The Need for Intentionality: Insights from Research and the LSAC Prelaw Undergraduate Scholars (PLUS) Program

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Introduction

The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) has a long-standing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in legal education and the legal profession. This commitment is evident in LSAC's most notable pipeline program, the Prelaw Undergraduate Scholars (PLUS) Program. For nearly two decades, the PLUS Program has supported thousands of students from underrepresented and historically marginalized communities in their law school journey, from their initial interest in law to their preparation for the law school admission process and beyond. As the legal community collectively engages in dialogue, strategic planning, and action to fight for justice, access, and equity in the legal-education and legal-profession pipelines, it is important to take a step back in order to understand our approach to DEI so that we can identify gaps, build on successes, and innovate in pipeline programming.

The purpose of this report is to be informative regarding LSAC's pipeline work and to contribute to the ongoing conversation about effective and impactful DEI pipeline programming in legal education. The report first provides a brief overview of relevant research about diversity in law school and student learning to inform law school pipeline programming. Second, the report spotlights the PLUS Program and shares what we have learned about the importance of intentionality in how we will use research, student feedback, and data in pipeline program development in order to bring about a meaningful and transformative impact on the lives of prospective law school candidates. Addressing inequity and promoting access requires an intentional shift in the focus of pipeline work from addressing the question of "why is there a lack of diversity in law school?" to addressing the question of "how are we promoting and cultivating law school aspirations among minoritized[1] students in the pipeline?" Finally, based on what we have learned, the report provides a list of guiding frameworks, questions, tips, and resources to help think about how to plan and drive intentionality in pipeline programming.

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[1] The use of "minoritized" is intended to refer to the "process [action vs. noun] of student minoritization" that reflects an understanding of "minority" status as that which is socially constructed in specific societal contexts (Benitez, 2010; Stewart, 2013). For example, women are not minorities in legal education today, but they are one of many minoritized groups. These are groups that face social, political, economic, and educational barriers that constrict them. Minoritized groups include women, students of color, first-generation college students, students with disabilities, students of low socioeconomic status, and LGBTQIA+, transgender, and gender-nonconforming students, to name a few. The term "minoritized" is used interchangeably with "marginalized" and "underrepresented" in this report.

Literature Review: Informing Pipeline Work

The literature on the subject is clear: Helping students develop the skills they need to succeed in law school must go hand in hand with understanding how they experience education and learning. This section briefly reviews some of the relevant research informing our understanding of what students need to succeed in the enrollment journey and what they will need to be successful in law school as members of minoritized groups. Specifically, this section briefly reviews the literature about minoritized students' experiences in law school as well as learning insights into how best to support law school aspirations among students in the pipeline.

Preparing for Law School: Diversity in Legal Education

For decades, critical race theory, higher education, sociology, social psychology, linguistic anthropology, and other interdisciplinary research have demonstrated how the law school experience is different among law students based on their race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and other historically marginalized identities. The pedagogy, the curriculum, and the notoriously competitive and adversarial culture of legal education (Sturm & Guinier, 2007) are often detrimental to many minoritized students' learning experience, sense of belonging, engagement, and success (e.g., Deo et al., 2019; Epstein, 2012; Evans & Moore, 2015; Granfield, 1992; Guinier, 1997; Mertz, 2007; Moore, 2007; Pan, 2017).

For example, studies at individual law schools consistently tell a similar story: that minoritized students experience hostile classrooms, marginalization, bias, isolation, a feeling of invisibility, and othering (e.g., Buckner, 2004; London et al., 2007). A 2013 survey of 118 JD students at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law found that across the 2013–2015 classes, minoritized students' experiences were affected by stereotyping, implicit and explicit bias, and prejudice (Darling-Hammond & Holmquist, 2015). Black and Latinx students felt that faculty prejudged their academic abilities based on their race or gender, and they feared confirming stereotypes, which paralyzed them from seeking help in class (Darling-Hammond & Holmquist, 2015; Steele, 1997). At UCLA School of Law, Moran (2000) conducted a survey of her student body and found that issues of race and gender were mostly ignored in the law school curriculum. A survey of University of Michigan Law School students similarly found that students of color described the school environment as one characterized by racial separation, racial conflict, and racial misunderstandings, which resulted in their disengagement from the learning process (Allen & Solórzano, 2000). At the University of Florida Levin College of Law, a study found that many law students perceived that white males were the primary focus of classroom attention and legal knowledge (Dowd et al., 2003).

A study at the University of California, Davis, found that while law school is challenging for all students, systemic challenges and stresses were disproportionally

experienced more by women and racially minoritized students than by white and male students (Cassman & Pruitt, 2004). For example, women described the Socratic method using language of intimidation and bias, such as how it caused undue and distracting stress and how it stomped out their confidence in the classroom. In relation to in-class voluntary participation, students of color and female students reported lower satisfaction with their own classroom participation compared to white and male students. In terms of the emotional labor of law school, law school was more emotionally taxing for female students than for male students, and more for students of color than for white students (Cassman & Pruitt, 2004).

