2), "don't do it unless you have administrative skills" (2), and "don't take it all too seriously" (2).

*B. To Dean Search Committees?*

Responses to this question were also divergent. Thirty-one respondents suggested that search committees should give "people skills" and energy an edge over academic credentials in making their choice of a new dean.

From that point, significant similarities in answers declined drastically: suggestions that committees look for an administrator

over an academician (5), be realistic in expectations (4), be honest and give full disclosure to candidates (3), encourage faculty to assume an appropriate role in assisting the new dean (3), and give preference to an insider (3).

Interesting individual responses included: seek someone who understands the school's needs and is willing to make a commitment, get advice from experienced managers as opposed to lawyers and academicians, seek a long-rider over a short-termer, and "eschew paper chasers."

#### VI. HOW DO YOU VIEW THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF THESE VARIOUS CONSTITUENCIES?

Of the eighty-three participants, eighty-two responded to this section. An unknown number of respondents were deans of private institutions, which may skew the significance of the response to "Legislature." In some cases, respondents chose not to answer a particular section.

	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT
ALUMNI	54	25	3
FACULTY	82	0	0
STAFF	55	26	1
STUDENTS	68	14	0
UNIVERSITY	55	22	2
BAR	24	48	10
JUDICIARY	13	51	18
LEGISLATURE	13	29	37
MEDIA	20	41	21
PUBLIC	17	38	28

#### VII. WHAT STEPS COULD OR SHOULD THE ABA OR AALS TAKE TO MAKE DEANING MORE ATTRACTIVE AND ENJOYABLE?

##### WHAT SUPPORT MIGHT THESE ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE TO LAW DEANS IN ADDITION TO WHAT IS BEING DONE PRESENTLY?

This question prompted the most diverse response, with sixty different suggestions. By far the most common response, by twenty-six deans, was "no ideas" (7), or "can't do any more" (10), or no response (9).

Fourteen deans suggested that opportunities for deans to interact (meetings, conferences, network lists) be maintained or expanded. One dean offered the suggestion that a sort of nonprogram retreat be held to stimulate informal communications

between deans. Eight deans requested that the paperwork load occasioned by the organizations be reduced. Seven deans suggested that efforts be made to help faculty understand the respective roles of dean and faculty.

#### VIII. WHAT DIRECTIONS DO YOU FORESEE FOR LEGAL EDUCATION IN THE 1990s? HOW WILL THIS AFFECT DEANING?

The most common prediction of things to come, mentioned by thirty-two respondents, is that financial woes will increase for law schools, placing a greater fundraising burden upon the deans. A group of eighteen deans believe that changes in the practice of law will cause deans and faculty to respond with changes in the law school curriculum. Seven deans foresee a decline in applications by and enrollment of qualified students, causing particular problems for "less prestigious" schools in recruiting, and demanding more attention by all deans regarding their school's image and public relations.

Three deans predict increasing complexity in the administration of legal education that may result in the development of professional law school administrators. Another two deans see increasing bureaucracy, with future law schools being run by bureaucrats. Another dean sees the same trend making deaning far less attractive.

Five deans believe there will be declining public interest in legal education. Two deans suggest that constituencies will become more specialized, requiring tomorrow's dean to be especially effective at balancing constituency needs against the needs of the school.

Six deans see the growth of technology as continuing, but at a more rapid pace in affecting law schools. Five deans foresee more clinical and interdisciplinary programs, while two other deans predict a movement back to the basics with less experimentation. Another dean suggests that there will be a push toward more part-time legal education in order to remove the economic barriers to entering the legal profession.

One dean lamented upon the low turnover of faculty which the respondent felt would make necessary programmatic changes difficult. Another dean foresees the demise of the tenure system, to be replaced by long-term contracts, an event that dean sees as removing obstacles to change.

## IX.

*A. How Long Have You Been a Law School Dean? How Long Do You Anticipate Continuing in the Job?*

Fifty of those responding have been a dean for three years or less. Of that number, fifteen expect to remain in that position for three or less years more, thirteen for four to nine years, and twenty for ten or more (or unknown) years.

Another eighteen of the participants have been a dean for more than three but less than ten years. Of those, eight expect to remain for three or less years more, three for four to nine years, and seven for an unknown period.

Fifteen respondents have been a dean for ten or more years. Within that group, four expect to remain on the job for three or less years more, four for four to nine years more, and seven are unsure.

*B. When You Quit, What Will Likely Be the Most Important Reason?*

Responses to this question may be grouped as follows:

Tired or loss of challenge	27
Return to faculty job	15
Goals accomplished	11
Best for school/time for "new blood"	10
Don't know	8
Increased funding problems	3
Better opportunity/location	3
Only interim dean now	2
Retirement	1
Poor faculty relations	1
If asked	1
Termination	1

X. KNOWING WHAT YOU KNOW NOW, WOULD YOU HAVE ACCEPTED A LAW SCHOOL DEANSHIP?

YES	74
NO	4
UNCERTAIN	4
NO RESPONSE	1

XI. WHAT ONE-SENTENCE "OBITUARY" WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE WRITTEN ABOUT YOUR CURRENT DEANSHIP?

Virtually all of the deans responding wrote an obit that suggests that he or she did the best that he or she could to help improve the school specifically and legal education generally. Some standouts (of sorts):

Shortest: "Effective"

Longest: (too long)

Most modest: "He didn't screw it up."

Best use of another's work: ". . . la historia me absolvera . . ." (" . . . history will absolve me . . .")—F. Castro

House favorite: "Here lies [name], he's over the hill, too many performance reviews against his will."