April 27, 2011

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Boxer:

I received your letter of March 31, 2011, regarding the transparency of law school data and appreciate this opportunity to respond. The Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, as the Department of Education’s recognized accreditor for legal education, is required by the Department’s regulations to carry out its accreditation activities independent from the American Bar Association. For that reason the Section has prepared for you a separate, detailed memo that accompanies this letter.

I want to emphasize that we share your concerns: no one could be more focused on the future of our next generation of lawyers than the ABA and the legal profession for whom we speak. An interest in pursuing justice should not leave someone with a life shadowed by overwhelming debt.

Much of the issue is about students making informed, smart choices, and the ABA distributes information that can help. I enclose a paper the Association produced entitled “The Value Proposition of Attending Law School,” which has gained wide coverage in traditional press and by legal bloggers for its simple, clear approach to helping potential law students weigh their decision to enter law school. The ABA also is encouraging more young people to read the highly detailed, comparative information about law schools, published in the ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools. This book includes extensive chapters on job opportunities, careers and salaries, and also is posted free on the Law School Admission Council website.

The ABA Young Lawyers Division, at my request, also has been looking into how the ABA can encourage additional dissemination of relevant information on this topic. While the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar leads on this issue through the accreditation standards applied to law schools, the ABA as a whole is committed to complementing its efforts.
This is a dynamic time for the legal profession and those who will one day lead it. The ABA will do everything possible to ensure this next generation has rewarding careers in the law that serve the American people’s needs. We stand ready to provide any additional information you might need.

Sincerely,

Stephen N. Zack
President