University of Georgia takes the top spot again, but a host of schools are adding value as well. Several have managed to cut debt, an issue that’s a major concern for students — and politicians.
We educate champions.

NAMED #1 BEST OF THE DECADE by PreLaw Magazine for Best Moot Court.
NATIONAL ADVOCACY WINNER: 130 TIMES. No other law school has won half as many.
More ABA NATIONAL APPELLATE ADVOCACY CHAMPIONSHIPS than any other law school in the U.S.
More Scribes BEST BRIEF LEGAL WRITING AWARDS than any other law school in the U.S.
16 FIRST-PLACE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ADR COMPETITIONS, ranking as a top law school for ADR.

Earn your J.D.
stcl.edu/champ
A diverse student body to reflect a diverse society.

People have always been our greatest asset. WMU-Cooley Law students come from across the nation and from around the world. The law school’s flexible scheduling options draw students of all ages and offer an opportunity to pursue legal education while maintaining a successful career. The diversity of backgrounds and perspectives creates a dynamic, open and uniquely stimulating learning environment, enriching the education experience and, ultimately, the careers of our law school graduates.

Learn more about WMU-Cooley at cooley.edu.
DEPARTMENTS

46 Helpful Advice: How to write a good personal statement

22 BEST VALUE LAW SCHOOLS
University of Georgia takes the top spot again, but a host of schools are adding value as well. Several have managed to cut debt, an issue that’s a major concern for students — and politicians.

30 SEVEN TRUTHS ABOUT DISTANCE LEARNING
Online J.D. programs are growing in popularity, but are they right for you?

33 SUPERSTARS
They may be teachers by day, but these law professors are TV stars by night, providing expert analysis.

LAW SCHOOL NEWS & TRENDS

6 New owner saves Western State from closing; WMU-Cooley to cut tuition and close a campus

7 ABA remains tough on schools

8 Rise in law school applicants continues; GRE snags a big one; Don’t apply to law school blindly

10 News from around the nation

12 Pro bono work offers many rewards

14 What moot court can do for your career
Innovative. Right value. Right downtown in Dallas.

After completing law school, graduates can focus on making a difference as a lawyer in their chosen field, not on choosing a job primarily to pay off law school debt. UNT Dallas College of Law is committed to keeping tuition affordable while maintaining high instructional standards.

UNT Dallas Law students also value our dynamic downtown Dallas location, diversity, innovative approach and focus on preparation to practice law. Legacies are built here. Apply today and let’s get started on yours.

FIND OUT MORE
Email: LawAdmissions@untdallas.edu
Site: lawschool.untdallas.edu
April 30: Deadline for fall applications

UNT Dallas College of Law
106 S. Harwood St.
Dallas, TX 75201

* 2018 Standard 509 Information Report
** U.S. News: See the Price, Payoff of Law School Before

Enrolling, by Ilana Kowarski, March 21, 2018

UNT Dallas College of Law is provisionally approved by the American Bar Association’s Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. Graduates of a provisionally approved law school are considered by the ABA to be graduates of an ABA-approved law school and are eligible to sit for most bar exams, including in the state of Texas.

Questions may be directed to the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, American Bar Association, 521 N. Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60654 or call (312) 988-6758.
New owner saves Western State from closing

Western State College of Law in Irvine, Calif., has avoided closure thanks to a new parent university buying the 53-year-old law school.

Westcliff University, a for-profit college also based in Irvine, acquired the law school for $1 from Dream Center Education Holdings, which is in bankruptcy receivership.

“But for Westcliff stepping forward, the school would have closed and its students would have been unable to complete their studies without arranging, on a student-by-student basis, to transfer to or visit at other law schools,” said Ed Trent, general counsel for Westcliff University.

Despite the recent turmoil, Western State has a long and fairly stable history as a for-profit law school. It was founded in 1966 and is the oldest law school in Orange County, Calif. It operated for several years with only California accreditation and at one time had three campuses: Fullerton, Irvine and San Diego.

The San Diego campus split off in 1995 and became Thomas Jefferson School of Law, which recently lost American Bar Association (ABA) accreditation. Western State merged its other two campuses and received ABA accreditation in 1998.

Argosy Education Group acquired the law school in 2000, and that company was itself acquired a year later by Education Management Corp. Argosy remained a division of the new owner and continued to run the law school. In 2016, the law school sold its campus in Fullerton and moved to Irvine. A year later, Dream Center, a megachurch, acquired Argosy and announced it would shift to nonprofit status.

However, in February, the U.S. Department of Education announced it was cutting off federal funding, and Argosy was forced to close its campuses. That left Western State with no option but to close, unless it could find a buyer.

That led to Westcliff University offering $1 for the law school.

“After finding we had the determination, expertise and financial resources to invest in reviving the school and building on its strong legacy, the Argosy receiver asked the court to approve the sale at this minimal amount, which it did,” Trent said.

Westcliff was founded in 1993 and offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in business administration, information technology and computer science. Plans are under way to move Western State to a location at or near Westcliff’s Irvine campus, Trent said.

WMU-Cooley to cut tuition, close a campus

Western Michigan University Cooley Law School is making big changes under its new president and dean, James McGrath, who was hired this summer.

The independent law school is closing its Auburn Hills, Mich., campus and cutting tuition by 21% next year.

Tuition is being reduced because the cost of legal education has become too high, McGrath said.

“We realize that a significant part of providing access to legal education is cost. To put it simply, we became too expensive,” he said.

WMU-Cooley currently charges $1,750 per credit hour. That will be reduced to $1,375 beginning in the fall of 2020. A student needs 90 credit hours to graduate.

The Lansing, Mich., law school was once the nation’s largest, with five campuses and a combined enrollment of 3,900 students in 2010. Enrollment now sits at 1,269.

The school shuttered its Ann Arbor, Mich., campus in 2014. Closing the Auburn Hills campus will help to right-size the institution, McGrath said.

“Our current campus structure was built at a time when the demand for legal education was significantly higher,” he said.

The Auburn Hills campus was launched in 2002. In 2009, the school spent $36 million for a 65,000-square-foot addition that doubled the size of the campus. At the time, school leaders said the campus would be able to accommodate 1,200 students.

Founded in 1972 as Thomas H. Cooley Law School, the school became affiliated with Western Michigan University in 2014.
ABA remains tough on schools

The American Bar Association (ABA) has been flexing its muscle when it comes to addressing poorly performing law schools, stripping two of accreditation, finding others out of compliance and placing several more on probation.

And the accrediting body hasn’t canceled its gym membership, apparently.

It recently sent public notices of noncompliance to two more law schools, Western New England University School of Law in Springfield, Mass., and University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law.

Additionally, it shot down Florida Coastal School of Law’s effort to change from a for-profit law school to a nonprofit institution.

Western New England School of Law got dinged for compliance issues regarding financial resources, which are supposed to be sufficient to carry out a legal program. The school questioned that finding, noting that this year’s entering class is larger than last year’s by 22 students.

University of the District of Columbia was found to be lacking in compliance when it came to the academic strength of its students. Law schools are not to admit students who appear incapable of passing law school and the bar.

This is a noncompliance issue that a number of law schools have been facing of late. They’ve been accused of lowering standards to fill seats in an era when applications to law schools have fallen dramatically.

For the University of the District of Columbia Class of 2017, the bar passage rate for first time test-takers was 39%.

The ABA has muscled up the bar passage requirement, though. This summer, it reduced the number of years it can take schools to have 75% of a graduating class pass the bar from five years to two.

Dean Renée McDonald Hutchins told preLaw magazine earlier that her school was taking a number of steps to meet that new guideline. The school is one of a half dozen historically black law schools, which have the goal of diversifying the profession.

“While we are not immune to the downward trend in applications that has been seen nationwide, our current admissions data indicates we are on the way to seating a highly competitive class for the upcoming academic year with an average LSAT/GPA that will be on par (or higher) than in years past,” she said.

Florida Coastal School of Law had been hoping to become a nonprofit and align itself with a public university. Now, the Jacksonville school operates independently. It’s the last remaining law school of the InfiLaw System, which once ran three for-profit law schools. Two closed because they had spiraled downhill.

In 2017, Florida Coastal was hit by the ABA for noncompliance in a number of areas, including the one prohibiting schools from accepting students who don’t appear able to complete law school and pass the bar. However, earlier this year, it returned to the ABA’s good graces.

No reason was given for why the ABA turned down the nonprofit request. The school will continue to pursue it, Florida Coastal officials said. However, the school has seen its leadership change abruptly.

Scott DeVito, who served as dean and helped steer the school back to compliance, resigned recently. Jennifer Reiber, who has taught at the school since 2009, was named interim dean.
Don’t apply to law school blindly; here’s a great, free tool

The average law student has to borrow about $112,800 in order to finance his or her degree. Given that investment, it’s no wonder students may think once, or twice, or 9,297 times about whether to make the leap.

But there’s a new tool to help pre-law students decide.

AccessLex Institute, a nonprofit that helps law students navigate the legal education process, recently released an online collection of resources created expressly for aspiring law students called MAX Pre-Law.

Rise in law school applicants continues

The number of people applying to law school is up 3.3% this year. A total of 62,427 people applied during the 2019-20 admissions cycle. While that doesn’t match last year’s 8.1% jump, it’s still one of the largest increases in recent years.

Last year’s meteoric rise was attributed, at least in part, to President Trump and his policies, which are particularly unpopular with young people, who make up the biggest segment of law school applicants.

It was called the Trump Bump. So, was this year’s increase Trump Bump Lite?

GRE snags a big one

Yale Law School is much emulated, given its status as the nation’s top law school. So the legal education world took notice when Yale recently announced it would soon accept the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) in lieu of the LSAT for admission consideration.

Picture a snowball. Now picture it going downhill. That just might be the GRE.

A growing number of law schools have added the GRE in hopes of broadening their applicant pool. Students who major in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) subjects tend to take the GRE, and law schools were worried that they were missing out on landing them.

UC Berkeley School of Law is also experimenting with the GRE. Some applicants, under a pilot study, will be allowed to use their GRE scores.

While the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) remains the test most used by law schools to help judge prospective students, the GRE is gaining ground. Today more than 40 schools accept it.

MAX Pre-Law includes interactive lessons, webinars, worksheets and checklists, as well as one-on-one financial coaching. It’s designed to answer students’ most pressing questions about law school, and it’s free to anyone interested in pursuing a legal education.

Lessons include: Your Law School Investment; Paying for Law School; Getting Into Law School; and Understanding Law School Admissions and Financial Aid.

Here’s the website: www.accesslex.org/max-prelaw
FIND THE RIGHT LAW SCHOOL FOR YOU.

XploreJD is a free, online search tool that offers aspiring law students like you a data-based approach to finding law schools that best fit what you want and need in your law school experience.

XPLOREJD.COM

XploreJD is brought to you by AccessLex Institute, the largest nonprofit organization dedicated to the betterment of legal education.

You’re more than a score.
Around the nation

- **Alexander Blewett III School of Law at University of Montana** and Carroll College have entered into a 3+3 agreement that put students on a fast track to earn a J.D. They can get it in six years instead of seven. Students spend three years in undergrad and then enter law school, where they earn credits for both degrees. Carroll College, based in Helena, Mont., is about two hours east of the law school, which is located in Missoula and is Montana’s only law school.

- **University of California Davis School of Law** has received a total of $1.15 million from two nonprofits to help fund additional staff attorneys and further serve immigrants through its Immigration Law Clinic. A group called Together Rising donated $900,000 that it generated through a crowdfunding effort. The James Irvine Foundation granted $250,000 to the clinic as part of a larger campaign to assist immigrant families and communities. The Together Rising gift will fund two legal fellows at the Immigration Law Clinic for three years. The Irvine Foundation grant will support the work of the clinic, including efforts to ensure compliance with the Flores settlement, a 1997 agreement that established basic standards for the treatment of juvenile migrant detainees.

- **University of North Dakota School of Law** saw its entering class enrollment grow by 33% this year compared to 2018. “I am so delighted about the strength and diversity of our incoming class of students,” said Julia Ernst, associate dean for academic & student affairs. “They bring a wealth of backgrounds and experiences into our law school community.”

- **University of South Dakota School of Law** saw a 20% increase, making that school’s incoming class the largest in 20 years.

- **University of Houston Law Center** is getting new digs. The University of Houston System Board of Regents has unanimously authorized funds for the construction of a new facility to replace the Law Center’s 50-year-old complex. A total of $78 million has been earmarked for the new facility, with funds secured from private contributions and state and university support. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2021.
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW has launched a First Amendment Clinic, which is believed to be the first in the state to focus on the subject. It is funded by a grant from the Stanton Foundation, established by Frank Stanton, a longtime president of CBS. “The clinic has two major goals,” said Lisa Hoppenjans, assistant professor of practice and director of the clinic. “To defend and advance freedom of speech, press and assembly by providing pro bono legal services to individuals and organizations in matters raising First Amendment issues and to educate law students to become leaders on First Amendment issues through real-world practice experience.”

