

Highlights from the *American Law School Dean Study*



Understanding the law school deanship is more important than ever

As legal education reaches another watershed moment in its evolution, understanding the American law school deanship has become more important than ever.

This study, one of the first comprehensive studies of law school deans' career pathways, day-to-day responsibilities, challenges and opportunities, reveals key findings including increasing diversification of the law school deanship, the primarily academic pathways to the position, and changes in how deans spent

their time before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For current law deans, the Study is a point of reference as they navigate their own careers and responsibilities. For aspiring and prospective deans, this study demystifies key elements of the deanship. We hope the Study contributes to further diversifying the ranks of deans by education, experience, race, ethnicity, gender, and age, and thereby increases the quality of leadership in the nation's law schools.

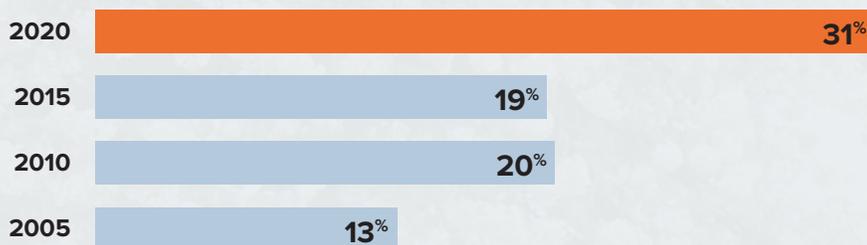
ABOUT THE *AMERICAN LAW SCHOOL DEAN STUDY*

The *American Law School Dean Study* is based primarily on a survey of the 197 law school deans who were serving at AALS member and fee-paid law schools in the spring of 2021, as well as 222 former deans who served between 2010 and 2020. The survey was conducted for AALS by NORC at the University of Chicago. The survey yielded responses from 84 percent of the 154 current law school deans. In addition to the survey, a diverse group of twelve deans participated in in-depth individual interviews.

The proportion of deans who are deans of color or Hispanic is growing.

- Women deans increased from 31 in 2005 to 74 in 2020 (18% to 41%).
- Deans of color and Hispanic deans increased from 21 in 2005 to 54 in 2020 (13% to 31%).
- In the fall of 2020, 18% of deans identified as Black/African American, up from 8% in 2005.

The proportion of deans who are deans of color or of Hispanic ethnicity is growing



18%

of deans identified as Black/African American in 2020, up from 8% in 2005

41%

of law school deans were women in 2020

Career pathways to and after the deanship are primarily within academia, and successful candidacies are most often initiated by someone other than the candidate.

- Over eighty percent (81%) of deans come to the deanship from inside academia, and an even higher proportion of those who were the first of their gender/race/ethnicity at their school come from inside academia (90%).
- Most successful dean candidacies are initiated by someone else (62%).
- More than one-half (59%) of deans are selected after a search that involves a search firm.
- Most of the deans who continue to work after the deanship return to the faculty (79%).

More than 80% of deans come from inside the legal academy

Deans from Inside the Legal Academy **81%**

from Inside the Academy:

Men **75%**

Women **84%**

81%

of deans come from inside the legal academy

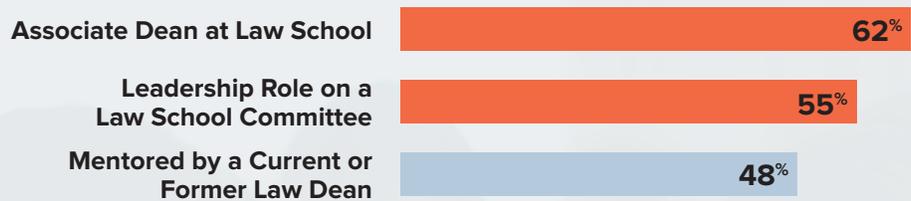
Deans First of Their Gender and or Race/Ethnicity to Serve as Dean of their Current Law School from Inside Academia

90%

Deans cite being an associate dean and being in a leadership role on a law school committee as the most helpful preparatory experiences.

- Deans identify being an associate dean (62%) as the most useful way to prepare for being a dean, followed by leadership on a law school committee (55%).
- Mentorship by other deans (48%), and serving on a law school search committee (38%) were also cited as helpful.

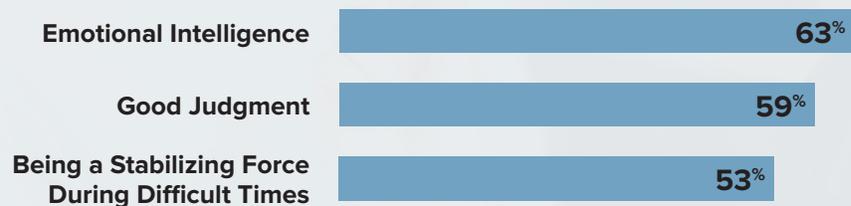
The two most helpful preparatory experiences were being an associate dean and being in a leadership role on a law school committee



Deans consider emotional intelligence, good judgment, and being a stabilizing force during difficult times important in helping them to succeed in their role as dean.

- Ability to listen (47%) and integrity (43%) are also in the top five most cited important attributes.
- Women are more likely than men to say that emotional intelligence (73% vs. 56%) and integrity (52% vs. 38%) are important for success as dean.

Top attributes deans consider important in helping them succeed in their role as dean



During the pandemic, deans focused more on crisis management; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and student life issues.

- The percentage of deans who allocated a lot of time to crisis management increased from 11% in 2019 to 88% in 2020.
- The percentage of deans who allocated a lot of time to diversity, equity, and inclusion increased from 16% in 2019 to 79% in 2020.
- The percentage of deans who allocated time to student life/conduct issues increased from 8% in 2019 to 44% in 2020.

COVID-19 and other events of 2020 changed how deans spend their time

