Great law students do more than study. They speak up for the voiceless, protect the innocent, push their school’s to do more, and serve the needy.

We profile 20 who stood out the most in the past year, hailing from Georgia State, Case Western, Penn State Dickinson, Hawaii, Southwestern, Seattle U., Loyola, Los Angeles, Idaho, Virginia, Baylor, Valparaiso, Chicago-Kent, Southern Illinois, Drake, Georgia, Wake Forest, Cardozo, NYLS, West Virginia and UDC.

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The John Marshall Law School, the nation’s third-oldest stand-alone law school, is in talks to merge with the University of Illinois at Chicago. If approved, John Marshall would become the first public law school in Chicago, and the fourth in the state.

“We are incredibly excited about the possibility to be Chicago’s public law schools,” said Darby Dickerson, dean at John Marshall. “This is a great match of schools in terms of our mission, our students and our vision for the future.”

The law school and University of Illinois at Chicago have been discussing a possible merger for the past 16 months and recently completed a financial assessment.

Susan Poser, who took over as provost of UIC in 2016, was previously dean of University of Nebraska College of Law.

University of Illinois at Chicago is one of 115 R1 universities, as classified by Indiana University Bloomington Center for Postsecondary Research. All but 32 of those universities have a law school, and John Marshall is the only stand-alone law school in the Chicago region.

John Marshall Law School was founded in 1899 and has been accredited by the American Bar Association since 1951.

A merger could open up new opportunities for John Marshall law students, as well as the hope for more moderate tuition.

Before a merger can take place, John Marshall and UIC will need approval from the UIC Board of Trustees and The John Marshall Law School Board of Trustees. Dickerson said the schools hopes to make presentations this spring.

It would also need degree approval from the Illinois Board of Education, and approval from the American Bar Association and the Higher Learning Commission, which serves as the regional accreditor for both UIC and the law school. Legislative approval is not required. The school hopes to obtain all approvals within 18 months.

This would not be the first time an independent private law school merged with a public institution.

Detroit College of Law, a private stand-alone school, affiliated with Michigan State University in 1995 and moved to East Lansing two years later. The Dickinson School of Law merged with Penn State University in 2000.

Franklin Pierce Law Center affiliated with University of New Hampshire in 2010. Also in 2010, the University of Massachusetts acquired Southern New England School of Law, a small private school that had not been accredited by the ABA. It changed its name to University of Massachusetts School of Law Dartmouth. Other recent mergers include Texas A&M University acquiring Texas Wesleyan University School of Law in 2012. Thomas Cooley Law School announced an affiliation with Western Michigan University in 2014.

Class of 2017 contributed $81M

More than 18,000 law students from the Class of 2017 at 94 schools reported 3.39 million hours in legal services as part of their legal education, according to The Association of American Law Schools second annual report on the value of pro bono services.

That’s 184 hours per student and equates to $81.8 million in value.

And that’s only counting numbers from 53 percent of law schools.

“The aspiration of ‘equal justice under law’ is one of our country’s greatest values and law students across the nation are working toward this ideal while laying the foundations for success in their future careers,” said Wendy Perdue, AALS president and dean of University of Richmond School of Law.

In the survey, 87 schools reported that 50,873 law students in all class years contributed 3.8 million hours in legal services during the academic year 2016-2017. This is an average of approximately 74.9 hours per student.

Law students contributed legal services through externships at legal aid and community organizations, law school clinics and student led projects. The report did not track hours contributed by students participating in law school master’s degree programs such as an LL.M.
Who will merge next?

We take a look at the nation’s remaining stand-alone law schools and the universities they are most likely to merge with:

Princeton University is one of three Ivy League schools without a law school. Both New York Law School, the nation’s oldest stand-alone law school, and Brooklyn Law School are a little more than 50 miles away. Stony Brook University, 57 miles away, is another possible partner.

Vermont Law School is only 25 miles from Dartmouth University. University of Vermont is another possible partner. It is 75 miles away.

Brown University in Providence, R.I. is the third Ivy League university without a law school. New England Law Boston is 50 miles north of Brown. New England could also partner with Tufts University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology or Brandeis University, all located in the Boston region.

South Texas College of Law Houston is three miles from Rice University.