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW has launched a First Amendment Clinic, which is believed to be the first in the state to focus on the subject. It is funded by a grant from the Stanton Foundation, established by Frank Stanton, a longtime president of CBS. “The clinic has two major goals,” said Lisa Hoppenjans, assistant professor of practice and director of the clinic. “To defend and advance freedom of speech, press and assembly by providing pro bono legal services to individuals and organizations in matters raising First Amendment issues and to educate law students to become leaders on First Amendment issues through real-world practice experience.”

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA SCHOOL OF LAW has received a $1 million gift to provide scholarships for law students who have demonstrated success in the face of challenging circumstances. The Brian and Kim Cain Family Scholarship Fund, established by 1987 graduate Brian P. Cain and his wife, Kim McLemore Cain, will provide two full scholarships for students who have overcome significant hardships while on their journeys to law school. In recent years, the school has focused on ensuring that obtaining one’s dream of becoming a lawyer and serving state and society are possible for any student.

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF LAW DARTMOUTH has entered into an agreement with Salem State University that enables students to get law a degree in six years instead of seven. The 3+3 agreement gives students a quicker and less expensive path to a J.D. Students put in three years of undergraduate study at Salem State, followed by three years at the law school, where they earn credits for both an undergrad degree and a law degree. Salem State is the 11th school to partner with UMass Law in a 3+3 program.

ANTONIN SCALIA LAW SCHOOL AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY and the Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) have partnered to create an immigration legal clinic. The clinic, which launched this fall, offers students the opportunity to gain translatable skills and valuable perspectives on immigration law, specifically the deportation process and habeas corpus litigation. LAJC also has clinics at University of Virginia School of Law and University of Richmond School of Law.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FRANKLIN PIERCE SCHOOL OF LAW has launched an online J.D. program focusing on intellectual property. A handful of other schools have online J.D. programs, but they don’t focus on a particular practice area. UNH Law’s intellectual property program is considered one of the best in the nation, and 45 students have enrolled in the inaugural class. It took a special variance from the ABA to start such a program because there are limits on how many online credits law schools can offer.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK, WILLIAM H. BOWEN SCHOOL OF LAW is creating a Veterans Legal Services Clinic. It will assist Arkansas veterans in need of legal services. Law students will work in the clinic under the supervision of a Bowen faculty member, who will represent Arkansas veterans in the Veterans Affairs disability appeal process and the process for reconsideration of discharge status. The clinic’s tentative opening date is fall 2020.

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA SCHOOL OF LAW has received a $1 million gift to provide scholarships for law students who have demonstrated success in the face of challenging circumstances. The Brian and Kim Cain Family Scholarship Fund, established by 1987 graduate Brian P. Cain and his wife, Kim McLemore Cain, will provide two full scholarships for students who have overcome significant hardships while on their journeys to law school. In recent years, the school has focused on ensuring that obtaining one’s dream of becoming a lawyer and serving state and society are possible for any student.

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW is opening an immigration clinic, which will focus on defending those facing deportation. Students will assist those who overstayed their visas or have had their Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or Temporary Protected Status rescinded.
Serving the needy

Many lawyers want to help others. We saw them doing so in airports when President Trump issued a travel ban that primarily targeted Muslim countries. They offered their services pro bono — for free.

If that's your goal, you don't have to wait until you become a lawyer. You can help others while you're still in law school. All schools have pro bono programs of some sort, and some even require students to complete a certain number of hours of pro bono work.

Why the emphasis on it? And why so early in your legal career?

For one, it's a traditional part of the law school experience. Not only does it help you gain legal skills but also you help those less fortunate than yourself. Schools — and the legal profession as a whole — hope it inspires students to continue to do so once they become lawyers, regardless of their specialties. A lot of people need lawyers but can't afford them.

Yet some students dread the idea, no matter how noble. They're busy. They're really busy.

Go back to 1994. That's when Howard Lesnick, a University of Pennsylvania Law School professor, wrote a paper called, “Why Pro Bono in Law Schools.” He noted the level of pressure in law school, even then.

“The prevalent mindset is that if you do not keep your eye totally on the ball, it will hit you in the face,” he wrote. “The thought is that as a student, I have to devote all of my time and effort to keeping my grades and reputation as high as possible, or I will simply not get a desirable job, a decent job, or a job at all.”

Today? That pressure is amped up even more.

But some students do find the time to do such work. Take Tanisha Taylor, who last year had the most pro bono hours of any student at St. Mary’s University School of Law in San Antonio, Texas. Her total was 225. The school requires 30. She found it provided her with a sense of worth.

“Community service is very important to me,” she said. “Growing up, my mom owned several day care centers and always taught us to give back, even if it was just

Law schools that require pro bono service*

We did not include schools that require clinical work as a requirement for graduation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Hours of pro bono service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appalachian School of Law</td>
<td>150 hours community service, which can include legal services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry Law School</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charleston School of Law</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Law School</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drexel University Kline School of Law</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida Coastal School of Law</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida International University</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State University</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell Hamline School of Law</td>
<td>24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvard Law School</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola Law School, Los Angeles</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola University New Orleans</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKU Chase College of Law</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Williams University</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMU Dedman School of Law</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas University</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stetson University</td>
<td>60 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M Law</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas Tech University School of Law</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touro Law Center</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulane Law School</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Akron</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the District of Columbia</td>
<td>40 hours during first year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Denver</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hawaii</td>
<td>60 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Idaho</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Louisville</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Massachusetts</td>
<td>30 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Memphis</td>
<td>40 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New Mexico</td>
<td>6 hours during first year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Pennsylvania</td>
<td>70 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of St. Thomas – Mn.</td>
<td>50 hours of public service, not necessarily law related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington</td>
<td>50 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington and Lee University</td>
<td>40 hours during third year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western New England University</td>
<td>20 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Source: The ABA Directory of Law School Public Interest & Pro Bono Programs
little things like taking our toys and giving them to kids in the day care.”

For her efforts, a local law firm gave her a business suit that cost nearly $2,000.

Then there is Erika Hernandez, a recent graduate of St. Thomas University School of Law near Miami, which requires students to do 50 hours of pro bono work. She put in a whopping 1,000 hours of service for the state attorney’s office. She did everything from writing motions to helping with discoveries and working on trial prep for capital cases.

“I like giving back,” said the 27-year-old. “It was my small contribution.”

She also gained valuable experience that led to a job as an assistant state attorney.

Hernandez noted that some students don’t enjoy this work because it doesn’t pay. Some also have jobs and limited time. Still, many students go well above and beyond the required hours, school officials said. St. Thomas University’s graduating classes provide about 19,000 hours of pro bono service each year, which averages out to approximately 80 hours per student. Most law schools, however, do not require students to do pro bono work. The American Bar Association (ABA) has a list of schools’ pro bono offerings on its website. We found that 36 schools have some sort of set amount of hours. That tally could be slightly off target, though, because not all schools are represented and not all of them provided information.

The value of pro bono work can’t be understated, some argue. “It’s important for law schools to instill in students the importance of pro bono and that it’s one of our core professional responsibilities,” said David Bienvenu, who chairs the ABA’s Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service. “We are a service profession. It’s part of what being a lawyer is all about.”

Doing such work has enriched him personally and professionally, said Bienvenu, a partner with a New Orleans law firm. He’s invested much time and effort in pro bono work, including serving as the chair of the New Orleans Pro Bono Project and on the boards of the New Orleans Legal Assistance Corp., the Legal Aid Bureau and the Louisiana Civil Justice Center.

However, he said he understands why law students may find little appeal in such work initially. He noted that they often feel over-extended as it is, but once they take part, the rewards become obvious.

And it can be career-boosting, Bienvenu added. Doing such work helps you become a richer, more profound person, making you more attractive to employers as well as clients.

“Don’t think that pro bono work goes unnoticed or unappreciated,” he said.

---

**OUR NUMBERS ADD UP TO YOUR SUCCESS**

Concordia recently achieved a 100% ultimate bar passage rate from the ABA—meaning that two years after graduation, 100% of Concordia Law’s 2016 graduates have passed the bar exam. Even more impressive? **Concordia is one of only four law schools in the nation to achieve a 100% two-year pass rate**, alongside Yale University, The University of Chicago, and University of Wisconsin.

**APPLY BY NOVEMBER 15 AT LAW.CU-PORTLAND.EDU AND RECEIVE AN ADDITIONAL $1,500 SCHOLARSHIP**

Concordia University School of Law is fully approved by the Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar of the American Bar Association, 321 North Clark Street, Chicago, IL 60654, 312-988-4708.
Christy Hix wasn’t planning on a legal career, but after taking a business law class during her sophomore year at Texas A&M University, the Fort Worth native was committed to becoming an attorney and wanted to give herself every advantage.

That meant taking part in moot court.

During her first two years at Baylor University School of Law, she participated in several competitions, honing her research and analysis skills and working with other team members to draft a brief.

As a third-year law student, she became a coach, adding another layer of experience to her resume to further distinguish herself from other job applicants.

“Christy Hix: “I learned many practical skills while participating in moot court, including how to think and present on my feet while fielding questions from judges.”

“I learned many practical skills while participating in moot court, including how to think and present on my feet while fielding questions from judges,” said Hix, who graduated from the Waco, Texas, school in 2016. “Moot court is about as close to the real world as you can get, and I believe employers see it as an asset.”

For Hix, it has paid off. In November, she started her second job as a litigator. She joined the personal injury and complex tort litigation firm of Harrison Davis Steakley Morrison Jones in Waco.

“Most firms are looking for team players who can work together for the greater good of the firm and its clients,” Treece said. “They want attorneys who can make winning presentations with solid research and writing skills, all of which we focus on in order to win competitions.

“Most of our graduates get jobs right out of law school.”

Brant Stogner is one of the program’s many success stories. Now a partner at the personal injury law firm of Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto & Aziz, he participated in moot court and mock trial at South Texas College of Law Houston, winning multiple tournaments.

“By Sherry Karabin

What moot court can do for your career

Participating in moot court programs helps students gain valuable skills and puts them in contact with future employers. And all that practice helps them move seamlessly into the real world.

Patricia Wilson, chair of the faculty advocacy committee and a moot court coach at Baylor, said the program puts students ahead of the game in more ways than one.

“We put a lot of resources into our program because we believe it supplements and complements the skills that students need in law school and in the future,” Wilson said. “Each year we hold tryouts, and those who are selected attend a mandatory weekend boot camp during which we focus on honing their persuasive writing skills. In addition, most of our teams are coached by full-time faculty, who spend countless hours preparing the teams to compete.”

Not only does moot court serve as a valuable training ground for students, Wilson said. It’s also not uncommon for high-performing mooters to receive informal job offers after showcasing their skills.

“A number of competition judges have invited students to contact them after they graduate,” she said.

T. Gerald Treece is associate dean and director of student advocacy at South Texas College of Law Houston. He said the two most important skills that mooters walk away with are confidence and collegiality — key qualities that help graduates land and retain jobs.

“Patricia Wilson, chair of the faculty advocacy committee and a moot court coach at Baylor, said the program puts students ahead of the game in more ways than one.”

During the 2018-19 competition season, Baylor’s moot court program was ranked No. 1 in the nation by University of Houston Law Center’s Blakely Advocacy Institute.

Christina Wilson, chair of the faculty advocacy committee and a moot court coach at Baylor, said the program puts students ahead of the game in more ways than one.

“We put a lot of resources into our program because we believe it supplements and complements the skills that students need in law school and in the future,” Wilson said. “Each year we hold tryouts, and those who are selected attend a mandatory weekend boot camp during which we focus on honing their persuasive writing skills. In addition, most of our teams are coached by full-time faculty, who spend countless hours preparing the teams to compete.”

Not only does moot court serve as a valuable training ground for students, Wilson said. It’s also not uncommon for high-performing mooters to receive informal job offers after showcasing their skills.

“A number of competition judges have invited students to contact them after they graduate,” she said.

T. Gerald Treece is associate dean and director of student advocacy at South Texas College of Law Houston. He said the two most important skills that mooters walk away with are confidence and collegiality — key qualities that help graduates land and retain jobs.

“Most firms are looking for team players who can work together for the greater good of the firm and its clients,” Treece said. “They want attorneys who can make winning presentations with solid research and writing skills, all of which we focus on in order to win competitions.

“Most of our graduates get jobs right out of law school.”

Brant Stogner is one of the program’s many success stories. Now a partner at the personal injury law firm of Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto & Aziz, he participated in moot court and mock trial at South Texas College of Law Houston, winning multiple tournaments.

“In law school, moot court and mock trial are the two top sports for lawyers,” said Stogner, president of the law school’s alumni association. “Participating on the moot court team gave me the discipline required to spend hours and hours prepar-
BRANT STOGNER: “Participating on the moot court team gave me the discipline required to spend hours and hours preparing, allowing me to outwork my opponents and be the smartest lawyer in the room.”

Moot court also helped him make connections in the legal community. The managing partner of the firm where Stogner began his career was a graduate of the law school, and the man who interviewed him was a former moot court coach.

