

IAALS, the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System, is a national, independent research center dedicated to facilitating continuous improvement and advancing excellence in the American legal system. **Our mission is to forge innovative and practical solutions to problems within the American legal system.** In 2006, we opened our doors at the [University of Denver](#). Founded by Chancellor Emeritus Daniel Ritchie, Denver attorney and bar leader John Moye, business leader and philanthropist Charles C. Gates, and former Colorado Supreme Court Justice Rebecca Love Kourlis, we had a clear sense of our mission, but also a healthy understanding of the enormity of the task. IAALS is independent and nonpartisan, and we are committed to comprehensive, balanced, and inclusive change across the American legal system.

The employment gap for law school graduates is well-documented. Almost 40% of 2015 law graduates did not secure full-time jobs requiring a law license and only 70% of 2015 graduates landed a full-time job that either required a law license or gave a preference to candidates with a juris doctor. One in four 2015 graduates did not report having any type of job, even a non-professional job, after law school. The employment gap is exacerbated by another gap: the gap between the skillset lawyers want in new graduates and the skillset lawyers believe new graduates have. Only 23% of practitioners believe new lawyers have sufficient skills to practice.

The gap between what new lawyers have and what new lawyers need exacerbates the employment problem, but it is even more insidious than that. When new lawyers enter the workforce unprepared or under-prepared, it undermines the public trust in our legal system. Something has to shift. And for something to shift, we had to understand exactly what new lawyers need as they entered the profession.

So we asked. In late 2014, we launched Foundations for Practice, a national, multi-year project designed to:

1. Identify the foundations entry-level lawyers need to launch successful careers in the legal profession;
2. Develop measurable models of legal education that support those foundations; and
3. Align market needs with hiring practices to incentivize positive improvements in legal education.

In 2014-15, we distributed a survey to lawyers across the country. The response was overwhelming. More than 24,000 lawyers in all 50 states from a range of backgrounds and practice settings answered.

First, new lawyers need character. In fact, 76% of characteristics (things like integrity, work ethic, common sense, and resilience) were identified by a majority of respondents as necessary right out of law school. When we talk about what makes people—not just lawyers—successful we have come to accept that they require some threshold intelligence quotient (IQ) and, in more recent years, that they also require a favorable emotional intelligence (EQ). Our findings suggest that lawyers also require some level of character quotient (CQ).

Second, successful entry-level lawyers are not merely legal technicians, nor are they merely cognitive powerhouses. The current dichotomous debate that places “law school as trade school” up against “law school as intellectual endeavor” is missing the sweet spot and the vision of what legal education could be and what type of lawyers it should be producing. New lawyers need some legal skills and require intelligence, but they are successful when they come to the job with a much broader blend of legal skills, professional competencies, and characteristics that comprise the whole lawyer.