The findings of these studies are echoed in the latest 2020 Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) Annual Report (Deo & Christensen, 2020). The report revealed that "present day law students of color, especially Black women, and other law students from underrepresented groups continue to feel that their law schools do not value their presence or work hard enough to foster environments conducive to a wide range of students" (Deo & Christensen, 2020, p. 4).

Key findings of the 2020 LSSSE report:

- One third (33%) of first-generation students and 38% of students owing over $200,000 report that they do not feel valued by their law schools.
- Approximately one quarter (26%) of Black women—more than any other raceXgender[2] group—see their schools doing "very little" to create an environment that is supportive of different racial and ethnic identities, as compared to just 5.5% of white men.
- One quarter (25%) of Black students and 18% of Latinx students strongly disagree that they feel comfortable being themselves on campus.
- Students with racial, gender, or class privilege are less likely than their classmates to reflect on the benefits associated with their cultural identity.
- Though 56% of white male law students believe their schools do "quite a bit" or "very much" to help them "develop the skills to confront discrimination and harassment," one quarter (24%) of all female students and over one third (36%) of all Black students believe their schools do "very little" to equip them with these tools.

The LSSSE Annual Report supports the findings of two forthcoming research articles using 2018 LSSSE data. In the first study, law students from disadvantaged backgrounds across 25 law schools reported weaker relationships with faculty, staff,

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[2] RaceXgender is a term that highlights the compound effects often caused by holding multiple devalued identity characteristics at the intersection of race and gender. This is seen with women of color who are doubly marginalized because of their race and gender (Deo, 2019).

and peers, which predicted a lower sense of belonging compared to their classmates from advantaged backgrounds (Green et al., 2021). The same study also found that sense of belonging is predictive of academic performance and educational satisfaction (Green et al., 2021). The second study, which involved students across 17 law schools, examined factors affecting law students' sense of belonging. The study found that self-reported experiences of bias and stereotype concerns significantly and adversely affected law students' sense of belonging (Bodamer, 2021). This study also found that women of color are significantly more likely to have a low sense of belonging compared to all other racial, ethnic, and gender subgroups (Bodamer, 2021).

Leveraging and Amplifying Students' Strengths, Knowledge, and Aspirations

Minoritized students' identities matter, as they impact how students experience, learn, and perform in educational settings (e.g., Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000; Steele, 1997; Steele, 2011).[3] Whether it is the fear of conforming to negative stereotypes associated with their race, ethnicity, and/or gender, weak relationships with peers and faculty, experiences of bias and othering, or the feeling of invisibility, these studies reveal that minoritized law students are being reminded by their surroundings and in their interactions that they do not belong in their law school. This finding is consistent with the literature on higher education, which shows that concerns about fitting in and developing relationships are exacerbated when Black (e.g., Chavous, 2000), Latinx (e.g., Gibson et al., 2004), Native American (e.g., Fryberg et al., 2008), and Asian American (e.g., Shimpi & Zirkel, 2012) students enter predominantly white colleges and universities.

Sense of belonging is important to examine and cultivate because it is linked to positive academic outcomes such as increased academic motivation, increased engagement, intention to persist, actual persistence, and achievement (Freeman et al., 2007; Gopalan & Brady, 2020; Green et al., 2021; Hausmann et al., 2007). The research shows that pipeline programs must intentionally address the factors that impact students' learning experiences and effectively create spaces where students feel

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[3] How students learn is far more nuanced than is captured in this brief literature review. The needs, barriers, and experiences of students are different for Indigenous women compared to Black, Latinx, and other women of color. The experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual students are different from those of transgender and gender nonconforming or nonbinary students. So many studies of the LGBTQIA+ community too often conflate sexual orientation and gender identity. And all these experiences are even more nuanced at the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, socioeconomic status, disability, immigration status, and other social statuses that are marginalized in U.S. society. This is important to highlight because this awareness impacts how we think about the development of pipeline programming to cultivate and support aspiration among various minoritized candidates in the pipeline.

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a sense of belonging and can develop the necessary skills and networks they need both in their enrollment journey and in law school.

In cultivating a sense of belonging and spaces conducive to learning and in developing strategies for success in the enrollment journey and in law school, it is helpful to access additional research about growth mindset, community cultural wealth, and mentoring. Such research provides helpful insights into how to leverage and amplify students' strengths, knowledge, and aspirations.[4]

In the law school pipeline and in legal education, students are sometimes characterized as having "natural" or "innate" skills (e.g., writing, oral argument) that lend themselves to the practice of law. This belief, which is known as a fixed mindset, is often fueled by stereotypes and stigmas associated with students' abilities based on race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. The belief that students cannot meaningfully develop their capacity is one that can hinder their ability to learn and grow. Cultivating a growth mindset, on the other hand, concerns helping students find ways to learn, that is, to view challenges and obstacles in education as opportunities to grow and learn rather than as signs of inadequacy (Dweck, 2008). Students with a growth mindset are more likely to persist and succeed in both the short term and long term (Dweck, 2008; Good et al., 2012).