“It definitely opened the door for me, which allowed me to land my current job,” Stogner said. “When I hire an associate now, I look almost exclusively at candidates who were part of the advocacy program, because I know the attorney will have the ability to construct sound legal arguments, write briefs and ultimately try cases.”

Karey Hart, a 2014 graduate of Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law, credits her time on the environmental moot court team with steering her toward a career as a litigator.

“I learned that my skills lent themselves more toward litigation,” said Hart, a civil litigation associate at Hannon Law Group in Washington, D.C. “Moot court definitely improved my confidence, and it was my first and only opportunity as a law student to write a brief with other people, which is often how it is done in the real world.”

Hart, a former moot court vice chancellor, is now a volunteer judge and moot court coach for Catholic University.

“I stress subject matter and presentation,” Hart said. “I also let the students know that moot court does help them prepare for their future careers. It may not be an exact replica of the professional world, but you do walk away with very useful practice skills.”

Catholic University law professor A.G. Harmon, a moot court team adviser for the past three years, said the competitions get students battle-ready.

“Moot court serves as a rigorous testing ground for students to test and improve their skill sets before they get in front of an employer,” Harmon said. “The competitions focus on cutting-edge topics that students will be involved in when they become practitioners.”

Anika Smith is a third-year law student at Catholic University and a former moot court team adviser. She said she learned to think on her feet and answer impromptu questions, both of which helped her to secure a clerkship with Judge Paul Matey of the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

“Being on the team prepared me to discuss constitutional issues with ease, which I believe also helped me land the position,” said Smith, who is set to graduate in May 2020 and begin the clerkship soon after.

Toni Young, senior assistant dean at University of California Hastings College of the Law, said the school’s moot court program helps prepare team members to practice law.

BRANT STOGNER: “Participating on the moot court team gave me the discipline required to spend hours and hours preparing, allowing me to outwork my opponents and be the smartest lawyer in the room.”

Moot Court Rankings (2018-19)

1. Baylor Law School
2. UC Hastings
3. Loyola University Chicago
4. University of Alabama
5. South Texas College of Law Houston
6. St. Mary’s University
7. George Washington University
8. William & Mary Law School
9. Columbia Law School
10. University of Georgia
11. Louisiana State University
12. Liberty University School of Law
13. Texas Tech University School of Law
14. University of Kansas
15. University of Houston
16. Ohio State University
17. NYU School of Law
18. Georgetown University
19. Northwestern Law
20. University of Florida
Students take a required persuasive writing and oral advocacy class prior to moot court tryouts in April. Those selected for the team focus extensively on research, writing and oral advocacy, along with soft skills such as teamwork, meeting deadlines, editing, proofreading and issue spotting.

"Moot court reinforces the skills that students need to pass the bar and ultimately to get a job," said Young, who directs the moot court program. "In fact, almost all of my students get jobs straight out of law school because of the excellent training they received as mooters."

Former UC Hastings mooter Miranda Rowley said her experience on the team provided her with solid talking points when she interviewed for an associate position at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius in Palo Alto.

“One of my job interview questions was to name a time when you needed a research topic but did not know where to start because you hadn’t yet learned about the subject matter,” said Rowley, who graduated in May and will begin working at the firm in October. “I immediately made the connection to writing my first moot court brief without having taken Evidence.”

While many mooters are working at law firms, things have come full circle for Robert Sherwin, a professor of law and director of advocacy programs at Texas Tech University School of Law.

A member of Texas Tech Law’s moot court team when he was a law student, Sherwin said the skills he acquired proved invaluable as a young lawyer at Brackett & Ellis.

“I had so much confidence going into a courtroom because I knew I had the training and experience to make arguments and negotiate with opposing counsel,” Sherwin said.

One of the firm’s externs noticed Sherwin’s moot court awards in his office and asked if he would be willing to coach her team at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law (now Texas A&M). He gladly accepted.

In 2007, he left the firm to run the advocacy program at Texas Wesleyan full time. The following year he was hired by his alma mater, Texas Tech, to work with its students.

“Most of my volunteer coaches are also alums,” he said. “When I talk to my mooters, I give them a healthy dose of my war stories combined with a solid education. I offer positive critiques so they understand what they could do better and why their arguments were ineffective.”

“I recently worked with one of our former Texas Tech advocates as he prepared to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court. He was only seven years out of law school, and he won the case.”

---

**ELON LAW**

When Elon Law talks about value, we mean:

- We value your finances: Tuition 20% lower than the national private school average; graduates’ average debt reduced 30% over past five years
- We value your future: 85% full-time employment rate for Class of 2017
- We value your time: 2.5-year program
- We value your learning: 100% of students complete full-time residencies with lawyers and judges
- We value your achievements: 90%+ of accepted students receive merit scholarships
- We value your experiences: 30% of the Class of 2021 are students of color & 53% from outside North Carolina

Learn more about Elon Law’s dynamic program at LAW.ELON.EDU and apply today.
Great bang for the buck

Schools in the Southeast offer variety and ample practical training opportunities. But value is the biggest selling point for many. BY BRITTANY CRUZ-FEJERN

Do you like country music? SEC football? How about an affordable legal education? Law schools in the Southeast offer some of the best deals in the nation. Indeed, six Southeastern schools are in the Top 20 of preLaw’s Best Value ranking, including University of Georgia School of Law, which finished numero uno. History and charm abound, this being the South. Schools are located in picturesque towns, such as Charleston, S.C., and Knoxville, Tenn. But if big city living is your thing, there’s Atlanta, where major companies such as Coca-Cola, Home Depot and Delta Air Lines are headquartered. So hop in the car and head toward Tennessee, which is where we begin our tour.

BELMONT UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF LAW

LSAT: 155 GPA: 3.50

Belmont University College of Law is less than two miles from Vanderbilt in the heart of Nashville’s music business center. The school’s building opened in 2012 and includes a state-of-the-art law library and an 80-foot-high rotunda. The college is integrated into Belmont’s main campus and offers specialties in areas that complement the university’s undergraduate offerings. It earned honors for Best Value in preLaw’s ranking of private law schools. Strengths: Best value

VANDERBILT LAW SCHOOL

LSAT: 167 GPA: 3.80

Located in Nashville, Vanderbilt is known for offering a rigorous academic program in a collegial, supportive atmosphere. The school earns high marks for intellectual property, trial and advocacy litigation, international law and practical training. Also, approximately a third of Vanderbilt’s J.D. class each year earns a second credential through Vanderbilt’s Law and Business Program. The school also earned high marks in a preLaw ranking of schools that excel in public interest training. Strengths: IP Law A-, trial and advocacy litigation A-, international law A- and practical training B+

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

LSAT: 158 GPA: 3.62

For in-state residents, University of Tennessee College of Law, located in Knoxville, is one of the region’s most affordable options. In-state tuition is just $19,674. The school notched high scores in preLaw’s rankings for business law, trial and advocacy litigation and alternative dispute resolution. Strengths: Business law A, trial and advocacy litigation A-

UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS

LSAT: 152 GPA: 3.41

The University of Memphis - Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law is the only law school in Western Tennessee, which means its students have a lock on practical training offerings in Memphis, the state’s second largest city. The school’s mission is to provide an affordable, intellectually rigorous and practice-oriented legal education. Memphis Law also has one of the most striking and accessible facilities in the nation. Strengths: Best value A-, trial and advocacy litigation A-, diversity B+

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

LSAT: 149 GPA: 3.07

Lincoln Memorial University John J. Duncan Jr. School of Law’s philosophy follows the dream of Abraham Lincoln, who once envisioned a university is this part of Tennessee. LMU Duncan School of Law is in the heart of downtown Knoxville and calls its classes “sustainably small,” making it easy for students to create close professional relationships with their professors. It made preLaw’s list of schools that over-performed in employment outcomes when compared to students’ academic profiles. Strengths: Small class size
SOUTHEASTERN SCHOOLS

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
LSAT: 163 GPA: 3.67
For two years running, University of Georgia School of Law has topped preLaw’s ranking of Best Value Law Schools. Graduates of the Athens, Ga., school have low debt, high bar-passage rates and solid employment results.
University of Georgia also boasts the Dean Rusk International Law Center, named after the former secretary of state who was also a law professor at the school. The center has served as a nucleus for international law and policy education and scholarship.
Strengths: Best Value, business law A-, trial and advocacy litigation A-

ATLANTA’S JOHN MARSHALL
LSAT: 149 GPA: 3.01
Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School was founded in 1933 to offer both traditional and non-traditional students the chance to pursue a legal career. At the time, people of color and women had few options when it came to law school. Indeed, women were among the school’s first class. The school is not affiliated with The John Marshall Law School in Chicago. It added Atlanta to its name to differentiate itself when it received ABA accreditation in 2009. Strengths: Diversity

EMORY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
LSAT: 165 GPA: 3.79
Based in Atlanta, Emory University School of Law is one of the region’s more prestigious schools. A private law school, it was founded in 1916. It scored well in a number of specialty area in preLaw’s rankings. It notched A’s in environmental law, intellectual property law, international law, family law, trial advocacy and litigation, and public interest law. Strengths: Employment

CHARLESTON SCHOOL OF LAW
LSAT: 147 GPA: 3.15
Located in downtown Charleston, S.C., Charleston School of Law is a private, independent, for-profit entity founded in 2004 by a group of local attorneys and judges. It earned ABA accreditation in 2011. Previously, there had been no law school in the port city. The school requires students to volunteer at least 30 hours of public service to qualify for graduation. It also requires professors to volunteer. The school offers part-time and full-time programs for law students.

SOUTH CAROLINA

MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW
LSAT: 152 GPA: 3.31
Founded in 1873, Mercer University – Walter F. George School of Law is one of America’s oldest law schools. Located in Macon, Ga., the school is named after Walter F. George, a 1901 Mercer graduate who became a Georgia Supreme Court justice and a U.S. senator. With fewer than 400 students, the school offers a small and supportive community. Strengths: Trial and advocacy litigation

Walter F. George

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 158 GPA: 3.50
Atlanta-based Georgia State University College of Law came in No. 7 nationwide in preLaw’s Best Value ranking. It also received an A- for diversity and an A for its trial and advocacy litigation program. The school has a 6-1 student-to-faculty ratio. Georgia State University also has the No. 1 bar passage rate in the state at nearly 90%. Strengths: No. 15 for best building, best value A-, diversity A-, trial and advocacy litigation A-
MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE SCHOOL OF LAW

**LSAT: 148 GPA: 3.05**

Mississippi College draws much strength from its location in Jackson near the state Capitol and a federal courthouse. Since it is a private institution, tuition is higher than state schools. But at $35,510 per year, the cost is lower than what most private schools charge. Additionally, each student’s tuition rate is locked in upon admission, so no one will face unexpected tuition increases. **Strengths: Location**

UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

**LSAT: 155 GPA: 3.46**

The University of Mississippi School of Law has one of the more iconic nicknames: Ole Miss Law. Celebrated author John Grisham is a grad. With one of the lowest in-state tuitions in the region, at $16,550 per year, and Mississippi’s favorable rules that allow out-of-state students to claim in-state status after two years, the Oxford-based school offers students an enticing deal in the heart of the Deep South. **Strengths: Trial and advocacy litigation A-, building A, alternative dispute resolution**
SOUTHEASTERN SCHOOLS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
LSAT: 163 GPA: 3.72
Located in Gainesville, University of Florida Levin College of Law gets top grades from preLaw for its business law, tax law and environmental law programs. The law school also has high marks for diversity. It is yet another school in the region that has traditionally scored well in Best Value. It’s currently No. 16 nationwide. Strengths: Family law A, tax law A, building A, diversity A, environmental law, Best Value

FLORIDA COASTAL SCHOOL OF LAW
LSAT: 150 GPA: 3.14
Founded in 1996, Florida Coastal School of Law is among the most diverse law schools in the nation, according to preLaw’s ranking. The Jacksonville school takes pride in the fact that it requires all students to participate in pro bono legal work. It also offers many other experiential learning opportunities, which helped place it as one of the top schools for practical training. Strengths: Practical training A+

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
LSAT: 158 GPA: 3.43
University of Miami School of Law gets top grades from preLaw for its business law, tax law and environmental law programs. The law school also has high marks for diversity. It is yet another school in the region that has traditionally scored well in Best Value. It’s currently No. 16 nationwide. Strengths: Family law A, tax law A, building A, diversity A, environmental law, Best Value

FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 146 GPA: 3.11
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University College of Law in Orlando was founded in the 1949 to serve blacks in the state. It closed in 1968 but reopened in 2002. preLaw ranked the school 12th most diverse in the nation in 2018. The school focuses on producing champions of civil rights and social justice, and it is a leader in criminal justice reform. The curriculum emphasizes practical experience, public service and professionalism. Strengths: Diversity

