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Law Schools: Violating Ethical Obligations and the Model Rules of Professional Conduct - The Very Subjects They Teach

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The significant downturn in the United States economy has not only affected the ability for law school graduates to find jobs, it has caused significant problems for law schools as well. Law schools rely on their reputations and statistics to entice prospective students to apply to their schools and many applicants rely heavily on this information when choosing which school to attend. As a result, the spotlight has been put on law schools that have publicly reassured potential students that they will be able to find jobs, even during these turbulent economic times, by posting employment percentage rates for students after graduation. Given the decline in legal jobs, some students have begun to take action against their law schools that posted employment percentage rates that did not accurately reflect graduates with law-related employment. Skewing employment statistics has been considered by many to constitute false advertising, which is not only illegal, but also violates the ethical laws that lawyers must adhere to and goes against what is taught in essential law school courses. As a result, the question remains: how can law schools expect students to make ethical decisions as lawyers when school administrators are violating the very laws they teach?

Law schools throughout the country become accredited after the American Bar Association (the ?ABA?) recognizes that these schools have met certain standards. Beginning in 1952, the United States Department of Education approved the ABA to act as the national agency responsible for accrediting law schools and ensuring that all accredited law schools adhere to its rules and procedures.1] Although some law schools are not accredited by the ABA, most states only allow graduates from ABA-accredited law schools to sit for their bar exams. In fact, twenty states require that students attend ABA-accredited law schools before they can sit for the bar in that state. The states that do not require this usually accept bar admission from another state or have additional requirements that can make the application process more difficult.

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