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LEGAL INC.

CBJ Sound Off: What do Charlotte Law's troubles mean for the future of legal ed here?

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The past few months have been tumultuous for Charlotte School of Law, the local for-profit college opened here in 2006. At the end of 2016, Charlotte Law was put on probation by the American Bar Association, with the organization citing concerns over admission policy standards and first-time bar passage rate. Then the school lost federal financial aid from the U.S. Department of Education. [Chidi Ogene](#), who became president of Charlotte Law in 2015, recently talked with the *CBJ* about recent staff cuts and the school's efforts to [avoid closure](#).



George Sistrunk III, Managing partner, Hamilton Stephens Steele & Martin

For the Legal Inc. special report in the *CBJ* subscriber edition dated Jan. 27, we talked to several professionals in the field about what Charlotte Law's struggles could mean for the future of legal education in the Queen City. Read their responses below.

George Sistrunk III

Managing partner, [Hamilton Stephens Steele & Martin](#)

Given the challenges at Charlotte School of Law, is it time for the UNC System to consider adding a law school here? I don't think the experience of Charlotte School of Law should be a test case for whether a not-for-profit law school can be successful in Charlotte. CSL's for-profit model functions entirely differently than a not-for-profit law school. Given that the number of law school applications is at or near an all-time low and established law schools have been reducing class sizes and lowering admission standards, I don't see now as a time to add a new law school.

Beyond granting JD degrees, are there legal education services that are needed in this market?

Programs like CPCC's paralegal program are great. As law firms look at ways to provide cost-effective services for clients, trained paralegals are a valuable resource.

Darrell Shealy

Managing partner, [Johnson Allison & Hord](#)

Does Charlotte need a law school? Perhaps in the future but not at the moment. Applications to law schools are down nationwide, so it would be difficult for a new program to be competitive for top students.

Would your firm be likely to hire from a UNC System school in Charlotte? Yes, once the school has proven itself to be well-established and producing quality graduates.

Do you have an opinion of what the biggest challenges are for CSL in this market? Cost of attending is a serious challenge for CSL as it must compete against established legacy institutions that in many cases are significantly more cost-effective.

Is law school too big of an undertaking to do part-time as many CSL students have done? Absolutely not. Many well-respected institutions are now offering part-time programs to meet demands of their law school students.

Missy Owen

Partner, Tin, Fulton, Walker & Owen

Does Charlotte need a law school? Charlotte may not "need" a law school but Charlotte has many "needs" that could be well served by a strong law school.

Is it time for the UNC System to consider adding a law school here? Clinical programs at the law school provide support for nonprofits and basic legal needs for individuals unable to hire counsel. A law school through the UNC system could fill this void.

Do you have any thoughts on why CSL has struggled? During an anemic job and legal job market, the Charlotte School of Law admitted and graduated extremely large classes. This hurt the chances of employment for even the most qualified graduates.

Has your firm ever hired from Charlotte School of Law? We hired many student interns with varying degrees of success. We had a few extremely talented interns who we would have hired as attorneys if we had the space. However, we had some negative experiences that stood out so significantly that we no longer considered applicants.