

Young Lawyers

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PROSPECTS FOR YOUNG LAWYERS

I am delighted to be the incoming chair of the Young Lawyers Section (YLS). When I joined the Executive Council of YLS, I was a litigation associate at Marquis Aurbach Coffing and an adjunct legal writing professor at the William S. Boyd School of Law. About a year later, I joined Boyd full-time as the Director of Career Development, and I am now Assistant Dean for External Relations, overseeing career development, alumni relations, fundraising and events.

Outside of work, I am an active volunteer with Junior League of Las Vegas and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Nevada. I also serve on the board of the National Association for Law Placement. A great deal of the work I do is devoted to helping law students and young lawyers find



compatible and rewarding careers. As a result, it seemed fitting that I focus my columns as chair of YLS on topics related to legal careers and professional development.

Probably the most frequent questions I receive from young lawyers center around the legal job market and salaries. Specifically, young lawyers want to know about the state of the job market as it relates to finding a first job after law school or making a lateral move. Similarly, job-hunting lawyers often ask me what to expect in terms of salary. To get a picture of the entry-level legal market in Nevada, the data we collect in Boyd's Career Development Office is quite helpful. Boyd, like all law schools, tracks the employment outcomes of its graduates ten months

after graduation. Boyd graduates make up a large portion of the state's entry-level legal market, particularly in Southern Nevada, and the data that they report regarding hiring trends and salaries provides important insight into the market.

The legal job market has improved in the past three years, and is expected to continue to improve, particularly at the entry-level, as law schools graduate fewer and fewer students. Nevada is already a strong market; according to *National Jurist* magazine, the Mountain region, including Utah, Colorado and Nevada, ranks as the best job market in the country for new law school grads.¹

Every year, about half of Boyd's recent grads begin their careers in law firms, and about 60 percent of those work in firms with ten or fewer attorneys. Those not working in firms are typically working in one- to two-year judicial clerkships, government positions (including district attorney and public defender offices), and in public interest. Less than 2 percent of Boyd graduates (two grads per year in 2014 and 2013) hung a shingle in the year after graduation. Nationally, 4.8 percent of all 2013 graduates started a solo practice right after law school.

The median salary for first-year attorneys nationally dropped significantly with the recession and



National Median Starting Salaries 2008-2013²

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Overall Median	\$72,000	\$72,000	\$63,000	\$60,000	\$61,245	\$62,467
Law Firm Median	\$125,000	\$130,000	\$104,000	\$85,000	\$90,000	\$95,000

Local Median Starting Salaries 2008-2013³

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Overall Median	\$68,000	\$65,000	\$62,186	\$60,000	\$65,600	\$60,000
Law Firm Median	\$75,000	\$80,000	\$75,000	\$68,000	\$72,000	\$68,500

has only recently started to slowly come back up.

Salaries for first-year attorneys at law firms tend to vary based on the size of firm. In 2013, the median starting salary (base salary only, not counting bonuses) at firms with 2-10 attorneys was \$56,500.⁴ For slightly larger firms of 11-25 attorneys, the median starting salary for new attorneys was \$62,500.⁵ For firms of 26-50 attorneys, in 2012 the median starting salary was \$80,000.⁶

The most recent Young Lawyers Compensation Survey, conducted in 2013, showed growth in the careers of young lawyers over time. The median first-year attorney salary for all young lawyers in Nevada was \$60,001-65,000 in 2012, while the median salary for attorneys practicing for five or more years was \$105,001-110,000. Other interesting salary

information collected in the last YLS survey related to salaries in different geographic areas. Young lawyers in northern Nevada reported higher salaries than their counterparts in the south. Reno lawyers reported a median salary of \$95,000, while Las Vegas lawyers reported a median of \$85,001-90,000. Rural lawyers reported a median base salary of \$70,001-75,000 in 2012.⁷

The Young Lawyers Section will be reporting the results of our 2015 Compensation Survey in the coming months, so stay tuned to this column for updated information regarding salaries, bonuses and billable hour requirements collected from young lawyers throughout the state. In the meantime, I look forward to working with you in this coming year as the chair of the Young Lawyers Section. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at layke.martin@unlv.edu. **NL**

1. *National Jurist*, Best legal job markets for new grads, December 2, 2014. <http://www.nationaljurist.com/content/best-legal-job-markets-new-grads>.
2. NALP, Employment for the Class of 2013 – Selected Findings <http://www.nalp.org/uploads/Classof2013SelectedFindings.pdf>.
3. William S. Boyd School of Law Employment Statistics, <http://www.law.unlv.edu/careers/employment-statistics>.
4. http://law.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/class_of_2013_summary_report_1.pdf.
5. Id.
6. <http://law.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/Class%20of%202012%20Summary%20Report.pdf>.
7. The salary results from the YLS Compensation Survey are for all young lawyers (attorneys who have been licensed for less than five years or are under the age of 36), and are not limited to first-year attorney salaries.