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HLS Student Government**

POLICY PROPOSAL

Measure Alumni Employment Type Beyond Graduation

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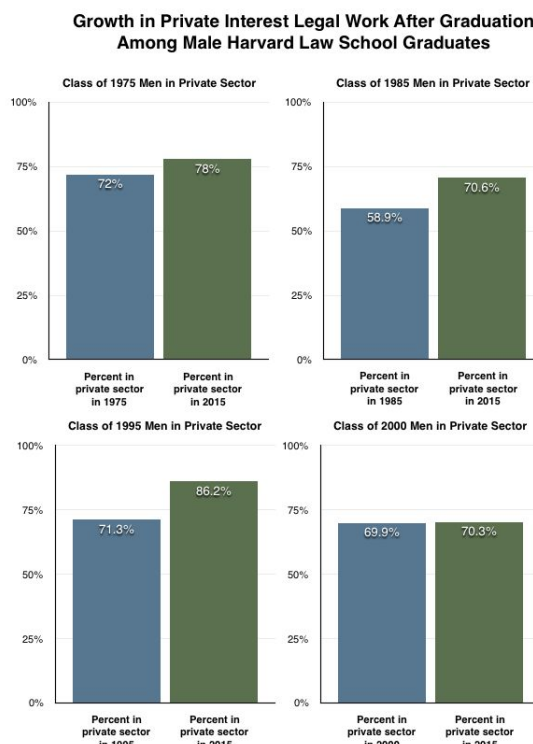
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I. Problem Statement: Unclear Alumni Employment Data

As required by the American Bar Association, Harvard Law School provides clear data annually on how many recent graduates are set to be employed in each of the different legal sectors (government, public interest, business, education, law firm, etc.). However, there is very little consistent data on where alumni work years out from graduation. This is important information, because many students make employment decisions based on assumptions regarding the ease at which they can switch legal sectors. For example, many civic-minded students assume that it is common to pursue corporate interest legal work for a few years and then switch to the public interest legal later. However, there is not consistent data to show that that is what happens with most graduates.

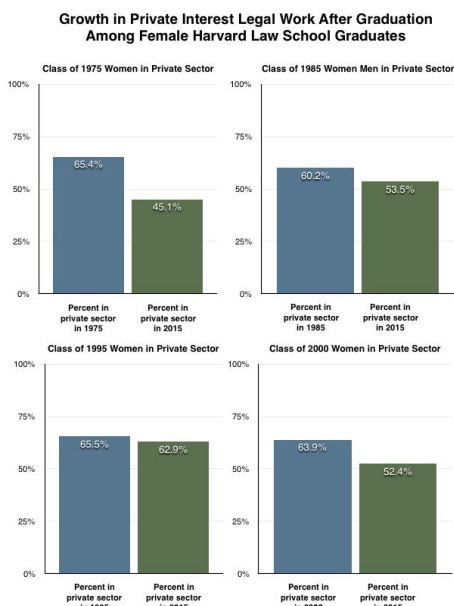
When data is sporadically gathered, the conclusions are revelatory. For example, according to Harvard's "After the JD" study, only 7.2% of Harvard Law graduates who are working at firms with 251+ lawyers three years after graduation are working in public interest organizations twelve years after graduation. The same is true for only 4.6% of lawyers who are working at mid-sized firms. Even more interesting, less than 0.2% of those surveyed were working in legal services or as a public defender. Indeed, given this brief glimpse at employment type data beyond graduation, it can be expected, if these trends continue, that of the 303 Class of 2015 graduates working in 100+ lawyer firms after graduation, *only 22* will be working in the public interest nine years later.¹

The Center on the Legal Profession's 2015 HLS Career Study -- another ad hoc data collection effort, which looks at the career trajectories of the Class of 1975, 1985, 1995, and 2000, split by gender -- also provided important data. 72% of men in the Class of 1975 worked in a law firm or a business after law school and 78% did in 2015. 58.9% of men in the Class of 1985 worked in a law firm or a business after law school and 70.6% did in 2015. The same trend continues with the Class of 1995 (from 71.3% in 1995 to 86.2% in 2015) and 2000 (from 69.9% to 70.3% in 2015). More



¹ Private email with member of Center for the Legal Profession, citing *After the JD Study* data.

Harvard Law men, not less, are deploying their educations for a business or a big law firm 15, 20, 30, and 40 years after graduation day. By 2015, no class studied had more than 30% of male graduates working in public interest organizations.²



Interestingly, there does appear to be a slight public interest career shift for Harvard Law women. Whereas 65.4% of women in the Class of 1975 worked for firms or businesses after graduation, that number was down to 45.1% by 2015, with 54.9% of the class' women working in public sector organizations. However, that 20 percentage point drop in corporate interest work is not matched in the future classes: the Classes of 1985, 1995, and 2000 saw 7, 2, and 13 percentage point drops, respectively, in corporate interest work between their graduation years and 2015. Indeed, almost 50% of women in the Class of 2000 were serving the public interest at work in 2015. However, even just among women graduates, the data dispels the notion that there is a major shift from corporate interest work to public interest work in the years following graduation.

At it's measured peak, with the Class of 1975 women, there was only a 20 percentage point shift.³

These two examples show the clarity and power of gathering data on alumni employment beyond graduation day. Such data collection helps inform assumptions that students and administrators are making with regard to Harvard Law graduates' career impact. This is likely why Yale Law School consistently conducts a [First Non-Clerkship](#), [5th year](#), and [10th year](#) employment survey. Since we do not do the same, our knowledge of the career trajectories on which we are launching Harvard lawyers remains shrouded in myth and informed by only ad hoc insight.

II. Policy Proposal: Routinely Measure Alumni Employment

We propose replicating Yale Law School's post-graduate employment surveys so as to consistently gather and publish data on each graduating classes's first non-clerkship employment, employment five years after graduation and employment ten years after

² David B. Wilkins, Bryon Fong, and Ronit Dinovitzer, *The Women and Men of Harvard Law School: Preliminary Results from the HLS Career Study* (Harvard Law School: Center on the Legal Profession 2015), <https://clp.law.harvard.edu/assets/HLS-Career-Study-FINAL.pdf>.

³ Id.

graduation. As you can see from Yale's [published surveys](#), useful questions to ask on such surveys include:

- Employer type
- Employer location
- Job satisfaction
- Hours spent working
- Salaries
- Pro Bono hours PERFORMED

If survey data is kept in a manner to track each individual graduate's career trajectories, they can be even more useful, showing how graduating classes move through different sectors at different points in their life and how career aspirations match up with career realities.

Such consistent data would make great strides in informing and clarifying student employment decisions following graduation, as well as administrative decisions in crafting admitted classes to ensure graduate career trajectories are balanced across different legal fields and needs.