

# From the President: Contributing Our Part to Continuing Research on the Legal Employment Market

by Marcy Cox

With the recent changes to the ABA Questionnaire, law schools will now have to submit individual graduate employment data to both the ABA and NALP. In recent years, all but a handful of U.S. law schools have completed the annual Employment Report and Salary Survey and submitted the report to NALP. This year the question of whether schools will have the time and resources to complete both the ABA and NALP surveys, with near contemporaneous deadlines, has become a topic of discussion among some law school members.

The added burden of supplying individual graduate data to the ABA combined with the recent request from the Law School Transparency group (which asked law school members to produce their 2010 NALP employment reports and threatened to file Freedom of Information Act requests to compel production of these reports by state schools that do not comply) has created a tremendous amount of pressure on law school members as they balance the need for total transparency while protecting the confidential employment information supplied by graduates and reported to NALP.

It is important to note that law schools' hesitancy in producing the report is not an attempt to preclude transparency, but rather reflects a deep concern that the NALP report contains individual graduate data that is sorted by gender, race, geography, and other identifying confidential information provided by graduates. The only entities that ask for individual graduate data are the ABA and

NALP. The ABA requests the information as the accrediting authority of law schools. NALP prepares a detailed report for each school and compiles and reports on the national data set on an annual basis, publishing various employment-related findings for each class individually and also reporting on changes in the employment market over time. Both groups assure the anonymity of all graduates and only report the data in the aggregate. All other organizations that request the data, like *U.S. News* for instance, request its production in the aggregate.

NALP's mission is to connect its members by providing vision, expertise, research, and education. One of NALP's key objectives is to serve as the authority for reliable, comprehensive, objective, and strategic data, information, and analysis on careers in the legal profession. For many years, the research that NALP has conducted on the school side has been based on the employment data provided by every law school in the country with only a few exceptions. If a substantial number of law schools decline to submit employment data to NALP, the research arm of the organization will be unable to analyze and report the employment outcomes and salaries of law school graduates. Because of this research we know, for example, the types of jobs law graduates find and where they find them; what salaries law graduates earn on a year-to-year basis; how the earnings of law graduates vary depending on geography and job type; what states offer the most job opportunities; and how women and graduates of color fare in comparison to their classmates. This is just a small sample

of the sort of analyses NALP is able to conduct and report back to us.

Much of the information that law schools use as benchmarks to gauge the effectiveness of their operations, both on an annual basis and over time, is in large part based on the data NALP collects from schools collectively. As a NALP member, I cannot imagine doing my job effectively without having access to the many resources NALP produces that rely on the data submitted by law schools.

As career services professionals finalize their data collection efforts, meet with their deans, and decide how to proceed over the next month, it is im-

portant to remember that each law school's data is vitally important as we measure employment in the legal profession. It is also important to remember the expression, "Don't cut off your nose to spite your face." The data that law schools supply to NALP is helpful to schools on many levels, yet it is also important in a broader sense as each school's data has allowed NALP to measure and report comprehensively on the legal employment market for nearly 40 years. As beneficiaries of the vast amount of information NALP has published over the years, the least we can do is contribute our small part to ensure that the data NALP reports in the years to come is as complete and comprehensive as possible.