

Most law school grads find jobs, not riches

Lawyer glut in Oregon sends students hunting elsewhere

By CAROL MORTON
Of the Emerald

This article is part of a series on the job-market outlook for University graduates

Although a law career is not the ticket to the upper-middle class it once might have been, most law school graduates find jobs within a year of graduation.

National news magazines write scare stories about a shortage of jobs for lawyers, but National Association for Law Placement figures show about 90 percent of yearly graduates find legally-related jobs within nine months, says Doug Haldine, University law school placement director.

And University law school graduates meet the national average.

Three-fourths of the 1980 class returned employment information questionnaires to the law school placement center, and 90 percent of the responding graduates were employed. Most of those employed had legally related jobs. Only 9 percent were in non-legal jobs.

"About one-third of the students have jobs before they graduate," Haldine estimates.

These jobs are with larger firms or are a result of contacts made during judicial clerkships, Haldine says.

"The bulk of students have

jobs by October when the state bar exam results are back."

Job hunting requires the same procedures students go through when looking for a clerkship in a law office while in law school. "They just knock on doors and walk into offices in town," Haldine says.

However, Eugene job prospects are not that good, he says. Most Eugene law firms do not expand at the rate they hire clerks.

For job-hunting out of town, Haldine advises students to send out resumes with cover letters before visiting a city.

Major law firms in search of new lawyers can afford to interview students in law schools across the country, Haldine says. However, the majority of the 1980 University law school graduates in private practices work in firms of less than 25 lawyers.

Students generally take jobs based on their interests rather than the market demands. For example, Haldine says a student at the top of his class, attractive to a large metropolitan law firm, decided to practice in a small legal services office in New Mexico because he was not interested in a large firm.

On the other hand, a large practice offers "quality exposure." Their clients can afford to spend a lot of money on large \$25-million suits that cover all the bases, Haldine says. A large firm has the people and sources to do the job.

An employer looks at a student's academic record and personality. Every employer weighs these factors differently, Haldine says.

Haldine says hiring an associate for a law firm is like getting married. The employer must work closely with the new employee and carefully consider whether the employee will get along with the firm and its clientele.

University law school placement coordinator Jan Prewitt says the market for traditional lawyers is tightening up. However, alternative careers for lawyers are opening.

Corporations are hiring lawyers right out of school as assistants or associate house counsels. These jobs involve routine matters such as monitoring the corporations compliance with government regulations.

Prewitt says jobs are available in areas other than strict legal practice, such as jobs with title companies, accounting firms, bank administration, middle management positions and government.

For graduates just starting out and interested in criminal law, a job in the district attorney's office offers criminal law experience, a secure position, a regular income and exposure to the legal community, Haldine says.

A reliable source of income for beginning lawyers in private practice has been taking court-appointed clients.

The court pays for those people who cannot afford their own lawyers. However, some courts are restricting their court appointee lists. For instance, Haldine says Lane County requires that lawyers demonstrate a certain level of experience.

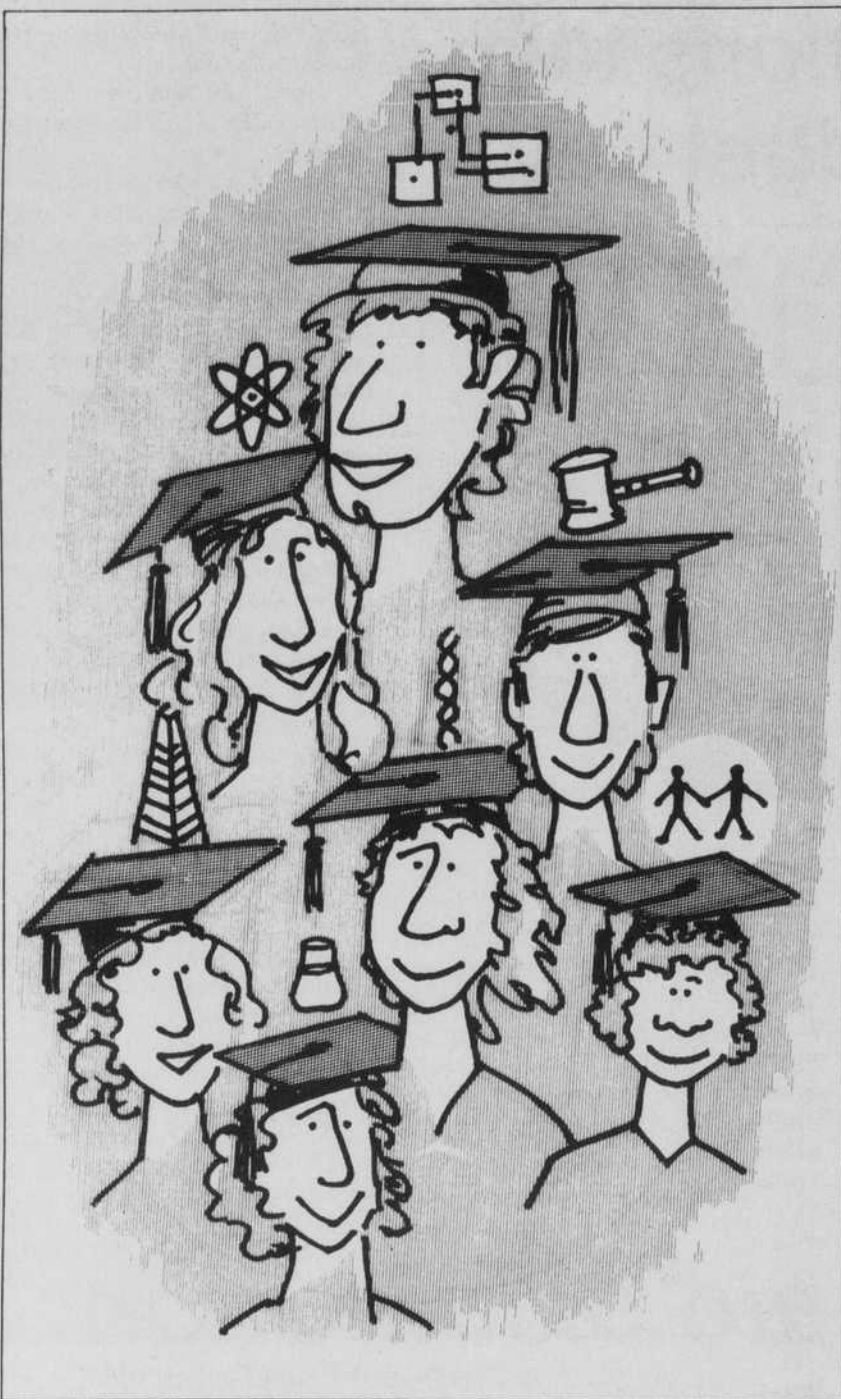
Prewitt says a lawyer's salary does not necessarily mean the country club anymore, especially in Oregon. The average starting salary for those polled 1980 University law school graduates was \$18,095. However, in Oregon the average starting salary was \$17,160.

"A legal education is a portable education," Prewitt says.

She says the law school attracts students because of the programs, not necessarily because they want to practice law in this state.

A lot of out-of-state students come to the law school for three years, and then find jobs where they came from, Haldine says.

The law school career placement office provides job strategy and resume preparation help.



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