In California, California Institute of Technology in Pasadena is only 13 miles from Southwestern Law School. University of California San Diego is 15 miles north of both Thomas Jefferson School of Law and California Western School of Law, which previously discussed a possible merger with UCSD. University of California Riverside is 45 miles from Western State College of Law, a for-profit school, in Fullerton, Calif.

Other for-profit stand-alone schools include, Atlanta’s John Marshall Law School, which is near Georgia Tech, Charleston School of Law, which is 240 miles from Clemson University, and Florida Coastal School of Law, 134 miles from University of Central Florida.

While there is no research university near Arizona Summit Law School in Phoenix, the school has an affiliation with Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla.

ABA warns two more schools

The American Bar Association warned two more law schools in January that they were not in compliance with accreditation standards.

Arizona Summit Law School, which was already on probation, and North Carolina Central University School of Law both received letters from the ABA directing them to submit reports and appear before the ABA’s accreditation committee in the coming year.

Arizona Summit is said to be out of compliance with standards relating to financial stability. The ABA found Arizona Summit to be noncompliant with Standard 202(a), which mandates that an accredited law school’s current and anticipated financial resources must be sufficient for the school to operate in compliance with other ABA standards and carry out its educational programming.

Arizona Summit must appear before the ABA’s accreditation committee at its March meeting. The law school is currently working towards compliance.

“Last week, we completed a second multi-million dollar capital raise to solidify the school’s financial position,” Donald Lively, president of Arizona Summit, told The ABA Journal. “We also have reduced cost structure commensurate with plans to maintain a substantially downsized school. Shortly, we will be notifying the ABA of these developments with an updated report.”

In March 2017, the ABA’s Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar placed Arizona Summit on probation for failing to meet a number of accreditation standards, including poor bar passage rates.

The ABA also found North Carolina Central University School of Law to be out of compliance with Standard 501(b) which states that a law school should only admit applicants who appear capable of completing the J.D. program and passing the bar exam. The law school was also found to be in violation of the Interpretation 501-1, which lists factors to consider when determining compliance, including admission credentials, attrition rates and bar passage rates.

According to the NCCU School of Law’s most recent Standard 509 Information Report, the school’s median LSAT score is 145 and its median undergraduate GPA is 3.22. Fifty-six percent of the school’s first-time test takers passed the July 2017 North Carolina Bar Exam.

Upcoming Deadlines for summer programs

| March 1  | Temple University, Rome, Italy | International and comparative law |
| March 9  | Seattle University, Madrid, Spain |
| March 31 | American University, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, UK | Comparative Law |
| April 1  | Widener University, Wilmington, Del. | Anti-Corruption Law; Corporate Law; Environmental Human Rights; Human Dignity Rights; International Money Laundering; U.S. Constitutional Law; U.S. Legal System |
| April 15 | DePaul University, Madrid, Spain | European Human Rights, Business |
| April 30 | Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, Cleveland, Ohio | Space Law |
| April 30 | Widener University, Venice, Italy | Comparative Corporate and Business Law |
| May 1    | American University, Washington, D.C. | Human Rights; Litigation Skills Summer Institute |
| May 1    | DePaul University, Costa Rica | Human Rights Law |
| May 1    | DePaul University, Berlin, Germany | Human Rights Law |
| May 22   | Southwestern Law School, Los Angeles | Entertainment & Sports Law |
| May 30   | American University, Washington, D.C. | International Commercial Arbitration |
| Rolling  | American University, Washington, D.C. | Health Law & Policy |
| Seattle University, Anchorage, Alaska | Law in Alaska |
| Seattle University, Seattle, Wash. | Legal Issues in Tech and Business |
| Southwestern Law School, London | Entertainment & Media Law |

For details on any of these programs, visit www.NationalJurist.com

Corrections

In the Winter 2018 issue we included a chart on page 5 with several errors.

First, we used an incorrect term to describe the ABA’s action against the five schools in the chart. The schools received letters of noncompliance, and not a formal censure.

Second, the University of Buffalo School of Law demonstrated it was in compliance prior to publication.

Third, Western Michigan University Cooley Law School sued the ABA in regards to its letter prior to publication, and the letter was not publicly displayed.

Fourth, we inadvertently included the wrong photo for Atlanta’s John Marshall. The John Marshall Law School is not affiliated with Atlanta’s John Marshall and has never been censured by the ABA.