It is also crucial to understand how the prevalence of inequality in the entire education pipeline hinders the development of the academic skills and mindset needed to succeed in law school—rather than blaming students or groups of students for lacking the necessary knowledge, motivation, or skills. Approaching pipeline work with intentionality means reflecting on how the content is delivered. Often the focus of programs is on knowledge deficiency and the development of human capital, such as learning how and when to apply to law school, which overlooks the wealth of capital that minoritized students bring to this process that can be leveraged to further support and cultivate their aspirations in the pipeline. The community cultural wealth model (Yosso, 2005) includes six forms of capital that students bring from their homes and communities to the classroom: aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. Pipeline programming can benefit from using the community cultural wealth model to frame programming, relationships, and interactions with students.[5]

The importance of mentorship for minoritized students is well documented in various fields, including legal education and STEM (National Academies of Sciences,

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[4] See the Resources section for links on mindset, belonging, community cultural wealth, and other approaches.

[5] For more information, see the Resources section of this report.

Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). Research demonstrates that mentees benefit from mentoring relationships of many types if the mentor and mentee can develop a sense of trust, identity, and culturally responsive engagement (Blake-Beard et al., 2011). In fact, intentional efforts made by concerned faculty and staff can help minoritized students feel empowered and validated, which can fortify students against the effects of discriminatory experiences on their sense of belonging (Hurtado et al., 2015). In legal education, mentorship through affinity organizations, such as the Black Law Student Association, for students of color is positively associated with retention (Deo & Griffin, 2011). Having someone whom students can relate to and feel comfortable approaching with their concerns and worries is important for students' persistence in education. Therefore, facilitating intentional network development and meaningful long-term mentoring relationships in pipeline programming is an important component of this effort, as it can be a rich source of support for students long after the pipeline program is over.

This literature review is not exhaustive, but it is clear that immersing students in the law school experience requires considering how students like them are currently experiencing legal education, and how theories, concepts, and other research related to learning can inform best practices for supporting and cultivating aspiration among students in the pipeline. The literature echoes the importance of student-centricity in pipeline programming, which can only be achieved by an intentional approach that addresses the learning needs, aspirations, and experiences of minoritized students.

LSAC's PLUS Program: Moving Forward with Intentionality

In this section, LSAC's PLUS Program is spotlighted so that we can share what we have learned about pipeline programming and the importance of intentionality in creating community and a space where students feel seen, heard, and valued by their peers and faculty. Moving forward, the PLUS Program, true to its origins, is investing— and will continue to invest—in minoritized prospective law school candidates. This effort will be accomplished by collaborating with key internal and external stakeholders and DEI experts to create programs with innovative, explicit, and intentional learning outcomes centered on the student experience in order to promote and cultivate law school aspirations among minoritized students in the PLUS Program and other future LSAC-supported pipeline programs.

Program Purpose and Curriculum

The PLUS Program is devoted to increasing opportunities for and providing encouragement to rising undergraduate sophomore and junior students from diverse backgrounds to consider careers in law and to prepare them for the law school

admission process. This purpose is realized through grant funding and programmatic support of LSAC member law schools as hosts to develop and implement a 4-week summer residential program that immerses students in the law school experience.

The curriculum focuses on the academic skills needed to succeed in law school, the admission process, exposure to the legal profession, and the development of a supportive network. Over the course of the 4-week program, students complete an average of 15 hours of rigorous coursework in Legal Writing and more than 25 hours of coursework in a variety of legal topics, such as Constitutional Law and Criminal Law. Most of the programs have students prepare case briefs, and many programs also have students prepare and present oral arguments. Students participate in at least 15 hours of additional sessions about the law school admission process and legal careers. All of the students receive peer-to-peer support as part of the development of their support network, and students are offered numerous opportunities for individual advising about their law school enrollment journey and experience.

Cumulative Summary of the Impact of the PLUS Program

Since its inception, the PLUS Program has successfully recruited and supported a diverse pool of prospective law school candidates (Figure 1).[6] Over half of PLUS alumni are Black/African American and over 19% are Latinx.

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[6] The section provides a broad overview of the PLUS Program. In the future, LSAC plans to provide more details about program learning outcomes in order to contribute to the growing literature on prelaw pipeline programs and to engage with the prelaw and legal education community.

