Section I

Introduction

The overall goal of the research reported here is to provide an objective and credible assessment of the future workforce needs for lawyers in the state of California through the year 2015. The study was carried out under a contract from the University of California, whose responsibilities under the California Master Plan for Higher Education include helping to meet California’s workforce needs.

Among publicly supported institutions, the University of California has the sole responsibility for providing certain types of professional education, including law. If the existing or expected supply of lawyers is likely to be unable to meet the state’s needs, then it would be appropriate for the University, along with other stakeholder institutions, to consider ways of addressing such imbalances. This project represents a first step toward understanding whether any supply-demand mismatches are emerging that might warrant new policy initiatives.

Specifically, the project gathered both primary and secondary data to meet four main research objectives:

i. Develop a profile of practicing attorneys in California today at the state level and—insofar as possible—for specific regions within the state.

ii. Project future supply and demand for lawyers in California to the year 2015 at the state level and—insofar as possible—for its specific regions, and identify likely mismatches (if any) between supply and demand.

iii. Determine what representatives of California’s top ABA-approved law schools expect to happen in legal education and in the legal profession generally over the coming decade that might affect future supply of and demand for lawyers.

iv. Explore what representatives of varied employing organizations and other experts anticipate as upcoming trends that will affect future supply of and demand for lawyers.

The first two objectives cited above are realized by acquiring and analyzing secondary data available through a number of sources (e.g., the US Census, Current Population Supplements to the US Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the California Bar Association, the National Association for Law Placement and Martindale Hubbell). The latter two objectives are achieved by means of semi-structured interviews carried out with members of law school faculties, law firms and other experts. In addition, a narrowly focused review of relevant literature provided background information that helped guide research toward all four objectives.

In the next section we summarize findings from the literature review. Sections 3 and 4 present descriptive and analytic methods and findings to yield a profile of California lawyers today as well as projected future supply and demand trends, respectively. Sections 5, 6 and 7 then describe procedures and findings from interviews with law
school deans, law firm representatives and other spokespersons for the profession. Section 8 provides conclusions and recommendations from the research. Finally, a set of appendices is included that gives supplementary methodological information related to the collection and examination of both secondary and primary data.