

NYU Law Students Demand Cash for Work: Is Education Not Enough?



New York University (NYU) Law students petition for compensation for their work in academic journals. Currently, 3L students can receive credit hours for their work but no wages. However, students argue that the prestige of having their work cited in courts across the country is not sufficient compensation for the value they provide to the institution. A petition with 250 signatures has been submitted to the administration, calling for monetary compensation.

"We love our work, but prestige is not adequate compensation for the value we provide. Our journals have been cited in courts nationwide, up to the Supreme Court. NYU reaps the benefits of robust journal publication in admissions and institutional prestige," the letter reads.

The lack of financial compensation for journal work is not unique to NYU, but the students hope to change the status quo. The issue has been discussed at other law schools, and some schools, such as the University of Pennsylvania and Vanderbilt University, offer credit hours for journal work. However, hourly wages are still unheard of for journal work at any law school.

NYU Law student Sean Connolly, a 2L and journal editor, argues that the expectation that students work for prestige and future career prospects is no longer sufficient. "That's kind of the logic we're trying to change, this idea that all the work you're doing in law school is stressful, uncompensated, and you should just like go to law school, get a bunch of debt, do a bunch of work, and then 'it's fine because you'll get a job later,'" Connolly said.

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Furthermore, Devin McCowan, another NYU Law student, believes that the ability to choose compensation could be particularly beneficial for low-income students. "By having the ability to choose compensation, that could allow me to feel much less stressed about going out to eat with friends on the weekends or being able to afford basic living expenses and things," McCowan said. "It can mean a lot for me and make me feel more comfortable being at university like this, especially when I know a lot of my richer colleagues and students don't have to worry in the same way about their living expenses necessarily."

The move for compensation is also a concrete step towards promoting diversity in legal academia, an issue many law schools have been striving to address. If successful, the move could make a material difference for students who do not come from privileged backgrounds.

A spokesperson for NYU stated that the university plans to discuss the petition with students but did not provide further details.

Overall, the petition for compensation for journal work is a vital issue highlighting the need for fair compensation for all forms of labor, regardless of prestige. It also highlights the financial hardship many students face, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, and the need for universities to address this issue in a meaningful way. By providing monetary compensation for journal work, NYU Law could set a positive example for other law schools and promote more significant equity in legal academia.