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LAW SCHOOL NOTES

Applicants drop for law schools

Deans discuss reasons behind this year's numbers, what future may hold in store

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The decline in applicants to attend most law schools in Illinois for the 2012-2013 school year ranges from 3 percent to 28 percent — although entering class sizes are expected to be similar to last year.

Across the nation, law schools generally saw fewer applicants.

But Southern Illinois University School of Law saw applicants rise 3 percent for this school year, said Alicia H. Ruiz, director of communications and outreach for Southern Illinois University's law school.

Dean Cynthia Fountaine of Southern Illinois University's law school said that due to the national decline, admissions office personnel "significantly increased recruitment efforts this year ... attended more recruitment events and talked to students in areas of the country that we haven't traditionally reached."

"Also, many of this year's media reports about the change in the legal market have focused on two areas that are our strengths," Fountaine said, "practical skills training and graduate debt load."

Applicants nationally were down 13.7 percent for this school year, said the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). This was the second year of a decline in applicants nationally.

Almost 88,000 people applied to U.S. law schools for the 2010-2011 school year.

For this school year, the number of national applicants was 67,957,

LSAC says.

Some people "just decide it's too tough a market" for jobs to invest in a law school education right now, said John E. Corkery, dean of The John Marshall Law School.

"What's the world going to be like in three years" when they graduate?" Corkery asked. "We're all playing, 'You Bet Your Life.'"

Some people said they believe the market for lawyers is smaller than it was five years ago. "Others are thinking it's likely to improve," Corkery said. He said he believes the market will improve.

He said managing partners of law firms "tell me they don't know either." Applications were down 14 percent at John Marshall, about the national average.

"Students are thinking very hard about whether a law school degree is worth it to them," said Jennifer L. Rosato, dean of Northern Illinois University College of Law.

They "are thinking about alternate and perhaps less expensive paths to their professional goals." And "information like rankings continues to weigh heavily in their decision-making process," she said.

"As the only public law school in the greater Chicagoland area, we are in the enviable position to offer an excellent and affordable legal education, less than half" of what most schools in the Chicago area charge, Rosato said.

Tuition and fees for this school year at Northern Illinois University's law school are \$19,811 for in-state students. Tuition and fees are at least \$40,000 at the other schools in the Chicago area.



John E. Corkery

Northern Illinois University's law school got 772 applications for this school year, down 28 percent from last year.

At Loyola University Chicago School of Law, even with a 17 percent drop in applicants, this year's total of 4,100 applicants is still "the fifth largest applicant pool we've ever had," said Dean David N. Yellen.

After the selection process, Loyola University Chicago's incoming class is about 285, about 10 fewer than last year, Yellen said.

Yellen said he does not believe the national decline in applicants to law school is cyclical this time.

"There's pretty good evidence there are structurally fewer legal jobs than there were five years ago," Yellen said, "because of globalization and technology. A number of law firms are outsourcing document review work to India."

"So law schools as a whole are beginning to shrink," Yellen said. Nationally "new students were down about 7 percent" last year.

Schools that responded to a survey by the Chicago Daily Law Bul-



Jennifer L. Rosato

letin are listed alphabetically below with the number of applicants to each for this school year and the difference from last year. Also shown are total tuition and fees for this year at each school when available.

- DePaul University College of Law, 4,149 applicants, down 14 percent. Entering class 280. Full time tuition and fees: \$43,636.

- IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law, 3,594 applicants, down 3 percent from 2011. Entering class 286. Full-time tuition (tuition only): \$42,900.

- The John Marshall Law School, 3,000 applicants, down 14 percent. Entering class 380. Tuition and fees including health insurance: \$42,724.

- Loyola University Chicago School of Law, 4,100 applicants, down 17 percent. Entering class 285. Tuition and fees: "around \$41,000."

- Northern Illinois University College of Law, 772 applicants, down 28 percent. Entering class 114. Tuition and fees: \$19,811 in state.

- Northwestern University School of Law, 4,390 applicants, down 3.5 percent. Entering class about 265. Tuition and fees: \$53,468.

- University of Chicago Law School, 4,500 applicants, down 6 percent. Entering class unknown as school starts in 30 days. Tuition and fees, including health insurance: about \$53,560.

- Southern Illinois University School of Law, 720 applicants, up 3 percent. Entering class 115. Tuition and fees: \$16,995 in-state.

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