

Survey Results (Included Responses)

[REPORT OVERVIEW](#)

J.D. Specialization: Prospective Students

Questions that required written responses are displayed by individual query. The "Report Overview" button or "Back" button will return you to your survey results.

Each individual respondent is referenced under the # column.

21 Please provide any additional input relative to the issue of specialization within the J.D. curriculum.

#	Response
1	LSAT scores should not be a deciding factor.
2	The more credentials one attains the better off they will be when it comes time for specific employment.
3	I'm not certain as to the specific benefit that specializations provide to students in general. I can understand specializations in technical fields (such as patent, admiralty, or tax law); however, I'm not sure there is any meaning to concentrations, specializations, or certificates in broad categories like "Trial Advocacy" or "Business/Corporate Law". Of course, these also begs the question concerning specializations and LLM programs. A student is probably better off receiving a solid general legal education on the JD level and then earning an LLM in a specialized field (Patent, Admiralty, Tax, etc.).
4	It seems naive to specialize so early on in one's education of a discipline that is so broad. Especially when it is truly difficult to determine one's taste for that area of law until one practices in that area. Theory is usually much different than practice.
5	I fell it is important to offer a specialized JD so that once a person has graduated and passed the State Bar, they are qualified to practice in one area beyond one who has general knowledge of all fields.
6	None
7	I would like to see more joint J.D. programs that offer both the J.D. and a Ph.D in various social, physical, and natural sciences.
8	Would like to see more availability of courses for the nontraditional student in the area of law at U of I. Part-time courses, evening, weekend, etc.
9	The term "track" to me indicates a concentration at the expense of certain knowledge that a fundamental "non-track" curriculum would require.
10	Choosing a school where I can study environmental law is very important to me. However, it seems to me that in any case the number of environmental law courses that I will be able to take at any school will be limited in light of the other demands of the J.D. curriculum. Therefore, I am considering schools that do not offer environmental law concentrations per se but which do offer 5 or 6 courses that are relevant to the practice of environmental law, because I'm not sure that I would be able to take more than 5 or 6 environmental electives even at a school with many more offerings. My point of view may be similar to that of other students considering a specialization. One last point: part of any university experience is discovery, that is the student should always allow a little room in his/her personal philosophy to follow new directions, to be spontaneous. So I know that there is always the possibility that I will discover a specialty within the law that appeals to me more than environmental law. This is also probably true of many people considering a specialization before entering law school.
11	I will be attending the University of Michigan this May, specifically because of its overall rank and the prestige of its international law program.
12	I am currently a candidate for a masters in psychology and my research is on eyewitness recall. I intend to complete both a JD and a Phd.
13	Working for a major firm in DC the evidence suggests that big firm employers are concerned with school and class rank only.
14	After looking into the curriculum of several law schools found in various places of the rankings and tuition costs, I found that most of the specialized areas are dedicated toward something in the practice of law but not of the theory. With this in mind, I made my answers. One of my greatest interests lies in the study of law is in legal history, philosophy and jurisprudence. If there was a school out there that did indeed offer a specialized curriculum in any of the aforementioned areas, I would apply without hesitation, despite its rankings and tuition and my answers in the survey would probably be much different.
15	Who cares about the LSAT anyway.
16	I am confused by question 17-21
17	southeast asian law
18	clinical courses are important as is the choice available in both theoretical and practical seminar options available - also important to some students will be whether joint research / collaborative work with faculty is encouraged at the school

