

CORPORATE NEWS

Law Grads Sue Over Tuition

By PATRICK G. LEE

Two lawsuits seeking class action status were filed in Michigan and New York on Wednesday against Thomas M. Cooley Law School and New York Law School.

The plaintiffs, who are graduates of the defendant schools, seek \$250 million from Cooley and \$200 million from NYLS in tuition refunds as well as other damages and reformed methods of reporting their graduates' employment numbers.

The plaintiffs—three against NYLS and four against Cooley—seek “to remedy a systemic, ongoing fraud that is ubiquitous in the legal education industry and threatens to leave a generation of law students in dire financial

straits,” according to both suits.

The NYLS case was filed in the Supreme Court of New York County; Cooley was filed in Western District of Michigan.

The lawsuits allege that the schools have distorted their post-graduate employment information by advertising the percentage of those who secure any kind of job within nine months of graduation, even ones that don't have anything to do with the legal industry. They also allege that the reported amount for graduates' average salaries is inflated since it is derived from the narrow, self-selected pool of people who actually provide that information to the schools.

Jim Thelen, Cooley's general counsel, said that if any of the plaintiffs or their attorneys has

issue with how law schools report employment numbers, then they ought to take it up with the American Bar Association, which helps set criteria for collecting data, or even the Department of Education—but not with individual law schools.

“These are nothing other than attempts to bring public attention to this issue,” Mr. Thelen said.

New York Law School Dean Richard Matasar said in a statement that the alleged claims “are without merit and we will vigorously defend against them in court.”

Plaintiffs' attorney David Anziska said his firm, **Kurzon Strauss** LLP, decided to sue these two particular law schools in large part because of their

large class sizes, with Cooley—at about 1,000 students in each year—the biggest in the country.

In the first stage of what now seems to be turning into a legal showdown, Cooley filed a lawsuit in Michigan state last month against Kurzon Strauss for propagating purportedly defamatory ads on the websites Craigslist and Facebook about the school. The postings were part of the law firm's investigation into how law schools report employment statistics, according to firm partner Jesse Strauss.

Mr. Thelen said Kurzon Strauss has not yet responded to the suit from Cooley.

Kurzon Strauss attorneys have until Thursday under Michigan state guidelines to respond to Cooley's lawsuit, Mr. Thelen said.

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"These are nothing other than attempts to bring public attention to this issue," Mr. Thelen said, "and it certainly doesn't seem like the right way to go about it."

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