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 160 GPA: 3.63
Florida State University College of Law in Tallahassee gives the Sunshine State yet another top Best Value school. For value, it ranks No. 8 in the nation. While its admission requirements are among the most rigorous in the region, the school offers in-state students a great deal on tuition. It recently introduced its new Advocacy Center, a five-courtroom facility where students can practice their advocacy skills. Strengths: Best Value, family law A, business Law A

BARRY LAW SCHOOL
LSAT: 148 GPA: 3.04
Barry University Dwayne O. Andrea School of Law in Orlando ranks as the sixth most diverse law school in the nation, according to preLaw’s analysis. Indeed, nearly 50% of the school’s total enrollment are minorities. The only Dominican law school in the U.S., Barry Law is affiliated with a university founded by religious women, the Adrian Dominican Sisters. Strengths: Diversity, environmental law A-

STETSON UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 155 GPA: 3.37
Established in 1900, Stetson University College of Law was not only Florida’s first law school but also a pioneer in requiring pro bono service from students and faculty. In each of the past few years, Stetson law students have completed more than 14,000 legal and non-legal hours of pro bono service. The school, which is located in Gulfport, has a second campus in Tampa. Strengths: Building

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 150 GPA: 3.14
Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad College of Law is known for its skills-centered approach to practicing law. NSU’s Shepard Broad Law has client clinics that are augmented by a full-time field placement program. This enables students to spend a full semester practicing law on campus in Fort Lauderdale, across the United States or in a foreign country. Through the clinical and field placement programs, every student is guaranteed a live-client course. Strengths: Diversity

AVE MARIA SCHOOL OF LAW
LSAT: 148 GPA: 3.05
A Roman Catholic school, Ave Maria School of Law is ranked as the Most Devout Catholic law school in the nation by preLaw. While it provides a traditional legal education, the Naples, Fla., school also focuses on how the law intersects with Catholic intellectual tradition and natural law philosophy. Strengths: Most Devout

ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 148 GPA: 3.10
St. Thomas University near Miami was founded in 1961 by the Order of Saint Augustine. The law school emphasizes learning and scholarship under its Catholic auspices and is committed to scholarship, service and training lawyers to be sensitive to the needs of the region’s underrepresented communities. Practical training is one of its hallmarks. Strengths: Practical training

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
LSAT: 156 GPA: 3.63
University of South Carolina School of Law gets top grades from preLaw for its business law, tax law and environmental law programs. The law school also has high marks for diversity. It is yet another school in the region that has traditionally scored well in Best Value. It’s currently No. 16 nationwide. Strengths: Intellectual property A-, building A, diversity A, environmental law, Best Value

ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 148 GPA: 3.10
St. Thomas University near Miami was founded in 1961 by the Order of Saint Augustine. The law school emphasizes learning and scholarship under its Catholic auspices and is committed to scholarship, service and training lawyers to be sensitive to the needs of the region’s underrepresented communities. Practical training is one of its hallmarks. Strengths: Practical training
FAULKNER UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 149 GPA: 3.13
A small Christian school, Faulkner University, Thomas Goode Jones School of Law is based in Montgomery, Alabama’s capital. This puts it close to courts, the state Legislature and the nationally known Southern Poverty Law Center. The school’s small enrollment of only 185 students allows for more in-depth professional relationships with professors. PreLaw awarded the school an A for its outstanding facilities. **Strengths:** Small class size

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
LSAT: 164 GPA: 3.88
The University of Alabama School of Law routinely finishes near the top in preLaw’s Best Value rankings. Twice it has come in first. This year, the Tuscaloosa, Ala., school finished ninth. That’s consistency. It’s ultimate bar passage rate for the Class of 2016 was a stellar 98.56%. Oh, and its undergraduate school has a pretty good football team. **Strengths:** Best Value, trial and advocacy litigation A-

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY
LSAT: 151 GPA: 3.31
Samford University’s Cumberland School of Law is the second smallest law school in the region and has the second highest bar passage rate in Alabama. That means students receive a quality education in a close-knit setting. With a curriculum centered on advocacy and skills training, the Birmingham, Ala., school has a year-round intramural advocacy training program in arbitration, mediation, moot court and mock trial. The school recently downsized its classes and now offers first-year classes with 50 students, the smallest the school has offered since the 1970s. **Strengths:** Small class size
University of Georgia takes the top spot again, but a host of schools are adding value as well. Several have managed to cut debt, an issue that’s a major concern for students — and politicians.

By Mike Stetz

Finishing first back-to-back in anything is tough, be it the NFL, the Daytona 500, the World Series of Poker or the National Stone Skipping Contest. (Yes, it’s a thing.)

You know what else is tough? Capturing the title of Best Value Law School two years in a row. Ever since the law school crisis hit and law schools suffered a barrage of criticism over cost and performance results, the quest to add more value to a legal education has intensified. And it has not ended, not by a long shot.

The nation’s law schools continue to look for ways to improve affordability as well as academic and employment outcomes. Even if the worst is over when it comes to legal education’s slide, the competition for students still remains fierce. And, what many of them want is no secret.

They want value.

University of Georgia School of Law continues to lead the nation’s law schools in providing it. As it did last year, the Athens, Ga., school — acting like a certain New England football team — finished first in our annual ranking of Best Value Law Schools.

How? Well, how about this:

University of Georgia lowered its average student debt nearly $5,000 from last year. This year’s typical University of Georgia law grad owed $77,269. The school also improved its ultimate bar passage rate to a nearly perfect 97%. Yes, tuition went up — by a whopping $12.

“I feel our school has a clear sense of mission, and that is to create the best possible return on investment in legal education,” said Dean Peter “Bo” Rutledge. “And that’s a mission that resonates with our faculty and staff, our alumni and our students and their families who are concerned about debt and getting jobs.”

The school consistently looks at ways to reduce costs, he said, especially for students who come from challenging backgrounds, such as rural or underserved areas, as well as veterans and first-generation college graduates.

“This is why we do the work,” he said, noting how rewarding it is to see such students thrive in his law school and knowing they’ll be both employable and not drowning in debt upon graduation.

In this year’s entering class, all first-generation college graduates are getting scholarship help. All veterans are getting scholar-
ship aid too.

University of Georgia was not alone in improving its value.

Seven schools on this year’s list had six-figure student debt levels last year but knocked the amount below that much-hyped mark this year. Leading the way was Boston College Law School, which reduced its average student debt by nearly $33,000 to $80,000.

Indeed, only three schools on this year’s list of 58 schools have student debt levels greater than $100,000.

Georgia State University College of Law in Atlanta has the lowest debt of any school on the list. At $50,902, it’s nearly a $6,000 drop from the year before.

New Jersey’s Rutgers Law School saw the greatest percentage in debt decline, going from $80,000 to $55,023 for a 31% drop. Liberty University School of Law also saw a significant decrease, with debt falling from $77,000 to $61,295. That helped land the private law school, based in Lynchburg, Va., on the Best Value list for the first time, with an A-ranking.

In all, 13 of the top 25 schools on the list managed to cut debt. That’s significant because students appear to be growing more debt averse all the time. They have heard the horror stories of how hard it can be to pay off big debts.

One poster on TopLawSchools.com wrote: “Massive debt can drastically impact mental health. There have been posts here over the years of people being depressed or even suicidal because of unemployment and debt. Even people who have jobs can be negatively affected by owing so much money.”

Student debt is such a big issue that Democratic presidential candidates are addressing it. Some are calling for it be wiped out. Among law schools that have reduced their student average debt, most have done so by increasing scholarship offerings.

### Employment up

Graduate employment rates, another key component in the Best Value ranking, are also up for most schools. Brigham Young University - J. Reuben Clark Law School in Provo, Utah, has traditionally performed well in Best Value, normally finishing in the top 20. But this year it reached No. 2, thanks in part to its employment rate, which climbed from 75% to more than 88%.

Texas Tech University School of Law saw its best finish in four years, coming in at No. 13. The Lubbock, Texas, school’s employment rate went from 80% to more than 87%.

An improved employment rate helped put another Texas school on the list for the first time. Texas A&M University School of Law saw employment rise from 75% to 84%. The Fort Worth school earned a B+ for value.

No law school did better in employment than The University of Iowa College of Law. It had a 93.7% employment rate, up from 88% last year. The Iowa City school came in at No. 6 on the Best Value list.

In addition to debt and employment, preLaw looks at several other variables to determine Best Value. They included bar passage rates, tuition and cost of living. This year, we added one more variable, which was whether schools have a tuition guarantee that freezes tuition for the period during which a student is enrolled.

That’s not a huge thing, just yet. Only three schools on our list freeze tuition. They are: University of Illinois College of Law in Champaign, Ill., (No. 11), The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law in Columbus, Ohio, (No. 20) and Indiana University Maurer School of Law -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOP 25</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
<th>Cost of Living</th>
<th>Debt</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>2-year Bar Pass Percentage</th>
<th>Ultimate Bar Pass Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>University of Georgia</td>
<td>$19,708</td>
<td>$15,472</td>
<td>$77,269</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brigham Young University</td>
<td>$13,060</td>
<td>$21,336</td>
<td>$56,903</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin</td>
<td>$23,517</td>
<td>$20,928</td>
<td>$79,455</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>University of Nebraska</td>
<td>$16,078</td>
<td>$17,490</td>
<td>$59,442</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>University of Kentucky</td>
<td>$24,046</td>
<td>$18,054</td>
<td>$78,275</td>
<td>93.4%</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>University of Iowa</td>
<td>$27,344</td>
<td>$16,278</td>
<td>$72,465</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Georgia State University</td>
<td>$17,050</td>
<td>$16,730</td>
<td>$50,902</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Florida State University</td>
<td>$20,693</td>
<td>$19,412</td>
<td>$72,534</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>University of Alabama</td>
<td>$23,920</td>
<td>$18,772</td>
<td>$81,738</td>
<td>86.8%</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>University of Montana</td>
<td>$13,177</td>
<td>$16,448</td>
<td>$78,056</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>$38,118</td>
<td>$19,789</td>
<td>$76,405</td>
<td>90.7%</td>
<td>86.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Louisiana State University</td>
<td>$23,660</td>
<td>$21,880</td>
<td>$83,026</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Texas Tech University School of Law</td>
<td>$26,840</td>
<td>$15,392</td>
<td>$78,800</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>University of Arkansas, Fayetteville</td>
<td>$16,188</td>
<td>$17,124</td>
<td>$66,659</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Florida International University</td>
<td>$21,806</td>
<td>$17,450</td>
<td>$96,767</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>University of Florida</td>
<td>$21,803</td>
<td>$17,410</td>
<td>$94,390</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>University of Oklahoma</td>
<td>$20,903</td>
<td>$21,878</td>
<td>$81,042</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>University of Texas</td>
<td>$35,715</td>
<td>$21,281</td>
<td>$91,978</td>
<td>92.3%</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Rutgers Law</td>
<td>$28,359</td>
<td>$19,471</td>
<td>$55,023</td>
<td>87.6%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>$30,854</td>
<td>$19,928</td>
<td>$92,993</td>
<td>89.5%</td>
<td>87.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>University of Missouri</td>
<td>$19,440</td>
<td>$18,978</td>
<td>$69,462</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>University of Tulsa</td>
<td>$25,254</td>
<td>$21,010</td>
<td>$75,861</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>University of Connecticut</td>
<td>$30,338</td>
<td>$18,276</td>
<td>$84,379</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Penn State University - Dickinson Law</td>
<td>$50,582</td>
<td>$21,238</td>
<td>$73,445</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Temple University</td>
<td>$27,103</td>
<td>$22,488</td>
<td>$78,725</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All data comes from the ABA with the exception of indebtedness, which comes from U.S. News & World Report. For employment, we used a weighted employment number, which gives more weight to full-time, bar-passage required jobs.

The ABA’s ultimate bar passage is the aggregate rate of the Class of 2016. We also used the first-time pass rate for the Classes of 2017 and 2018 to arrive at the two-year bar pass percentage.

**Best Value Methodology**

Our Best Value Law Schools ranking is designed to recognize schools where graduates have excellent chances of passing the bar and getting a legal job without taking on a ton of debt.

We rank the schools using this formula: ultimate bar pass rate and two-year pass rate (15% of study); employment rate (35%); tuition (25%); cost of living (10%); and average indebtedness upon graduation (15%).

---

Fall 2019 23
Bloomington (B+).

One might wonder why many of the nation’s top schools, such as Harvard, Yale and Stanford, are not on this list. Yes, they most certainly provide opportunity, and many of their graduates go on to land prestigious legal jobs. But students at these schools rack up big debt.

The Best Value list is designed to identify schools that graduate students with low debt and a high chance of passing the bar and getting a legal job. These schools give students a better chance of entering any legal field they may choose, including lower-paying jobs in small towns or government positions, because with less debt, they can afford to do so.

Here you’ll find schools such as Alexander Blewett III School of Law at University of Montana, which has the lowest tuition of all schools on our list, with the exception of Brigham Young University, which offers a lower tuition to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

University of Montana’s tuition is $13,177, lower than the average tuition for private high schools.