- 19 Specialization offers an enhancement of the JD curriculum, I believe, but it should not go too far. I am anxious to be exposed to a wide array of topics in my legal education. Law school should never become a vocational program that attempts to train a certain kind of lawyer - there is merit in the general liberal arts rigor of all law school programs.
- 20 Just like undergraduate program, there should be general core of legal study and then area of concentration(specialization)
- 21 Comes second to an overall solid program
- 22 I would greatly appreciate the ability to focus on an area and feel that having specialties would increase the support students would feel to pursue their passion and could also really allow greater access to faculty who are experts in that area.
- 23 It's not really that big of a deal to me. I think employers are just mainly looking for people with law degrees.
- 24 The idea of specialization is a great one because it allows a person to focus on one area of interest as well as general law. However, there are two main draw backs I see. One, if something is specialized there still need to be a well balanced education or it almost seems pointless to have a specialization. Second, most people don't know going into school or law school what they want to specialize in if anything. I myself am interested in several different areas of law but I will not decide what I like best until I am in law school and have taken classes on each area. I think it is important to know what is out there before you make such a decision.
- 25 Increase in the number of various specializations within the JD curriculum would bring more interest in selecting law school.
- 26 none
- 27 Specialized Programs Marketing should be backed up by Job Market information (salary, job description, state (city) concentrations). This may attract students with no preference in specialization.
- 28 I have a good idea about the type of law I would like to practice today, but I also have a friend who switched from entertainment to tax when she said it was "entertainment or nothing". We change as we learn.
- 29 I want to see greater number of courses for specialized degree programs.
- 30 Rankings are bunk. The quality of education is determined by the efforts of the students and faculty. Certification should indicate by whom it is certified, i.e. accredited. Concentration sounds more analogous to an undergraduate major.
- 31 There needs to be more areas to specialize in other than traditional areas. Areas such as juvenile law (separate from family law) and child advocacy areas should be addressed, either as a separate area or as an in depth focus within an area. For me, a law degree will be worthless if all I learn about is corporate law and business law and only have to opportunity to take a few courses related to juveniles. I will have to network within the law schools with faculty and students in order to "specialize" by working in the community or with outside programs. It would be much easier and more educational for students if they were able to have those resources closer at hand and be able to show they not only have direct line experience with that specialization, but also the education to back their experiences up in the field of law.
- 32 Regarding this survey: #5 and #6 I would think the option of "no opinion/preference" would be considered as a separate entity, not in the middle of two opinions with varying degrees. One's opinion may be equally BETWEEN the two opinions, but not specifically of NO opinion.
- 33 Any Joint Degree program is clearly accredited, but I also believe there should exist some standard of difference between receiving a certificate and having completed a concentration. I would think that a certificate would typically be awarded upon completion of a "track" or maybe even a "concentration".
- 34 I think it's important to have a specialization, but I don't believe you have to have a certificate in that specialization. Isn't it enough to say you have a JD with a specialization/concentration in whichever field?
- 35 Regarding question 15, I would only consider the USNews ranking important if there were a large difference in the rankings, for example if one were ranked 3 and the other 33.
- 36 All specializations should have some sort of standard criteria that is overseen by some national governing board.
- 37 I strongly believe there should be an accreditation process in place for schools to be able to offer specializations. Much more consistency and accountability is needed.
- 38 I would certainly prefer to specialize in a particular area, but not at the expense of broader knowledge of law or extreme variances in tuition.
- 39 Specialization is important, not only because it makes you more attractive to potential employers, but also because you graduate with more knowledge and feeling more prepared.
- 40 I believe that hands-on experience is paramount in a quality specialization program (i.e., clinics, internships, externships)
- 41 My opinion may be unique in that I plan to pursue corporate/business law and have an MBA which reduces the need for a "certificate." For a specialization which derives solely from concentrating one's electives in a particular subject area, it is probably reasonable to assume that the rigor is equivalent to that of the school. Likewise, a review of one's transcript would provide an employer with an idea of whether someone "specialized" in an area, with or without a separate and unique designation. If one wishes to differentiate his program from that of another school, some added value would be necessary to attract the discriminating buyer.
- 42 In addition to specialization, I would like the school to be located in the state where I plan to practice later on.
- 43 Last year I applied to Iowa despite the fact that the school does not offer specialization in intellectual property/patent law. I was not accepted, but, as of last year, I may have attended if accepted because of two interlinked factors: (1) national ranking and (2) cost of school/cost of living. If Iowa had been too expensive, I would not have considered applying at all even with its national status. I will be a non-traditional law student - a professional returning to school, with a family to consider - so my list of factors which lead to my decisions regarding to which schools to apply are

probably quite different from most students. Because I know exactly what type of law I want to practice, I have narrowed my focus this year and have chosen to apply only to schools (third-tier and above) this year which offer the most intense, specialized patent/IP programs (I was unable to attend last year to due family health problems.) The selection of schools (12) all have patent and/or intellectual property (technology) specializations, ranging from a set of core courses to intense "tracks". These schools represent a range of tuition costs, but I know already that, unless I am offered scholarships to some of these schools(as I was last year), I will not attend. Job availability is a very important factor, and my wife and I have chosen all of these schools with the expectation that we will make our home in the same region as the school. Last year, I included Iowa in our list primarily because my wife and children would have loved living there. But from a professional career point-of-view, Iowa would not have been the best choice for me. If I were twenty-two, then Iowa would be a dream choice, regardless of specializations.

