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Posted on Tue, Jan. 03, 2006

## Survey: Interaction important for law students

### Associated Press

**BLOOMINGTON, Ind.** - Law students who interact with classmates from different racial and economic backgrounds are likely to get more out of their law school experience, a study released Tuesday shows.

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement, based at Indiana University, found that students who engaged in "diversity-related activities" were more likely to interact with faculty members and say they gained more from attending law school.

George Kuh, an IU education professor and the director of the survey, said the results suggest that diversity is not important just for its own sake.

"When you see this array of desired outcomes and experiences that students report, it really is a very powerful educational effect," he said.

The survey, titled "The Law School Years: Probing Questions, Actionable Data," used data from 28,000 students at 73 law schools. The survey is a spinoff of the National Survey of Student Engagement, which has polled college undergraduates since 2000.

IU Bloomington Law School Dean Lauren Robel, a member of the project's advisory board, called Tuesday's report an outstanding survey that is "incredibly useful for law schools that participate."

The survey also found other information about law school students.

It confirmed that law graduates begin their careers with significant debt.

Nine of 10 students took out loans to pay for law school, and graduates owed an average of \$77,000, according to the report.

The report supports the common belief that law students slack off in their final year. One-fourth of graduating students said they often came to class unprepared, compared with 7 percent of first-year students.

The survey findings challenge extensive use of lectures and high-stakes tests by professors. One of six students in the survey said they never got prompt written or oral feedback from faculty.

"They have that major exam at the end of the semester, then wait two months to find out how they performed," Kuh said. "Well, that's not effective educational practice."

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