

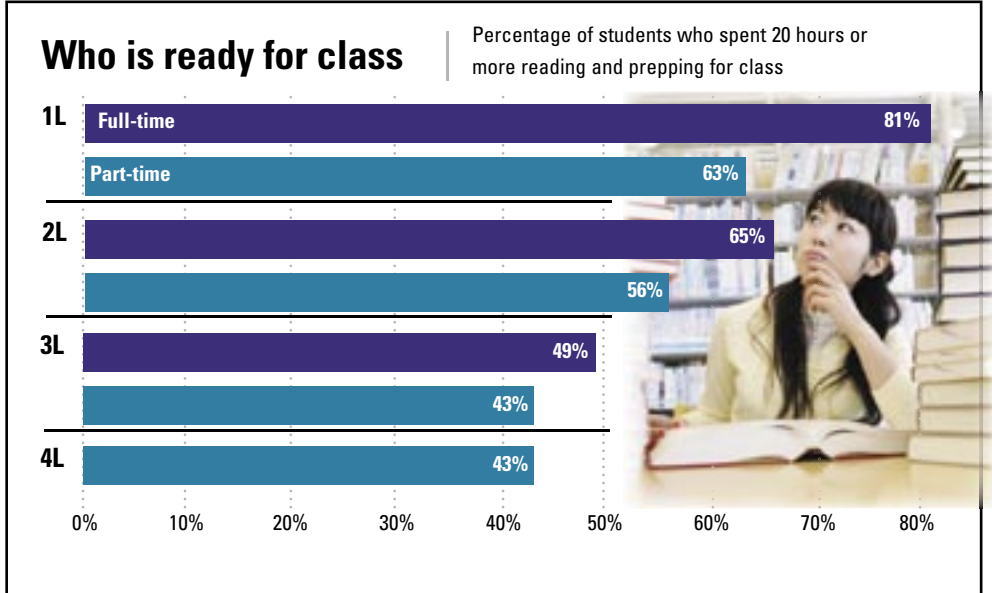
What law school is REALLY like

Law student survey gives an insider's view By Rebecca Luczycki

You think you want to go to law school, and you've done your research so you think you know what to expect. But what's it *really* like? How much will you *really* have to study? Are the professors supportive or scary? And how much time will you have for the rest of your life?

Those are questions pre-law students can now get answers to, direct from the minds of current law students, thanks to the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE). It's an annual national survey of tens of thousands of law students at 74 law schools and the 2005 results for the survey were recently released.

So how much will you have to study? Well, the survey results revealed that 81 percent of full-time, first-year students nationwide spend 20 hours or more a week reading and prepping for class, and 93 percent of 1Ls come to class prepared with reading and assignments completed. But many students slack off a bit after first year. The numbers of students spending 20 hours a week prepping drop to 65 percent and 49 percent in the second and third years of law school. That's probably not surprising to most upper-class students.



The survey also showed how satisfied students are with the services provided to them by law schools, and how many make use of those services. For example, 79 percent of students make use of career counseling, and just over 60 percent of students are satisfied or very satisfied with that service.

Meanwhile, 84 percent of students use academic counseling services, and more than 65 percent of them are happy with that service. Analysis of the data by survey staffers shows that students who said they were happy with academic advising at their schools perceived the law school to be more supportive and were more satisfied with their law school experience.

Other significant findings that are not so reassuring, show that about one in six law students never receives prompt feedback from professors; about 40 percent of law students do not participate in any extracurricular activities; and most law students today graduate with about \$77,000 in debt.

Information like that can be very useful to people thinking about going to law school, said Patrick

How do law students spend their time (Hours per week)

	full-time students			part-time students			
	1L	2L	3L	1L	2L	3L	4L
Class reading	21	17	13	16	16	13	12
Other studying	10	8	8	8	7	6	6
Working (non-legal job)	2	2	2	19	19	16	15
Working (legal job)	1	4	7	8	11	13	15
Co-curricular activities	2	5	5	1	1	2	2
Community organizations	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Pro bono	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Personal reading	3	4	4	3	4	4	4
Caring for dependents	3	3	4	8	10	10	10
Relaxing/socializing	10	11	12	7	7	8	8
Commuting to school	5	5	5	5	5	6	6

O'Day, project manager for the survey, which was conducted by the Center for Postsecondary Research at Indiana University in Bloomington, Ind.

"It gives them a more realistic idea of what [law school] is like and people always tend to do better when expectations match experience," said O'Day.

Janelle Marsh, senior assistant dean for students and academics the **University of Alabama School of Law** in Tuscaloosa agrees prelaw students should pay close attention to the survey and use the results when choosing schools.

"They will know what kind of questions to ask," she said.

But don't look for a ranking of schools based on the data.

"We don't need any more rankings," said O'Day.

Results at a glance...

The good news



Part-time and full-time law students did not differ in terms of how they perceived the degree to which the law school environment supports their academic and social needs



More than one-half of students frequently had serious conversations with students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds



Nine in 10 students said their law school emphasized studying and spending time on academic work

The bad news



About two-fifths of law students spent no time on co-curricular activities



Almost one-half of students said their school did very little to help them cope with their non-school activities



Nine out of 10 J.D. students who incur debt to attend law school indicated they will owe more than \$77,000 when they graduate

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