44 I think it helps people who are sure what area they'd like to study or practice. But overall, i think it's best to teach good skills rather than have less of an education but a certificate in a certain area.

45 no answer

46 I am interested in a international conflict resolution specialization within a law program. My options right now are limited because no schools offer the concentration and only a few schools offer joint degree programs with a masters in international relations with an emphasis on international conflict resolution.

47 Not sure I understood question # 20 (what does it mean to be specifically accredited in relation to a school's level of rigor?)

48 Constitutional Law!!! I would like to a certificate in constitutional law or civil rights litigation

49 Maybe a law major/minor such as undergraduate ed.

50 I was under the impression that most employers prefer students to have a large, general knowledge base that will allow them to specialize in a specific type of law once they are employed.

51 I think specialization is a very tricky subject. Although some schools do not offer a specialty in my area of interest (Labor and Employment Law), they do offer courses in which I can concentrate on that particular area of law. I believe most employers will understand the lack of specialization and look at the quality of education received from a law school such as University of Iowa.

I was formerly a legal assistant for one of your alumni, who speaks very highly of the education she received there. I also know your law school is highly ranked in the US News general ranking.

Although, I basically have your institution as my "wish list" school. If given the opportunity, I would be honored to attend University of Iowa. My only hesitation would be my GPA and LSAT score, which I believe fails to represent your median. Not to mention, I would never be able to afford such quality education.

In spite the obstacles, I do plan on making an effort to attend your institution which offers an exceptional, yet traditional, law school education!

Sincerely,
LISA D. JACKSON-POPE

52 I think that specialization is good but it's also really important to get grounding in a traditional curriculum and have exposure to all areas - not only does it make for a better rounded lawyer but it exposes you to possible greater interests. Really, until you've gotten a traditional, broad exposure, you (a) don't have the context required to be as effective as possible and (b) might be cheating yourself out of discovering an area of true talent or passion. So often we make our choices based on availability of information, rather than "truth". If there is a specialization to occur, it definitely should be at least after the first year. At the risk of being redundant, I think a program that promises innovation, in and of itself is risky. I'd rather see a program that promises to give me the tools I need to deal with innovation, rather than purporting to teach me innovation itself. I believe programs that claim to do the latter inadvertently fail to accomplish the former. An on unrelated note, I think the labels of question 17 matter because employers look at certification. I know at least in the high-tech world, certifications are paid attention to. I'm not sure how and if the legal realm differs with respect to this.

53 I hope your school offer LLM or JD course specialized for securities and financial law. i.e., please provide more chance for the applicant to take various course.

54 As more students go to law school with a clearer understanding of their post-graduation goals (usually older students), I think specialties are somewhat more important. However, I think what a person will look for most in a program (cost, ranking, location, specialities, etc.) depends on that person and won't be affected much by specializations offered.

55 If an institution can specialize in a particular area and give the prospective student confidence that the institution can be trusted to produce a high-quality attorney, then I believe many students will both pay more and attend that institution that may be lower on the unreliable U.S. Rankings.

56

57 Before conducting research on my own among practicing lawyers and current law students, I would have placed much more weight on a school that offers a specialization in a track, such as international or Asian law, that I am keenly interested in. What I have gathered in the last few months, however, is that the prestige of a school and a student's performance at that school are far more important factors in finding a position with a good firm. And in essence, it is only at a firm that one starts to learn the law he or she needs to know for practice and really sets the tone for a subsequent career. Therefore, all things considered, I don't have any negative feelings about a specialized program, but I do place much less importance on it now than before. On the other hand if such a program included specific clinics, externships, journals or study-abroad options, that would be a plus in my book. Maybe the key is to back up a designation on paper with substance. Some of the school catalogs I read offer "certificates" in any number of specialities, but I don't see how those are particularly meaningful if they only involve taking a block of courses that's available at pretty much any other law school.

