The Law Deans of New York, New Jersey, and California

February 10, 2021

Mr. William E. Adams, Jr.
Managing Director, Accreditation and Legal Education

Ms. Stephanie Giggetts
Deputy Managing Director, Accreditation and Legal Education
ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
321 N. Clark St.
Chicago IL 60654

Dear Bill and Stephanie,

We hope you are well. We, the undersigned Law Deans from the States of New York, New Jersey, and California, appreciate all that you do for American legal education. We are committed to and fully support all efforts by the ABA to ensure transparency in the job placement reporting process. We write to provide suggestions for improving the quality of consumer information regarding the Class of 2020’s placement statistics in light of the unique and profound disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background
COVID-19 has radically impacted recent law school graduates’ ability to uniformly access state licensing exams and the job market.

- First, many bar exams, particularly in the states with among the largest numbers of new law graduates, were rescheduled from late July to early October. Many of these states were among the hardest hit by COVID-19, and statewide operations were subject to severe limitations imposed by government. These states include New York, New Jersey, California, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, among others. Graduates who took the October bar exam did not find out if they passed the exam until mid- or late-December, or even January (e.g., NY 12/16; NJ 12/23; CA 1/8; GA 12/14; MA 12/8; IL 12/1; DC 12/11; PA 12/11; and DC 12/11). These delays in bar results were more than two months later than when bar takers and law schools typically rely on receiving them: by mid-to-late October. This means, in normal years, law schools can typically expect to have at least a four-month window from the time their graduates receive bar results (discounting December and early January because of the holidays) to meaningfully assist them before filing an employment report, as of March 15, with the ABA.

- Second, states like New York, New Jersey, and California, experienced lengthy economic shut-downs and physical lockdowns - significantly reducing hiring, the
accessibility of the courts, and the overall provision of legal services, beginning in early spring 2020 when many 3Ls in these jurisdictions would have typically secured opportunities prior to graduation. New York announced lockdown on March 22, New Jersey on March 21, and California announced lockdown on March 19.

We acknowledge that the circumstances informing this year’s reporting cycle are *sui generis*. These circumstances pose an array of threats and challenges to ensuring that the collection of uniform data is valid and reliable for public consumption. Presenting data that is not properly measured and contextualized can have an injurious effect on the consumer.

**Our Request**

In light of the delay in the administration of the bar exam, we request the ABA consider March 15 as an *interim* “as of” reporting date, and set a later date, such as “as of” June 15, for a final reporting date so as to capture those graduates employed during the period from March 15 to the final reporting date. This staggered approach leaves intact the March 15 data submission to the ABA, while also ensuring the reporting and publication of more complete and reliable statistics to the consumer. Until the final reports are published, consumers will be able to look at the interim data in relation to the three years of job placement data each law school currently makes available on their website. This data, which is “as of” March 15 has long served as a reliable indicator of how law schools fare generally, and comparatively to other schools, under more normal conditions.

We thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

**The New York Law Deans**¹

Alicia Ouellette  
President and Dean, Professor of Law  
Albany Law School

Michael T. Cahill  
President, Joseph Crea Dean & Professor of Law  
Brooklyn Law School

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¹ The CUNY and Syracuse Law Deans, Mary Lu Bilek and Craig Boise, recused themselves from participation in this submission because they are ABA Council Members.
Aviva Abramovsky
Dean and Professor of Law
University at Buffalo School of Law

Melanie Leslie
Dean and Samuel Belkin Professor of Law
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

Gillian Lester
Dean and Lucy G. Moses Professor of Law
Columbia Law School

Jens David Ohlin
Interim Dean and Professor of Law
Cornell Law School

Matthew Diller
Dean and Paul Fuller Professor of Law
Fordham University School of Law

Judge A. Gail Prudenti
Dean and Executive Director of the Center for Children, Families and the Law
Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University

Anthony W. Crowell
Dean and President, Professor of Law
New York Law School

Trevor W. Morrison
Dean and Eric M. and Laurie B. Roth Professor of Law
New York University School of Law

Horace Anderson, Jr.
Dean and Professor of Law
Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University
Michael A. Simons  
Dean and John V. Brennan Professor of Law & Ethics  
St. John’s University School of Law  

Elena B. Langan  
Dean and Professor of Law  
Touro Law Center  

**The New Jersey Law Deans**  
Kimberly Mutcherson  
Co-Dean and Professor of Law  
Rutgers Law School, Camden  

David Lopez  
Co-Dean and Professor of Law  
Rutgers Law School, Newark  

Kathleen M. Boozang  
Dean and Professor of Law  
Seton Hall Law School  

**The California Law Deans**  
Erwin Chemerinsky  
Dean and Jesse H. Choper Distinguished Professor of Law  
University of California, Berkeley School of Law  

Kevin Johnson  
Dean and Mabie-Apallas Professor of Public Interest Law  
University of California, Davis School of Law  

David Faigman  
Chancellor and Dean, John F. Digardi Distinguished Professor of Law  
University of California, Hastings College of the Law
L. Song Richardson
Dean and Chancellor’s Professor of Law
University of California, Irvine School of Law

Jennifer L. Mnookin
Dean and Ralph and Shirley Shapiro Professor of Law
University of California, Los Angeles School of Law

Sean Scott
President and Dean
California Western School of Law

Matt Parlow
Dean and Professor of Law
Chapman University, Fowler School of Law

Eric C. Christiansen
Interim Dean and Professor of Law
Golden Gate University School of Law

Michael Waterstone
Dean and Professor of Law
Loyola University School of Law

Michael Hunter Schwartz
Dean and Professor of Law
University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law

Paul Caron
Duane and Kelly Roberts Dean and Professor of Law
Pepperdine Caruso School of Law

Robert Schapiro
Dean and Professor of Law
University of San Diego School of Law
Susan Freiwald  
Dean and Professor of Law  
University of San Francisco School of Law

Anna M. Han  
Interim Dean and Associate Professor of Law  
Santa Clara University School of Law

Andrew Guzman  
Dean and Carl Mason Franklin Chair in Law,  
and Professor of Law and Political Science  
University of Southern California, Gould School of Law

Susan Prager  
President and Dean  
Southwestern Law School

Jenny S. Martinez  
Richard E. Lang Professor of Law and Dean  
Stanford University Law School

Allen K. Easley  
Dean & Professor of Law  
Western State College of Law