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STAFF

Jack Crittenden
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
Jack@CypressMagazines.com

EDITORIAL TEAM

Mike Stetz
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Tiffany Porter
Copy Editor
Shannon Harrington
Art Director
Richard Steadham
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PUBLISHING TEAM

Michael Wright
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CYPRESS MAGAZINES

preLaw is published by:
Cypress Magazines
7670 Opportunity Road, Suite 105
San Diego, CA 92111
Tel: 858-300-3200
Fax: 877-300-2232
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www.preLawInsider.com

Cover photo by Peter Barreras
In recent years, several law schools have cut back on staffing in an effort to better balance faculty and staff resources with smaller enrollments. But none of those schools have had the pedigree of Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law.

Yet, this fall, the school’s new dean, Kimberly Yuracko, did just that partly because the school faces a deficit. It’s quite the 180 swing. The move brings an end to an unprecedented increase in faculty hiring at the Chicago-based school.

Northwestern Law grew from 161 faculty members in 2000 to 352 last year, an increase of 119 percent. The increase in full-time faculty was even greater. It went from 57 full-time faculty members to 135, for a 137 percent increase.

J.D. enrollment increased from 650 to 814 between the years 2000 and 2010. But since then, it has dropped back to 664 students.

The law school had been running at a budget deficit, and Yuracko felt it was time to bring a better balance to the faculty-to-student ratio.

“We have had a lot of growth in faculty over the last 20 years, and one of the things we did, like most law schools in the last five years, is shrunk our J.D. class size,” she said. “Good management is to make sure your size fits with your mission.”

Yuracko, who became dean on Sept. 1, 2018, announced staff and non-tenured lecturer cutbacks a few weeks later. In a message to staff, she said the school was in a “challenging financial position.”

To make ends meet, the law school reduced staff, clinical and lecturer positions by eliminating vacant jobs and not renewing some short-term teaching contracts.

“What makes this news is a perception that academic institutions don’t do this,” Yuracko said. “[But] we have an obligation to use our students’ tuition dollars wisely. This is part of sound management.”

Yuracko said “no one has left the building,” and noted that she feels good about the current staffing level.

Yuracko inherited a budget deficit from her predecessor, Daniel Rodriguez, who was dean for six years. Under Rodriguez’s leadership, the Chicago school had its most successful fundraising period in history. It nearly reached its $250 million fundraising goal with the help of the largest donation in the school’s history: a $100 million donation from J.B. Pritzker in 2015. In November 2018, Pritzker was elected governor of Illinois.

Rodriguez significantly increased the size of the school’s faculty at a time when enrollment was dropping. He did not start the faculty boom at Northwestern Law. His predecessor, David Van Zandt, also oversaw a substantial increase during his tenure. But enrollment did not drop until after Van Zandt left Northwestern to become president of The New School in New York City.

Rodriguez, who was previously dean of University of San Diego School of Law, told Law.com that Northwestern’s current budget deficit is not that large.

“Through the dean search process, I learned that we have made significant financial aid commitments, for good reason, but that we would not be able to maintain them without changes,” she said. “Then, over the summer, the university had financial issues and asked each school to make its own reductions. That prompted us to do things faster than otherwise would have happened.”

The overall university cut jobs in the summer and ordered expense reductions of 5 to 10 percent at its campuses, Crain’s Chicago Business reported. Yuracko said financial cutbacks were necessary even though the law school has brought in record donations.

“Yes, we have money,” she said. “But we have a tremendous sense of obligation to steward that money wisely.”
Michigan State University to take over law school

Michigan State University College of Law will become part of Michigan State University by 2020.

Yes, most people likely thought the law school was already part of the state university in East Lansing. But while the law school has been affiliated with the university for the past 23 years, it has been a private, independent school ever since it was established as Detroit College of Law in 1891.

The law school used to be located in downtown Detroit, in a building it built in 1935. By 1995, that part of Detroit had become run-down, and the neighborhood was contributing to the stand-alone school’s struggles.

So it affiliated with Michigan State but remained a private, independent college. It moved to the East Lansing campus two years later, and its old building and torn down to make way for Comerica Park, the Detroit Tigers ballpark.

The affiliation allowed for dual-degree programs and for law faculty to participate in campus activities, but the law school’s finances were kept separate.

For the first 15 years, that arrangement worked well. The law school’s enrollment, which had been about 600, grew to 911 by 2011. But like most law schools, it then saw a significant drop in applications, forcing it to cut enrollment to 784 and discount tuition. It reported a $1.74 million deficit on its tax return that covered half of 2016 and half of 2017.

To place the law school on firmer financial footing, Dean Lawrence Ponoroff started working to get the university to fully integrate the law school into its operations.

“This action will stabilize us,” Ponoroff told the law school’s board of trustees in October. “But it’s not a panacea, and we will still all need to continue to work very hard to bring the law school to the next plateau, the levels that we’d like to see it achieve.”

Ponoroff said that the school’s financial reserves remain “significant” but that the change was needed to avoid further compromise. The school’s median LSAT has dropped from 157 in 2011 to 154.

The move from affiliation to merger is expected to save money by eliminating duplicate administrative functions in the areas of auditing, legal counsel, insurance and employee benefits.
**LSAT will be done on the Go**

Goodbye No. 2 pencil, hello Microsoft Surface Go tablet.

A few months ago, it was announced that the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) was going digital. The mystery of how it’s going digital is now solved. It will be administered on the Go.

The Law School Admission Council (LSAC), which administers the test, recently announced it was teaming with Microsoft Corp., a collaboration that will include the use of thousands of Microsoft Surface Go tablets as the LSAT goes digital, beginning with the July 2019 test.

The test — first administered in 1948 — has always been done with paper and pencil. Beyond this arrangement, LSAC and Microsoft are working together on a number of initiatives to make the LSAT more effective and efficient, LSAC announced. “Legal education and the legal profession need to keep pace with technological advancements,” said Kellye Testy, president and CEO of LSAC. “With the breadth of their solutions and their commitment to privacy, security, accessibility and inclusion, Microsoft will be a tremendous help to the legal education community as we navigate these accelerating changes.”

The LSAT is used by more than 99 percent of law school applicants and is the only test accepted by every law school in the U.S and Canada. LSAC has more than doubled the number of tests dates it will offer in the 2019-20 cycle.

A number of law schools are beginning to accept Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) scores from prospective students. One reason for doing so is that the GRE helps identify students with good math and science abilities. Law schools are looking to attract such students as the field becomes more tech-oriented. The GRE is done digitally, but LSAC did not make the transition because of that. It had been in the works for some time.

**Valparaiso and Arizona Summit latest to close**

Law school applications are on the rebound, and most schools are bullish about the future. But, not all law schools are enjoying that trend. Two more schools, Valparaiso University Law School and Arizona Summit Law School, are closing.

Both had hoped to weather their most recent woes but could not muster last-second revival efforts. Both had seen dropping enrollment and had academic-related troubles. Valparaiso Law, based in Northwest Indiana, had been censured by the American Bar Association, while Phoenix-based Arizona Summit had been put on probation by the accrediting body.
PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW was in the path of one of the devastating wildfires that stuck California in November. Nestled in Malibu, a fire-prone area, the school has often had to deal with such emergencies. This one, though, was a whole new ball game. The fire marched toward the campus and came within feet of the law school and undergraduate buildings.

Students, faculty and staff huddled in fire-resistant central buildings as part of the school’s shelter-in-place plan. The school does not rely on evacuation because of a history of road closures and severe traffic congestion during fires that can make it dangerous to leave. Dean Paul Caron, who took refuge in the school gym with his wife and dog, said he feared for his life.

“There was a lot of worry. My wife and I were talking about that we could die here tonight,” Canon told Law.com. See that little blue oval in the circle in the bottom-right corner of the map. That’s where Pepperdine is.
Around the nation

**Seattle University School of Law** has suspended its externship with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). An online petition to nix the collaboration was organized by student Alex Romero and it got nearly 500 signatures. Romero argued that the relationship went against the principles of the Jesuit school and that having ICE on campus could alarm students who were not documented. The Trump administration has taken a hard-line approach to immigration, including separating families.

**Santina Clara University School of Law** has partnered with the nonprofit Institute for the Future of Law Practice to offer curriculum that complements traditional law school offerings and helps equip participating students with knowledge and skills that are essential to modern legal practice. Santa Clara Law is one of only 17 participating law schools in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

**University of Hawaii at Manoa—William S. Richardson School of Law** is partnering with the university's Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work, creating an opportunity to earn two advanced degrees in four years. Students can study for a J.D. and a master's degree in social work concurrently. The program is open to students currently enrolled in the school of social work, currently enrolled in the law school or admitted to the school for Fall 2019.

**The John Marshall Law School** is getting closer to becoming a part of The University of Illinois at Chicago. Both the Illinois Board of Higher Education and the council of the ABA's Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar have OK’d the plan, which means the Chicago law school will no longer be independent. Once a few more regulatory hurdles are cleared, John Marshall will be Chicago’s first public law school.

**Lincoln Memorial University John J. Duncan Jr. School of Law** is back in the good graces of the ABA. Earlier, the school was found to be “significantly out of compliance” in regard to admissions standards. The Knoxville, Tenn., school’s mission is to diversify the legal profession, and that led to it fielding classes that were less than ideal academically. However, it has since upped its standards, and the ABA has now ruled that the school is in “substantial compliance.”

**University of Wisconsin Law School** is starting a program to help victims of domestic violence obtain restraining orders. The VOCA Restraining Order Clinic gets its name from the 1984 Victims of Crime Act, which makes federal funds available for victim-support programs. The new clinic will address a gap in legal services, said Marsha Mansfield, a family law professor and director of University of Wisconsin’s Economic Justice Institute.
UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY SCHOOL OF LAW, in partnership with the Great Lakes Environmental Law Center, has established an environmental law clinic to aid organizational clients and teach students how to affect regulatory policy in state, provincial and federal government in the U.S. and Canada. The clinic offers students the opportunity to learn regulatory processes while having a hand in policy development. Students will examine new and existing environmental problems and assist in bringing forth enforcement actions and regulations.

UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO SCHOOL OF LAW, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK will accept Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores in place of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) beginning with applications for Fall 2019. “As New York state’s law school, we have always been committed to expanding pathways to a legal education,” said Dean Dean Aviva Abramovsky.

NEW ENGLAND LAW | BOSTON has introduced an accelerated degree program that law students can complete in either two and a half years (full-time) or three and a half years (part-time). The school has also expanded a part-time program for parents and caregivers that students can complete within six years. New England Law designed these programs in response to the growing demand for flexible law school programming in Massachusetts.

VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY CHARLES WIDGER SCHOOL OF LAW was recently awarded the St. Thomas More Award for its clinical program. The award is presented annually by the St. Thomas More Society of Philadelphia to a member of the legal profession whose accomplishments represent the principles and ideals of the saint. The school has six in-house clinics, ranging from Farmworker Legal Aid to Physical Health Law.

ATLANTA’S JOHN MARSHALL LAW SCHOOL is having difficulty pursuing its goal of providing a legal education to both traditional and non-traditional students while still maintaining standards. It has been placed on probation by the ABA for being out of compliance in a number of areas, including maintaining “a rigorous program for legal education.”

