

Law Schools

Too short rather than two long? Law school prof backs four-year requirement

Posted Nov 7, 2013 5:45 AM CST

By [Debra Cassens Weiss](#)

President Barack Obama got it “exactly backward” when he [called for consideration](#) of a two-year law degree, a law professor argues.

Instead, says Cardozo law professor Edward Zelinsky, students should spend four years in classes. “Law school should not be shortened; it should be lengthened,” he argues at the [OUPblog](#) published by Oxford University Press. [TaxProf Blog](#) and [Above the Law](#) noted the proposal.

Zelinsky gives three reasons why law school should be lengthened.

First, he says, there are whole new fields of law and there is more to learn about existing fields than in the past. Second, he says, “we are de facto creeping towards four years of legal education” because of expanded LLM programs. Third, he says, there are increasing calls for expanded clinical education, but such programs should not be instituted at the expense of substantive legal education.

Zelinsky notes that legal education is already too expensive, but he argues that a fourth year of instruction would “impart even greater urgency to task of controlling the expense of law school.”

“An ancillary benefit of a fourth year of legal education would, in the short run, be a reduction in the supply of law school graduates,” he adds. “A fourth year would also abate the job-related pressures students currently feel after the second year of law school by giving students another bite of the employment-related apple after their third year.”

Above the Law calls Zelinsky's blog post the “worst argument on the Internet this week.”

“The goal of law school shouldn't be to teach people every substantive rule and standard of every possible field of law,” Above the Law says. “The goal is to teach students a way of understanding and researching the basic concepts so that students can learn for themselves over the course of their careers.”

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