A local law school dean says there are too many law students in America.

The number of students has grown too high given the fact there are not enough jobs for lawyers, said David N. Yellen, dean of Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

Yellen made this observation in one of his new columns for the blog, "The Faculty Lounge," which Yellen called "one of the three or four leading blogs within the law school world."

Yellen also recently started another writing gig - he became a columnist this week for Above The Law (ATL), a website.

Edward X. Clinton Jr., a Chicago lawyer known as a critic of law schools, said, "what makes Dean Yellen most worth reading is that he is brutally honest about law schools and the employment problems."

Clinton has sued three Chicago law schools over statistics they reported on jobs obtained by graduates.

Yet about Yellen, Clinton said, "he doesn't sugarcoat anything or exaggerate. He is a quality person in the often smarmy world of the law schools."

The Faculty Lounge invited Yellen to write once a week for a month.

Meanwhile, ATL writer Elie Mystal - the site's most outspoken, anti-law school voice - invited him to write about law schools for the site. He agreed to do so biweekly.

ATL regularly ridicules law schools, deans and faculty - along with many other aspects of the legal profession.

Yellen said he hesitated before he accepted the opportunity because the reader comments on ATL can be outrageous, are seemingly uncensored and are often anonymous.

Comments on his first column include "lives you helped destroy," "outright falsehood," and "I still hope you go to hell."

In his first ATL column, Yellen wrote that "many of the most inflammatory things said about legal education and those who work in it are, in my view, exaggerated and often inaccurate."
He said he hopes to present the issues in a "fair and balanced" way.

In his first Faculty Lounge column, Yellen noted that there were about 52,000 first-year law students in 2010.

This year - despite a sharp drop in law school applicants that might eventually amount to 38 percent fewer than in 2010 - Yellen wrote that the number of new law students in the fall is likely to be 40,000.

"In my view, 52,000 is far too many (first year) law students and even 40,000 is too many," Yellen said.

He wrote that if there were "an Emperor of Legal Education," that person would order schools to enroll fewer students.

"My best guess is the target would be 35,000 students," Yellen said.

Asked if, amidst the shrinking pool of applicants, law schools should do more to attract students or just let things be as they are, Yellen said:

"That's a tough question. I'm not really trying to convince people to go to law school.

"There are still plenty of people who want to go to law school. That's great. And I definitely want them to think about us," he said, referring to Loyola.

"That's different than saying it's a great time to go to law school," Yellen said, noting his daughter currently attends Cornell University Law School and several friends of his children also attend law school.

"It's all relative. It's way less popular than it was five years ago, and the current job market is the main reason, so it's understandable."

Yellen recently completed six years on the Standards Review Committee of the American Bar Association. He was chairman of that group's transparency subcommittee that created new rules requiring law schools to report more detail on jobs obtained by graduates.

He is now one of the members of the ABA's Task Force on the Future of Legal Education.

**Loyola presents two events**

The Law and Religion program at Loyola University Chicago School of Law will offer two events this month on religious liberty that are open to the public.

Both will be in the Power Rogers & Smith Ceremonial Courtroom on the 10th floor of the Philip H. Corboy Law Center, 25 E. Pearson St.
The first event will be a speech by Cardinal Francis George of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

The second will be a panel discussion on the 44 separate religious liberty challenges to a federal health-care regulation requiring employers to cover contraceptives in employee health insurance plans.

At noon on Feb. 21, George will discuss the Second Vatican Council's declaration on religious freedom entitled, "Dignitatis Humanae," or "Of the Dignity of the Human Person."

George will talk and answer questions for 75 minutes, said Nora O'Callaghan, executive director of the Law and Religion program.

From 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., Feb. 26, three speakers will discuss the contraceptive coverage mandate.

Helen M. Alvaré, an associate professor at George Mason University School of Law, is expected to argue the mandate violates religious liberty protections.

Andrew Martin Mayer Koppelman, a professor at Northwestern University School of Law, is expected to argue that the mandate is legal.

Asma T. Uddin, legal counsel for The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, which is challenging the law, will discuss the litigation around the country.

To attend, e-mail lawandreligion@luc.edu.