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA LAW SCHOOL has begun a pilot program that will incorporate a session on attorney well-being into its mandatory Professional Responsibility course. The curricular module will expose students to the latest data about health risks and career satisfaction among practicing lawyers and equip them with tools to promote awareness and well-being in their future careers.

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Columbia Law School is among those beefing up their public interest programs as more students say making a difference is more important than making big money.

BY MIKE STETZ

Columbia Law School has a great overall reputation, but its biggest claim to fame is that it sends more grads to America’s largest law firms than any other school in the nation. Nearly 70 percent of its Class of 2017 went into Big Law. The next closest school, The University of Chicago Law School, limped in at second with 60 percent.

So when the New York-based school recently announced it was beefing up a certain specialty, it attracted attention. That’s because it wasn’t anything Big Law related. Um, hardly.

It was public interest.

That’s the opposite of Big Law. That’s where lawyers don’t pull in $190,000 a year. They make, on average, about $50,000. They don’t help corporate America manage mergers and acquisitions or pull off mega financial deals. They help needy people ward off shady landlords and help homeless vets get their much-needed benefits.

It’s not as if Columbia doesn’t have a history of preparing lawyers for public service. It does. It’s ranked among the nation’s top schools for public interest law. It’s just that many students are drawn there in hopes of landing that golden ticket to Big Law and its six-figure first-year salary.

Yet the school will invest $4.5 million during the next three years to beef up its public interest program.

This doesn’t appear to be an isolated move. More students are being drawn to law school for reasons other than making money, so high-caliber public interest programs are becoming a selling point for schools.

“There’s a growing awareness and new appreciation [from prospective students] for what lawyers can do,” said Judith Areen, executive director and CEO of the Association of American Law Schools (AALS).

She has proof. Her organization recently released findings from a survey looking at what motivates college students to go on to law school. The report, “Before the JD: Undergraduate Views on Law School,” says that money was not the most-cited reason.

The top reason for going to law school was to use it as a pathway to a career in politics, government or public service, the report said. Other leading reasons were: an interest in or passion for the work; wanting to help others or be useful to society; wanting to give back; and wanting to be an advocate for change.

Areen said she was surprised — and delightfully so — by the students’ motivations. Students interested in other types of advanced degrees did not cite similar reasons.

Columbia Law is reacting to the fact that more students are showing an interest in public service, school officials say.

“There’s renewed interest in students hoping to change the world,” said Erica Smock, dean of social justice initiatives.

Therefore, the school wants to bolster its program offerings and its financial support for students wanting to go this route. These jobs can be tough to find — there aren’t as many of them compared to jobs with law firms — and the pay can be a deterrent.

Students can be risk-adverse, Smock said, so the school wants to make this career path as inviting as possible for those who want to do public good. Yes, the school is a leader for Big Law jobs, but its public-interest commitment has not wavered.

“Our thinking is: What’s the best package for those who aren’t going in that track?” she said.

Could President Trump be partly responsible for this new enthusiasm about public interest work? Some people suggest there could be a connection. The AALS survey was done by Gallup in November 2017, which was 10 months after the
Trump administration announced a travel ban directed primarily at nations with Muslim majorities. Lawyers showed up at airports, offering their services for free. TV captured these moments, which could have influenced prospective law students, Areen said.

“Things done by the [Trump] administration have shown that lawyers can be different in ways the students may not have understood before,” Areen said. She said she thinks those lawyers’ “brave actions” have been inspiring.

Law schools have seen more interest of late. Applications rose 8 percent last year, and this is believed to be partly due to the Trump administration’s policies, which are unpopular with many young people. It’s known as the “Trump Bump.”

Law schools would be smart to take advantage of students’ motivations by increasing public service offerings, Areen said. Her organization has been tracking law schools in this regard, and it has noticed an uptick in the creation of programs devoted to public interest.

Loyola University Chicago School of Law opened the Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice last year. New York Law School opened its Office of Public Service and Pro Bono Initiatives, which is a resource for students focused on the specialty, and its Social Justice Organization Incubator.

University of Akron School of Law in Ohio is adding three initiatives to broaden its program.

“Over the years, I’ve noticed that a lot of students come to law school because they want to change the world,” said Brant Lee, professor of law and director of diversity and social justice initiatives at the school. “The problem is, the first year of law school can beat that spirit out of you.”

The initiatives, which include a new Social Justice Fellows program, hope to combat that.

New York is home to a number of law schools that have strong public interest programs. New York University School of Law and City University of New York School of Law have much-heralded offerings. Indeed, CUNY Law’s mission is to create public interest lawyers. It was ranked No. 1 for public interest by preLaw magazine last year.

Columbia’s move would make the school another attractive option for such students, no question. And Smock is well-suited to be a key part of the effort. A 1995 graduate of Columbia Law School, she has extensive experience in the field.

To assist students, Columbia will increase the scope of its Loan Repayment Assistance Program, which helps graduates who work in public interest pay off their law school debts. The income threshold will rise from $50,000 to $55,000, making it one of the most generous in the nation, the school said.

Beginning with the 2019-20 academic year, the school will offer Public Interest/Public Service fellowships, along with some new post-graduate fellowships.

Smock came back to Columbia, in part, to rally future public interest lawyers.

“I want to have a force-multiplier effect by helping to create the next generation of change agents,” she said.
What lawyers earn
First-year salaries continue to climb, but not everyone gets the highest salaries.

BY MIKE STETZ

Raises keep coming to Big Law. Two years ago, the starting salary for first-year associates jumped from $160,000 to $180,000. Last year, it went up again, to $190,000.

So, it’s confetti time?
Not quite. The raises are primarily limited to the nation’s most elite law firms, and the number of new lawyers landing such jobs is limited. Those who do land them usually come from top law schools.

Statistics for the Class of 2017 showed 4,610 grads got plum jobs at firms with 500 or more lawyers, where those massive starting salaries could be had. This is according to the National Association for Law Placement (NALP) annual report titled “Jobs & JDs.”

The report shows that firms with 10 or fewer lawyers did the most hiring, and that is where 5,793 law grads landed jobs. The median starting salary for those grads was $67,750, about 62 percent less than their Big Law counterparts.

Jobs in private firms of other sizes, as well as jobs in public service, government and clerkships, accounted for the bulk of other hiring. And public-interest jobs again were among the lowest-paying positions, with a median salary of $50,000.

That Grand Canyon-like difference is not new. The two-tier distribution of starting salaries has been a staple in the legal industry for years. A few years ago, one magazine wrote about it under the headline, “Starting Salaries for Attorneys are Pretty Weird.”

Still are …
“That’s not going to change,” said James Leipold, NALP’s executive director.

But big firms may pull back in the coming years from their recent robust hiring. They’re beginning to question how long the economic expansion will last and what effect technology will have on the profession.

“I think we’ve peaked,” Leipold said.

But law graduates still make a good living. The median starting salary for the Class of 2017 was $70,000, a 7.7 percent climb from the year before. The law-firm median rose to $117,000, up 12.5 percent.

Those increases are partly attributed to Big Law hiring and the salaries first-year associates demand, Leipold said. That skews the numbers higher overall. Big Law hired 28 percent of graduates from the Class of 2017, up from 25.5 percent the year before.

While the overall median starting salary has been increasing yearly since 2011, it is still below that of 2009, right before the impact of the recession was felt. So things are getting better – just slowly.

It’s important to note that these are starting salaries. Lawyers’ pay increases over time as they pick up experience. The median salary for attorneys is $119,000, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Not all legal jobs are created equal. Some are in greater demand, and pay more, said Jamy Sullivan, executive director of Robert Half Legal, a legal staffing and consulting firm. Litigation, commercial data privacy, regulatory compliance and health care are among the hot specialty areas.

“If law students can get some experi-
ence in those kinds of areas, that can help set them up for success,” she said.

Students should consider taking courses in those practice areas, as well as looking for practical training experience through clinics and externships, she said. Sullivan also suggests that students look for mentors in those fields.

It’s not just expertise that makes you marketable, Sullivan added. Her clients are looking for lawyers with good interpersonal skills. So it’s also important to work on collaboration and conflict-resolution abilities, she said.

One significant bright spot in the NALP survey was the number of jobs that grads took for which bar passage was required or expected, Leipold said. The percentage rose from 67.7 percent to 71.8 percent. That increase was larger than those of the past four years combined.

The report called that increase the “single most important indicator of an improved market.”

Nearly 34,000 grads responded to NALP’s survey, which offers the most comprehensive look at the status of recent law graduates.

The Class of 2018 will likely be affected, pay-wise, by the recent jump in Big Law salaries. In June, New York-based Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy upped its salary for a first-year associate to $190,000. Other law firms have started to match it. Just two years ago, another New York firm, Cravath, Swain & Moore, increased it’s first-year pay from $160,000 to $180,000, and that soon became standard.

That’s nearly a 19 percent increase in less than three years.

Now, consider public-interest work. Median salaries in that field went up $1,500 last year and have risen $3,000 since 2015, for a 6 percent climb.

Nearly 31 percent of recent graduates who went into public-interest law reported making less than $45,000. No other legal category had a larger percentage of graduates making that little.

The good news for public-interest lawyers, however, is that there are loan-forgiveness programs that can help mitigate their debt burdens.

Still, private practice is where most grads end up working. Fifty-four percent of 2017 grads went into private practice.

Lawyers once got paid in tobacco; Honest Abe bagged 6 figures

When it comes to salaries, lawyers have seen some up and downs over the years. For instance, in Virginia in 1680, they weren’t allowed to bill more than 500 pounds of tobacco, even if they rocked the closing argument. Yep, they had a salary cap.

That information comes from the 1958 paper, “Legal Profession in Colonial America.” It seems the limit was necessary to prevent so-called mercenary lawyers from ripping off their Colonial clients.

Many of our presidents were lawyers, including Abraham Lincoln. He practiced law for nearly a quarter of a century in the mid-1800s in Springfield, Ill., racking up considerable experience. He litigated nearly 4,000 cases, with his fees being between $5 and $20, according to the Abraham Lincoln Research Site.

A $5 fee would be about $152 in today’s dollars.

However, Lincoln did land one big score. He represented Illinois Central Railroad often, and for one case he charged $5,000. That’s nearly $152,000 in today’s money.

It’s difficult to find much information on lawyers’ pay over the years, since it was a fledgling profession in our early history. You can find more information on pay history for harness makers, blacksmiths, tool sharpeners, oilers, glassblowers . . .

There was no National Association for Law Placement (NALP) then. NALP didn’t come into being until 1971.

The National Law Review found a newspaper story from 1911 that showed lawyers were not exactly killing it back then, at least not in New York.

There was so little business that nearly 700 lawyers were dropped from the New York County Lawyers Association for not paying dues, which were $10 at the time. We guess they went into tech.

—Mike Stetz
A region on the rebound

The Midwest's eastern states offer a mix of value and practical training with diverse offerings that stretch from health law to space law.

BY JACK CRITTENDEN

The Midwest has been called the Breadbasket of America and the Rust Belt, two nicknames that belie the region's growing diversity and innovation. A burgeoning biomedical center with a focus on high tech, the region is replacing old manufacturing with new industry, while still remaining an agriculture force.

The five Midwestern states that sit in the Eastern Time Zone are home to 23 law schools. They offer concentrations in a host of practice areas, including space law, sports law, public interest law and intellectual property and technology law.