Figure 1: LSAC's PLUS Program Participants (2002–2019): Race and Ethnicity Breakdowns (N = 2,713). Responding Law Schools by Geographic Region
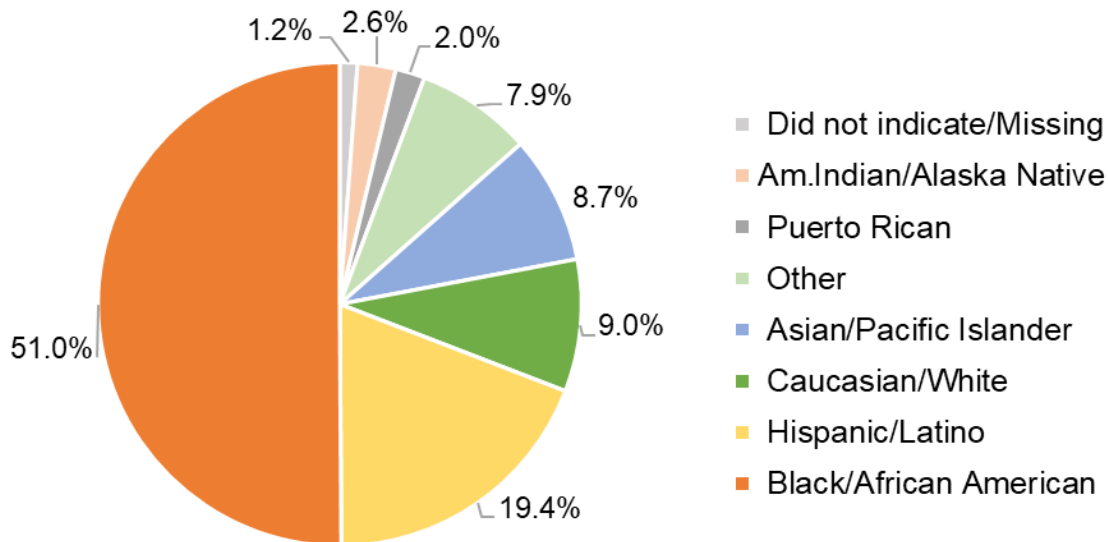
Source: LSAC's PLUS Program PLUS Dataset 2002–2019. Does not include the 2020 PLUS Online participants (*N* = 185).

After completing the program, students consistently reported that they knew more about the law school admission process, law school, and the legal profession (Figure 2). Additionally, PLUS students reported higher levels of confidence about taking the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and applying to law school after completing the PLUS Program. Both faculty feedback and measures of students' academic achievements from PLUS course exams and assignments confirmed students' self-reported learning gains.

Figure 2: 2007–2019 LSAC Pre-Survey and Post-Survey Scales

PLUS Know More About the...
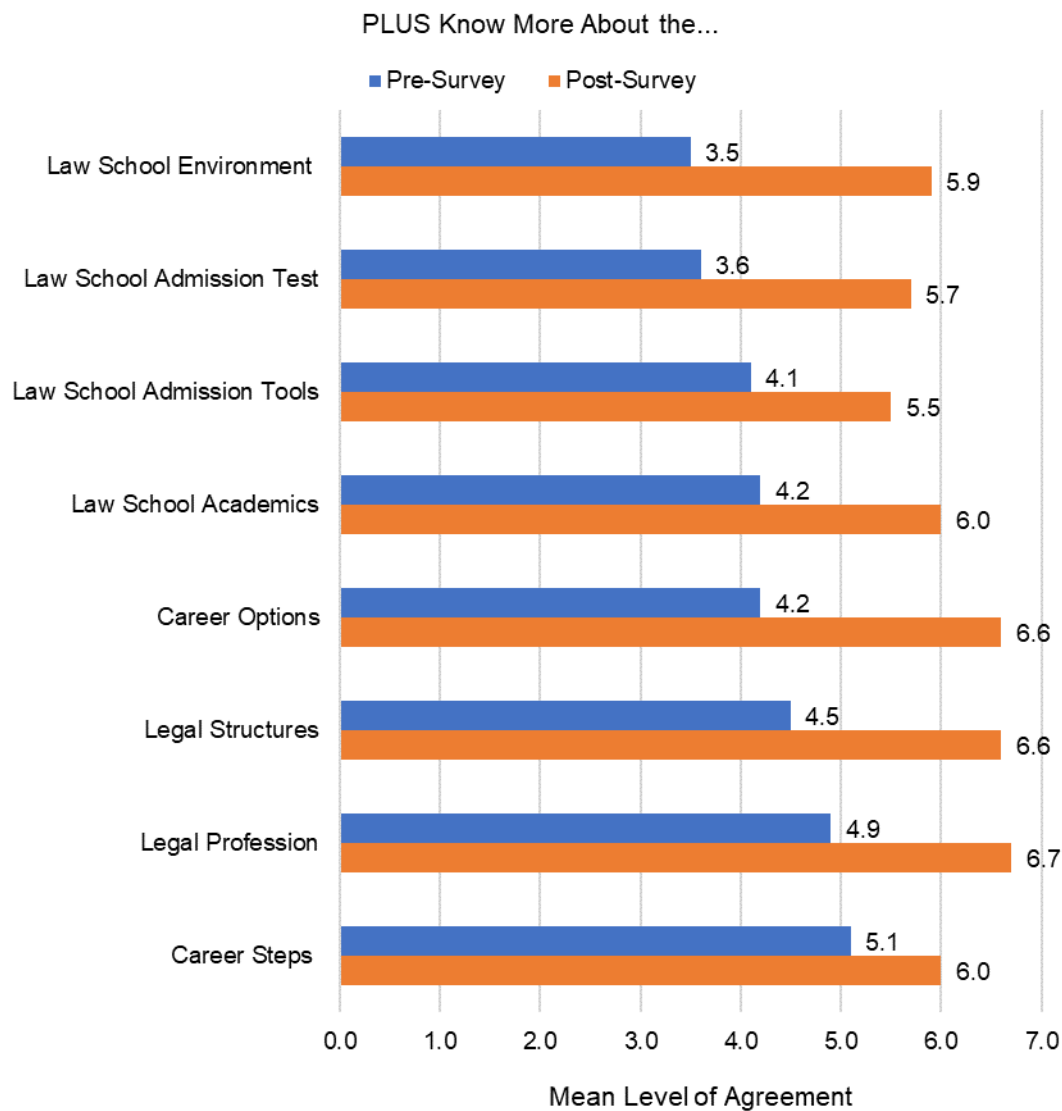
Source: 2007–2019 LSAC PLUS Program Pre-/Post-Survey Results