Also in the Winter 2018 issue in the story on tuition discounts at private law schools, Vermont Law School’s data was incorrect. The school reported an incorrect figure to the ABA, which we used to estimate its tuition discount. The school’s average discount is much lower than we reported.

We deeply regret these errors.
UBuffalo law students provide disaster relief in Puerto Rico

Jonathan Reyes-Colon left Puerto Rico, to study law at the University at Buffalo School of Law. Before Hurricane Maria, Reyes-Colon told the New York Law Journal that his two worlds “didn’t really overlap in any significant way.” But that changed when he was selected as one of 10 students to participate in the law school’s Puerto Rico Recovery Assistance Legal Clinic.

Students made a 10-day trip to Puerto Rico to provide legal assistance under supervising attorneys. Reyes-Colon, who was already there visiting family, prepared for his classmates’ arrival.

“My feelings and my state of mind has gone from despair and sadness to a sense of hope and purpose,” Reyes-Colon wrote. “I have met wonderful people who have looked at my country as I look at it, with the same kindness, the same heart, the same willingness not only to help but to tell the world about who we are, Puerto Ricans.”

Harvard Law students use AI to change contract negotiation prep work

Four Harvard Law students – Memme Onwudiwe, Jacob Sussman, Jerry Ting and Riley Hawkins – created a search engine called Evisort that uses cloud storage and artificial intelligence to change the way lawyers handle contracts and transactional work.

It’s like “Google for legal contracts,” said Ting, Evisort’s CEO. The program converts scanned documents to searchable text. Using artificial intelligence, Evisort then sorts through all of a firm’s contracts, extracting key data such as party names, dates and size of the deal. The software allows lawyers to quickly sort through thousands of contracts and other documents to gather information for transactional work, potentially saving both time and money.
How to answer really tough interview questions

BY HILLARY MANTIS

You have checked your resume over twice. You have lined up all your references. You have re-familiarized yourself with that paper you wrote when you were a 1L that’s now listed on your resume, along with every summer job you’ve had since high school.

You are ready for your next interview . . . or are you?

What if they ask those vague questions that you can’t really prepare for, such as: “Tell me about yourself?” How are you supposed to answer that question?

While you don’t want canned answers for most of your interview questions, you do want to have a plan for these types of questions. If you have an interview coming up, here are some tips to help you answer the really tough questions.

1 Tell me about yourself.

What do they want to know about you?

Do they want to know where you grew up and where you are going over Christmas break? Probably not. What they are looking for is an overview of your work history, especially as it relates to the job at hand.

You may want to start with when and why you decided to go to law school, then summarize the internships and law-related jobs you’ve had. Give an example from each experience that shows how you accomplished or initiated something positive. Bring the interviewer to the present, and tell them why you are now applying for this specific position. Hopefully your summary of past employment will fit into your current goals. If not, you can explain why you are making a switch. Also, give a brief history of your college and law school experiences. Highlight academic honors and courses you have taken that relate to this job.

Be prepared for interruptions. You may have to adjust the story as you go. But no matter what, try to work in some of your accomplishments, whether they are job related or academic.

2 Where do you see yourself in five years?

You may not know where you want to be in one year, much less five, but you probably have some idea of your long-term goals.

The key to this question is to have some goals that hopefully fit in with the employer’s goals. You would be surprised how many students I’ve worked with have given answers to this question that were completely unrelated to the employer’s practice area or location.

Employers do not need to know everything about you, but they do want to hear that you are committed to the type of law that they practice, and hopefully to the geographic location they are in. If they hire you and train you, they want to know that you are as invested in them as they are in you.

3 What are your weaknesses?

I hate being asked this question, and I’m guessing you do too. What can you say that does not sound totally phony and artificial?

The general theory is that you should name a weakness that does not relate to the job, or one that you have overcome or improved upon. I prefer the latter — a weakness that you have learned to overcome or have substantially improved upon.

Take public speaking, for example. Many people hate public speaking. Some would rather have a root canal than give a speech in front of a large audience. But in school, you are forced to answer questions in class, participate in moot court and develop confidence in your thoughts and legal arguments. If you can give an example of how you have improved, that would be an excellent way to answer the question. You could say your team placed first in mock trial, you got an “A” in moot court, or your grades went up because of class participation. Public speaking is just one example. Think of other skills you have improved during college and law school.