While it would take about 24 hours to drive the 1,347 miles that separate these schools, we take you on a quick tour, highlighting each school's strengths. We throw in two schools in Pittsburgh, which is technically outside of the Midwest but along our route. We start in Detroit, drive south to Indiana, on to Kentucky, and then back north to Ohio and east to Pennsylvania, ending in West Virginia. (Yes, it's not technically in the Midwest either, but we had some gas left in the tank.)

Wayne State University, located just a few miles from the heart of Detroit, is the most affordable school in Michigan and the only Best Value school in the state. Its students have the third-lowest indebtedness in the region, at $78,000. The public law school also boasts the second-best bar-passage rate in Michigan, with 96 percent of its graduates ultimately passing the bar exam. Its concentrations reflect the needs of the community, with offerings in civil rights and entrepreneurship among others.

Strengths: Practical training, public interest law, business law

University of Detroit Mercy is the only Catholic law school in Michigan. It is located in the heart of Michigan's largest business and legal community and just across the river from Canada. The school's mission is to provide students with hands-on learning and to ensure that a commitment to social justice is a key part of their education. Almost 30 percent of students participate in a clinic, and the school offers a number of externships through government and policy institutions. Students have the opportunity to take courses that allow them to exercise their education with real or simulated client cases. The school offers a Canadian and American dual J.D. degree.

Strengths: Intellectual property, social justice
The University of Michigan Law School is the most prestigious school in the region and one of the top schools in the country. It does not disappoint, with a 98.88 percent ultimate bar-pass rate and a 94 percent employment rate. Students can take advantage of the school’s 16 clinical offerings with focuses ranging from child welfare to international transactions. It boasts one of the most iconic law school buildings in the nation, earning an A+ for facilities. But despite all the prestige, it prides itself on “unusual levels of faculty accessibility.” Students engage with professors through small group seminars, which often take place in professors’ homes.

**Strengths:** International law, business law, environmental law

WMU-Cooley is unlike any other law school in the nation. It is one of the largest, and it has multiple locations: four in Michigan and one in Tampa, Fla. But the private law school’s mission is what truly sets it apart. Founded in 1972 on the premise that law should not be an elitist profession, WMU-Cooley is committed to providing a legal education to people from all walks of life. To achieve this, it admits students who otherwise might not get into law school, but it requires them to perform well or be expelled. The law school takes new students three times a year, in January, May and September, and operates on a rolling admissions system. Its main location is in Lansing, Mich., the state capital. It also offers classes in Auburn Hills near Detroit, Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids.

**Strengths:** Criminal law, environmental law, health law, intellectual property

Michigan State University College of Law was founded as Detroit College of Law and moved to East Lansing where, in 1997, it took on the name of the state university. But it only recently announced it would officially become part of the university, making it a state law school. The school offers clinics in 10 practice areas and has one of the strongest moot court programs in the Midwest. Its externship offerings include a semester-long program in Washington, D.C. It also offers a U.S.-Canadian dual degree that allows graduates to take the bar exam in both countries.

**Strengths:** Intellectual property, business law, family law

Notre Dame Law School is the most prestigious devout Catholic law school in the country. Located on the Notre Dame campus in South Bend, Ind., it is steps away from the university’s iconic football stadium. Its building earned an A+ ranking, coming in ninth in the nation for Best Facilities. The school has one of the top employment rates in the region at 91.3 percent, as well as a stellar bar exam pass rate of 97.19 percent. It offers a variety of clinics and externships and features the only ABA-approved year-long study abroad program in the country, allowing students to study in London. Students looking for dual degrees can pursue either a three-year or four-year J.D./MBA degree, or a J.D./Master’s degree in engineering.

**Strengths:** Technology law, intellectual property, public interest law

IU McKinney School of Law is located in Indianapolis, the state’s largest city and capital. That has helped the school produce leaders in government, politics and business, in addition to traditional legal professions. It is one of the top schools for government jobs, and the school has robust offerings in several practice areas, including intellectual property, public interest law and taxation. It offers nine live client clinics, moot court, law reviews, skills training, pro bono work and a variety of externships and clerkships. IU McKinney has one of the best facilities in the region, earning an A+. 

**Strengths:** Criminal law, environmental law, health law, intellectual property

Indiana University Maurer School of Law - Bloomington was founded in 1842 and is the ninth-oldest law school in the nation. Its Bloomington, Ind., campus is considered one of the most beautiful university campuses in the U.S. The law school combines a personalized education with real-world networking in an effort to help prepare students to be effective leaders. It offers a first-year course that combines instruction on professional responsibilities with immersion in the practical context of lawyering. This is designed to help students determine their own strengths so they can choose the career path that’s right for them.

**Strengths:** Intellectual property, environmental law, public interest law

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**The University of Michigan Law School**

- LSAT: 169; GPA: 3.80

**Michigan State University College of Law**

- LSAT: 154; GPA: 3.56

**Notre Dame Law School**

- LSAT: 164; GPA: 3.73

**Indiana University McKinney School of Law**

- LSAT: 153; GPA: 3.45

**Indiana University Maurer School of Law - Bloomington**

- LSAT: 161; GPA: 3.75
University of Louisville Louis D. Brandeis School of Law is one of the smallest schools in the region, with fewer than 360 students. But it packs a powerful punch. About 94 percent of its students ultimately pass the bar exam, and the school’s employment rate for the Class of 2017 was 93.2 percent. Those statistics, combined with an in-state tuition of $21,392, helped it earn an A- for Best Value. University of Louisville offers a comprehensive education that is rooted in its commitment to public service. It was one of the first law schools to require public service for graduation, with each class donating 7,000 or more hours to the community. It has an extensive skills program, which includes clinics, externship opportunities, an expansive moot court program and professional skills competitions, in addition to the Samuel L. Greenbaum Public Service Program.

University of Kentucky in Lexington is another Best Value law school, ranking ninth in the nation. The law school combines a low in-state tuition of $23,783 with a strong bar-pass rate and an excellent employment rate of 94.7 percent. UK Law was founded in 1908, but its heritage dates back to 1799, when Transylvania University was founded as the first law school west of the Alleghany Mountains. It offers students a variety of clinical and externship experiences, with a legal clinic that represents low-income and elderly individuals, as well as UK students, in a variety of civil legal matters. The university saw enrollment decline in the past few years as it was displaced from its building. But its new facility is scheduled to open in the fall of 2019.

Northern Kentucky University - Salmon P. Chase College of Law is across the river from Cincinnati in Highland Heights. It was founded in 1893 as a part-time program and still offers both day and evening part-time options. The school has long specialized in experiential training and produces lawyers who are practice-ready. In recent years, it has focused on technology law, and it is highly ranked in that growing specialty. It is also the top-ranked school in the region for business law. NKU Chase caters to locals and has the lowest resident tuition in the region at $19,370.

University of Cincinnati College of Law is one of two Best Value law schools in Ohio, ranking No. 18 in the nation. It is also the nation’s sixth oldest law school, having been founded in 1833. With an enrollment of less than 400 students, it boasts one of the lowest student-to-faculty ratios. Cincinnati Law was ranked No. 15 among Best Schools for Practical Training in 2018. It offers several clinics, including the Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic, which allows third-year students to work directly with clients under the supervision of an attorney. Students work in two-person teams and advise clients on a variety of legal issues, including entity formation, protecting intellectual property and preparing operating agreements. 

Strengths: Business law, public interest

Wayne State Law School

“The Damon J. Keith Scholarship afforded me the opportunity to attend law school. It’s a continuous reminder that the doors have been opened for me to achieve my biggest dreams.”

- Monique S. Eubanks
Second-year Wayne Law student

law.wayne.edu
Capital University Law School offers student-focused education in the heart of Ohio’s capital, Columbus. The school is within steps of courthouses, government agencies and big law firms, which allows the Lutheran-affiliated school to place students in numerous externships. In addition to externships and simulation courses, it offers a family residency program in which law students work with medical students to take depositions and handle other matters. Students get feedback from doctors and lawyers. The school offers a program with the Columbus Police Department in which students learn about expert witnesses and help guide police officers.

**Strengths:** Criminal law, family law

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**University of Dayton School of Law**

University of Dayton, one of only three Catholic schools in the region and the only one in Ohio, focuses on delivering a hands-on approach. It is one of a handful of schools that offer a hybrid online program that blends online and on-campus instruction. The program will start in August with weekly live classes online, and students will visit the campus one week each semester. The school has partnered with Lexis, which is located in Dayton, to focus on cutting-edge legal technologies. It also has partnered with Emerson, which has built an on-campus facility that focuses on the internet of things. It includes a mini-office, home and restaurant where everything is connected and outfitted with sensors.

**Strengths:** Intellectual property, cyberlaw, corporate compliance

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**Akron Law**

**Top 50**

PreLaw ranking for intellectual property law programs (2018)

**Top 50**


23

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7

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**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY MORITZ COLLEGE OF LAW**  
**LSAT:** 160; **GPA:** 3.68

The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law is the leading law school in the state of Ohio and ranked 14th for Best Value in the nation. With alumni working as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and as U.S. senators and governors, the school has a strong alumni base and heritage. It has one of the best ultimate bar-pass rates in the region, at 97.5 percent, and a strong employment rate, above 90 percent. The school has a highly ranked moot court program, a lawyering skills program and five scholarly journals. While it is a small school, it is also part of one of the largest tier-one research universities.  
**Strengths:** Technology law, family law, moot court

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**OHIO NORTHERN UNIVERSITY - CLAUDE W. PETTIT COLLEGE OF LAW**  
**LSAT:** 151; **GPA:** 3.28

Ohio Northern University - Claude W. Pettit College of Law is one of the smallest law schools and is in one of the smallest towns in the U.S. Located in Ada, Ohio, (population 5,592) the private school has fewer than 170 law students. That size leads to a high quality of life and allows for easy collaboration in and out of the classroom as well as the opportunity for faculty to get to know every student. This personalized education has resulted in a consistently high bar-pass rate and a strong job placement rate. It placed 90.3 percent of graduates in jobs within 10 months of graduation. The school also earned an A- in Best Schools for Practical Training in 2018. Every student who wants one is guaranteed a clinic or externship placement.