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the residential program was canceled and LSAC partnered with seven law schools to implement a virtual version of the PLUS program, called PLUS Online. A total of 185 students participated in PLUS Online. Reflecting the total PLUS Program alumni network from 2002 to 2019, 50% of the PLUS Online students were Black/African American and about 20% were Latinx. A little more

than 20% of PLUS Online students identified as LGBTQIA+.[7] Overall, PLUS Online students reported similar levels of increased knowledge about the law school admission process, what it is like to attend law school, and the various career paths within the legal profession compared to previous PLUS Program participants. The PLUS Program will be offered online again in 2021.

LSAC's PLUS Program Alumni and the Enrollment Journey

To examine how PLUS alumni and students who participated in the PLUS Program fared in the enrollment journey, LSAC Research conducted a quantitative analysis in 2018 (Dustman & Gallagher, 2018). PLUS alumni were compared to other law school applicants who matched on more than five variables, including sex, race, ethnicity, and freshman year undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) within +/- 0.1 points (Dustman & Gallagher, 2018). The analysis found that, compared to matched applicants who did not participate in PLUS, PLUS alumni:

- Achieved a greater improvement in their UGPA between their freshman year and when they applied to law school
- Had a higher UGPA at the time of law school application
- Applied to more law schools
- Were more likely to be admitted to law school
- Were admitted to more law schools

While this analysis provides evidence of PLUS success in terms of numbers (e.g. UGPA, applications submitted, and admission), we must exercise caution against placing too much emphasis on this data as the key outcomes of success. Quantitative data, while important, cannot capture fundamental shifts in social capital[8] and the increase in confidence observed in PLUS students by directors and LSAC staff, and found in post-survey comment responses, in which students elaborated on their experiences in the program. The impact of the PLUS Program goes beyond students' learning about the law school admission process, law school, and the legal profession: The impact is also felt in terms of how our students experience this unique learning space based on who they are. As one 2020 PLUS Online student said, "My biggest takeaway from this program was that pursuing a law degree is possible as a black

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[7] Moving forward, LSAC pipeline programs are incorporating more intentional data tracking of who our PLUS and pipeline students are in order to evaluate our efforts to meet their nuanced needs.

[8] Social capital comprises the relationships, networks of people, and community resources that provide instrumental and emotional support to successfully navigate educational institutions.

woman. It is so important for college students who are minorities or first-generation students to know that they are not limited in what they can do."

Therefore, given the literature and feedback from students, PLUS alumni, PLUS directors, and legal education stakeholders, LSAC is building on the PLUS Program by assessing the meaning of success for pipeline programming, identifying and intentionally focusing on the needs of minoritized students, and centering our explicit learning outcomes on students' experiences in education settings to best cultivate and support their aspirations in the pipeline.

> **PLUS Student Voices**
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> *"My biggest takeaway from this program was that pursuing a law degree is possible as a black woman. It is so important for college students who are minorities or first-generation students to know that they are not limited in what they can do."*
>
> 2020 PLUS Online student

Student-Centered: Creating Community and Fostering Belonging

The strength of the PLUS Program is found in the unique experience it provides diverse students. For many students, the 4-week program offers a rare opportunity not to feel alone in a classroom, that is, to find community. Moving forward, the PLUS Program will build on its successes and address gaps in program requirements to better serve minoritized students in the pipeline. Specifically, by taking an intentional student-centric approach, the PLUS Program will build on its already strong foundation of fostering a sense of belonging to support learning, and creating a supportive community to better cultivate aspirations among minoritized students in the pipeline.

An important component of the PLUS Program is the community and the space it creates where students feel like they belong. Based on the 2020 PLUS Online post-survey, more than 64% of PLUS Online alumni who took the survey indicated to a great extent feeling comfortable being themselves in the program, more than 70% reported feeling to a great extent a sense of community among their peers in the program, and more than 80% indicated feeling to a great extent valued by their PLUS instructors (Figure 3).