These are not questions to be afraid of. They are really opportunities. They give you a chance to tell interviewers things they would not typically ask you about if they were just going from your resume.

Hillary Mantis consults with pre-law students, law students and lawyers. She is the author of career books, including “Alternative Careers for Lawyers,” and is director of the pre-law program at Fordham University. You can reach her at altcareer@aol.com.
Barrister’s Ball etiquette

Do you really need advice on how to party? Yes, when the celebration is tied into your future career.

BY MIKE STETZ

Law school students not only need to learn the ins and outs of the law. They also need to learn the ins and outs of partying.

Well, at least some do, it appears.

Every year, most student bar associations throw a Barristers’ Ball, which is sort of like a prom for law students. It’s a chance to hang out with your peers and your professors in a semi-formal atmosphere.

Normally, not surprisingly, there is drinking involved. Sometimes, there is too much drinking involved. Open bars are not out of the ordinary.

The evidence? This posting on the PrawfsBlawg website from a professor about a Barrister Ball’s evening:

“Many years ago, when teaching at a different law school, I attended that school’s incarnation of this event. At 7 p.m., I went to the ladies’ room and a female student was passed out cold on the bathroom floor. Worse, three male students were in the ladies’ room attempting to revive her. They eventually just carried her out. Call me old-fashioned, but I am not anxious to repeat this experience.”

OK, rule No. 1: Don’t do what that female law school student did.

Rule No. 2: Especially don’t do it as early as 7.

Here’s another post by another professor:

“I go to these things sometimes because students really do like to see profs there. But, I try to leave before the tipping point where enough alcohol has been consumed that the students become either overly affectionate toward me or overly honest. Both are uncomfortable for me and cause subsequent remorse and regret for the student in question. So, I put in an appearance and interact with the students but try to leave well before that inevitable time when the party starts to take that kind of turn.”

Rule No. 3: Don’t get affectionate with a professor, no matter how smart/good-looking/funny/charming he or she is. And let’s be frank, it’s not as if they’re rich; they’re law school professors.

Rule No. 4: Don’t spill your guts. Don’t say: “Taking that Adderall really helped me cram for Contracts. That stuff works miracles.”

Students should indeed be mindful of their behavior at such events, law school experts say. If you blow it, it can carry through your law school career — and perhaps further.

“It’s crucial. Given the increased use of social media, those casual snapshots live forever,” said Nancy Rapoport, who co-wrote “Law School Survival Manual: From LSAT to Bar Exam.” “And many state bars actually mine photos for the character and fitness part of admission. Basically, everyone (students and professors) should remember that the internet is the permanent record about which our parents and teachers warned us.”

One word: Yikes!

“I didn’t know this lesson when I was in law school,” she said. “But the best way that I’ve found for combating social anxiety is to focus entirely on the other people at the event. Ask them questions, get to know them, make sure that they feel comfortable. If you’re not focusing on yourself and your discomfort, social anxiety lessens.”

Rule No. 5: Do the above.

Yes, there can be considerable angst over the event. Students even ask what’s the right thing to wear via Reddit.

One response: “I’d go with your gray suit, a white shirt, a skinny black tie and your black shoes. When I was at law school, only the girls cared about what they were wearing, and after the first five drinks, no one cared about anything much.”

Still another: “Most of all, have fun. If you don’t want a pocket square, you don’t need one, but I also wouldn’t worry about being too formal either. They’re all students looking to have a good time, so I wouldn’t take it too seriously. I’ll bet the women’s bathroom will have at least one sink with vomit in it at the end of the night.”
Rule No. 6: Don’t over-think the wardrobe.

Rule No. 7: Avoid women’s restroom at end of evening.

At Tulane University Law School, the Barristers’ Ball was once held at the Louisiana Children’s Museum. A tribute to Mr. Rogers of “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood” was on display. A student apparently stole one of the shoes actually worn by Mr. Rogers. The school freaked. The shoe was returned soon after.

Rule No. 8: Don’t steal Mr. Rogers’ shoe, or any items at the Barristers’ Ball venue.

Not every law school has had problems with its Barristers’ Ball. At California Western School of Law in San Diego, for instance, the open bar is only open for two non-consecutive hours.