You’ll also find University of Nebraska College of Law, which previously topped our list in two consecutive years, finishing first in 2015 and 2016. This year, it came in fourth. While these schools have a strong focus on value, they are hardly vanilla institutions. Nebraska Law has the nation’s first and only Space, Cyber and Telecommunications Law program.

**How important is value?**

If law schools don’t provide value, they could be forced to close. The American Bar Association (ABA) has been toughening standards. Today, in order to maintain accreditation, schools must show that 75% of their students who sit for the bar pass it within two years of graduation. They used to have five years to meet that mark.

The ABA stripped two schools of accreditation recently for poor performance — or lack of value, as we like to put it. How many times has the ABA done that before?

Try zero.

Arizona Summit Law School in Phoenix is closing because of the ABA’s action. Its students graduated with about $180,000 in debt. Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego is appealing its loss of accreditation.

But most schools have improved their value since applications to law school began to drop in 2011.

Take Cleveland State University’s Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, which hasn’t been on the list for the past four years. This year, it earned an A-, finishing just outside the top 25. It climbed for a number of reasons. It improved not only its employment rate, which went from 67% to 85.1%, but also its ultimate bar passage rate, which rose above 92%. Its average student debt load fell by more than $8,000, to $76,448.

That’s important, given the school is in Ohio. There are nine law schools in the state, so you’d better provide value, said Dean Lee Fisher.
“Students have never been more aware of the cost of law school than today,” he said. “If you’re not able to show results, you’ll have a hard time attracting them.”

His school is helped by alumni who want to “pay it forward,” he said. Many have successful careers and want to help the next generation. Much of the money they contribute is targeted toward scholarships. Sixty-four percent of students get grants, the 50th percentile of which is $13,680.

Improving academics is yet another focus of Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. In 2012, the school started a partnership with Barbri, the test prep company. Students get benefits as soon as they walk through the door. During orientation, they enroll with Barbri and get access to supplemental course material and online study aids. When they graduate, they don’t have to worry about the cost of bar prep. It’s already paid for.

The school also assigns a faculty mentor to each student. The mentor monitors the student throughout the final two years of law school to make sure the student is doing adequate bar prep. An alumni men-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Name</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
<th>Cost of Living</th>
<th>Debt</th>
<th>Employment 2-year Bar</th>
<th>Ultimate Bar Pass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arizona State University</td>
<td>$27,584</td>
<td>$21,710</td>
<td>$93,524</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>92.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland-Marshall College of Law</td>
<td>$27,209</td>
<td>$19,988</td>
<td>$76,448</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUNY School of Law</td>
<td>$15,563</td>
<td>$20,512</td>
<td>$68,355</td>
<td>77.7%</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty University School of Law</td>
<td>$36,862</td>
<td>$22,948</td>
<td>$61,295</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNC School of Law</td>
<td>$24,172</td>
<td>$24,792</td>
<td>$86,019</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
<td>80.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
<td>$24,010</td>
<td>$17,768</td>
<td>$63,728</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>79.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado</td>
<td>$31,898</td>
<td>$20,546</td>
<td>$83,943</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Houston</td>
<td>$32,093</td>
<td>$17,306</td>
<td>$81,290</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Kansas</td>
<td>$22,562</td>
<td>$16,712</td>
<td>$81,290</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Louisville</td>
<td>$21,988</td>
<td>$18,918</td>
<td>$81,471</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>87.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
<td>$44,919</td>
<td>$18,478</td>
<td>$99,510</td>
<td>91.4%</td>
<td>94.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nevada, Las Vegas</td>
<td>$27,023</td>
<td>$16,356</td>
<td>$83,837</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>75.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New Hampshire</td>
<td>$37,405</td>
<td>$20,899</td>
<td>$78,586</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Utah</td>
<td>$28,354</td>
<td>$19,352</td>
<td>$90,488</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washburn University</td>
<td>$22,429</td>
<td>$16,893</td>
<td>$72,602</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington and Lee University</td>
<td>$49,355</td>
<td>$18,125</td>
<td>$99,559</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>97.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne State University</td>
<td>$32,882</td>
<td>$21,924</td>
<td>$66,521</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William &amp; Mary Law School</td>
<td>$34,000</td>
<td>$19,100</td>
<td>$98,850</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
<td>91.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pennsylvania State University, Dickinson Law in Carlisle, Pa., made it into the Top 25 this year. It had made the list only once in the past four years, earning a B+ in 2017. This year, it reduced debt by $8,000 to $73,445. Employment climbed from 79% to 90.5%. And its ultimate bar passage rate rose from 90% to nearly 97%.

That success was the result of a number of strategic moves, including keeping classes small, said Dean Danielle Conway.

By keeping classes to between 75 and 80 students, you keep operating costs down, she said. The school didn’t pull off this feat alone. It needed investment and support from Penn State University leaders, she said. Additional financial help came from school alumni, creating what she calls an “afford-ability matrix.”

The small cohort also allows the school to forge deeper relationships with students, which helps when it comes to academics, career services and bar prep, Conway said. The career services personnel are not relegated to a back office, she said. They are adjunct professors who also teach classes.

Third-year students can take a two-credit bar prep course taught by a faculty member. That signals to students the importance of the course, Conway said. In addition, students can take a supplemental bar prep class during the summer leading up to the bar.

The school is on a mission to help make law school affordable to students from all backgrounds, because creating more diversity in the profession is vital, Conway said. It’s not just about making law school reachable for people of color, but for those from all socioeconomic backgrounds, she said.

If legal representation isn’t broad, people won’t have faith in the system, Conway said. She wants her school to be one of those institutions that helps, and it can do that by making legal education affordable and dynamic.

“We have to rebuild and enhance people’s trust in the legal system,” she said.

**Battling for students**

University of Georgia is such a value that it’s been attracting students from other states, such as South Carolina. Indeed, the flight of students from that state forced the South Carolina General Assembly to pump more money into higher education, leading to lower law school tuition.

The University of South Carolina School of Law slashed tuition for in-state residents by 17% to try and retain them. That’s the kind of intrastate rivalry that helps students in the long run.

University of Georgia remains laser-focused on offering both value and return on investment, Dean Rutledge said. Not only does he want students to have manage-
able debt but also he wants them to receive an education that positions them advantageously in today’s job market. And he wants them to land the kinds of legal jobs that fuel them.

“I want them to take a job based on passion, not their pockets,” he said.

The school’s fundraising efforts are focused on how they will benefit students, he said. For instance, an ongoing campaign has resulted in $54 million coming to the law school, with 90% of that going to financial aid for students, Rutledge said.

Of late, the law school has focused on what can be done to reduce non-tuition costs. These can include everything from bar prep to obtaining professional attire, all of which is not cheap. The school created a working group that is chaired by student affairs staff and includes members of the student body.

Bar prep is becoming more costly for students, Rutledge noted. In the past, larger law firms helped pay for it, but legal hiring is shifting. More small and mid-size firms are doing the hiring, and they may not have the resources to pay. So the school earmarked $25,000 for those students in the most need of assistance. Once the alumni heard some of the students’ stories, they rallied for a total of $45,000, he said.

Having students involved in these dis-

Continued on page 29
The key to cost-of-living issues? Think small

If you’re going to a law school away from home, you’ll likely have to rent a place to live. You could buy and hope for a sweet return on your investment in three years. But we’re guessing your money will be tied up in other things.

Such as tuition, books, Tums . . .

So which law schools are located in the most and least affordable places? In our Best Value Law School analysis, the most affordable places to live tended to be the smaller college towns.

While that’s hardly surprising, moving to one of those towns could be a culture shock for those who are from big cities.

University of Georgia School of Law, which finished first in our Best Value analysis, is in Athens, Ga., and has the lowest cost of living among nearly all schools, at $15,472. That figure comes the American Bar Association, which requires schools to estimate living expenses, which includes food and housing.

We went to Apartments.com, searched for Athens and found one-bedroom apartments for as low as $520 a month. We thought we were in a time warp. We were not.

Athens is not exactly isolated, either. You’re only 70 miles from Atlanta.

What if

we told you that everything you are looking for in a law school could be found in a single place?

Our 2018 graduates achieved an 88% bar passage rate and 92% were employed in full-time, long-term JD preferred positions.

*First attempt, July 2018 Illinois Bar

ILLINOIS LAW law.illinois.edu/apply

Athens, Ga., home to University of Georgia School of Law, has the lowest cost of living at $15,472.

The school with the lowest cost of living (which counted for 10% in our Best Value analysis) was Texas Tech University School of Law in Lubbock. One-bedroom apartments there can be had for as low as $490 a month.

Our Best Value list includes a number of schools based in larger cities, such as University of Nevada, Las Vegas, William S. Boyd School of Law and University of Houston Law Center. The cost of living in such cities is actually pretty affordable, with both coming in well below $20,000.

However, big city living can be quite expensive. The website RentCafe.com did an analysis of rental prices near the nation’s top 100 universities. Not all have law schools, but if they do, the law schools are usually located either on campus or nearby. So it’s apples to apples for the most part.

New York University School of Law in the New York neighborhood of Greenwich Village was the most expensive, with an average rent for an apartment within a mile of the university campus going for $4,463. That’s more than $50,000 for a year’s rent.

Columbia Law School, another New York-based school, was second, with an average rent of $4,217.

USC and UCLA are the other universities with law schools where nearby rents are considerably pricey, at $3,604 and $3,541 respectively, according to the RentCafe.com analysis. But you won’t need money for winter clothes, so that pretty much evens things out, no?

Here’s the problem. A good number of universities — and law schools — are located in desirable places, some of which have seen housing shortages and hence higher rents. That’s the story in coastal California, most certainly. And in some cases, law school students have to compete with tech workers for housing. Good luck with that.

The key is to find affordable housing further from campus where public transportation is available.

Or get 17 roommates.
Discussions is key, Rutledge said. School leaders get a clearer picture of students’ challenges and help craft messages to garner support.

Textbooks are a good example. In 2016, law students at University of Georgia spent up to $2,000 a year on them, or $1.2 million collectively. If the faculty is made aware of how these costs affect students, they may be more judicial in their material requirements.

“If you just chip away and reduce it by 25%, that’s $300,000 back in the students’ pockets,” Rutledge said.

Students today are indeed looking for value and a return on their investment, he said.

“Students are sophisticated consumers,” he said, “and I think it’s a good thing they are sophisticated consumers.”

Rutledge is not concerned about University of South Carolina School of Law and its effort to woo South Carolina residents to stay in state by lowering tuition, even if it could affect his school.

“I’m not surprised, and I’m happy to see it,” Rutledge said. "I’ve spoken with a number of deans, and I’ve always said I believe we have a moral obligation to make legal education affordable. Whether it’s a competing school or not, I welcome it.”

### Best Value Private Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Top 10</th>
<th>Tuition</th>
<th>Cost of Living</th>
<th>Debt</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>2-year bar</th>
<th>Ultimate Bar Pass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brigham Young University</td>
<td>$13,060</td>
<td>$21,336</td>
<td>$56,903</td>
<td>88.5%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>94.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>University of Tulsa School of Law</td>
<td>$25,254</td>
<td>$21,010</td>
<td>$75,861</td>
<td>86.0%</td>
<td>87.5%</td>
<td>92.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Liberty University School of Law</td>
<td>$36,862</td>
<td>$22,948</td>
<td>$61,295</td>
<td>81.3%</td>
<td>88.3%</td>
<td>94.44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Washington and Lee University</td>
<td>$49,355</td>
<td>$18,125</td>
<td>$99,559</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>93.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Boston College</td>
<td>$54,750</td>
<td>$20,760</td>
<td>$80,113</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>95.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Saint Louis University</td>
<td>$42,154</td>
<td>$21,238</td>
<td>$91,149</td>
<td>85.9%</td>
<td>90.3%</td>
<td>92.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wake Forest University</td>
<td>$46,409</td>
<td>$21,246</td>
<td>$96,244</td>
<td>85.4%</td>
<td>87.2%</td>
<td>94.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Washington University</td>
<td>$57,445</td>
<td>$23,973</td>
<td>$98,058</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>87.0%</td>
<td>91.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Seton Hall University</td>
<td>$54,090</td>
<td>$22,498</td>
<td>$117,034</td>
<td>93.6%</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
<td>93.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Belmont University College of Law</td>
<td>$44,470</td>
<td>$25,325</td>
<td>$125,489</td>
<td>91.0%</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>94.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Drexel University Kline School of Law</td>
<td>$44,195</td>
<td>$22,980</td>
<td>$81,575</td>
<td>84.6%</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>88.82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued from page 27

---

**THIRD YEAR ANYWHERE™**

The enrollment option that enables you to **live, study,** and **work** where you plan to practice after graduation.

**WASHBURN UNIVERSITY**

SCHOOL OF LAW

785.670.1185
washburnlaw.edu
admissions@washburnlaw.edu
It’s time to stop with the notion that an online education is somehow less than a traditional one. After all, what can’t be done online today? Instead of streaming “The Firm,” join one.

The number of online offerings from law schools accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA) is growing. Some schools have received variances that allow them to offer the majority of their J.D. courses online.