58 My understanding is that specialization in law school is impractical and maybe even unwise as most employers would

like prospective employees to be flexible when they are hired and would expect employees to become specialized through their practice experience.

- 59 Since law makers have so much influence in the field of education, it would be nice if they had some idea of what they really were talking about.
- 60 Those schools I have chosen also have accreditation in my specialty. That really is the most important over US News ranking.
- 61 N/A
- 62 I find it problematic to select a school based on a potential specialization because I do not have the background to be certain that is the specialization I want to pursue.
- 63 .
- 64 i need urgently JD Curriculum
- 65 I don't think the idea of specialization should be greatly emphasized. I feel that currently, a J.D. curriculum gives you the basics for almost any aspect of law. I guess I see the J.D. as very similar to the M.D.--it is a general education. The specialization is what happens afterwards.

But, I have yet to study law. If there are significant differences among the various specializations in law (international vs. environmental vs. corporate, etc), then perhaps there should be specializations. Obviously there are differences among all fields, but if the differences are theoretical & not practical, then there should be specializations.

- 66 none
- 67 Its better to provide J.D. Degree on information technology law.
- 68 If you know which sector of law you want to concentrate on, I believe that specialization is a better idea than attending a highly ranked general law school. When one wants to go into business law, for instance, and has only had a few classes in it, what good does that do.
- 69 Specialization is important to me as I will be an older JD student, having a BS in Management and an MBA in Global Management. My work for the past ten years has been concentrated in sport and international business, which makes a specialty even more important as my study focus and goals will be ultimately geared towards these areas. However, it is a bit challenging in trying to determine whose specialty is "better" as I have not found a standard within the curriculum of various schools. Therefore, upon graduation from law school, the foundation of law that is taught at a school has greater weight, as this is a standard that industry leaders, current law students and prospective law students base their decisions. A top tier school offering a specialty will be my optimal choice.

Thank you,
Wanda S. Durden

- 70 In the first question the word, "innovative" is used. In my mind I am conotating that word with "progressive-minded". That is what I find important in a law school.
- 71 I think many prospective students are unsure of their area of concentration and ranking of the overall program appeals more to us. That way, if we change our minds we will still be confident in the level of education we are receiving.
- 72 The areas of law are so diverse that I think it is important for each school to explain what their strongest areas of law are. A highly ranked school can be deceiving if they are not strong in the areas of law a prospective student is interested in.
- 73 Regarding the three factors this survey is trying to measure, tuition, academic specialization, and US News and World, Report Ranking, I don't think this survey is adequate. While I know that I want to study international law, I wouldn't necessarily go to a school that who's overall quality or job placement is poor, or expensive. I know that I will need a job when I graduate from law school, even if I cannot find a job in the area in which I intend to practice. For that reason, I must consider schools that will help me attain a job (hopefully in the area I would like to pursue), and that won't force me to take out hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of loans, thereby forcing me into a higher paying job that I might not necessarily consider otherwise. Frankly, in my search for a law school, I don't look for schools that have a specific international law certification/track/focus. I look at course offerings, and faculty descriptions when deciding whether to apply. I know that employers in the legal profession care more about grades and where I attend law school than they do about attaining an additional certificate. When I choose to attend a school it is because they are offering the courses I would be excited to pay for, and I feel that in the end, I won't be unemployed and stuck with a massive amount of debt.
- 74 As I consider law school, I have taken the view that a law degree is similar to a liberal arts undergraduate degree in that it should teach a student how to think, not teach him specific skills. I do not understand this proposal as one that would teach "skills," so to speak, but I think a good legal education would be broad-based and prepare a student for a wide variety of situations and legal issues. An opportunity to specialize perhaps has merit in some situations, but I think that the best law school for me will be one that offers a broad-based curriculum. I think I would have the most options open with this type of program upon my graduation and I believe options are among the most important things in life.
- 75 Less expensive but with specialized program.
- 76 To clarify some of my answers: While offering a speciality, it can be inferred that the school in question offers professors and courses with great expertise in the area. So to answer questions 12-16, I assumed speciality to be equated with " 'stronger' program in a specific area that interested me." A lower ranking law school with a highly ranked IP department (for example) would appeal to me more than a highly ranked law school with an average IP department (assuming I am interested in IP).
- 77 specialization made be a good Idea, but limiting someone potential to the area mau affect him after graduation. He may seek employment in that field and unable find a job. This will lessen his ability to get hired, despite an opening in another area which he was not trained for in that specialized program