“So I think that helps prevent guests from drinking too much too fast,” said Valerie Gurrola, a third-year who’s the Student Bar Association vice president and was in charge of this year’s ball. She served on the committee for the two previous ones, so she’s something of an expert on the subject.

The annual ball is not the kind of event where students feel an urge to get blotto, she said. If anything, the opposite is true.

“The Barristers’ Ball is a very classy event, and nobody wants to make a fool of themselves and have their peers and professors see or hear about it,” she said. “Students should always be mindful of their reputations, regardless of where they are.”

This is particularly true of first-year students, she added. They should take a cautious approach because they don’t really know what to expect, and take their cues from others.

“As for behaving appropriately, we’ve never had issues where students get out of hand,” she said. “Everyone is professional and a responsible adult.”

Indeed, it’s all about “dancing, eating and socializing among themselves and their significant others,” she said. “Everyone is dressed up — feeling and looking great — and I think that gives them a sense of freedom and youth because everyone is there for the same reason: to have fun.”

Law school students need to maintain a level of professionalism at other events, as well. Suppose you’re clerking at a law firm and it’s holding a summer barbecue. The last thing you want to do is knock back too many cold ones or wear cut-off jeans and a T-shirt that says: “One Tequila, Two Tequila, Three Tequila, Floor.”

Rule No. 9: At summer barbecues, wear casual clothes, but make sure they’ve got one of those alligators stitched on them.

Rule No. 10: If you’re offered a burger and you’re a vegan, don’t go on a rant about animal rights and how you donate to PETA and how meat-eaters are destroying the planet. That’s a downer. Just politely decline and go for the salad.

Oh, and have a ball at the ball . . .

“Students should always be mindful of their reputations, regardless of where they are.”

—Valerie Gurrola, 3L, California Western School of Law
How law students are improving access to justice

Access-to-justice issues are dominating discussions across the legal profession. Here is how law schools, students and graduates are responding.

BY TYLER ROBERTS

Access to justice can be as simple as access to a printer. Literally. That is what Brigham Young University - J. Reuben Clark Law School student Erika Nash learned while working on SoloSuit, an online document-assembly tool that helps low-income defendants answer summonses and complaints in debt-collection cases.

“It is one thing to theorize about the law, but it is an entirely different thing to get down in the weeds and talk to individuals actually impacted by it, and understand how you can make things easier for them,” Nash said.

In Utah, where Brigham Young University is located, nearly 98 percent of defendants in 67,000 plus debt-collection cases lacked legal representation in 2015.

In many cases, debtors fail to answer the complaint and summons, resulting in a default judgment. The costs pile up. What starts out as a relatively small debt, $100 or so, can quickly grow to $1,000 or more when court fees and attorney fees are added.

To address this problem, Nash and other students participating in BYU’s LawX program created SoloSuit, a free online application that automatically generates an answer to a summons and complaint. The program coaches users through every step of the process, resulting in an error-free, ready-to-file legal document.

Justice remains somewhat elusive, however. Under Utah law, only licensed attorneys are allowed to e-file, so SoloSuit users have to print out and deliver their completed answers. Most SoloSuit users only have access to the internet through smartphones and do not have printers – a poignant example of how low-income individuals can be disadvantaged when facing legal issues.

“I had no idea how difficult this could be for people,” Nash said.

The situation in Utah is just one example of what is known as the access-to-justice gap – the difference between low-income individuals’ need for legal representation and the resources available to meet that need.

According to a report by Legal Services Corp. (LSC), a federally funded nonprofit organization, seven out of 10 individuals eligible for legal aid services faced a civil legal problem last year. In nearly nine out of 10 instances, these individuals had to face the judicial system without the help of a lawyer.

Trial judges reported that many self-represented litigants failed to present necessary evidence, committed procedural errors and failed to present enforceable orders to the court, said Martha Minow, former dean of Harvard Law School and vice chair of LSC. These individuals missed out on disability benefits, lost custody of their children or were evicted from their homes.

“The law does not enforce itself. People need lawyers to help,” Minow said. “When people can access the legal system, it can be transformative for them and for their families.”

Overall, the U.S. ranks 94th out of 113 countries when it comes to accessibility and affordability of civil justice, according to the World Justice Project’s 2016 Rule of Law Index.

