

## Richard Sloane

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**From:** James Greiner <jgreiner@law.harvard.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 10, 2012 9:37 PM  
**To:** Richard Sloane  
**Subject:** Comment letter  
**Attachments:** LSCLetter20120710.pdf

Dear Mr. Sloane:

Please find attached a letter in response to LSC's request for comments on its draft strategic plan. Many thanks.

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July 10, 2012

Mr. Richard L. Sloane  
Chief of Staff and Special Assistant to the President  
Legal Services Corporation  
3333 K Street NW.  
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Via email to [sloaner@lsc.gov](mailto:sloaner@lsc.gov)

Dear Mr. Sloane:

I write in response to the request for comment on the Legal Service Corporation (“LSC”) Strategic Plan for 2012-2016. I have been fortunate enough to see an advanced copy of the letter submitted by Rebecca L. Sandefur, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Law, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Senior Research Social Scientist, American Bar Foundation. I agree with and support all of the statements Professor Sandefur makes in her letter. Hoping to avoid repetition, I will limit my comments to two points.

First, LSC’s Strategic Plan is ambitious. Implementing it will require strong leadership, but it will also require information and knowledge that only strong research can provide. I have recently been fortunate enough to participate in meetings, conferences, working groups, and informal conversations in which a discussion of research on access to justice issues has taken place. At such gatherings, I have attempted to facilitate discussion by asking the following question of those in the field: “What do you not know that you wish you knew?”. There has been no shortage of answers to this question, suggesting that the need for research is large. We in a growing community of researchers interested in access to justice stand ready to dedicate our time and energy to satisfying this need, but given the startlingly limited nature of the information we presently possess about the civil justice system in the United States, a sustained effort will be necessary. That sustained effort cannot take place without LSC’s commitment and leadership.

Second, my own personal experience has been that the information and knowledge produced by strong research methodology will not always be popular. If it is to be effective, LSC’s commitment to research must including a willingness to reexamine notions popular with its grantee agencies. Evaluation of best practices, assessments of need, and other critical

programmatic efforts must come from researchers who are not beholden to LSC or its grantees. Research methodologies can and should vary according to the purpose of the research and the nature of the setting under study. A commitment to researcher independence should not vary. If, by 2016, LSC has been unable to persuade its constituents and grantees to engage with researchers that they cannot control, if decisions of what research to pursue are driven by fear of misuse of the resulting information by those opposed to LSC's purpose and existence, or if habit and inertia are allowed to masquerade as choice, then the Strategic Plan will become another disappointing missed opportunity. I trust that will not occur.

My thanks to all involved for an excellent, and inspiring, draft Strategic Plan.

Sincerely,

/s/

D. James Greiner