- 78 There should be a differentiation between the different types of programs for many reasons. First, it may lead to misleading of potential students to an institution if there are no standardized terms. Secondly, the rigour of these "special" programs can be circumspect at best. This is becoming a bigger problem in choosing a program. Also, the beauty of law is that it applies so much. Tracking is such a horrible thing because it only further alienates the particular traits and breadth that the developing lawyer NEEDS. As long as specialization does not take away from that asset, it is a fine idea. However, it could be seen as a very large detriment to a legal education. Besides, over half of Americans do not do something within their major as their career. Lawyers are not really different (only just a higher number going to law firms).
- 79 I studied in the Law School of University of International Business and Economics. My major is International Economic Law. I am interested in it very much. I think we need full development, but specialization provides us with guidance on the areas which we have more interests. Thank you.
- 80 I do explore the number of classes in my area of interest.
- 81 I believe there should be specialization within the J.D. curriculum and if there is going to be, there should be certification involved.
- 82 Specialization should be included in all curriculums especially when resources are available. However a general program should also be available with options for specialization. Most students would choose the general program.
- 83 I think there should be more involvement with international schools, so that specialization has an added flavour of international experience.
- 84 While specialization is important to me, my overall learning experience and the reputation of the school are most important.
- 85 It would be nice to have informative resources available to prospect law students regarding the importance of specialization or the benefits of certification from the perspective of employers.
- 86 Specialization programs should include "hands-on" experience such as required specialized experience in an externship or clinic.
- 87 It's hard to have any grasp of what specific specialties entail, and consequently what specialties I might enjoy practicing, before even taking law classes at a law school.
- 88 Specialization is a foggy area to prospective students with whom I communicate. I especially am not sure what the differences between certificate and concentration are aside from some educated guesses. I, more importantly, am not sure for which I should strive if anything.
- Thank you.
- 89 I've noticed that some schools' specializations within the J.D. curriculum are comprised of courses taken from the second semester of 1L through 3L. At other schools, a "concentration" consists of only a few courses, all of which can be taken in 3L. I prefer the schools that offer many courses within a specialization.
- 90 I would personally prefer a general JD curriculum but with a hefty and recognizable inclination toward a specialization of choice even if it involves added course credit requirements
- 91 none
- 92 I think a specialization in a JD curriculum is useful for future job prospects.
- 93 It would help if the A.B.A. set accreditation guidelines for the specialization track and current or potential students had access to it.
- 94 Specialized recruiting // placement.
- 95 data should be provided by the designated law schools as to what types of employers are looking at employing people who attain a certain certificate within the J.D. program.
- 96 The "types" of employers that seek a certain specialization from a certain school would be helpful (ie. the United Nations or International Court of Justice may look favorably on lawyers from Notre Dame Law School who specialize in International Law).
- 97 I think that specialization within a J.D. curriculum should be more than just specific classes for that area, it should include internship/practicum type experiences as well.
- 98 work experience/recommendations should have greater consideration like MBA programs
- 99 I don't like the idea of certificates
- 100 DU was not interested in diversity in their program.
- 101 it is difficult to know what "specialization" means from school to school. while i think it is best for applicants to research schools, i am at a particular economic disadvantage when it comes to applying. i would like to know what school is best for my income, interests, and life-style. i tend to assume that if a school is more expensive i should get a good education and be able to get a good job. my interests lie more in serving the public interest and less in making a lot of money. however, i would like to make enough money to live and to pay back the expensive loans.
- 102 To be honest, I hadn't factored the availability of a certificate in env. law too heavily into my school choices because I've heard it said that it's something of a fad. However, apparently some law firms and organizations are impressed when they see a certificate listed on a CV, so I suppose it could be an asset to my career. I chose the schools based on the apparent strength of their env. law programs and their location, and in several cases they happened to offer certificates as well.
- 103 A presentation or extra information packet would be helpful for applicants.
- 104 Support George W and his agenda on equal opportunity in admissions
- 105 School location outweighs all other factors. I'm destined to be a great jurist no matter where I attend. A good student

in a poor school will do better than a poor student in a top-notch school. Take it from "The Sage."