Indeed, a number of lawyers have earned their J.D. degrees in this manner, and the legal profession hasn’t screeched to a halt. Perry Mason did not roll over in his grave.

Who knows? One day a Supreme Court justice may have earned his or her degree while sitting in the basement wearing pajamas and eating Pop-Tarts.

While an increasing number of college students have some experience with online learning, the law school model is a bit different. It’s still law school. And it has its own quirks and unique pressures.

Here are seven truths about online J.D. programs:

1. **Online is not easy.**

Some students are under the impression that seeking a law degree online is not as daunting as attending law school in a traditional campus setting.

That’s because you’re not under pressure to attend class at a certain time and face professors in live settings, where they can give you disappointed looks for eating Pop-Tarts.

You study at your leisure, after all. Don’t buy that.

“It’s difficult,” said Jack Graves, director of digital legal education at Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center on Long Island, N.Y. “If anything, it tends to be more engaging.”

That’s because, in law school, a professor may not call on you in class. He has a classroom full of students and limited time, after all. When it comes to online, all students must respond to questions and participate in discussions during a certain timeframe, usually a week, Graves said. That’s one of the ways professors know if students are grasping the material and keeping up.

“There’s more regular assessment,” he said. “So you have to be prepared.”

Gregory Duhl, faculty director for blended learning at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul, Minn., agrees.

“You’re going to work hard,” Duhl said. “You have to do work every week.”

He tends to give quizzes more often in the online format to make sure students are keeping pace. In traditional law school classes, it’s easier to gauge students’ progress, given you see them more often.

Jakor Riddick, a law student who has completed the first year of Touro’s online program, agrees that there is added pressure.

“It’s all year round, so it’s tough,” Riddick said. “I’m enjoying the experience, but it’s very difficult.”

Brandon Jasso, a graduate of Mitchell Hamline’s online program who practices in California, concurs.

“It was very challenging, particularly the first semester,” Jasso said. “Personally, I was not used to such a demanding education. After the first year, I got into a groove.”
2. You still need to know your way to campus.

Online programs are not solely online. Students are required to come to campus for short classroom stints that are normally quite comprehensive.

Touro’s program is called FlexTime and requires students to come to the campus every other Sunday for a full day of classes. “It’s intensive,” said Graves, explaining that students go over two weeks’ worth of work during each on-campus session.

Even so, it beats the stress that night school can bring, Graves said. After working all day and making the commute to class, night school students are often “zombies,” he said.

Syracuse University College of Law in upstate New York requires online students to take four courses on campus. Its program is a bit different than those at other schools. Some of its online classes are held in real time, meaning students can engage with the professor and fellow students in a live setting; they’re just at home, or at Starbucks, taking part.

3. For some online programs, you can live far, far away.

Even though you have to come to campus now and then, that doesn’t mean you have to call U-Haul and move near the school. However, you might want to bone up on how to book cheap flights.

Jasso lives near Palms Springs, Calif., but that didn’t stop him from enrolling in Mitchell Hamline, which is about 2,000 miles away.

He had been thinking of applying to law school but he had a 5-year-old son and a job and wasn’t sure how to pull it off. Then he got a flyer in the mail from Mitchell Hamline about its new hybrid online program, which at the time only required students to be on campus for only a couple of weeks per year.

“I thought this could actually work,” he said.

It did.

Others have pulled off similar feats. Two students at Mitchell Hamline were a husband and wife living in Malta, Duhl noted. Malta, an island in the Mediterranean, is 12 hours away by air.

“They made it to every on-campus session,” Duhl said.

Then there are students who take part in the online program who live only blocks away.

“They’d rather do it this way,” he said.

4. Online students need self-discipline.

Online requires you to be disciplined so you don’t fall behind. “You have to manage your time smartly to meet deadlines,” Graves said. “If procrastination is a problem, this is not a program for you.”

Duhl concurred: “It’s great for students who are independent self-starters.”

Online students agree that you can’t afford not to be on top of your game at all times.

“You can’t cram on a Friday or a Saturday,” Riddick said “There’s too much material to absorb.”

The key is to keep a steady pace. With every week comes another lesson. It’s like clockwork. And keeping up is the responsibility of the student, Riddick said.

Jasso said earning an online degree is all about commitment. You need to go all-in, he said. Professors track your progress, but if you don’t do the work, you won’t get the credit.

“If you can’t commit,” Jasso said, “don’t do it.”

5. You don’t have to quit your day job.

One of the biggest selling points about the online option is its flexibility. Jasso, 29, held a job throughout his online program, first at a restaurant and later as a clerk at a law firm.

Most of those participating in online programs are a bit older than traditional students and have work or family obligations that don’t allow them to attend a typical, three-year law school program. Normally, online programs take a year longer.
“I’d say most of our students are second-career students,” Duhl said of Mitchell Hamline’s program.

That’s the case with Riddick, the Touro student. He is 30 and has a son and a full-time job at a pharmacy. He can’t afford to quit work and take on significant debt. This way he’ll complete law school without being financially strapped, he said.

Most of his classmates are in the same boat, he added. They have families and jobs.

One of the advantages of Touro’s program is its Sunday scheduling, Riddick said. On Sundays the commute is less taxing. It’s not that he lives far away. It’s the traffic. On weeknights, it’s brutal, he said.

6. The format has advantages.

Many of the online lectures are recorded, meaning you can watch them repeatedly should you not understand the subject immediately. So hit that playback button — again and again if need be.

The video lessons that Graves produces for his Touro students are about seven minutes long. Not only is the short length easier to absorb but also it’s simpler for students to go back to a spot that they may need to watch again. Then, they can pause the lecture and take notes.

There are also no limitations regarding when you can review the material. If you’re traveling, you can view it in your hotel room, for instance. And you can take advantage of your own body clock too.

“If you’re a night owl,” he said, “study at 2 a.m.”

Riddick, who had never taken an online course before, said he found the style of learning easy to adapt to.

“You can watch the lectures over and over again,” he said. “It’s very user friendly.”

Jesso said he would listen to the lectures from Mitchell Hamline’s program when he was driving or during lunch.

“I’d get up at 4 a.m. and go on the discussion board,” he said. “When I had free time, I’d study.”

7. You won’t be a hermit.

Don’t worry about not establishing human connections. Not only do online J.D. programs have that campus requirement but also you banter with fellow students on discussion boards and via texts, emails and phone calls.

At Touro, students are required to answer questions on the discussion board. If not, they can’t see how the other students responded.

“Not only does that guarantee all students will take part, but you also get amazing, rich discussions,” Graves said.

Mitchell Hamline’s program works in a similar way. It uses discussion boards and live chats to help students get to know and bond with their classmates.

“Communication is strong, both formal and informal,” Duhl said.

Jasso agrees. When he was going through the Mitchell Hamline program, he was often in contact with fellow students.

“I was talking with friends from throughout the nation,” he said. “It was a great, inclusive experience. Thanks to that, my legal network is pretty extensive.”

To see an extended version of this story, see our inaugural issue of The Online Jurist, a magazine for online law school students, which debuts in November.
How often do you turn on the news and see a familiar face? For many law students across the country, the nightly news is merely an extension of the classroom. Their professors moonlight as legal analysts and bump elbows with some of the best-known faces in America. It may take these professors a while to get midterms graded, but that’s only because they’re busy explaining breaking news to the country.

How did they find stardom? Two things: the explosion of cable TV news and the crazy political world in which we find ourselves.

Trying to make sense of this rocky landscape is no easy thing, but these professors put down the textbooks, put on the makeup and do their part. CNN alone has 15 legal experts under contract, according to Politico.

So without further ado, we highlight 20 of the more recognizable law school professors. Some of the bios are longer because we wanted to give more insight as to how they reached this level of importance, but it’s not a judgment regarding their level of influence. And obviously there are other professors who are regularly featured in the media, but space limits how many we can list.

Rebecca Roiphe has a background in history and law and teaches at New York Law School in Manhattan. Before joining academia, Roiphe worked as an assistant district attorney in the New York County District Attorney’s Office, where she prosecuted money laundering, securities fraud and corporate crimes.

But that didn’t land her on TV. This did:

“I have been giving quotes to newspapers and magazines for some time,” she said. “But requests for media appearances and quotes increased rapidly after I published a co-authored piece titled, ‘Can the President Control the Department of Justice?’ This piece came out around the time that the president was railing against Attorney General Jeff Sessions for recusing himself from the Russia probe, calling the Mueller investigation a witch hunt and attempting to limit its scope.”

In short: Nice timing.

When President Trump fired FBI Director James Comey, even more requests came her way, she said. Since then, Roiphe has become a frequent contributor on MSNBC, CNN and CBS News.

So, what’s it like to be a law school professor and have these gigs as well? Do students ask for autographs? Or how to land on Rachel Maddow’s show?

Students do at times want to discuss the subject of her latest interview, but Roiphe said she tries to make sure her television appearances don’t affect her teaching.

“In class, we often talk about how important the legal profession is to every aspect of people’s lives,” she said. “For my students, I think that seeing me on TV, especially when I’m discussing stories that relate to the legal profession and its role in preserving our democracy, reaffirms that lesson.”

Hot Take: On Trump’s request that the Justice Department investigate the FBI: “In my mind, what Rod Rosenstein is doing is putting his body between Donald Trump and this principle that is fundamental to American democracy . . . There’s been a gradual erosion of these principles, and it’s
Steve Mulroy is a professor at University of Memphis – Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law. He has appeared on Fox News, MSNBC and CNN. He has been quoted in USA Today, The Washington Post, The Washington Times and People magazine.

When asked how he got started in television, Mulroy said: “I reached out and offered my services after seeing too many on-screen commentators with comparatively less knowledge and thinking to myself, ‘Well, even I could do that better.’”

Going on TV is not without its challenges. Mulroy noted that during an interview he can hear but not see the questioner and the other panelists.

“There’s a full second audio delay via satellite each way, which can make things awkward if the discussion gets animated and people are tempted to interrupt,” he said.

Also, he said politics can sometimes come into play.

“Most anchors just want the law straight, neutrally discussed,” he said. “But some have a spin to their questions. Sometimes you have to politely reject the premise of the question before you can answer.”

Hot Take: Speaking on Fox News: “Increased border security and increased guest worker programs would be a more efficient use of our tax dollars than actually building a wall.”

Steve Mulroy

The distinguished fellow of criminal justice at Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University, Mimi Rocah is recognized nationwide as a legal analyst for both MSNBC and NBC News.

So, how did her TV journey begin? Trump made her angry. After a terrorist attack in New York City, where a driver ran a van into a bike path, killing eight, Trump called the justice system a joke and a laugh stock.

“I couldn’t believe what I heard. I decided I wanted to go on TV to respond,” Rocah said, according to the website Scarsdale10583.com. (She lives in Scarsdale, N.Y.)

No wonder it hit a nerve. Rocah worked for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, where she was an assistant United States attorney for more than 16 years.

Rocah has provided analysis and commentary for many red-hot news stories, including Jeffrey Epstein’s sex trafficking charges, a breakdown of Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation, Paul Manafort’s indictment and Justice Brett Kavanaugh’s confirmation.

Having a voice on such a prominent stage is something the school appreciates as well. After all, it’s great exposure.

“Of course we feel a great deal of pride when Haub Law School is highlighted on MSNBC and we are proud to have Mimi as our Distinguished Fellow in Criminal Law, said Dean Horace Anderson Jr. “Our students have learned a great deal from her during her time here — through symposia she has organized and classes she has taught in white collar crime and public corruption. She makes an impact on the students she teaches, and we are grateful for her contributions to the national conversation about justice and the rule of law.”

Really, Really Hot Take: Speaking on MSNBC: “Bernie Sanders makes my skin crawl. And I can’t even identify for you what exactly it is. But I see him as sort of a not pro-woman candidate.”

No other legal expert on race relations and criminal law is more sought-after than Paul Butler, a Georgetown University Law Center professor.

Name a news show, any news show, and he’s been on it — from “60 Minutes” and “Nightline” to every major network evening newscast to just about every cable offering available. Before joining Georgetown Law, Butler was a federal prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice, where he focused primarily on public corruption. In addition to his TV appearances, he has written articles for (and has been quoted in) The New York Times, The Washington Post, Los Angeles Times and The Daily Beast. (and The National Jurist, FYI ...)

Butler’s most recent insights include: an analysis of the legal repercussions of Jeffrey Epstein’s death; a discussion of Brown v. Board of Education in the modern day; prosecutors’ role in the problem of mass incarceration; and political accountability in the #MeToo era.

Most notably, Butler authored the book “Chokehold: Policing Black Men,” which argues that the criminal justice system is an institutional mechanism to control black men.

We’re guessing that his class is standing room only.

Hot Take: Speaking on MSNBC: “This is a time to remember that Robert Mueller is not only the former director of the FBI, he’s a former Marine. When Donald Trump was evading the draft, dodging the draft, Robert Mueller volunteered to go to Vietnam.”

