

INDIANA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW – BLOOMINGTON

## The Globalization of the Legal Profession

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Much has been written in the academic literature on the process of globalization and its effects on international law and the law of individual states. The impact of globalization on the legal *profession* has received far less systematic attention, despite a universal recognition that the practice of law and the economic and personal lives of lawyers may be on a brink of profound transformation. On Thursday, April 6, 2006, the Indiana University School of Law – Bloomington will host a symposium on the Globalization of the Legal Profession. This event will draw upon a broad array of participants, including legal academics, law firm development consultants, law firm managing partners, in-house counsel, and lawyers working for transnational accounting firms. The purpose of this unique symposium is to initiate a dialogue on the many ways in which the process of globalization is fundamentally changing the work lives and professional opportunities of lawyers in the U.S. and abroad.

Conference presenters and discussants will explore three interrelated themes, each representing a key aspect of the globalization of the legal profession:

- *Law Firm Strategy.* What are the hallmarks of a successful transnational law firm? What services do they offer? What makes a firm transnational – clients, offices, lawyers' education/licensing, approaches to client problems? Can firms situated entirely within one jurisdiction nevertheless be transnational? To what extent are they competing with local lawyers and non-legal professionals? What management structures are necessary to govern a global law firm with offices on multiple continents? Are different management structures required because the business of these firms is law, compared to other multinational organizations? Is the robust competition between U.S. and British law firms evidence of the adaptability and dominance of Anglo-American legal systems?
- *Relevance of Geography.* What are the economic drivers that account for (a) the rapid growth of "Am Law 200" law firms in high-cost locations such as New York, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Los Angeles, and London (b) the slow growth in smaller markets, and (c) the trend toward outsourcing of legal services to low-cost locations such as India? As some locations, based on longitudinal growth patterns, are emerging as truly "international" legal cities for firms attempting to fit the transnational model? How does/should location impact a firm's and its lawyers' practices and obligations, including ethical obligations and goals for pro bono activities? Do we need a new identity regarding ethics and the goals of the profession for transnational lawyers and firms?
- *Convergence.* To what extent is global law, created for the benefit of growing, multinational clients, challenging the relevance of traditional international law? How are transnational lawyers shaping the legal regimes of key emerging markets, such as China, Russia, and the Middle East? Can transnational law firms successfully balance the competing goals of higher profitability and professional autonomy? To what extent is the practice of law, and identity of lawyers, converging around certain practices and values? If so, are those practices/values those characteristic of the US legal profession? How do regulators adapt to these forces? What is the role, if any, of GATS?

The program format will include presentation of scholarly papers and responses by symposium discussants, all of whom are prominent figures in the global legal industry. The conference will conclude with a roundtable discussion on the implications of globalization for legal education.