The access-to-justice gap is perpetuated by the high cost of legal representation, limited legal aid resources and complex legal processes. For many low-income
individuals, attorney fees are simply too high. Legal aid organizations do exist, but many of them are operating at or above capacity and are unable to take on more cases. Court proceedings are complex and too difficult for laymen to navigate.

Sometimes the access-to-justice problem boils down to non-legal issues that many take for granted. A defendant in a lawsuit may be able to call a legal aid clinic, but he or she may not have enough minutes on a limited cell phone plan to hold for 20 minutes. Legal aid clinics may not be accessible by public transportation. Or, as the students at BYU Law learned, printer access and the cost of postage may stand in the way.

Awareness of the access-to-justice gap is growing, but so are the underlying problems. In 2017, President Trump proposed a budget that would eliminate funding for LSC, which is the single largest funder of civil legal aid in the United States. The American Bar Association issued a statement declaring that it was outraged by the proposal.

"LSC provides civil legal aid to people who desperately need help to navigate the legal process," the statement said. "Without this assistance, courthouse doors will slam in the faces of millions of Americans, denying them equal access to justice."

A letter signed by leaders of more than 150 U.S. law firms stated:

"Eliminating the Legal Services Corp. will not only imperil the ability of civil legal aid organizations to serve Americans in need, it will also vastly diminish the private bar's capacity to help these individuals. The pro bono activity facilitated by LSC funding is exactly the kind of public-private partnership the government should encourage, not eliminate."

The problem is overwhelming. And while there is consensus that major reform is needed, there is no universal plan for neling student resources to overburdened organizations, but a select few are focusing on innovative solutions such as post-graduate accelerator programs, public service employment pipelines and design-thinking courses meant to challenge and reimagine complex legal processes.

Eric Mitnick, dean of University of Massachusetts School of Law Dartmouth, said access to justice is also an issue for some middle-income families who do not qualify for free legal services but are, nevertheless, priced out of the legal market.

In Massachusetts, 86 percent of people in family court do not have a lawyer, and the percentage for housing court is even higher, he said. To serve these populations, University of Massachusetts created a post-graduate incubator called Justice Bridge, which is designed to support new lawyers as they set up law firms that serve clients of modest needs.

University of Massachusetts, which received full ABA accreditation in December 2016, has plugged its student body into various nonprofits, clinics and pro bono programs in the surrounding community. All law students must complete at least 30 hours of pro bono service in order to graduate. In the school’s short history, students have completed more than 100,000 hours of pro bono service.

Connecting law students and graduates with low-income clients is critical to closing the access-to-justice gap, but it is only part of the equation. Legal aid organizations and “low-bono” law firms still ache for funding and human resources to keep the wheels turning. A scalable solution is needed, said Martin Pritikin, dean of Concord Law School, an online law school based in Los Angeles.

“There may be a shortage of legal jobs, but there is not a shortage of legal work,” Pritikin said. “We need to find ways to connect law graduates to the people in need of legal representation.”

Matthew Stubenberg, creator of MDExpungement, is doing just that. As IT director of Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, Stubenberg creates in-house, scalable technology solutions for underfunded legal aid and criminal justice programs.

“Even with nonprofit attorneys, we can only reach 20 percent of people who are in need of legal representation,” Stubenberg said. “It is unlikely that nonprofit lawyers

UMass Dartmouth law students are committed to finding ways to expand access to justice. Nearly one-third of 2016 graduates secured permanent full-time government or public interest-related jobs.

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“Law students have power here. Law students can ask firms about pro bono opportunities and make them compete. That really does change behavior.”
—Martha Minow, former dean of Harvard Law School and vice chair of LSC

will ever get five times more funding. The only way to reach those people is through technology.”

Using MDExpungement, clients enter their case number into an online user interface. A computer program pulls the relevant case file and determines whether the client’s case is expungable. If it is expungable, MDExpungement automatically populates court forms using information pulled from the public record. All the client has to do is print the form and file it.

Dorna Moini, a former Big Law associate, created a similar document-assembly application called HelpSelf Legal, which helps low-income individuals file for domestic violence restraining orders.

“There are a lot of ways in which the technology we use to help larger companies and wealthy individuals could be used to help low-income and moderate-income individuals who do not have enough money to hire a lawyer,” Moini said. “The reality is that there are not enough pro bono attorneys or affordable attorneys, and affordable legal aid is not available to most of America, particularly in rural areas.”