Jonathan Turley, a professor at The George Washington University Law School, has been in the spotlight for decades. He is a pioneer when it comes to offering legal analysis in noted publications and on TV.


“I Couldn’t Believe What I Heard. I Decided I Wanted to Go On TV to Respond.” –Mimi Rocah
He’s controversial as well as brilliant. He has led lawsuits against former President Obama twice, once for invading Libya and once over the Affordable Care Act.

One study ranked Turley as 38th among the top 100 most cited “public intellectuals.” Another survey found him to be the second most cited law professor in the country.

Hot Take: On whether Trump should be tried for obstruction of justice, he told CBS “This Morning”: “I think that, quite frankly, I don’t know any prosecutor who would bring this case into an actual court of law. It would be rather laughable . . . The fact is that it’s very hard actually to obstruct something that is not an underlying crime.”

Barbara McQuade has had a meteoric rise in TV punditry. The University of Michigan Law School professor was, not that long ago, a U.S. attorney in Detroit. Then politics forced her out.

A colleague contacted her, saying that MSNBC needed someone to comment on then acting Attorney General Sally Yates. McQuade did “Hardball With Chris Matthews.” Then, crazy things started to happen. Trump fired FBI Director James Comey. The Washington Post asked McQuade to write about that, and “The Rachel Maddow Show” came calling.

“She has become something of a celebrity lately,” blogged the strategic communications firm Tanner Friedman. “Her students and their parents tell her they enjoy seeing her on TV. She was even recognized at the mall recently, a true ‘Welcome to TV Moment,’ even for someone who led the charge, very publicly, to put the former Detroit mayor in prison.”

McQuade told Tanner Friedman, “What I still try to adhere to is, I don’t have any political spin here. I don’t have personal opinions to share. If I can help explain what’s happening so the public understands it better, then that’s what I’d like to do.”

She focuses primarily on criminal law, criminal procedure, national security and data privacy. The Washington Post, The Daily Beast, Slate, Time magazine and NPR have all carried her work.

Hot Take: When Trump questioned the FBI’s integrity, McQuade told MSNBC: “In self-interest, President Trump is trying to undermine the public credibility of the FBI for this case. But the effect he’s going to have is to undermine public credibility in every case.”

Melissa Murray, a professor at New York University School of Law, teaches classes on constitutional law, family law, criminal law, reproductive rights and justice. Prior to entering academia, Murray clerked for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and the U.S. District Court for the District of Connecticut.

Murray taught at University of California, Berkeley, School of Law before joining NYU Law in 2018. She has been featured regularly on NPR, MSNBC and PBS. She has also written for The New York Times, Newsweek, the San Francisco Chronicle, Vanity Fair and HuffPost.

One of her well-known papers is “Marriage as Punishment,” a fun read for newlyweds, no doubt. “As I explained — to my husband and everyone else — my interest in these issues was academic, not personal,” she told the NYU website.

Hot Take: Roger Stone called the Mueller probe a lynching. She responded on MSNBC: “This is straight out of the GOP playbook. Anytime anyone runs into hot water, it’s a ‘high-tech lynching,’ it’s a ‘legal lynching.’ These people need to go down to Alabama and see Bryan Stevenson’s museum, where (they) would learn about the lynching and violence that black people all across the South experienced.”

Jonathan Adler, a professor at Case Western Reserve University School of Law, is known for his expertise in environmental, constitutional, election and regulatory law. Adler has appeared on several television and radio networks, including PBS, NPR and Fox News.

Rafael Cox Alomar is a professor at University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law. He teaches courses in remedies, public international law and conflicts of law. His work has been published by The Boston Globe and The Hill, and he is a frequent guest on NPR.

Andrew Brandt is a professor at Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law. He teaches classes in sports law and the business of professional sports. Brandt was an analyst for ESPN from 2011 to 2017 and has made contributions to HuffPost, Forbes and Sports Business Journal. He currently hosts the popular The Business of Sports podcast and has been recognized for his insightful and engaging analysis.

Laura Coates is an adjunct professor at The George Washington University Law School. She has been a CNN legal ana-
y, a bestselling author and a radio host. Her commentaries have been featured by MSNBC, Boston Herald, The Washington Post and USA Today. Coates is considered a constitutional expert and is known for her ability to break down complex topics.

Charlotte Garden teaches courses in labor law, employment law and regulation. Her work focuses on the intersection of the Constitution, technology and employment practices. She writes regular opinions on upcoming Supreme Court cases, and her work has been featured by The Atlantic, NBC’s Think, The New York Times, NPR, The Washington Post and Politico.

Robert Glennon is known for his prowess in water policy and law. A professor at The University of Arizona James E. Rodgers College of Law, he has appeared on several television programs, including “The Daily Show” with Jon Stewart, as well as “Talk of the Nation” and other NPR broadcasts.

Risa Goluboff is the first female dean of University of Virginia School of Law. Her work in constitutional and civil rights has been featured in The New York Times, Time magazine and The Atlantic. She is considered an expert on the development of legal rights during the 20th century.

Kate Shaw is no stranger to high-profile positions. She worked in the White House Counsel’s office during the Obama administration and served as a clerk of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit as well as a clerk of the United States Supreme Court. Shaw, a professor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University, is a frequent contributor to The New York Times, Slate and the Take Care blog. In 2015, Shaw signed on as a regular contributor for the MSNBC show, “All In With Chris Hayes.”

Francis Shen is an associate professor at University of Minnesota Law School who also serves as executive director of education and outreach for the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Law and Neuroscience. Shen teaches classes in law and artificial intelligence and is known for his expertise in the intersection between the law and neuroscience. His work has appeared in the Los Angeles Times, The Daily Beast and Politico.

Elizabeth Tippett is a professor at University of Oregon School of Law, where she focuses on business and employment practices. Her latest research examined the legal implications of the #MeToo movement and has been featured in The Washington Post, HuffPost, Newsweek, Salon and The Daily Beast.

Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia has taught at Penn State Law since 2008. Her work focuses on race, national security and immigration. She teaches courses in asylum law and immigration law and a clinic on immigration rights. Wadhia has appeared on HBO’s “Vice News Tonight,” and her work has been featured by Bloomberg and The Washington Post.

University of Baltimore School of Law professor Kimberly Wehle regularly contributes on CBS News and has also appeared on MSNBC, CNN, BBC, NPR and PBS. On her personal website, Wehle explains her role in the media and academia, stating that she “translates complex legal concepts into plain English for those who want to know how the law actually works.”


CARDOZO LAW SCHOOL
NEW YORK CITY

A+ A
Business Criminal Law
A+ A
Public Interest Family Law
A+ A
Alternative Dispute Resolution Practical Training
A+ A
Intellectual Property

*PreLaw Magazine Ratings

A commitment to diversity and inclusion within a welcoming community
Real-world experience with valuable career connections
A deep commitment to social justice
An innovative, entrepreneurial spirit
And justice for all

The criminal law program at Loyola Law School, Los Angeles relies on practical training to give students an inside look at how the system works and how to navigate it fairly and professionally. **BY LYLE MORAN**

Kayla Burchuk and some fellow students from LMU Loyola Law School regularly visited Kiera Newsome in prison last fall to prepare her for an interview as part of efforts to get her sentence commuted.

Newsome, who was arrested at age 16 and convicted in 2003 of killing a man in Los Angeles, was seeking a reprieve from her sentence of 60 years to life with assistance from the school’s Juvenile Innocence and Fair Sentencing Clinic.

In December, outgoing Gov. Jerry Brown commuted Newsome’s sentence, making her eligible for parole in the near future.

“We were all ecstatic,” Burchuk said.

LMU Loyola Law School officials say the Los Angeles school’s wide array of clinics helps distinguish its criminal justice concentration from competitors’ offerings. It earned an A+ in preLaw’s ranking of top schools for the specialty. “I think the opportunity to form a real relationship with a live client is something really irreplaceable and a really rare opportunity to get as a student, particularly with someone whose case is still active or someone who has been incarcerated for a long time,” Burchuk said.

Professor Sean Kennedy, adviser for the criminal justice concentration, said clinics are a great example of how the program emphasizes practical training above all else. Students in the program must complete one clinic or externship during their time at LMU Loyola Law School.

“Criminal lawyers, whether they are going to be prosecutors or defense lawyers, spend a lot more time in court than most civil lawyers,” Kennedy said. “The Loyola criminal justice concentration reflects that.”

The law school’s 20-plus clinics also demonstrate Loyola’s strong commitment to social justice, he said. One of the newest offerings is a collaboration with Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti. It’s called the Collateral Consequences of Conviction Justice Project. Students and supervising attorneys who work in the clinic provide free legal assistance to individuals seeking to expunge or seal prior convictions. In addition, they assist participants in obtaining driver’s licenses and professional certifications that bolster their chances of securing employment and getting their lives back on track.

LMU Loyola Law School also employs social workers in its student clinics to help train students how to interact with people in crisis. The students are taught how to interview victims, witnesses and defendants. “Our hope is that students who are exposed to social workers as teachers and members of team representation will bring that model out into the world,” said Kennedy, a 1989 LMU Loyola Law School graduate who was the federal public defender for the Central District of California from 2006 to 2014.

When it comes to curricular requirements, students in the criminal justice concentration must complete a class in research skills, in addition to a legal research and writing course that all students must take. Kennedy further recommends that criminal justice students take a course in appellate advocacy to strengthen their research and writing abilities.

“Criminal lawyers need high-quality research and writing skills just as much as big-shot corporate civil lawyers do,” he said.

In addition, criminal justice students are required to take an advanced advocacy elective that focuses on sentencing issues. “Loyola has a sentencing requirement because we want to convey to students in the concentration that high-quality sentencing advocacy — on either side — is one of the most important skills of a criminal
Kennedy and professor Laurie Levenson, who is a former federal prosecutor and founding faculty director of Project for the Innocent, have teamed up to teach a class for first-year students titled “Adjudicative Criminal Procedure: Bail to Jail.”

“We are both committed to modeling the idea that you can be a strong and vigorous advocate on your side but still have a mutual respect and good working relationship with your opponent,” Kennedy said.

He praised the breadth and diversity of the criminal law faculty’s experience.

“I think we are unique in that our faculty is a half-and-half mix of really accomplished criminal law scholars and people who have had a long career in practicing criminal law in the L.A. legal community who are emphasizing the how-to-do-it skills,” Kennedy said.

He said another strong suit of Loyola’s criminal justice program is that the school frequently brings members of the local law enforcement community to campus to discuss a variety of topics.

One example of that is LMU Loyola Law School’s annual Fidler Institute on Criminal Justice. The 2019 edition featured Nicola T. Hanna, U.S. attorney for the Central District of California; Hilary Potashner, federal public defender for the Central District; and Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Ronald S. Coen.

The event included discussions about how courts address mental health issues, the challenges of investigating the dark web, and U.S. Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s Russia investigation.

“This is a unique institute where we bring everyone who is part of the criminal justice system together under one gorgeous Frank Gehry-designed roof to talk about hot issues in criminal justice,” said Levenson, founding director of the event.

As for Burchuk, she and other students have continued their work in support of Newsome through the Juvenile Innocence and Fair Sentencing Clinic. They are helping her prepare for a hearing before the parole board and working on a writ of habeas corpus.

Burchuk, who entered LMU Loyola Law School with an interest in social justice, said her clinical work has inspired her to become a county public defender after she graduates.

“Now criminal defense doesn’t just feel like an appealing career,” she said. “It feels like a calling for me.”
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY students take part in a criminal litigation class. The school’s program earned an A-.

**Crime and punishment — re-examined**

To get an idea of how much criminal law can affect our society, just look at the Netflix miniseries “When They See Us,” which details how five teens of color were unfairly convicted of attacking a jogger in New York’s Central Park in 1989.

Within the first month of its release, 23 million viewers tuned in, many of whom were appalled at how the system went awry.

Law schools are on the forefront of creating the next wave of criminal justice lawyers, who are being trained to be much more aware of how our society has rushed to judgment at times — in many cases against minorities. A growing number of states, for instance, are no longer using the death penalty. One concern is that innocent people could be put to death. More than 165 people on death row have been exonerated.

Duke University School of Law in Durham, N.C., which earned an A in our ranking of Top Schools for Criminal Law, boasts the Center for Criminal Justice and Professional Responsibility.

Duke Law was one of 17 schools to earn an A. Only two — LMU Loyola Law School which we profile in the previous story, and University of California, Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, got an A+. At UC Hastings, its Civil Justice Clinic has a clean slate program, which helps people who face challenges getting a job or federal benefits because of past convictions. A past conviction can have effects that last well after a person pays his or her debt to society.

Other schools have aggressive innocence projects as well. Duquesne University School of Law, which earned an A-, is the home of the Western Pennsylvania Innocence Project. This past year, with students from both Duquesne Law and University of Pittsburgh School of Law, the Innocence Project achieved exoneration for three people. The school complements this center with the Wrongful Convictions Clinic and the Duke Law Innocence Project.

