

# New Report Details the Career Pathways, Responsibilities, and Job Satisfaction of Law School Faculty

*While law faculty are becoming more diverse, a large majority graduated from the most selective institutions*

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, November 19, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Law faculty are becoming more diverse, though barriers to the legal academy remain for first-generation college graduates according to the American Law School Faculty Study released today by the Association of American Law Schools (AALS). The comprehensive new study highlights trends in demographics, career pathways, scholarship, duties, and job satisfaction, and is based on two surveys conducted for AALS by NORC at the University of Chicago.

Hispanic faculty and faculty of color at law schools. The study found that Hispanic faculty and faculty of color comprise 37 percent of faculty who started teaching in the last five years. In contrast, Hispanic faculty and faculty of color make up smaller proportions of more experienced law faculty.

First-generation college graduates and law school. While the legal academy is becoming more diverse in terms of race and ethnicity and gender, first-generation college graduates face barriers on the pathway to law teaching. Less than a quarter (22 percent) of current law faculty are first-generation college graduates whose parents have less than a bachelor's degree. A majority (56 percent) of current law faculty have a parent with an advanced degree (44 percent) or a law degree (12 percent).

The decision to pursue law teaching. According to the survey, most law faculty (68 percent) made the decision to pursue law teaching after they completed law school. Interestingly, those who earned their JD more recently (between 2010 and 2023) made this decision earlier in their careers. Most law faculty across the country (71 percent) earned their JD from one of the most selective law schools based on average LSAT scores of admitted students. Eighty-nine percent of faculty teaching at the most selective schools also have a law degree from one of the most selective institutions.

There has also been a steady increase in the proportion of faculty earning both a JD and an additional advanced degree, such as a master's or PhD, with 57 percent of those earning their JD between 2010 and 2023 holding such qualifications.

Law school hiring practices. The 2022-23 academic year saw a significant increase in hiring across various positions and law school selectivity levels. Most law schools hired at least one new tenured classroom faculty member or dean (68 percent) or tenure-track faculty member (75 percent). The most selective institutions were more likely to hire tenured classroom faculty or deans (87 percent), while selective institutions hired more tenure-track (80 percent), clinical (61 percent), and legal writing faculty (75 percent).

“The key findings from this project represent an important foundation from which AALS will build to further explore the pathway to law teaching and the experiences of current law faculty,” said Kellye Y. Testy, AALS Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer. “Our goal in completing this study is to assist those considering a career in law teaching, aid current law faculty in better understanding their profession, and empower law school leaders to foster the talents of current and prospective faculty members.”

“The prior AALS study on law deans is an important piece in understanding our profession. Our hope is that this report will prove equally useful and interesting to law school faculty and allow us to more fully map the most popular paths to a career in law teaching,” said Melanie D. Wilson, AALS President and Dean and Roy L. Steinheimer, Jr., Professor of Law at Washington and Lee University School of Law. “The legal academy is changing, and the findings in this study reveal those important trends.”

The study is sponsored by the AccessLex Institute. Additional information can be found at [www.aals.org/research/faculty-study/](http://www.aals.org/research/faculty-study/).

#### About the American Law School Faculty Study

The American Law School Faculty Study is a report based on two national surveys conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for AALS in fall of 2023: a survey of 117 current or acting deans and a survey of 1,892 law faculty. The report provides a snapshot of the background and responsibilities of law professors as well as the current academic job market.

#### About AALS

The Association of American Law Schools (AALS), founded in 1900, is a nonprofit association of 175 member and 19 fee-paid law schools. Its members enroll most of the nation’s law students and produce the majority of the country’s lawyers and judges, as well as many of its lawmakers. The mission of AALS is to improve and advance legal education. AALS carries out its mission by promoting the core values of excellence in teaching and scholarship, academic freedom, and diversity, including diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints, while seeking to foster justice, and to serve our many communities—local, national, and international. In support of its mission, AALS serves as both the institutional membership organization for law schools, and as the learned society for law faculty.

#### About NORC at the University of Chicago

NORC at the University of Chicago conducts research and analysis that decision-makers trust. As a nonpartisan research organization and a pioneer in measuring and understanding the world, we have studied almost every aspect of the human experience and every major news event for more than eight decades. Today, we partner with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to provide the objectivity and expertise necessary to inform the critical decisions facing society.

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