Online applications are a promising step toward closing the access-to-justice gap. But it is going to take continued commitment from law clinics, community partnerships and firm-sponsored pro bono programs to ensure equal justice for all. And it can start with law students, Minow said.

“Law students have power here,” she said. “Law students can ask firms about pro bono opportunities and make them compete. That really does change behavior. To have big firms compete to promote day-to-day pro bono services would be a victory.”

Students at Brigham Young University’s LawX are working to overcome the printer issue and are advocating for courts to allow pro se defendants to e-file their answers. Meanwhile, LawX is also moving on to address other access-to-justice issues.

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Art Law Centre of the University of Geneva:
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Deadline to Apply: April 15
www.law.miami.edu/geneva2018
Diversity has long been a buzzword in education. Just check out most law school websites. Chances are you’ll see people of color portrayed in the photos that tout campus life.

But diversity is not just about appearances. Law schools aim for diversity in order to prepare students to meet the needs of our diverse citizenry. And many law schools have gone beyond the talk to make diversity a point of action.

They have programs geared for minorities, designed to help transform students into confident, passionate, skilled attorneys. They provide minorities with mentors, additional academic support and student organizations. Perhaps most important, they walk the walk, employing minorities as law professors and seeking diversity in their student bodies.

PreLaw magazine looked at the number of minority students, the number of minority faculty and the services available to minority students to determine the best law schools for Asians, African-Americans and Hispanics.

In determining our ranking, we gave the most weight to the percentage of minority students, which counted for 50 percent of the score. This was followed by the number of minority faculty and student services, which each counted for 25 percent. We used data from the American Bar Association for the number of students and faculty, and we collected data from the schools themselves for student services. The ABA does not break out faculty by race but provides the number of minorities overall.

Student services includes bar exam prep programs, student support groups, mentoring programs, employment workshops and minority affairs offices.

The results, in some respects, are not that surprising. For example, West Coast law schools dominate the list of best schools for Asians. In fact, 12 of California’s 16 law schools place in the top 20.

California’s schools also do well in the list of best schools for Hispanics, with eight placing in the top 20. Florida, with five schools, and Texas, with four schools, follow. All three states have large Hispanic populations.

And the law schools at historically black colleges take the top five spots in our list of best schools for African-Americans.

Some newer law schools that consider diversity to be part of their mission also made the lists. They include Florida Coastal School of Law and University of North Texas at Dallas College of Law, which placed in the top 20 for both Hispanics and African-Americans. UNT Dallas was one of 16 schools to place in the top 20 for more than one group.

We identify the best schools for Asians, Hispanics and African-Americans based on student enrollment, faculty and student services. 

BY MIKE STETZ

Best law schools for diversity
Only three law schools placed in the top 20 for all three races: Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles; American University Washington College of Law in Washington, D.C.; and City University of New York School of Law in Long Island City, N.Y.

Best Schools for African-Americans
Howard University School of Law has long been known for its role in educating African-Americans to become lawyers. It is a mission that remains extremely vital, given that the legal profession continues to be predominately white. One study found that 81 percent of the nation’s lawyers are white. In Big Law, only 3 percent of the lawyers are black.

Howard University School of Law continues to help integrate the profession, as well as produce lawyers who fight to create a better, more equal society.

“For almost 150 years now, the goal of Howard University School of Law has been to provide outstanding legal education to African-American students and train them to be leaders in the legal profession,” said Dean Danielle Holley-Walker. “Our belief and mission is that lawyers should be leaders who change their communities for the better through a deep commitment to justice and equality for all people.”

That commitment to social justice is one of the reasons students choose Howard, she said. However, they also come to the school because “it’s like family,” she added.

“It’s a place that stays with you, and our alumni help each other and encourage each other to grow and advance in their careers. It is a truly unique and inspiring learning space,” she said.

Diversity is not just a numbers game. It’s a necessity for the legal profession, she said.

“Our world is diverse, and the legal profession should reflect the reality of our country and the global community,” Holley-Walker said. “That means educating and producing lawyers of all different racial backgrounds, religions and sexual orientations. If we are going to serve clients who are, by nature, diverse and provide legal services to the most marginalized communities, we must have lawyers who come from every part of our society.”