- 106 I believe that obtaining a concentration in a specific field of study qualifies a person for having the utmost skills and knowledge in that area and should therefore be separated from other terms such as track or certificate.
- 107 It should be made clear that specialization comes only after a common, universal first year curriculum
- 108 Schools which provide programs where students can deepen their area of interest in law will always appear better than schools which only provide a "general" education. However, when it comes to competing with big-named schools like Stanford and Yale, specialized programs become even more important for smaller institutions.
- 109 In the society we occupy today, the law pervades nearly everything. Specialization is crucial to provide training for those who are working towards more integrated forms of law, saving both time and errors to produce a more effective lawyer.
- 110 I believe as both an older potential student and a legal professional for the last five years that specialization is important because for the most part your first job out of law school seems to dictate the area of law you will ultimately be practicing, so by taking a concentration of classes in a specific area can at least demonstrate an interest in a particular area, create a more marketable resume for practicing in that area and ultimately deriving more satisfaction from a job in that area, and that is the goal of law school to train one to practice law, so why not gear your studies to do so in a field of interest.
- 111 It would be nice to know how firms interpret the education, how much it truly assists the student in a job search.
- 112 There are limited schools with a night program, which is the criteria I applied in answering these questions.
- 113 It would be a good idea if there was some kind of ranking on specialization programs based on a schools requirements.
- 114 Great survey. I've personally struggled alot with the specialization issue. One thing that's guiding my answers is that I've been told you have to be a good lawyer, in general, before you can be good in a specialization. So, if a great school without my specialization accepts me, I'll likely assume I can just focus my electives in 2nd and 3rd year to equal what other schools call "specializations".
- 115 Choosing a school based solely on its specialization is a difficult decision. In particular, it is hard to know how much of a legal education is focussed on core/traditional legal curriculum and how much on elective credit. If it is the former, then specialization should be a smaller consideration, if the latter, then consideration should be high. In addition, it is hard to gauge how much an employer values specialization. It may be that most of what forms a specialization can be learned quickly when practicing law. These things are hard to know for someone who is not a lawyer. Ideally, a school will have both good rankings overall and quality specialized program.
- 116 For example, there should be a difference in both the rigor and the specialization of the certificate versus the concentration. I believe a certificate should be looked upon almost as specialized as one who has pursued a L.L.M degree or dual degree. But then again, that could just be the marketing talking to me.
- 117 I think that specialization is important but however do not feel it should be so rigorous or defined that you could not receive proper training and education in another field for employment and long term goal issues.
- 118 The J.D. who graduates already having compiled significant management experience (including responsibility over people and cost/revenue centers) will, clearly, provide a more marketable product for any school educating lawyers. Also, this type of candidate will outperform less experienced competitors, even if these younger lawyers have higher LSAT scores and better GPAs. Law schools should look at graduate business schools as leaders on this point.
- 119 I think that even if you create a more specialized program, alot of the emphasis should still be bar exam prep work
- 120 This was a very minor factor in my application process.
- 121 MY PAST EXPERIENCES IN NO WAY REFLECT MY LSAT SCORE. I AM ALSO AN LCSW W/ 10 YRS EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF MENTAL HEALTH/ADVOCACY. MY MSW GPA IS ALSO A 3.9. I FEEL DU ONLY LOOKED @ MY UNDERGRAD GPA & LSAT SCORE & BASED THEIR ADMISSION DECISION ON THESE SCORES, WHICH IS ABSOLUTELY NOT REFLECTIVE OF MY LIFE ACCOMPLISHMENTS. I WISH THERE WAS A FAIRER WAY OF EVALUATING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES TO YOUR PROGRAM
- 122 None.
- 123 Many of these questions do not have simple "yes" or "no" answers, and thus I wonder about their usefulness.

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