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**UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO COLLEGE OF LAW**  
**LSAT:** 152; **GPA:** 3.41

University of Toledo College of Law offers small classes and plenty of access to faculty. It's the second smallest school in the region, with about 245 students. It offers first-year classes of only 45 students. It also offers the lowest in-state tuition in Ohio, Michigan or Indiana. The school offers concentrations in six areas, including labor and employment law, and allows students to extern at a government agency or program of their choice.  
**Strengths:** Environmental law, criminal law

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**CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY, CLEVELAND-MARSHALL COLLEGE OF LAW**  
**LSAT:** 153; **GPA:** 3.35

Cleveland State University, Cleveland-Marshall College of Law was the first law school in Ohio to admit women and one of the first to admit minorities. It continues to innovate, giving students access to one of the state’s first high-tech learning courtrooms, as well as the Great Lakes Sports and Entertainment Law Academy. Cleveland-Marshall College of Law offers a part-time J.D. program and is one of 10 schools that have a solo-practitioner incubator program. It is home to the Global Space Law Center and is one of three law schools that excel in space law. It also has a criminal law center.  
**Strengths:** Health law, business law, tax

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON SCHOOL OF LAW**  
**LSAT:** 151; **GPA:** 3.28

The University of Akron School of Law is another one that performed well in Best Schools for Practical Training, earning an A- in 2018. Many of the school’s programs are focused on issues that are important to Akron’s booming biomedical industry, such as intellectual property and public health law. Many upperclassmen have the opportunity to work in the community in clerking positions or for a number of the biomedical companies. The intellectual property program is nationally recognized for its comprehensive courses and externship opportunities with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Students can earn a joint J.D./L.L.M. in intellectual property law in three years.  
**Strengths:** Intellectual property, practical training

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**CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW**  
**LSAT:** 159; **GPA:** 3.46

Case Western Reserve University School of Law has built a strong reputation in practice areas that match the university’s strengths: international law, intellectual property and technology. Located in Cleveland, it has one of the top health law programs in the nation and offers a sports and entertainment specialization too. Case Western Reserve students have the opportunity to build real-world experience from the get-go with a curriculum that allows them to work with clients during their first year. During their third year, students have a capstone requirement, with options that include clinics and externships throughout the U.S. and abroad. This innovative curriculum helped Case Western Reserve earn an A- for Best Schools for Practical Training.  
**Strengths:** Intellectual property, health law, international law, criminal law
Duquesne University School of Law began as a night school in 1911, and that tradition carries on today with an evening program still being offered. Located in Pittsburgh, Duquesne University is a Catholic institution dedicated to moral, ethical and spiritual values, with a focus on justice and service to others. It operates a clinic in a nearby neighborhood that helps the underserved. The school has a history of producing judges and other public servants and offers 13 concentrations. It reports one of the top employment rates in the region.

**Strengths:** Criminal law, civil rights, education law

University of Pittsburgh is in a vibrant neighborhood with easy connectivity to the heart of the Pittsburgh legal community. That has helped the school provide experiential opportunities to students. As a result, it has earned an A- for Best Schools for Practical Training. The law school also takes advantage of the university’s research programs. Seven permanent clinics prepare students for real life, while the Innovation Practice Institute is a first-of-its-kind collaboration between local business and legal leaders, which brings together law, technology and entrepreneurship. It offers more clinic positions than any other school in the region.

**Strengths:** Environmental law, practical training

West Virginia University College of Law is the only law school in the state, and it’s a Best Value law school to boot, earning an A- in 2018. That’s partly related to its low tuition, which was $22,996 in 2017-18. The ranking is also due to a strong employment rate, as graduates benefit from access to the local legal community. Located in Morgantown, W.V., the school offers nine clinics, including clinics in domestic violence, tax advocacy, sustainable use and immigration. The school also offers a number of externship opportunities. The program is designed so that students get foundational courses in their first year, simulated classes in their second year and clinics and externships in their third year. The school’s Center for Energy and Sustainable Development plays a prominent role in shaping the state’s environmental and energy policies. It offers an energy law moot court competition and energy law symposia. Its Center for Law and Public Service helps place students in externships.

**Strengths:** Public interest law, environmental and energy law

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**Notable alumni includes former U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch.**

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The end of law is not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom.
— John Locke

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hen it comes to religious devotion, law schools are like people. Some people aren’t religious at all. Others claim to be, but only go to church on Christmas and Easter, no doubt slyly looking at their phones during the sermon.

And still others are truly devout. They incorporate religion into their daily lives. Not only do they go to church but they also take part in church activities and causes. And miraculously, many even turn off their phones.

Almost 25 percent of the nation’s law schools have religious ties. And, like people, some are more devout than others. They make efforts to incorporate religion into the law school experience in varying degrees. They may have centers and institutions devoted to religious study. Some of their faculty may be of faith. As preLaw magazine has done in the past, we set out to identify such schools.

Some law students feel their work should be rooted in their religious beliefs so they can feel fulfilled, energized. Some simply prefer an institution where their views will be supported.

At such schools, there is opportunity for both.

Law schools and religion have a natural connection, given how their philosophies intersect. Thou shall not steal? Thou shall not kill? These are both commandments and legal statutes. Breaking them can land you in a very, very hot place and/or in the slammer.

The Bible?

Leviticus 19:15 says: “Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.”

1 John 3:4 says: “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”

Why, it’s like a law textbook . . .

“Many lawyers and law students who are active members of mainstream faith communities do not easily see a connection between their religious profession as ‘believers’ and their secular profession as lawyers,”
wrote Fred Enman, a Jesuit priest and lawyer, in a paper called “Law as Ministry.” “Yet there is a strong and comprehensive tradition about justice in Judeo-Christian scripture that can permit any lawyer to see himself or herself as a person engaged in ‘ministry’ in a very real sense.”

A number of law schools focus on this connection. Take Ave Maria School of Law, once again our choice for Most Devout Catholic Law School. The Naples, Fla., school was founded to be an institution where religiously minded students could find commonality.

Its mission, in part, reads: “Ave Maria School of Law offers an outstanding legal education in fidelity to the Catholic Faith as expressed through Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church.”

At Ave Maria, Mass is celebrated every day. There are crucifixes in classrooms. A chaplain, Monsignor Frank McGrath, lives on campus.

The school was established in 1999 by Domino’s Pizza’s founder Tom Monaghan, who felt many Catholic schools had abandoned their missions.

“There’s nothing wrong with most Catholic schools, except they’re not Catholic,” Monaghan told The Chronicle of Higher Education.

A number of law schools that were founded by or had ties to religious denominations have evolved over the years to become more secular in nature. In some cases, they have cut ties to their churches.

It’s partly in reaction to the fact that society has become more secular. One recent poll found that 22 percent of Americans don’t have a religious affiliation, up from 6 percent in 1992. And many law schools have followed societal trends to embrace controversial causes, such as same-sex marriage and transgender rights, which many religions find to be in conflict with their teachings.

Many Catholic universities and their law schools have come under fire by critics such as Monaghan. University of Notre Dame caught heat a few years ago for giving a religious medal to former Vice President Joe Biden. Biden supports a number of anti-Catholic principles, such as abortion rights.

Georgetown University started an LGBTQ Resource Center in 2008, which was a first for a Catholic institution.

“We have sought to build on the rich interfaith and intellectual engagements of Georgetown to create a center that will speak to all of us in all of our rich diversity,” the school notes.

But some alumni find such a center and other actions to be inconsistent with the values of Georgetown, the nation’s oldest Catholic university.

Georgetown University Law Center contends that it remains very much wedded to its Jesuit roots. Pope Francis is the first Jesuit to lead the Church, and Georgetown has been actively supporting a number of his initiatives, including the protection of migrants.

Criticism hasn’t been limited to Catholic universities and law schools. Baylor University in Waco, Texas, was questioned when it removed “homosexual acts” from its list of prohibited conduct in 2015. Some charged that the Baptist school was endorsing such behavior, which the school denied.

“These changes were made because we didn’t believe the language reflected Baylor’s caring community,” a spokesperson told The Dallas Morning News at the time.

The rise of secularism is one of the reasons that evangelical law schools were founded. Lynchburg, Va.-based Liberty University School of Law is preLaw’s top-ranked Christian law school. On its website, it notes that it is “Distinctively Christian.”

“At Liberty Law, our uniquely tailored legal program taught with sound biblical principles will equip you in your pursuit of justice in your community and in the world,” the site states.

Liberty University was founded by the late Jerry Falwell Sr., a well-known Southern Baptist pastor who helped start the Moral Majority, which promoted conservative causes and supported conservative politicians.

Devout schools have become popular because they offer a different experience than secular institutions, noted Naomi Schaefer Riley, author of the book, “God on the Quad: How Religious Colleges and the Missionary Generation Are Changing America.”

In it, she notes that students with religious identities who attend secular schools “quickly find themselves a beleaguered minority,” both in the classroom and in their extracurricular lives. They routinely suffer prejudices and have to tolerate behaviors they find offensive.

At the following schools, however, that’s not likely.

**Most Devout Catholic Law Schools**

No.1 Ave Maria School of Law, Naples, Fla. Though a Catholic school, Ave Maria welcomes students from all faiths. However, nearly 60 percent of the students practice the Catholic religion. That’s the greatest percentage among all Catholic law schools. For 18 consecutive years, the school has participated in the March for Life in Washington, D.C.
No. 2 University of St. Thomas
School of Law - Minneapolis
One of the hallmarks of University of St. Thomas - Minneapolis is its Terrence J. Murphy Institute for Catholic Thought, Law and Public Policy, which is a collaboration between the law school and the university’s Center for Catholic Studies. The school’s motto is “All for the Common Good,” which according to the institution, is “a concept that rejects individualism and focuses on the interdependence of humanity and our planet.” Half of the school’s faculty is Catholic.

No. 3 Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, Washington, D.C.
The law school dates back to 1897, just after the founding of Catholic University, which was approved by Pope Leo XIII, who began leading the church in 1878. So, yes, it’s got quite the faith-based history. And that continues today. The law school is home to the Center for Religious Liberty. The law school and the university’s School of Canon offer a rare dual-degree program in which students can earn a J.D. and a Licentiate in Canon Law.

No. 4 St. John’s University School of Law, Queens, N.Y.
St. John’s started its Center for Law and Religion in 2010 because of the way the two societal forces have been linked through history. As professor Mark Movsesian, director of the center, notes: “Law traditionally has looked to religion for fundamental concepts like justice and equality, and religion often has made law central to believers’ daily lives.” The law school follows the Vincentian mission of St. John’s University, which was founded 55 years before the law school. The Vincentian mission is inspired by St. Vincent de Paul’s compassion and zeal for service.

No. 5 Gonzaga University School of Law, Spokane, Wash.
Gonzaga is a Jesuit-affiliated law school that was established in 1912. The law school and university are named after St. Aloysius de Gonzaga, an Italian aristocrat who gave up his fortune and joined the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. He died in 1591 after caring for those inflicted with a plague. Just 23 years old at his death, he became the patron saint of young students. “As a Jesuit institution, we are committed to educating the whole person to serve the public good, to engaging in a dialogue with all cultures and religious or ethical traditions, and to pursuing justice,” the school’s mission statement says.

No. 6 Seton Hall University School of Law, Newark, N.J.
Seton Hall’s chaplain, Father Nicholas Gengaro, has welcomed nearly 20 entering law classes. He once wrote a blog post noting how important it is to reassure people of all faiths that they are welcome at the school. He pointed out how interreligious respect and dialogue has grown over the years. “The point of these examples is to show that what we do at Seton Hall Law..."
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School is not the exception but the rule in the Catholic Church,” he wrote. “We welcome to these halls of study individuals of all faiths and all people of goodwill to learn and grow and thrive in an atmosphere of mutual respect and dignity.”

**No.7** Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, New Orleans, La.
Loyola University New Orleans is another Jesuit law school, established in 1914. The classes of 2002 and 2003 gifted the school with reminders of Jesuit ideals, which were installed along the walkway to the library. Among them are: pursuit of excellence; learning from experience; development of personal potential; appreciation of things both great and small; commitment to service; and special concern for the poor and oppressed. Now, all who walk to the library can be inspired by these ideals.

**No.8** Creighton University School of Law, Omaha, Neb.
Catholic tradition is a significant part of Creighton. For instance, every fall, like a number of other Jesuit and Catholic law schools, Creighton holds a Red Mass. The ceremony dates back to the 13th century, when it marked the fall term of the King’s Bench during the reign of Edward of England. Priests wore red vestments, hence its name. According to Creighton, the Mass “provides an opportunity for attending members of the legal community – judges, attorneys, law school professors, law enforcement and governmental agencies – to reflect on the God-given power attached to their office.”

