

# Grim job market awaits law school graduates

By DAVE LUDWIG  
Of the Emerald

**Editor's Note:** This is the eighth in a 10-part series exploring the problems of this year's college graduates as they enter the job market. Thursday's story will concern itself with the job outlook for students in the School of Community Service and Public Affairs.

For the law school graduate, the job market is grim.

Over 1,300 persons applied for 175 positions at the University's law school for next fall. Recent law school graduates may wonder why. There is basically a ratio of two lawyers for every job. In 1973, there were over 30,000 new admittees to various state bars and only 16,500 new attorney jobs estimated for each year throughout the 1970s by the U.S. Department of Labor.

The situation is even worse this year because of the economy.

"In general, the economy has slowed down the hiring process," said Marilyn Howard, placement coordinator for the law school. "Employers are cautious about hiring a new associate."

She pointed out that though they may be overworked, employers are afraid the economy may take a dip and what work is available may disappear.

In the March issue of *Student Lawyer*, published monthly during the school year, Frances Utley, the American Bar Association's lawyer placement information service manager, said many firms which normally take up to five students have cut back and now take three.

Howard also said many firms do not have the physical space to hire a new associate though they may need one. The economy has forced employers to reconsider expansion plans, she says.

According to Utley, all these factors make it extremely difficult, since those competing in the job market will be the brightest group of law students in legal education history.

Rand Dawson, a recent University law school graduate, agreed.

Dawson said even salary offers have come down. "If you can get into one of the top Portland law firms, you can get \$1,000 a month," he said. "But two years ago, it was \$1,200 a month."

In addition, the number of available jobs have fallen, continued Dawson.

According to Utley, some work areas have suffered more than others. *Pro bono* work, work for the public good, has definitely suffered. It is shocking to realize, writes Utley, that throughout this country there are only 4,000 lawyers employed in legal aid and defender offices.

But Howard is optimistic. She feels, however, that she may not feel that way in September after the graduates have taken the bar exam and have actively sought jobs.

She said 20 to 25 per cent of this year's graduates already have jobs but that these are students who clerked for a law firm after their second year in school. Utley said clerkships in law firms are becoming a recruiting device by employers.

Howard said that though national statistics show that two graduates exist for every job, she thinks these statistics reflect only "straight legal employment."

They fail to consider non-legal jobs such as OSPIRG or government research, she remarks, adding that large numbers of persons are now entering government work.

Dawson said there isn't a third year law student who isn't aware of the depressing job market. In



Drawing by Alfred Li

fact, he said, if graduates have other opportunities, he or she might be well advised to take them.

Graduates should have a long-range viewpoint, he explained. "The law graduate is not going to have many geographical options, the initial salary will be low and graduates will be unable to bargain for *pro bono* work," he continued.

According to Utley, many students also fail to recognize that the bulk of first job opportunities come through law school alumni. The job situation becomes even grimmer having graduated from an unknown law school, she said. An employer who has attended the law school the student has graduated from knows about the quality of education provided and naturally looks with greater favor upon a student from that school.

In addition, she said, the most difficult areas to find jobs in are San Francisco, Colorado, Arizona and the smaller states. Job difficulties also emerge she added, where there is a heavy concentration of law schools.

Howard noted that the graduate with a business background is easiest to place.

"People with a general B.S. degree who do not have a special interest area in law school will be hardest to place," she commented.

In any case, according to Utley, the greatest opportunities are for those in general practice dealing with individuals in small businesses and in general corporate law dealing with the large corporate plant.

There are two areas, she said, however, where law graduates can restrict their field. One area is taxation where students should have an accounting or business

background or even Certified Public Accountant rank.

The other area is patent law where an engineering degree or a scientific background is required.

For the average law school graduate, both Howard and Dawson agree that employers place an overwhelming emphasis on grades.

Howard says personality factors in law school recruitment have grown in importance as well.

As an example of this, Utley noted that an employer from downstate Illinois said: "You know, if you have any student who are farm-raised, that would be a real asset, because most of my clients are farmers, and if they've lived on a farm and know some of the economics of farming, they'd be better able to talk to my clients."

For those graduates who have found a job, Howard said, salaries range between \$500-\$1,500 a month for this year's graduates, the average being between \$850 and \$900 a month.

Dawson cautioned any individual entering law school who might think initial salaries are high upon graduation. The average initial income, he said, and Utley concurred, is under \$100,000 annually.

Utley said, however, that "there's no question but that the market for graduates is going to gradually expand over the years."

She said, in fact, that if the market continues to expand, a reverse situation may exist where two jobs exist for every law school graduate.

Nevertheless, the outlook for the present law school graduate getting a job remains grim.

"You can't be optimistic," said Dawson. "Neither can you be pessimistic. You just have to be realistic."

## The Orient not important back then



A Page 2 story in the Saturday May 14, 1927, *Oregon Daily Emerald* asked whether the course "Asia and the Pacific" — then, except for art history courses, the major Asian studies offering at the University — would be dropped from the curriculum.

According to Walter Barnes, instructor of the course, the history department was considering dropping the course because it anticipated being "shorthanded" for the next school year. Barnes was unhappy about this situation.

"It may be better to study the Orient before a military crisis arises out of Chinese confusion or Japanese ambition," he said. He also complained that East Coast Americans seemed to pay more attention to the Orient than West Coast. Advocating a kind of pan-Pacificism, he said, "One would think that trans-Pacific relations would be especially important to people on this coast. Think of American technical skill combined with Chinese labor!"

That spring, 30 students were enrolled in "Asia and the Pacific," which professor Barnes considered "just normal" for an upper-

division course. "But the oriental culture course is far from the fields in which we (the history department faculty) were trained, and if it is not going to reach more students than any other upper-division course, there seems no quite adequate reason for giving it," he concluded. It goes to show that playing the numbers game with course enrollments is nothing new at the University.

Elsewhere on the same page, an editorial lambasted Bernard McFadden, the "leading American exponent of the gutter press," for his recent attack on the nation's colleges. McFadden's

*New York Graphic*, a tabloid newspaper with an unsavory reputation, had recently declared that college students were getting "an education in vice."

But the *Emerald* editor attacked McFadden for what he considered hypocrisy. He charged that McFadden "emptied the sewers of the world in his own publications," and hinted that he might find it more in his own self-interest to encourage the tendencies the *Graphic* discussed, than to oppose them.

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