

Too Many Lawyers?

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The idea that there are just too many lawyers isn't a new idea, but it deserves mention even in these difficult economic times.

It seems that some think that it's not that there aren't enough legal jobs, but rather, there are just too many lawyers. Read more at [The New York Times](#)...

Another View: Lock the Law School Doors

by Dan Slater

This summer, in the staid world of legal education, where curriculum is uniform and scholars are trained in the art of like-mindedness, one dean hatched a contrary plan.

In a memo to incoming students, Patricia D. White, the dean of University of Miami School of Law, surmised: "Perhaps many of you are looking to law school as a safe harbor in which you can wait out the current economic storm." She then urged them to "think hard" about their plans and offered incentives for those willing to defer for one year.

"The nature of the legal profession is in great flux," Dean White observed. "It is very difficult to predict what the employment landscape for young lawyers will be in May 2012 and thereafter."

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The American Bar Association, which continues to approve law schools with impunity and with no end in sight, bears complicity in creating this mess. Yet a spokeswoman, citing antitrust concerns, says the A.B.A. takes no position on the optimal number of lawyers or law schools. So then how about the schools? Can they save future generations of students from themselves?

If it means shrinking classes, don't count on it. Limiting education is un-American, not to mention anticapitalist, even if many law schools appear to profit from what may charitably be called an inefficient distribution of market information.

Take, for instance, the employment statistics posted on the Web sites of three low-ranked law schools in New York City, the country's biggest market for legal employment. All three advertise that 45 to 60 percent of their 2008 graduates who reported salary information are making a median salary of \$150,000 to \$160,000.

Now, of course there must be some way of slicing and dicing the numbers to yield that magic result. But what happens, in practice, is that prospective degree-purchasers enroll in these \$43,000-a-year programs believing their chances of landing that Big Law job are about one in two. Tempting odds.

Other schools market their degrees without six-figure promises. "If you counted on starting at \$160,000 per year, then you're in for a huge disappointment," said Bryant Garth, the dean at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles, where enrollment is up 11 percent. He disagrees with Miami's approach and believes that trying to shrink class size amounts to panicking. "I insist law is still a good career," he said. "Students may just have to make it in a more entrepreneurial fashion."