**No.9** Santa Clara University School of Law, Santa Clara, Calif.
Santa Clara is in the heart of Silicon Valley, but the Jesuit law school was founded in 1911, well before Google and Apple came to be. The main university was established even earlier, in 1851, at Mission Santa Clara de Asis, one of the 21 California missions. As the university notes: “The Mission points not only to the past but also to the present and the future. Not only a reminder of our history and heritage, it is an active and functioning university chapel as well. It symbolizes Santa Clara University’s desire to enhance and deepen – not simply preserve – its religious character.”

**No.10** St. Mary’s University School of Law, San Antonio, Texas
St. Mary’s, the only Catholic law school in Texas, belongs to the Marianist – the Society of Mary – congregation. It offers a campus ministry, which it refers to as the “heart of the School of Law.” The law chaplain, Sister Grace Walle, offers personal guidance, spiritual support, opportunity for community prayer and social occasions. The ministry also organizes spring-break service trips to Austin, Dallas and New Orleans.

**No.11** Marquette University Law School, Milwaukee, Wis.
Going to a Jesuit school offers advantages even if one is not of the Catholic faith, notes Marquette Dean Joseph Kearney is his “Message From the Dean” address. He notes that unlike many institutions, Marquette is not constrained by “political correctness.” “In fact, The Society of Jesus, Marquette University and this law school are absolutely committed to the core concept of academic freedom and to a full dialogue on every and any issue. We are not afraid or ashamed to speak about faith, morality, and right and wrong, but we are not parochial in our views.”

**No.12** University of Dayton School of Law, Dayton, Ohio
University of Dayton is a Marianist institution with a rich tradition of inclusion. Indeed, when the school opened in 1922, the first class had two women and an African-American. The law school also has a campus minister, Kathy Sales, who offers personal support and pastoral care for life and spiritual issues and crises. Students can submit prayer requests anonymously to be included in the chapel book of intentions.

**Most Devout Christian Schools**

**No.1** Liberty University School of Law, Lynchburg, Va.
Among the dual degrees this school offers is a J.D./Master of Arts in Religion. “Be both a law and divinity student,” the school suggests. “You will learn to defend both your clients and your faith as you study Scripture, apologetics and discipleship.”

**No.2** Regent University School of Law, Virginia Beach, Va.
Founded by Pat Robertson, the well-known promoter of conservative causes, the school follows his principles. The law school’s philosophy: “Our commitment to faith-law integration is woven into our curriculum, as our faculty, dedicated to Christ’s call both personally and professionally, provide a caring and nurturing environment in which students gain an understanding of the foundations of law and learn to develop the ethical and moral code required for the recognition and resolution of ethical dilemmas.”

**No.3** Trinity Law School, Santa Ana, Calif.
Trinity Law is another school that focuses on Christian-inspired learning. The school’s Carl F.H. Henry Center for Theological Understanding is “dedicated to the advancement of Christian wisdom in all areas of life and thought for the glory of God, the good of His church, and the welfare of the world.”

**No.4** Brigham Young University - J. Reuben Clark Law School, Provo, Utah
BYU Law is both devout and highly regarded. Affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it routinely ranks high for academics and affordability. The university is home to the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, which has helped organize more than 350 international events in more than 50 countries.

No. 5 Pepperdine University School of Law, Malibu, Calif.
At Pepperdine, social events and official ceremonies begin with prayer. That’s a significant part of the school’s culture. “It is not unusual that business meetings will likewise be convened with a request to God for prudence, understanding and guidance,” the school’s website notes. “Many of Pepperdine’s professors and administrators take the time to spiritually encourage and pray with students and others who need the care that those who profess faith are called to give.” Pepperdine is affiliated with Churches of Christ, but students of all faiths are welcome.

No. 6 Baylor University School of Law, Waco, Texas
Baylor Law is part of Baylor University, which has the distinction of being the largest Baptist University in the world. And the two institutions are very much aligned. “As a member of the Baylor University community, Baylor Law shares in the University’s mission to educate men and women by integrating academic excellence and Christian commitment within a caring community,” the mission statement says. The law school is particularly proud of its pro bono efforts. It has won seven major awards for pro bono work in the past decade.

No. 7 Faulkner University, Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, Montgomery, Ala.
Charles Campbell, Faulkner’s interim law dean, uses a Scripture verse in his “Message From the Dean” to describe the school’s mission: “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause” (Isaiah 1:17). The school is affiliated with Churches of Christ. Public service is stressed.

No. 8 Belmont University College of Law, Nashville, Tenn.
Belmont Law is part of Belmont University, the largest ecumenical Christian university in America. The university’s faculty members all hold religious values, according to the school: “Belmont faculty confess Jesus Christ as Lord and are active members of churches that support that historic confession of faith. They come from the full range of denominations, so Belmont students benefit from the strengths of these varied traditions enriching Belmont’s Christian community of learning and service.”

No. 9 Campbell University, Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law, Raleigh, N.C.
As part of a Baptist university, the law school incorporates religion into its teachings. Yet it stresses that students are not obligated to embrace a particular kind of thinking. Instead, it wants students to have open minds. “We encourage students to examine the relationship between spiritual and legal issues, to explore the theological foundations for law, to think differently about justice and the legal system, and to consider how we can help achieve a more just and merciful society,” the school says. It offers a dual J.D. and Master of Divinity degree.

No. 10 Concordia University School of Law, Boise, Idaho
Concordia Law’s vision is to prepare leaders for the transformation of society. And it does so by “welcoming diverse perspectives in an environment of open discourse and academic freedom in the tradition of Martin Luther, the founder of the Christian Reformation,” it says. It’s one of the nation’s newest law schools, having been established in 2012. It’s part of Portland, Ore.-based Concordia University, one of 10 universities established by The Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod.
Since it’s one of the biggest decisions you’ll make in life, it’s best to dig deep into the process. Cost, career goals and feel all come into play.

**BY MIKE STETZ**

Too bad there’s not a Harry Potter-like sorting hat for prospective law school students. Given all the variables, it can be tough to choose a law school.

Just imagine if there were a Law School Sorting Hat, though.

Sorting Hat: “Hmm, difficult. VERY difficult. Good LSAT score, I see. Not a bad GPA, either. Seems to enjoy criminal law . . .”

Student: “I like big cities. I hate winters. And, please, no conditional scholarships.”

Sorting Hat: “Then, better be . . . ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY!”

If only . . . If only . . .

A host of considerations come into play when making this life-changing decision. Going to law school is expensive and time-consuming, and landing a good job afterward is far from guaranteed.

So when it comes to choosing a law school, students have to consider affordability, prestige, scholarship availability, bar-passage rates, practical training opportunities, job placement assistance, employment rates, practice specialties, alumni networks, the strength of the surrounding legal community, living expenses, location, lifestyle . . .

We could name at least another half dozen.

And the choice is not just about the school’s merits. It’s about the prospective student’s chops too. You have to know which schools you have a shot at, given your grades, LSAT score and personal history. Some students may be above average and have more options, as law schools compete for the top students. But do you forgo a T14 law school for a free ride elsewhere and avoid a ton of crippling debt?

Other applicants may be right in the middle and have to think more pragmatically, such as considering state schools in regions where the cost of living is lower. Some may have to reconsider whether law school is even for them, given all of the above, particularly if their LSAT scores are below average.

Sorting Hat: “Invest those six figures in a starter house.”

“Each student has his or her own ranking [of law schools],” said Kara Bowen, assistant director for admissions at University of Memphis - Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law in Tennessee.

For many, a school’s culture is important because they will be spending three years there, she said. Many students are attracted
to University of Memphis because of its wide range of practical training opportunities, either in clinics or in externships, Bowen said.

Not only do students find giving back to the community appealing but also they want to get real-world experience so they can better market themselves after law school, she said.

They are quite savvy, Bowen said.

**Law school selection tools**

While there is no Law School Sorting Hat, there are a lot of other tools available to prospective law students. There’s no way you should be making this decision in a vacuum. Social media allows students from all parts of the nation to compare schools and seek advice. Look at the TopLawSchools.com forum called “Choosing a Law School.” There are 311 threads, 15,549 topics and 351,514 posts – and counting.

They run the gamut: “Money vs. Location vs. Rank,” “Chapman or Pepperdine,” “Does prestige matter for criminal law?” “How much is ‘feel’ worth?”

One student said he made his choice quite scientifically: “I built a spreadsheet and weighted every variable (for instance, employment outcomes were weighted like 30 times heavier than whether the school had exciting sports opportunities).”

In addition to looking to their peers for help, students can turn to pre-law advisers. Private consultants can be hired.

Resources are plentiful and quite sophisticated. For instance, one can go to the website of the Law School Admissions Council, which administers the LSAT, and check out the LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools.

When you plug in your undergrad GPA and your LSAT score, it gives you your chances of admission at a majority of the nation’s law schools. Say you have an LSAT of 160 and a GPA of 3.50. Your chance of being accepted by University of Houston Law Center is between 89 and 99 percent, according to the guide.

LawSchoolNumbers.com is perhaps the most popular site that predicts acceptance. It uses data from past and current applicants who have added the information on their own. Applicants post their LSAT scores, GPAs and a few other factors and then track their acceptance status.

**Who runs Law School Numbers?**

Law School Numbers is one of the most popular websites for law school applicants. But does it provide accurate data? And, who runs the site?

The first question is easier to answer than the second.

Law School Numbers relies on law school applicants to submit their data (LSAT scores and GPAs) and then follow up with where they were admitted and where they were denied.

Mike Spivey, a law school consultant and a former admissions director at Vanderbilt University Law School in Nashville, Tenn., has written that the number of applicants who submit data to the site is only about 5 percent of the total number of applicants in any given year.

But the numbers are far better for prestigious schools. Spivey posted a column on his blog that was written by a then-applicant, Warren Buff. Buff wrote that the site’s users represent 10 percent of the applicants at top schools. They also represent a higher percentage of admitted applicants.

“It tells us more about what successful applicants look like than unsuccessful ones,” Buff wrote.

All told, Buff feels that Law School Numbers is accurate for top schools, but not necessarily for all schools.

“Once we get outside of the top segment of the law school rankings, we have to use an increasingly large number of years to find a decent sample size of similar applicants,” Buff wrote. “With such a broad net, we have to include more data of questionable value to our current cycle.”

Kyle McEntee, executive director and founder of Law School Transparency, agrees with Buff. McEntee knows something about Law School Numbers. He previously worked on the site, helping make it more user-friendly.

Law School Numbers was founded in 2003, and McEntee offered his web services in 2008, after he had used the site as an applicant. He did the work right after starting law school at Vanderbilt in 2008.

But who owns Law School Numbers, and why do they run the site? That’s a mystery. McEntee said the owners he worked for in 2008 sold the site, but he was unwilling to disclose the name of the former owners.

Even though he runs an organization that promotes transparency, he said that mission does not apply to a website such as this.

The website states that Law School Numbers is owned by Meyer Media LLC and is based in San Francisco. But there is no LLC or corporation currently listed under that name in California.