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, 5% for a certificate and added value for other offerings.
TOP LAW SCHOOLS
Criminal Law

people accused and incarcerated for murders they did not commit.

These programs work not only to free the wrongly convicted but to also change laws to combat policies that lead to such convictions. For instance, prosecutors rely heavily on eyewitness testimony to get convictions. But that's shown to be unreliable in many cases. The California Innocence Coalition found that 66 wrongful convictions that were based on eyewitness misidentification.

While it may be common belief that this problem hits urban areas hardest, that's not necessarily the case. Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law looked to dispel that misconception last year. The Dallas school, which earned an A, hosted a national summit that looked at the challenges small-town America faces when it comes to criminal justice.

“Our focus has been historically on urban communities, on large cities with big systems, good technology — lots of things to count and measure and experiment with,” Pamela Metzger, director of SMU’s Deason Criminal Justice Reform Center, said at the time of the event. “What we’re doing unfortunately is leaving behind the country’s heartland.”

For instance, drug rehabilitation centers are scarce in rural America, so it’s harder to access treatment. In some small towns, court is held only a few times a month. So if you get arrested, you could spend weeks in jail before your hearing. You could lose your job in the meantime.

However, this is one specialty that extends beyond America’s courtrooms. As technology increases, so do the ways bad guys use it for criminal purposes. Albany Law School, which earned an A- in our ranking, has a course in cybercrime, to teach the next generation of lawyers how to combat criminals who use keyboards as their weapon of choice.
The art of the deal: Business Law

Our country is all about business. We seem to have a zillion of them, after all, crammed in malls and strip malls, in office towers, office parks and industrial parks and in garages and homes. Even NFL players are well aware that their game is not a game. When they get released — often because a younger player can be had cheaper — they grudgingly acknowledge: “It’s a business.”

That’s why business law is such a popular specialty. Business is a key part of this nation’s fabric, and lawyers are needed to help businesses grow and run smoothly and efficiently.

It’s important for schools to keep on top of this specialty, particularly because of how swiftly business laws and practices change.

American University Washington College
of Law formed an advisory council on business recently to assure that its business law program remains forward-looking and connected to major networks in private practice, the corporate world and government.

American University also started a new course called “Deals.”

“Students will learn how to document business deals and will get experience drafting transactional documents,” according to the course description. “The course will cover law, language, strategy, drafting skills, and in some sections may include negotiation.”

American University was one of 13 schools to get an A+ in our roundup of Top Schools for Business Law.

Many schools were honored for exceptional offerings in this area. Thirty-two schools earned an A grade, while another 41 earned an A-. That is more than any other specialty.

Many schools show innovation in this practice area. Georgetown University Law Center launched a new Business Law Scholars Program in 2016. It is designed to give students extensive practical experience to better prepare them for a career in corporate law, starting a business or becoming a partner in a law practice. Georgetown University got an A grade.

University of Denver Sturm College of law has a program, called the Pioneer Venture Group, which allows students to

---

**Business Law**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Western Reserve University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland-Marshall College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DePaul University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgetown University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hofstra University (Deane)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis &amp; Clark Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola Law School, Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola University Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marquette University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McGeorge School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell Hamline School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKU Chase College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMU Dedman School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Cincinnati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Colorado</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Houston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Miami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of San Diego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of St. Thomas - Mn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USC Gould School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Forest University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washburn University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne State University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
manage and operate a venture fund. Students in the group have the ability to invest up to $25,000 in companies that are in the early investment stage. They span across multiple industries including health care, technology, consumer goods, agriculture, and clean energy.

The school notes: “This is an incredible opportunity for students who are passionate about entrepreneurship and venture investing to manage a real portfolio of companies.” Denver earned an A+.

Many schools are tapping the nation’s growing entrepreneurial spirit. Seattle University School of Law offered the Summer Institute in Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, an expansion of the school’s popular entrepreneurship immersion course that included sessions on providing counsel to startups, serving as general counsel and current issues in real estate development. Next year, the institute will be open to students from other law schools. Seattle University, which earned an A, is based in a region that is bustling with big time businesses, from Microsoft to Amazon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albany Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Kent College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drexel University Kline School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elon University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fordham Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IU Bloomington Mauer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre Dame Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn State Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Louis University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffolk University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas at Little Rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Arkansas, Fayetteville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Hawaii I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Louisville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri - KC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Nebraska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New Hampshire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Oklahoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Oregon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willamette Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale Law School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"The difference between a good business lawyer and an excellent business lawyer is the willingness to immerse yourself in the business…"

Tom Welsh '89
Partner and business transactions and litigation attorney, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP

- Banking and Corporate Finance
- Bankruptcy Law
- Business and Corporate Litigation
- Commercial Law
- Corporate Law
- Corporate Securities Regulation
- International Business Law
- Negotiating Deals
- Regulatory Law
- Tax Law

McGeorge.edu/Admissions
916.739.7105

@McGeorgeLaw
@McGeorgeLaw
@ExperienceMcGeorge
Taxation
Beatle George Harrison once wrote a song called “Taxman.” Unlike many other Beatle songs, it is not a love song. But if you go into tax law and you figure out ways to help clients navigate the tax system or get the IRS off their backs you no doubt will be loved.

Chapman University Fowler School of Law earned an A in our analysis of Top Schools for Tax Law. The Orange, Calif., school is the only law school in the nation to offer both trial and appellate level tax clinic courses.

In the trial clinic, students represent clients facing IRS scrutiny, for instance. In the appellate clinic, students write briefs on tax cases that are unique and may not have legal precedent.

Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Institute of Technology received an A in our analysis. It has an offering called the Tax Practice, which serves people and businesses that can’t afford to pay for practicing attorneys. They’re charged a much lesser amount at the clinic, which is the only one of its kind operating at a law school.

“Our focus is on middle-class taxpayers and small business men and women who demand superior, responsive, personalized and aggressive representation,” the school notes on its website.

If you ever have done a tax return, you likely pulled out a few strands of hair. Tax is a complicated specialty, and getting more so. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, enacted in 2017, is 1,097 pages long.

For the poor, it’s particularly frustrating because they can’t afford tax attorneys. Many law schools try and fill that justice gap. University of Pittsburgh School of Law, which earned an A-, was one of the original 16 law schools in the country to start a low-income taxpayer clinic.

Since 2012 its tax clinic has enrolled 106 law students, who represented 479 clients. More than 130 of those cases were before the U.S. Tax Court, where they faced a variety of complicated tax issues. Through the work of the clinic, clients have recovered

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO tax clinic

Leadership Through Law

One of the most valuable lessons I learned in our first-year course: Professional Identity is that employers value competencies beyond legal skills. This knowledge allowed me to strengthen critical skills while developing mentoring relationships and volunteering in my community. I believe my experiences at Texas A&M will make me a more skilled, effective, and compassionate lawyer as I begin my practice in the corporate and finance sector.

“

Jordan Jensen, J.D. ‘19
Managing Editor, Journal of Property Law – Volume V
Student Attorney, Community Development Clinic
Global Program – International Trade & Finance, Jersey, UK
Teaching Assistant, Professional Identity – Professionalism & Leadership Program

SCHOOL OF LAW
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
LAW.TAMU.EDU

preLaw
more than $10 million in tax liabilities, penalties and interest.

It’s not just federal tax codes that are head-scratching. State codes are too. That’s why University of Baltimore School of Law, which received an A-, is starting a graduate-level course focusing on Maryland tax law.

The school’s blog notes: “While it might be expected that a state system would be just a smaller version of the federal tax system, the reality is that Maryland has a wide assortment of taxes — personal income tax, corporate income tax, pass-through entity tax, fiduciary tax, sales and use tax, real estate tax, personal property tax, admissions and amusement tax, etc.—that require know-how in order to properly assess.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tax Law</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A+</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola Law School, Los Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapman Fowler School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago-Kent College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fordham Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Washington University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Gate University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC Hastings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Missouri - KC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A-</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston College Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland-Marshall College of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis &amp; Clark Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyola University Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michigan State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell Hamline School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinnipiac University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMU Dedman School of Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Thomas University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Idaho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Memphis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of the District of Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villanova Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washburn University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a tax law program recognized as one of the best in the nation, St. Thomas University School of Law is a leader in graduating highly-trained practitioners in the field of tax law.

“Top Law School for Taxation Law”
- PreLaw Magazine, Fall 2019

**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI**
Successful, high-performing alumni hired at prestigious tax law firms and accepted into top tax LL.M. programs

**TAX CLINIC**
Our law students thrive through successful and practical real-world experiences

**CERTIFICATE IN TAX LAW**
Students align their learning within this specialized and complex field.

**VOLUNTEER INCOME TAX ASSISTANCE**
IRS-certified, law student volunteers provide free, tax-related services to low-income taxpayers throughout the South Florida community.

**A-RATING**
Rated nationally as a top law school for tax law by National Jurist
“I am at a standstill in my personal statement,” Lucy, a rising senior, emailed me. “Frankly, I can’t seem to really even get started. What are the components for a good personal statement? I could write about my summer legal internship, but that doesn’t seem original enough.”

I receive a lot of emails like Lucy’s. So as we enter fall, and personal statement writing season, here are a few tips:

The topic does not have to be unique. While you don’t want to sound trite, the reality is that there are limited topics for personal statements. It’s fine to write about a legal internship. It shows your interest in law school.

Chances are, an admissions officer has read multiple essays about whatever topic you choose. Your particular take on what you learned during your internship and what you experienced should make your essay unique, even if the topic isn’t. Remember to include details that made the experience memorable for you.

What’s more important is your voice and writing style. It should be written in the first person and reflect an experience you have had that ultimately led you to want to go to law school.

Whether it’s a legal internship, a course you took, an experience working in student government, volunteer work, nonprofit experience, study abroad, or whatever you choose to write about, as long as it is your personal experience, the topic should be fine. What you don’t want to do is write about someone else’s experience — parents, friends, etc. It should be reflective of you, and you should be the central character in the essay.

Stick to one topic. You can’t fit all of your activities, internships, study abroad and volunteer work into one essay, which is usually only about two pages long. That’s what your resume is for, and you will have a chance to describe other activities and jobs on your applications.

When applicants try to write about more than one topic or activity, it tends to sound disjointed and not in depth. If you can’t decide what to write about, do quick drafts on two different topics and see which one you like better.

Work on your conclusion. I often find that essays get stuck toward the end. Writers sometimes veer off into the land of legal clichés because they don’t know how to end the essay. Stick to talking about yourself and your main topic.

If you haven’t directly addressed why you want to go to law school, because you chose to write on topic not related to the law, the final paragraph is a nice opportunity to do so. For example, an applicant I know who wrote about studying Italian and living abroad concluded her essay with her desire to practice international law.

You should be able to use the same personal statement for most law school applications. While some schools will have word limits and some may not, and some schools may give direction while others will leave the topic open ended, a well written statement is about two pages long. That should be good for most of the law schools you apply to.

Many schools will have an optional diversity statement as a second essay, and some schools will have a shorter school-specific essay (why are you interested in our law school?), or other short supplemental essay.

Where possible, do the supplemental essays to show interest in the schools you are applying to. If it is a "why us" essay, for example, think about what you saw on the law school tour that especially interested you, whether it was a course, a clinic, an internship, a professor or the location of the school. If you did not get a chance to visit, look through their website to see what they offer that is of particular interest to you.

Now is a good time to start to brainstorm your personal statement, or at least think about a topic. That way, by the time you have your scores back, have your recommendations in, have your resume finished and are ready to complete your application, it will be done.
LEAD THE WAY

PRACTICE READY. PURPOSE DRIVEN.

100% BAR PASSAGE ON UNIFORM BAR EXAM
Class of 2018

92% EMPLOYED WITHIN 10 MONTHS OF GRADUATION
NALP Employment Report, Class of 2018

JD: 3-YEAR TRADITIONAL, PART TIME, HONORS | LL.M. | M.A. IN LAW | M.A. IN FINANCIAL PLANNING & LAW

Become a top-performing lawyer with a competitive edge and a principled foundation.
regent.edu/learnmore | 877.267.5072

The American Bar Association (ABA) fully approves the School of Law. LA01900629

Christian Leadership to Change the World
A legal education from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law opens doors to an unlimited number of career possibilities. Our strong legal writing program lays the foundation for students to gain the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities necessary to thrive in any area of the law. Simulation-based skills courses and opportunities to combine classroom teaching with field-placement projects gives students the experience and confidence necessary to excel from day one of their careers.

- **Gain substantive work experience** in the nation’s capital through the Washington, D.C. Summer Program
- **Take advantage** of our well-rounded judicial and public interest/governmental externship programs
- **Practice written and oral legal skills** on a national level through our highly successful Moot Court Program
- **Represent real clients** through the Civil Law, Criminal Defense, Criminal Prosecution, Entrepreneurial Business Law, Justice for Children, Legislation, and Mediation Clinics
- **Work alongside professionals** from both legal and non-legal backgrounds through a variety of simulations and workshops

Contact us: moritzlaw.osu.edu or lawadmit@osu.edu