Creating and fostering a space where students feel they belong and have a community is crucial to preparing minoritized students for success in law school. As a 2020 PLUS Online student said, "In this program, I learned to offer my opinion or speak up even when I'm not comfortable or feel I am wrong. I had this expectation that pre-law students and lawyers were always sharp and correct in everything but programs such as these are the steppingstones and comfortable places to put yourself out there. In doing this, sharp skills are developed."
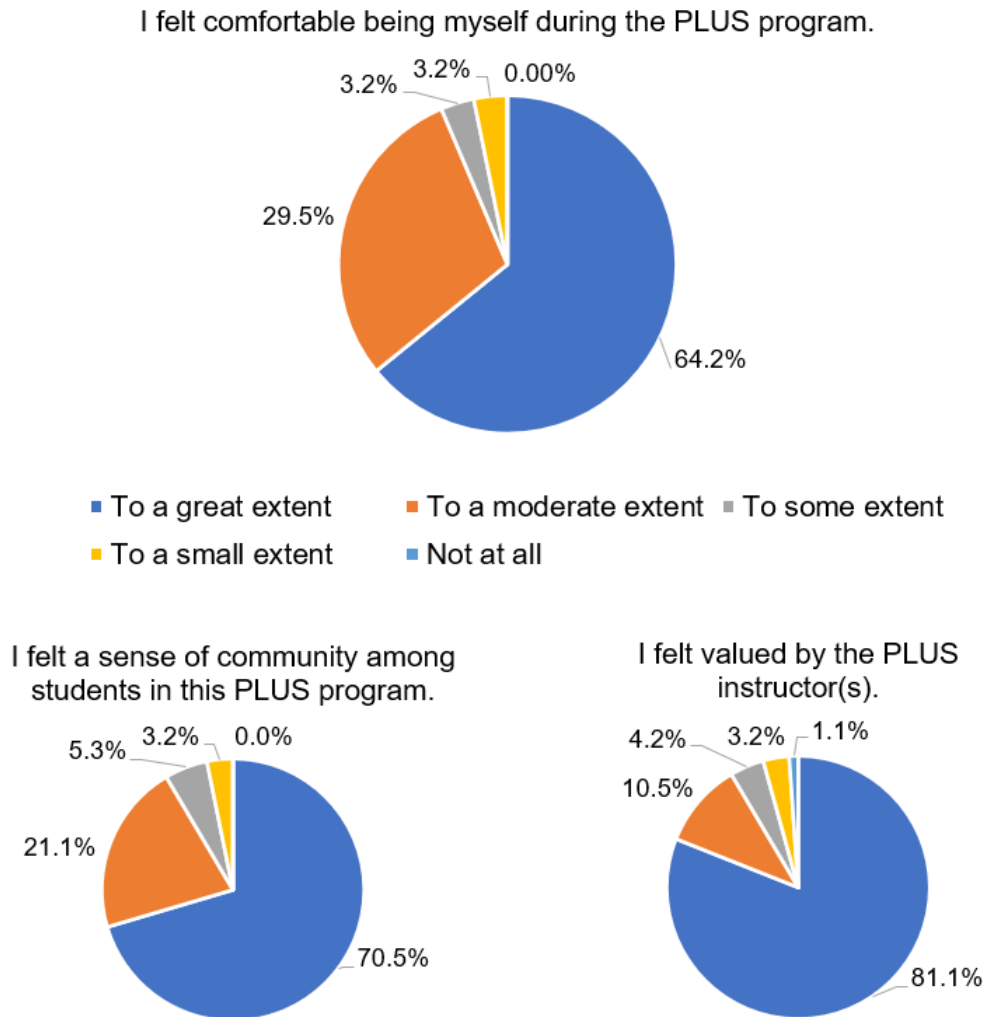
The PLUS Program enables students to feel safe to make mistakes and to learn from them as they explore their interest in law and begin to cultivate their professional identity. The opportunity to develop skills, to act like a legal professional, and to be recognized as such can help minoritized prospective law students begin to develop a professional identity long before they are law students—without the fear of othering. Envisioning themselves in the legal profession despite the challenges and exclusionary forces that impact diversity, equity, and access to law school is as important as their understanding of, and having, the necessary academic skills required for success in law school.

PLUS Student Voices

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2020 PLUS Online student

Figure 3: Sense of Belonging Indicators in 2020 PLUS Online Program

I felt comfortable being myself during the PLUS program.

3.2% 3.2% 0.00%
29.5%
64.2%

■ To a great extent ■ To a moderate extent ■ To some extent
■ To a small extent ■ Not at all

I felt a sense of community among students in this PLUS program.

5.3% 3.2% 0.0%
21.1%
70.5%

I felt valued by the PLUS instructor(s).

4.2% 3.2% 1.1%
10.5%
81.1%

Source: 2020 LSAC PLUS Online Program Post-Survey results (*N* = 95). The survey questions were derived from some of the LSSSE Diversity and Inclusiveness module questions, which were analyzed in the 2020 LSSSE Annual Report (Deo & Christensen, 2020).