A Meyer Media LLC was previously registered, but its registration expired. That registration was made by an accountant in Southern California who graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2008, but he is unwilling to release the name of the client who hired him to register the entity.

While most websites can be found through a domain-name search, Law School Numbers uses a privacy service based in the Cayman Islands to hide the identity of its owners.

As one online sleuth stated, companies only go to such great lengths to be anonymous when there is a reason.

But why would Law School Numbers want to be anonymous? That remains a mystery.
For example, one of the posters, describes herself as Hispanic from Florida with a GPA of 3.95 and an LSAT score of 158. As of early December, she had applied to six schools and been accepted by University of Miami School of Law. She was waiting to hear from the other five.

Another site, MyLSN.info, takes aggregate data from Law School Numbers and provides graphs to help applicants understand their chances for admittance.

HowlCompare.com is a similar website that helps identify which laws schools are realistic goals for you and allows you to compare your standing to those of other students in the website's database.

Another popular resource is Law School Transparency, a nonprofit created by legal education watchdogs who didn't feel enough information was available to prospective students. It fills that gap, and then some. It offers information on employment, costs, academic standards, bar passage and almost anything else you can think of.

It also has a paid feature that allows you to rank the schools best suited for you based on your career goals and debt aversion. It even has a Harry Potter-like name, LST Wizard.

There are multiple sites where you can calculate your student debt. They will even tell you how much you will owe monthly and how many years it will take to pay off your debt. The Washington Post has a tool that calculates how much you need to earn to afford your loan.

Ideally, these resources can help you decide which are the best schools for you to apply to. Students apply to an average of six schools, but some go well beyond that. It depends on how secure you are in your choices. It’s important, if possible, to visit the schools that you’re interested in attending.

Normally, students look for safety schools, target schools and reach schools. Reach schools are the ones you likely won’t get into, but there’s always a chance, particularly if you have an interesting life story. And a good number of students have interesting life stories. Vanderbilt University Law School in Nashville, Tenn., noted that this year’s entering class includes an aerial circus performer. University of Pennsylvania Law School in Philadelphia has a Wilderness First Responder. Harvard Law School boasts a holder of 13 patents, as well as the Guinness World Record holder for the most pull-ups per minute.

For clarification, they are not the same person

The role of employment data

Make no mistake: The competition is getting tougher. UCLA School of Law has a champion chess player among its new class of students. And two Eagle Scouts. And a former employee of the Los Angeles Lakers.

Applications to law schools went up 8 percent last year, and the quality of the students was higher as well. LSAT scores went up significantly. Those scoring 160 or better jumped 20 percent. Those with scores of 170 or higher rose 25 percent.
A number of schools reported that their Classes of 2021 are some of the best ever academically. University of Southern California, Gould School of Law in Los Angeles, for instance, noted that its entering class had the highest GPA ever. It saw an 18 percent jump in applications, and it accepted just 19 percent of those who applied.

Some of the increase in applications is being attributed to the so-called “Trump Bump.” It appears that students are being drawn to law school because they find President Trump’s policies unappealing and have seen lawyers working to make a difference.

Whether that’s true or sustainable is the question. Likely the biggest factor when it comes to law school demand will be employment outcomes. They are improving, but whether that will continue is also in question. The number of legal jobs has actually been shrinking, but so have class sizes, thereby creating better employment outcomes. With more than 200 law schools in the nation, students have quite the selection from which to choose. However, a recent survey showed that most students still look at a law school’s prestige as the most influential part of their decision, even if that means moving across the country. But some argue that it makes sense to go a law school that’s located in the region in which you hope to practice. Alumni connections can help tremendously, and you will have three years before graduation to network locally.

Remember, this is like a buying car. The sticker price is not the true price. Sought-after students can and should negotiate with a school to see if they can land a better deal.

Put serious thought into debt because it can take years to get out of it. Robert Farrington, founder of The College Investor, said a good rule of thumb is never to borrow more than what you expect to make during your first year out of school.

“A prestigious school could be a way to boost your (return on investment), simply because the potential for post-graduation earnings is higher,” he said. “But that’s not always the case. It also depends on the student and what they will put into it. Will they build a large social network? Will they take advantage of the network to land internships and jobs? Or will they just go and be another student?”

Career goals play a significant role in choosing a law school as well. If you’re interested in Big Law, for instance, you need to target schools that feed into that field. Again, the research is plentiful. PreLaw did an evaluation of the Best Schools for Big Law and Small Law. Columbia Law School in New York was No. 1. So if Big Law is a goal and you have grades to land in Columbia, there you go.

If public interest is your dream, preLaw ranked City University of New York Law School in Queens as No. 1 in that field. CUNY Law also leads our ranking of Most Diverse Law Schools – highlighted in this issue – which is also an important factor for many prospective law school students.

Law school analyses are pretty much limitless. Billboard magazine recently looked at top schools for music law. “From streaming to licensing, touring to estate planning, the music industry is more complex and volatile than ever. And that’s where the lawyers come in,” the magazine said.

Among those spotlighted was Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, which this year started an entertainment fellows program.

And if you don’t know what kind of lawyer you want to be, then it might be best to play it safe and focus on cost. The last thing you want to do is walk out of law school so deeply in debt that you’re forced to take a job that makes you miserable.

Sorting Hat: “Hm. Very difficult . . . Big Law hours can be daunting, yes. And public service pays little. Then best you . . . TAKE THE FULL RIDE!”
Kevin Johnson knows something about the importance of diversity. A Mexican-American, he grew up in Los Angeles, and his family wasn’t exactly wealthy. They needed welfare assistance and received food stamps. Later, his parents divorced and Johnson had to navigate two different, complicated worlds.

It wasn’t the kind of childhood you think about when you think Ivy League. But Johnson worked hard and got into University of California, Berkeley as an undergrad, where he worked even harder. That set the path for him to be admitted to Harvard Law School, where he started in 1980.

“That’s not a very common story at Harvard,” said Johnson, who is now dean of University of California Davis School of Law and was the first Latino dean at a University of California law school.

It was even more rare when he was in school. Harvard Law had only a handful of Latino students and placed little emphasis on student needs. There was no such thing as academic support counselors. The environment was hardly touchy-feely.

“It was intensely competitive,” he said. “I felt different, alienated and lonely.”

Johnson hopes today’s law students have a very different experience, and he has been at the forefront of an effort to ensure that. Diversity has increased significantly since the early 1980s, and progress continues. In an effort to track that, The National Jurist has assessed and graded law schools for diversity every other year since 2013.

This year, 60 law schools made our honor roll, which is determined by evaluating the percentage of minority faculty members and the percentage of students in

By Mike Stetz

Most Diverse Law Schools

CUNY tops this year’s list, which sees more schools earning honors. Yet, law schools could face more challenges to diversity, as university admission practices are under attack.
five racial groups and comparing those to national averages.

This year, 20 law schools received an A+, up from 13 in 2017, 10 in 2015 and 8 in 2013. This growth occurred during a time when most law schools struggled with a declining number of applicants.

Johnson’s own school, UC Davis, is one of the schools that has improved in diversity. It jumped to No. 2 on this year’s list, up from an A- in 2017. The reason for the rise? The percentage of Hispanic students went from 12 percent to 21 percent.

Like other law schools, UC Davis has worked hard to diversify and bring a more accurate representation of our nation’s people to the legal profession.

Diversity challenged

But will such progress continue?

Creating diversity is no easy thing and not without critics, who argue that some of the methods are unfair, such as law school admissions being based partly on race. They argue that admissions should be based on merit.

President Trump is one of those critics, and that’s a significant factor, given the power his office holds. Last year, his administration rolled back Obama-era guidelines that encouraged universities to consider race as part of admissions.

Two of Trump’s Supreme Court nominees have been appointed, causing affirmative action supporters to worry that these conservative jurists will not be supportive of such policies in the future.

Other actions are also giving supporters of diversity pause. Harvard Law and New York University’s law reviews are being sued for allegedly discriminating against white males in selecting editors and in selecting

KEVIN JOHNSON is a role model for many of the students at UC Davis, where he is dean. He routinely attends minority functions to show support for their causes.
articles to publish. A Texas-based group is charging that the law reviews use gender and racial preferences.

Harvard University is facing charges that it discriminates against Asian-Americans, a fight led by a conservative activist who wants an end to affirmative action policies. The Trump administration endorsed the suit, and the U.S. Justice Department is investigating Harvard’s practices.

A ruling in that case, which went to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Diverse Law Schools A+</th>
<th>% Hispanic students</th>
<th>% Native American</th>
<th>% Asian</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>Faculty minority %</th>
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trial in the fall, is expected in the coming months. Harvard is facing allegations that it puts limits on the number of Asian students it admits. They have a tendency to score higher on standardized tests, crowding out other racial groups. Harvard denied the practice.

The U.S. Justice Department is investigating Yale University’s admissions practices after receiving a complaint from the Asian American Coalition for Education charging that it too discriminates against Asian-Americans.

So, yes, these are uncertain times for diversity.

Supporters argue that a diverse student body and faculty enhance the law school experience. They help prepare students for the real world because the real world is hardly like a 1950s sitcom. Even “The Jeffersons” would look out of date, given the absence of Latinos, Asians and Pacific Islanders in the show. Demographic trends show that the nation is becoming much more diverse all the time.

“Our legal system should represent all of the people, to give them all a voice. If you don’t have this diversity, you create an illegitimate system.”

—Ann Cammett, senior associate dean of academic affairs, City University of New York School of Law
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Questions may be directed to the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, American Bar Association, 321 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60654 or call (312) 988-6738.
This year’s ranking shows that schools are indeed working to make progress. A number of schools are new to the list, such as Loyola University New Orleans School of Law, which enters the ranking with an A. More than 20 percent of its faculty is diverse, which helped its climb. Nearly 17 percent of its students are African-American, which is a high percentage for a law school that’s not historically black.

The University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law in Tucson, another newcomer, got an A-. No other school comes close to its percentage of Native American students enrolled, at nearly 9 percent.

Topping our list is City University of New York School of Law. Nearly half of its students are minorities. More than one-third
of its faculty is diverse. Part of CUNY Law’s mission is to help diversify the legal profession, said Ann Cammett, senior associate dean of academic affairs for the Long Island City school, which is known for its commitment to public interest.

“Our legal system should represent all of the people, to give them all a voice,” Cammett said. “If you don’t have this diversity, you create an illegitimate system.”

### Why diversity matters

UC Davis’ Johnson also believes that diversity matters, and he has been heartened by the change in American law schools.

“I think it’s wonderful,” he said of the

### METHODOLOGY

Our grades are based on how well each school matches with the U.S. average for each minority population. For students, we looked at Asian, black, Hispanic, Caucasian and American Indian populations. For faculty, we compared overall U.S. minority percentage with the percentage of minority faculty. We’ve used this methodology three previous times, beginning in 2013. Since then, a number of schools have made consistent strides in diversification. Below, we compare 2013’s scores to today’s.

- **DePaul University:** C+ to A-
- **University of Baltimore:** C+ to A-
- **Loyola University-New Orleans:** B to A
- **Georgia State University:** B- to A
- **Barry University:** B+ to A+
- **The John Marshall:** B- to A

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Having peers you can relate to is a tremendous boost, he said. Having professors who look like you is too.