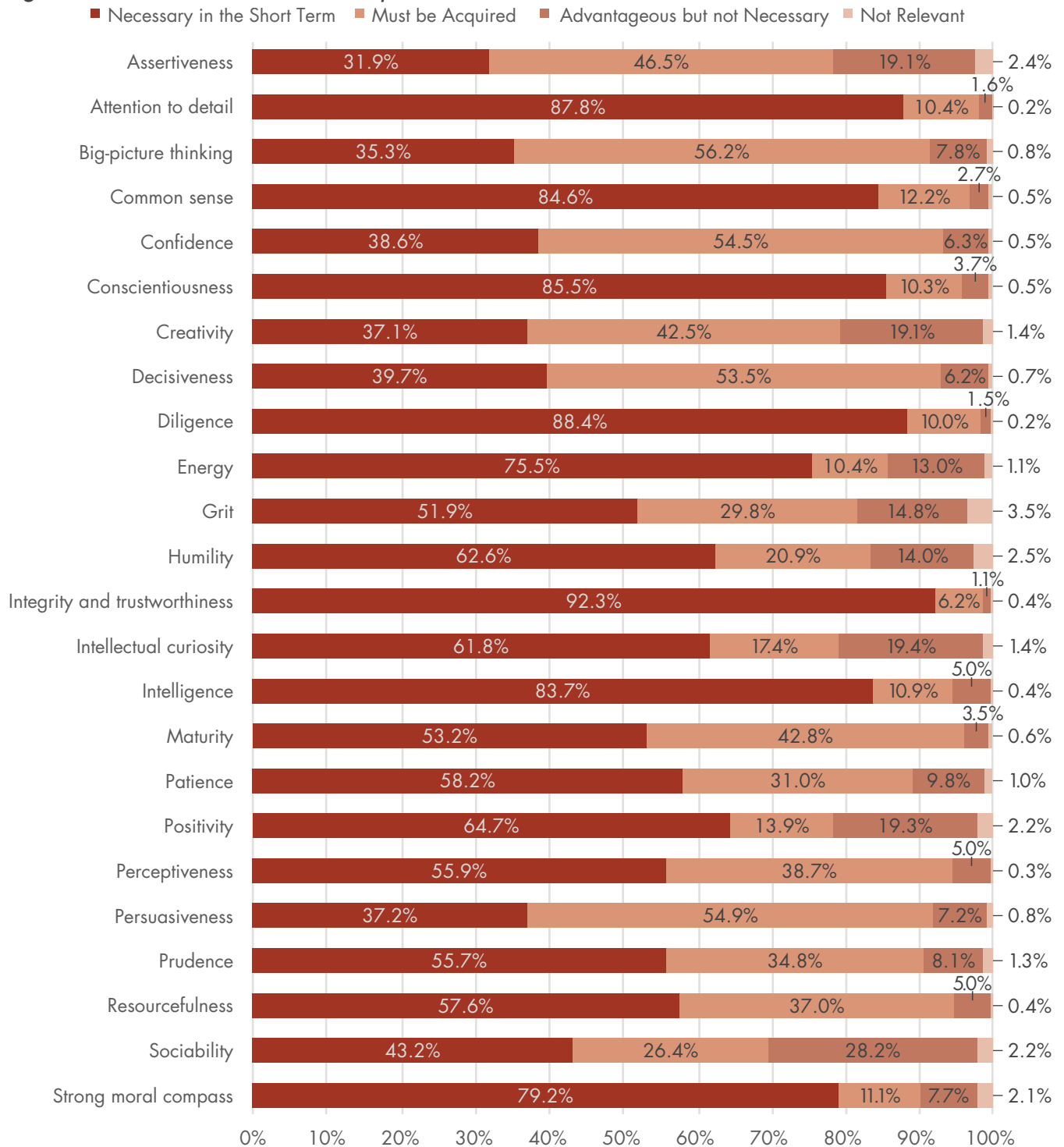
While many employers still rely on criteria like class rank, law school, and law review, our respondents indicated that if they wanted to hire people with the broad array of foundations they identified as important, they would rely on criteria rooted in experience, including legal employment, recommendations from practitioners or judges, legal externships, participation in a law school clinic, or other experiential education.

<http://iaals.du.edu/publications/foundations-practice-whole-lawyer-and-character-quotient>

QUALITIES AND TALENTS

Of the twenty-four foundations in the Qualities and Talents²² category, a considerable seventeen were considered necessary in the short term by a majority of respondents, with eight of those being considered so by more than three-quarters of respondents. Notably, none of the foundations in this category were considered not relevant by more than 4% of respondents.

Figure 10: Qualities and Talents Responses



22 Cronbach's alpha = 0.8951

Considering the data from a different vantage point, Table 1 below presents the ten individual foundations categorized as necessary in the short term by the largest proportions of respondents. Examination of these ten most urgent foundations provides further confirmation that legal skills tend to be considered less urgent than characteristics and professional competencies—in fact, legal skills make no appearance in the top ten foundations new lawyers need for success right out of law school.

Table 1: Top 10 Foundations Categorized as Necessary in the Short Term

Percent Indicating Necessary in the Short Term	Type	Category	Foundation
96.1%	Professional Competency	Professionalism	Keep information confidential
95.4%	Professional Competency	Professionalism	Arrive on time for meetings, appointments, and hearings
93.7%	Characteristic	Professionalism	Honor commitments
92.3%	Characteristic	Qualities and Talents	Integrity and trustworthiness
91.9%	Professional Competency	Emotional and Interpersonal Intelligence	Treat others with courtesy and respect
91.5%	Professional Competency	Communications	Listen attentively and respectfully
91.0%	Professional Competency	Communications	Promptly respond to inquiries and requests
88.4%	Characteristic	Qualities and Talents	Diligence
88.1%	Characteristic	Passion and Ambition	Have a strong work ethic and put forth best effort
87.8%	Characteristic	Qualities and Talents	Attention to detail



Figure 1: Helpfulness of All Hiring Criteria