The PLUS Program also provides a unique mentoring setting that combines the strength of informal mentorships with career-specific expertise found more frequently in formal career mentorship opportunities (e.g., internships). The program includes both personalized/individual mentoring and group mentoring. Moving forward, it will be particularly important for PLUS students and staff to recognize the value of fostering relationships among those with shared experiences (peers, teaching assistants, and law faculty or staff of color). As a 2018 PLUS student said, "The availability of the program fellows was one of the most useful resources in the program. Their willingness to speak about their experiences as law school students and offer advice helped me learn how to navigate law school once I start." Additionally, it is important to support students' development of a diverse mentor network that includes mentors who come from different backgrounds and are intentionally responsive to the identity-related challenges faced by their mentees when developing their law-related career identity.
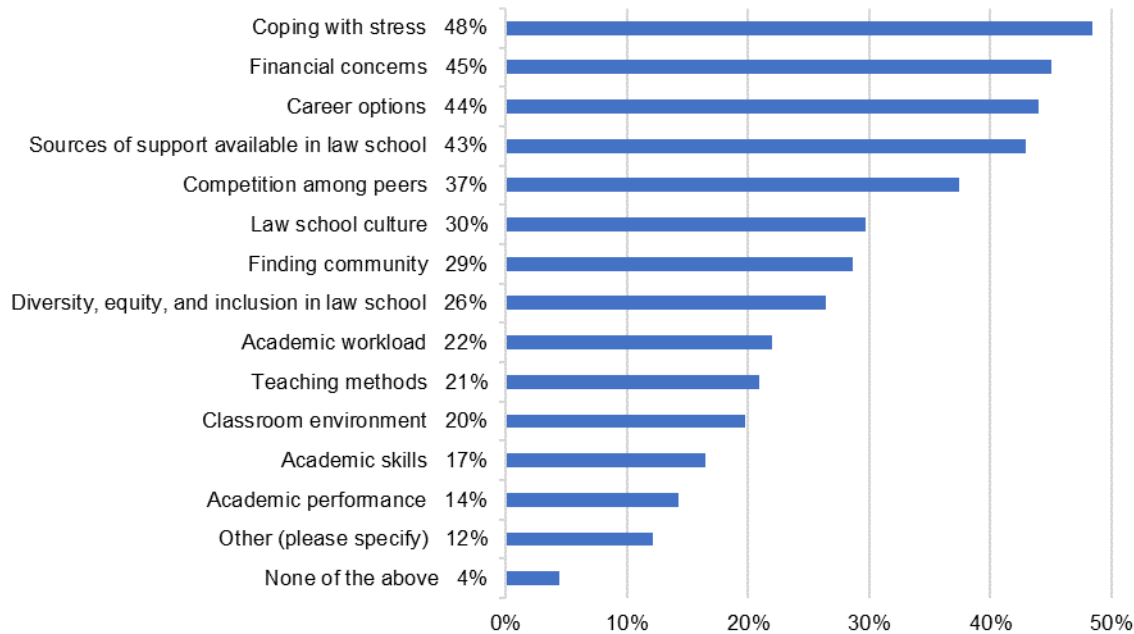
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In an effort to inform the future direction of the PLUS Program, in the 2020 PLUS Online post-survey we intentionally asked students about what aspects of the law school experience they need more information about in order to help with their decision to pursue legal education and prepare for law school. The top five responses were: coping with stress, financial concerns, career options, sources of support available in law school, and competition among peers (Figure 4). These findings mirror the concerns identified in research about minoritized law students. While law school is stressful for everyone, stresses are often disproportionally experienced by female and racially minoritized students than by male and white students (Cassman & Pruitt, 2004). Therefore, understanding what to expect and how to cope, face, and overcome foreseeable challenges in law school are important teaching elements to integrate into pipeline programming. Addressing students' needs while teaching them about the academic skills required for law school must go hand in hand with data-driven and socially conscious best practices to create equitable programming—whether in-person or virtual.

While we still have a lot to learn, and even though more research is needed to improve prelaw pipeline programing, we look forward to collaborating with pipeline stakeholders, DEI experts, and students to intentionally evaluate, integrate best practices for, and build on all LSAC future pipeline programming to specifically target and support aspirations among minoritized students in the pipeline.

Figure 4: Aspects of the Law School Experience You Wish the LSAC PLUS Online Program Had Provided More Information About

Aspect	Percentage
Coping with stress	48%
Financial concerns	45%
Career options	44%
Sources of support available in law school	43%
Competition among peers	37%
Law school culture	30%
Finding community	29%
Diversity, equity, and inclusion in law school	26%
Academic workload	22%
Teaching methods	21%
Classroom environment	20%
Academic skills	17%
Academic performance	14%
Other (please specify)	12%
None of the above	4%

Source: 2020 LSAC PLUS Online Program Post-Survey Results (*N* = 95).

Doing Pipeline Work: Approaches and Questions to Drive Intentionality

As pipeline programs strive to support and equip prospective law students with the academic skills to succeed in the enrollment journey and in law school, we must take a step back to reevaluate our pipeline purpose, goals, and outcomes to ensure we are also taking a student-centered approach. Fighting for justice and equity in legal education necessitates that we create spaces where students can show up as their authentic selves so that they can effectively learn and grow. Based on research, theories that drive best practices, feedback from PLUS students, and DEI experts who trained our 2021 PLUS Program directors, we offer five points to help drive thinking about how to plan more intentional pipeline programming:

1. **The purpose of the pipeline program should be intentionally defined:**
   - What is the purpose of the pipeline program?
   - What is the program's definition of success?
   - What are the needs and barriers that the intended targeted audience faces in the pipeline?
   - What are the program goals?