UC Davis has increased its diversity by doing more outreach, Johnson said. Under California law, the school can’t use race as part of its admission criteria. By referendum in 1988, voters banned such action. But schools can and do look at socioeconomic conditions. Many minorities come from more challenging backgrounds.

The school’s King Hall Outreach Program has been lauded for its success in reaching students from under-represented communities. The number of alumni from the program now totals more than 300.

“We take a holistic approach,” Johnson said, noting the importance of this mission, given that UC Davis is a public school in a very diverse state.

When it comes to choosing faculty, Johnson makes sure minorities are represented in the applicant pool.

“You can’t hire someone who’s diverse if they’re not included,” he said.

However, it’s the faculty that votes on new hires, so they’ve been actively diversifying the school’s teaching ranks, Johnson notes. He’s hardly alone in seeking to create a more diverse environment. Indeed, the faculty is now a minority majority.

Diversifying does not mean sacrificing, Johnson said.

“Diversity and excellence go hand in hand,” he said. “It’s not a zero-sum game.”

Jessica Martinez is a product of the school’s outreach program, having learned about it as an undergrad at UC Berkeley, where she majored in political science. UC Davis’ commitment to diversity was a key selling point, she said.

“It felt really comfortable,” Martinez said. “And a big part of that is how diverse and inclusive the environment is.”

She’s the first in her family to gradu-
ate from college. Her parents, who run a housekeeping service, came to the U.S. from Mexico as teens without any resources. Martinez was raised in Yuba City, Calif., which is nearly 30 percent Hispanic. Going to a law school where Hispanics were not represented in significant numbers would have been difficult, she said. “It can be intimidating,” Martinez said of being in an academic environment that is not diverse. “You feel less free to speak out, to be yourself.”

At UC Davis, many of her professors are either minorities or first-generation lawyers or both. That’s important, she said. She feels she can reach out to them and they’ll be able to relate to her.

Martinez is very active in Latino causes. A third-year student, she’s a former co-chair of La Raza Students Association. Her goal is to be an immigration lawyer and return to her community to help those in need.

That’s one of the major benefits of diversity, experts say. It helps bring representation to those who lack it. “I definitely want to

Most Diverse Law Schools A-

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<th>School</th>
<th>% Hispanic students</th>
<th>% Native American</th>
<th>% Asian</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>Faculty minority %</th>
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<tr>
<td>DePaul University</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
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<td>Georgia State University</td>
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<td>0.5%</td>
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<td>68.8%</td>
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<td>Harvard Law School</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
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<td>Lewis &amp; Clark College</td>
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Reflecting the World Around Us
give back,” Martinez said.

The push for diversity is important for a host of reasons. For one, the law profession remains one of the least diverse. Only about 15 percent of lawyers are minorities, one estimate showed.

When it comes to law firms, the diversity figures are also worrisome. Fewer than 9 percent of partners in major firms are minorities, according to National Association of Law Placement (NALP). Fewer than 2 percent are African-American.

And when it comes to prosecutors, the numbers are downright alarming. A 2014 study found that 95 percent of elected state and local prosecutors were white.

And now come yet more attacks on affirmative action. While it has withstood challenges before, things could change if another suit against affirmative action reaches the highest court.

“Some schools may pull back, given Trump’s actions,” said Johnson, an expert in immigration law and civil rights. “Everyone has to keep watching.”

As noted, California has banned race-based admission to public universities. It’s one of eight states to do so. In California, the ban initially caused a disruption in schools’ diversity numbers. For instance, the number of African-American students at UCLA fell by nearly half in the first year following the ban.

Those numbers slowly inched back up, in part because of more aggressive and costly outreach. The UC system also enacted a program that guarantees acceptance to the top 9 percent of the state’s high school graduates. That helps bring in students from schools in diverse communities.

Experts have made compelling arguments both in favor of and against these bans. Some say that the current outreach efforts have failed to keep pace with changing demographics and that Latino and African-American students have suffered the most.

Others say California’s educational system has been forced to improve minority-dominated schools, so their graduates are now better able to compete.

For now, the vast majority of states can use race as part of admission criteria, and they do so. And some have noted their commitment to the process. For instance New York Governor Andrew Cuomo wrote a letter to the leaders of both SUNY and CUNY’s board of trustees not to waver in the face of Trump’s actions. He wrote:

“In this state, we embrace diversity and we encourage it. I am directing you to continue your existing diversity and inclusion plans. The new federal action should have no bearing on admission policies and should not interfere with SUNY’s and CUNY’s commitment to a diverse and inclusive student body.”

CUNY Law is devoted to its mission of diversity regardless of the current environment, Cammett said. The school has a
number of progressive programs, including its Pipeline to Justice initiative. In that, the school takes under-represented students who have been denied admission and prepares them to reapply to law school with a much greater chance of getting in and excelling. Indeed, 83 percent of these students graduate.

CUNY’s success in diversification is also due to its commitment to public service, Cammett said. Students are drawn to that mission and want to tackle injustices.

“It’s not that hard to find [diverse students],” she said. “They find us.”

The school’s admissions policy is fair and all-encompassing, she said. CUNY seeks students from all backgrounds and races, and merit is key, she added.

“We seek people who can complete our program successfully,” Cammett said.

And she noted that there’s no reason the pool can’t be wide and diverse.

“It’s unfortunate that diversity is seen as a problem to some,” Cammett said. “For us, it’s just the opposite. We see it as a strength.”
Why our list includes some failing law schools

Arizona Summit Law School topped our list of Most Diverse Law Schools two years ago. This year it was still highly ranked, at No. 10.

Next year, it will close.

The Phoenix school is one of a number of law schools on our list that have failed or are struggling, and the reason is largely related to poor performance on the bar exam.

Whittier Law School in Costa Mesa, Calif., finished 11th on our list this year. It announced its closing in 2017. In July of 2016, just 22 percent of its graduates passed the bar.

Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, which placed ninth on our list, is currently on probation from the American Bar Association for its shaky financial situation, admissions standards and bar exam performance. Atlanta’s John Marshall, which this year received an A grade, was also recently put on probation by the ABA for similar reasons.

Not only did bar passage plummet but employment rates fell for many of these schools. And a good number of students went deeply in debt to pay for their educations.

For years, these schools had prided themselves on taking diverse students from under-privileged backgrounds and making them lawyers. And they were successful until applications began falling dramatically.

Whites and Asians were turning away from law schools in the greatest numbers, which meant the schools had to dig deeper Arizona Summit’s goal was to diversify the legal field. When applications fell, it struggled to field strong classes.
for applicants. Minorities have a tendency to score lower on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), one of the most important measures when it comes to qualifying for law school.

There are a host of theories about their poorer performances, including that more minorities come from lower socioeconomic households and can’t afford more extensive LSAT prep. They may be first-generation college graduates who don’t have family members to help them navigate the law school admissions process.

Many of the schools on the Most Diverse list have been praised for taking minorities when other schools would not. Some elite schools did not want to jeopardize their rankings, which resulted in a drop in diversity among the nation’s leading law schools, one study showed.

Still, a number of elite schools made our list, such as Cornell University Law School in Ithaca, N.Y., Harvard Law School and the University of Pennsylvania School of Law in Philadelphia.

The only catch? They can be quite selective when it comes to their choices. Take New York City-based Columbia Law School, which is also on the list. Forty percent of its students are minorities. And the median LSAT? It’s 172.

But most of the other schools on our diversity list also excel when it comes to preparing students to practice law.

For example, Texas Southern University – Thurgood Marshall School of Law continued its mission of diversifying the legal profession during the crisis. The Houston-based school routinely finishes among the top schools for diversity and came in seventh this year.

It was also honored in an earlier ranking by preLaw magazine for having an employment rate considerably higher than its projected rate, given its students’ academic standing. Nearly 75 percent of its grads got jobs, when only 61 percent were projected to do so by our analysis. It finished fifth among law schools in that ranking.

And then there is Florida International University College of Law, which is 19th on our list. That Miami school routinely tops all Florida law schools when it comes to bar-passage rates. This past July, it did so again, when 88 percent of its graduates passed. It beat the statewide average by 20 points.
Santa Clara University School of Law stands among titans when it comes to international law. The law school, which is part of a small Jesuit university in Santa Clara, Calif., is one of 13 in the nation to earn an A+ in this practice area.

It rubs shoulders with schools such as Columbia Law School, Duke University, Georgetown University, University of Michigan and UC Berkeley School of Law — large schools with ample resources to throw at popular practice areas such as international law.

What makes Santa Clara’s accomplishment even more impressive is that, arguably, international law is not even its top offering. That would go to intellectual property, for which it has been ranked in the top five in the nation. That makes sense, given the school’s location. Other than Stanford University, it is the only law school located in Silicon Valley — home to the world’s most creative tech companies, including Apple, Google and Intel.

But on closer look, the school’s vast offerings in international law are closely tied to Silicon Valley, the school’s own IP offering and some good foresight 40 years ago.

George Alexander became dean of the law school in 1970, moving from Syracuse University, where he specialized in space law. The then 39-year-old dean arrived with a background in technology and experience in civil liberties. He had previously served as vice chairman of the board of the New York Civil Liberties Union and had served as a consultant to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights from 1962 to 1963.

Alexander focused the school on three concentrations: social justice, international law and intellectual property.

In hindsight, he was the perfect hire for the time and place. Within four years, Silicon Valley was exploding following the release of the first microchip. The tech companies needed law firms that were well versed in two areas: IP and international law.

“In Silicon Valley, a lot of the litigation and transactions have to do with IP rights, and all of them are international in nature,” explained Don Polden, who was dean of the law school from 2003 to 2013. “IP rights don’t stop at the border.”

The law school continued to hire faculty in its three core areas and developed additional resources and offerings. That is reflected today in its three centers: Center for Global Law & Policy, Center for Social Justice & Public Service and its High Tech Law Institute.

In international law, it started its study abroad programs in 1974, being the first to offer a program in Asia. Today, it offers more study abroad programs than any other law school, with programs in Shanghai, Singapore, Tokyo, Sydney, Oxford, Munich, Geneva, The Hague, Vienna and Costa Rica.

Unlike many study abroad programs, Santa Clara’s hires most faculty members from local universities, and students can take externships. This gives them the opportunity to get practical international experience, enhancing their skill sets and resumes.

Santa Clara added an LL.M. program in the early 1990s, bringing foreign attorneys into the same classes as J.D. students. It added to the student body’s international mix by adding exchange students from Europe and Asia. Today there are 15 to 25 per semester.
Santa Clara started its Journal of International Law in 2002 and its International Human Rights Clinic in 2012, giving students even more opportunities. It offers a certificate in international law, allowing students to choose from one of three specializations: Public International Law, International Business and Comparative Law. Each has its own required courses and a study abroad experience.

“A lot of the work that our graduates do has direct connections to international law,” Polden said. “It’s an aspect of a lot of our curriculum as a result.”

While dean, Polden oversaw continued growth. When he arrived in 2003, the law school was housed in 13 different buildings. Slowly, he worked to merge the school into a smaller number of buildings. At the same time, he sought donations for a new building.

Dean Lisa Kloppenberg, who took over from Polden in 2013, secured a $10 million gift in 2014 from a Silicon Valley tech founder to go toward the new building. But it wasn’t until the university received a $100 million gift in 2017 that the law school had the resources to start construction.

The new 96,000-square-foot building, which cost $58 million, opened in October.

“It looks like Silicon Valley tech space with teaching space that is first rate,” Polden said of the new building. “There is a lot of technology and collaborative spaces.”

The building’s location, adjacent to the business school, places the law school squarely in the campus’s professional neighborhood, and leaders are hopeful it will encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among students of business, law, technology, social justice and ethics.

Throughout the eco-friendly building, there are numerous cozy corners, couches, tables, benches and conference rooms for students to gather, collaborate and study together. The technology is cutting edge, including numerous LED monitors, smart keys for classrooms and an artificial intelligence lab. It also features open spaces, modern design and lots of natural light.

International law: a global view

International law can involve everything from human rights to intellectual property to soybeans. Yep, soybeans. When President Trump imposed tariffs on some goods from China, China did the same on a number of U.S. goods, including soybeans. Trade is a major part of international law.

As nations have become more interconnected, this specialty has broadened. And technological advances will likely only speed and complicate globalization moving forward. Law schools have long understood the importance of this specialty, and many having expansive, venerable programs. Thirteen received A+ grades in our rankings. They boast top faculty,

**International Law**

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*preLaw magazine* graded law schools based on the breadth of their curricular offerings. The scores were weighted as follows: 30% for a concentration, 24% for a clinic, 12% for a center, 12% for an externship, 9% for a journal, 8% for a student group and 5% for a certificate. An A represents a score of 90% or higher, an A- is 78% to 89% and a B+ is 72% to 77%.
wide-ranging clinics and renowned centers, along with many practical-training opportunities.

American University Washington College of Law is one such school. It sports 80 international-related courses in a host of areas, from international resolution dispute to national security. The Washington, D.C., school has added five related courses in the past year, including U.S. Export Control and Economic Sanctions. Soybeans anyone?

Another new course is called Regulation of Emerging Robotics Automation & Artificial Intelligence. Terminator anyone? Actually, it will examine regulations that are emerging as a result of new technologies, such as driverless cars and drones, which a number of nations are experimenting with.

Another Washington, D.C., school, Georgetown University Law Center, also boasts a well-respected and long-standing international law program. It offers 122 course titles.

One of its hallmarks is the Global Law Scholars program for students who want to specialize in international or transnational practice. Such lawyers routinely face problems involving more than one legal system and need to know how to navigate them all. Only 15 to 20 students are selected for the program each year, which gives you an idea of the program’s heft.

Students at Case Western Reserve University School of Law have three clinics from which to choose: human rights, human trafficking and immigration law. The Cleveland school’s human rights clinic recently added a summer externship in the Palestinian city of Ramallah in partnership with Al-Haq, an independent human rights organization. Students helped prepare a report on human rights violations in occupied, Palestinian-controlled territory to be submitted to the United Nations.

Yes, students can do some pretty heady work in this specialty. At Brooklyn Law School, another A+ rated school, a number of fellowships are offered in international law. The International Human Rights Fellowship, for example, provides stipends to students who work on international issues throughout the world.

Students can tackle legal issues related to anything from the genocide in Rwanda to the theft of art and antiquities, the school notes. It also recently launched its Global Justice Fellowship program, in which the first two fellows completed internships in South Africa.
Environmental law: earthly matters

Let’s be frank. Colonizing Mars is not really an option. But we’ve got a pretty special planet right here. It has oxygen, water and the NBA, which is why we need to keep it humming.

Many people are being drawn to environmental law. It focuses on protecting our natural resources. And climate change is affecting our lives in major ways, with experts saying that the recent wildfires in California, the deadliest ever, were fueled in part by atmospheric warming.

To see how much this has become a part of our national consciousness, one only has to look at law schools. Many have excellent environmental law programs. Indeed, the number of schools receiving an A+ stands at 14. Another 22 got an A grade.

Two of the best are on opposite sides of the country: Vermont Law School in South Royalton, Vt., and Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Ore., consistently lead a host of rankings, our publication’s included.

Lewis & Clark has 32 environmental law courses. Among its faculty is Pamela Frasch, a pioneer in animal law who co-authored the premier American casebook in the field, “Animal Law: Cases and Materials.”

Students can get key practical-training experience in the school’s Earthrise Law Center legal clinic. The school also boasts the International Environmental Law Project, the Green Energy Institute and the Environmental Law Review.

Vermont Law School’s celebrated environmental law program dates back to 1978. No other school offers more degrees, certificates, faculty and research centers focused on environment law.

Its Environmental Law Center is the largest in the nation and addresses pressing issues such as climate change, energy and sustainable agriculture, to name a few.

But, as noted, this work is hardly limited to a handful of law schools. University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law in Salt Lake City also earned an A+ in our ranking and offers a wide array of courses that expose students to environmental, energy, natural resources, land use and water law.

The program is housed in the school’s Wallace Stegner Center for Land, Resources and the Environment. The center is named after the Pulitzer Prize-winning author and conservationist.

University of Utah also created the Green Team, which works to make the law school, as well as the community, more sustainable.

The environmental law clinic at Golden Gate University School of Law in San Francisco worked with clients in a historically African-American community on
a cleanup effort at the site of the former Hunters Point Shipyard.

The school’s Environmental Law and Justice Clinic works to protect poorer communities, which face the lion’s share of environmental hazards, studies show. In the case of Hunters Point, the clinic found that the U.S. Navy’s primary contractor for a $270 million radiation cleanup, Tetra Tech, had a record of sampling fraud, data falsification and disposal fraud. The Navy was forced to redo the cleanup project.

The San Francisco Chronicle noted: “Attorney Steven Castleman, who worked with the students, said it was ironic that a handful of law students was able to discover irregularities in one semester that the Navy didn’t see in three years since the first Tetra Tech whistle-blowers came forwarded with allegations in 2014.”

Environmental Law

A+
- Columbia Law School
- George Washington University
- Georgetown University
- Georgia State University
- Lewis & Clark Law School
- Pace University
- Tulane University Law School
- UC Berkeley School of Law
- UCLA Law
- University of Colorado
- University of Oregon
- University of Utah
- University of New Mexico
- Vermont Law School

A
- Duke University
- Emory University School of Law
- Golden Gate University
- IU Bloomington (Maurer)
- IU McKinney School of Law
- Loyola University New Orleans
- Touro Law Center
- UBuffalo School of Law
- UC Hastings
- University of Arizona
- University of Connecticut
- University of Denver
- University of Hawaii
- University of Idaho
- University of Maryland
- University of Minnesota
- University of Montana
- University of San Diego
- University of Washington
- West Virginia University
- Widener Law Commonwealth
- Harvard Law School

A-
- American University
- Arizona State University
- Barry Law School
- Chicago-Kent College of Law
- University of Florida
- University of Michigan
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Virginia
- NYU School of Law

preLaw magazine graded law schools based on the breadth of their curricular offerings. The scores were weighted as follows: 30% for a concentration, 24% for a clinic, 12% for a center, 12% for an externship, 9% for a journal, 8% for a student group and 5% for a certificate. An A represents a score of 90% or higher, an A- is 78% to 89% and a B+ is 72% to 77%.
**Employment Law: nine-to-five**

Except for lottery winners, trust-fund kids and retirees, we all have to work. Indeed, the U.S. labor force numbers 157,833,000 people. That’s a lot of potential lawsuits, which make labor and employment law an in-demand specialty.

Our sister publication, The National Jurist, listed employment law as one of the 10 hottest specialties in its back-to-school issue. That’s partly due to the sizzling labor market. Companies are looking for lawyers who specialize in such things as benefits, salaries and professional development to maintain thriving workforces.

But this is another broad specialty, particularly when one considers how the labor force is evolving. The gig economy is bringing with it new issues. And more and more low-wage workers are demanding minimum wage increases – and getting them – as local and state governments worry about how income disparity is influencing worker availability.

Topping our list of schools for employment law is Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Institute of Technology. It offers nearly 20 courses in the specialty. Chicago-Kent students can earn a certificate in Labor and Employment Law.

The school also boasts the Institute for Law and the Workplace, which is nationally recognized for its research into employment and labor law issues.

Chicago-Kent offers a host of practical-training opportunities, as well. Students can work for government regulatory agencies and law firms that specialize in employment law, as well as assisting corporate in-house counsel with labor and employment issues.

The school also runs the Plaintiffs Employment Clinic, which has been instrumental in litigating workplace violations ranging from unfair termination to sexual harassment. It’s recovered millions in damages.

Saint Louis University School of Law also has a comprehensive employment and labor law program, with 15 course offerings as well as a concentration. The school’s William C. Wefel Center for Employment Law co-sponsors a labor and employment symposium every other year.

And students can get some pretty extensive practical-training experience during the school’s Employment Law Semester in D.C. program. Students are placed with federal agencies and take a companion course to complement the placement.

The ABA Section on Labor & Employment Law awarded the school editorial responsibility for its ABA Journal of Labor & Employment Law.

University of Minnesota Law School, another top school in this specialty, had that responsibility previously. The Minneapolis school offers a concentration in the field and boasts an employment law clinic.

Students can earn valuable experience helping people with unemployment insurance claims. They also counsel nonprofits in best employer practices and compliance issues.

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Many law schools ask for a personal statement, but few actually tell you what to write about.

Indeed, the request can be kind of vague and confusing. Where do you start? With your childhood or last year? And what do you write about? Is it really OK not to write about why you want to go to law school? Do you have to think of something that no one else has ever written about?

Here are some tips to get you started:

How personal should your statement be?
I think it can be pretty personal, actually. It’s a part of your application that admissions may read first, before your academic numbers. So definitely write it in the first person. Make sure the story is primarily about you and not a friend, relative or colleague. You are the protagonist, the star of this essay. Whatever it’s about, it’s a story about you. It can be about a life-long interest or one you just discovered this year.

What are some good topics?
A legal internship or post-graduate job is an obvious choice. But it needs to be about your own personal experience there. Was there a client that you helped? A lawyer who was a great mentor to you? What was your most memorable experience there?

Volunteer work, travel, study abroad or other life-changing experiences that broadened your perspective can also be good topics. Tell a specific story about who you met or what you did that most influenced you.

Many write about obstacles they’ve overcome in life, experiences growing up, their families or achievements. These are all good topics. Make sure that you are always the main focus, though.

It’s fine if you are not writing specifically about why you want to go to law school, unless the law school you are applying to indicates otherwise. I also don’t think it’s necessary to come up with a topic that no one else has written about. That is way too much pressure. I think whatever is genuinely interesting to you is fine to write about. If you can’t decide between two topics, try writing a draft of each.

What are topics to avoid?
The most common problem I see is that a personal statement sounds like a paper you might write for school rather than an essay about your life. Another common problem is very long paragraphs and run-on sentences. Keep paragraphs to less than 10 lines and break up sentences that have a lot of commas or semicolons.

Try to stay aware of how many other personal statements the admissions committee might be reading. What would you want to read if you were them? A long, densely written opinion paper? Or a great story about something that has affected your life?

Also avoid any mention of something negative. That’s what addendums are for. If you want to explain a poor semester of grades or an offday for your LSAT, the personal statement is not the place to write about it.

✓ Yes, keep it personal.
✓ Tell a story.
✓ Keep it positive.

HILLARY MANTIS advises pre-law students, law students and lawyers. She is director of the pre-law program at Fordham University and author of career books, including “Alternative Careers for Lawyers.” You can reach her at altcareer@aol.com.
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