- What are the program learning outcomes?

2. **The program's purpose, goals, and outcomes should be strategically aligned with an evaluation tool:**
   - To improve and build on programming, evaluation is crucial. Is there a plan to effectively evaluate learning outcomes both quantitatively and qualitatively?
   - Best practices call for, at minimum, a pre-survey and post-survey.
   - The evaluation of the program should be holistic. Consider including ways to measure changes in attitudes, aspirations, sense of belonging, and adoption of skills, as these areas are associated with long-term changes that positively impact educational outcomes.
   - Too often, programs rely on quantitative data that cannot capture the nuanced impact of their programs. Therefore, consider other ways to provide students with the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words and to amplify their voices.

3. **Immersion of students in the law school experience should not limit innovation and creativity:**
   - What frameworks and approaches are you using to intentionally and explicitly center on the student experience? Supportive programming that cultivates aspiration among minoritized students in the pipeline can, for example, use Wilkins-Yel's five foundational tenets to help the program center on the student experience (Wilkins-Yel, 2021).
     - An anti-oppressive framework focuses on recognizing and promoting change to redress power imbalances (Dalrymple & Burke, 1995). In practice, this is accomplished by addressing sexist or ableist jokes among students and orienting speakers to use inclusive language, such as using preferred pronouns.
     - There is no neutrality in the fight for justice and the racism struggle (Kendi, 2019). In pipeline work, one either believes social problems are rooted in groups of people—a racist mindset—or believes social problems are rooted in power and policies—an anti-racist mindset.
     - An anti-deficit achievement framework focuses on the achievements and strengths of minoritized groups rather than their underachievement so as to create viable solutions to problems (Harper, 2010). Applied to pipeline programming, this framework requires shifting our questions about DEI from asking "why are there so few Black men in law school?" (deficit-based question) to asking "how are we promoting and cultivating law

school aspirations among Black men in college?" (anti-deficit question).

- Students come to pipeline programs as whole individuals. A whole-body approach comprehensively addresses students' needs to prevent the compartmentalization of certain aspects of themselves. In practice, this is actualized, in part, when programs address mental health and collaborate with counseling centers on campus.
- *Safe space* is a common concept in education. While safe spaces allow students to express themselves and vent, it is more fruitful to cultivate *counterspace*. Counterspace is an environment that allows minoritized students to cope, counteract, mitigate, and/or resist the psychological consequences of marginalization or othering (Case & Hunter, 2012). This can be cultivated by surrounding students and supporting them with people who affirm that they matter, belong, and are destined for greatness.

4. **Pipeline programming should be informed by students, research, and best practices:**
   - Programming should be an iterative process as we learn more about students' needs. Program design should start with the developers and instructors and what informs how they develop and deliver content. Therefore, introspection is crucial for checking biases, assumptions about the targeted student population, and blind spots. Are you aware of the virtual and in-person best practices for creating community and a sense of belonging in the learning space?
   - Are you up to date to the latest research in education and pipeline programming?
   - Are you providing DEI training for all involved in supporting and teaching your students?
   - Are you creating space for students to express their experiences to help reevaluate how the program is going in order to course-correct and rectify when needed?

5. **Because pipeline work isn't easy, it is important to realistically assess your capacity:**
   - What are the necessary internal resources and human capital (i.e., knowledge) needed to advance your program purpose so that it meets stated goals and measures outcomes?
   - What support do you need in order to develop and deliver the program?
     - Do you need help with grant writing?
     - Do you need evaluation and assessment support?

- ▪ Do you have a network to help with fundraising and securing funding for long-term program sustainability?
  - What kinds of opportunities are built into the process to provide those developing and implementing the program an emotional and mental break (i.e., to prevent burnout and compassion fatigue)?

This list, by no means exhaustive, is intended to provide several key points to consider in pipeline program development. LSAC welcomes and looks forward to engaging and collaborating with pipeline stakeholders, scholars, researchers, directors, faculty, law school administrators, legal professionals, pipeline program alumni, and students in order to share and learn about specific practices, literature, and perspectives to identify gaps, build on successes, and innovate in pipeline programming. For more information, or if you are interested in collaboration, please contact LSAC DEI at DiversityOffice@LSAC.org.

Resources

Below is a list resources provided by DEI experts (Boles & Weng, 2021) and others to help pipeline stakeholders learn more about the various frameworks, concepts, approaches, literature, institutes, and projects to inform pipeline programming.

- AALS Law Deans Antiracist Clearinghouse Project
- Community Cultural Wealth Model (a summary)
- Components of an anti-oppressive framework
- Equity in Assessment
- Growth Mindset
- Learning for Justice
- Native Land Acknowledgment
- Othering & Belonging Institute
- Professional Identity Formation
- Social and Emotional Learning (belonging, DEI)
- StrengthsFinder
- Talking about Race (NMAAHC)
- Universal Design

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