Best Schools for Hispanics
As The University of New Mexico School of Law notes, it is located in a state that’s “inherently rich in diversity.” And it makes every effort, it says, to reflect that diversity.

“We give great consideration to diversity of all types with respect to our law school culture, and this is reflected in our student recruitment, our current student body and across the composition of our administration, staff and faculty.”

The school is aggressive when it comes to this mission. It has increased its pipeline initiatives with grade schools through high schools across the state, for instance. The New Mexico Hispanic Bar Association opens the pipeline to law school by holding a summer camp at the law school for a diverse group of middle-school students.

That program is a collaboration between the school’s College Enrichment & Outreach Programs, the law school and the Summer Policy Academy for Native American Leadership.

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“These efforts also ensure that we can play an important role in reaching not only future Hispanic applicants earlier, but those of all racial and ethnic backgrounds,” it notes.

The reason for such efforts is simple. “We have seen the cultural, ethnic and experiential diversity – to name only a few examples of diversity here – strength-
en our people, curriculum, approaches and the skill-sets and mind-sets our graduates are forming and bringing with them into the profession,” the school said.

Best Schools for Asians
At University of Hawaii at Manoa – William S. Richardson School of Law, diversity is hardly new, notes Dean Aviam Soifer. Because of its location, diversity has always been a part of the school’s DNA. “Diversity is not simply recognized, it’s celebrated,” Soifer said.

Many Asian students gravitate toward University of Hawaii because of that diversity, as well as its curriculum, which includes one of the nation’s most robust Asian law programs, he said. Its Pacific-Asian Legal Studies Program includes courses in Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Filipino law. This can be extremely helpful as globalization continues to bring much Asian-related work to U.S. law firms, Soifer said. One member of the faculty is professor Tae-Ung Baik, who served six years in a South Korean prison for leading what the South Korean government called an anti-state organization. Originally sentenced to life imprisonment, he was released after pressure came from Amnesty International and other organizations. That kind of faculty diversity is rare to say the least, Soifer said.

In addition to career enrichment, students leave the small school “culturally enhanced,” he said. Indeed, that immersion goes beyond the school’s walls. On the streets near the campus, one sees no majority population, Soifer said. Learning in such an environment “helps you to become confident about who you are,” he said.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>University of New Mexico</th>
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<tr>
<td>UC Irvine</td>
<td>22.8</td>
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<td>UC Davis</td>
<td>17.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUNY School of Law</td>
<td>12.0</td>
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<td>UC Hastings</td>
<td>16.1</td>
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<td>Santa Clara University</td>
<td>20.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loyola Law School, Los Angeles</td>
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<td>Golden Gate U.</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>22.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Univ. of San Francisco</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>27.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southwestern Law</td>
<td>9.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western State College</td>
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<td>George Mason U.</td>
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<td>USC Gould</td>
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<tr>
<td>American University</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCLA Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rutgers University</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Marshall Law</td>
<td>8.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seattle University</td>
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<td>Stanford University</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Houston</td>
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University of Hawaii has a long history of boasting a diverse student body and faculty. And it’s a point of pride that continues to this day.
More options

Whether you are looking to take a summer course, pursue a graduate degree or find a class not offered at your school, distance education may be the answer.

BY MIKE STETZ

If you take a remote externship through Mississippi College School of Law, you still have to go to a weekly class — even if your externship is really remote, such as in another state.

The good news is that you don’t have to worry about making lengthy commutes to the Jackson, Miss., campus. All you have to do is power up your laptop and join in online.

The online component increases students’ options, said Phillip McIntosh, associate dean for academic affairs at Mississippi College. This way, students can go anywhere they please to do externships, he said.

McIntosh teaches one class during intersession in which about half of the students are elsewhere and take the class online. During the regular semester, it’s normally only a few who do so. But having the option is very popular.

Technology is making a significant difference in legal education, with more law schools offering more options to students. Most law schools offer online courses, some offer summer or intercession programs, and 43 law schools offer an LL.M. degree online.

But while distance education continues to grow in popularity, the American Bar Association (ABA) limits how many credits a J.D. candidate can take online. At most law schools, a student can take only 15 hours of distance learning and can only do so after completing 28 hours of regular classroom time. That’s less than 20 percent of the credits needed for a J.D.

Three law schools have ABA variances that allow their students to take a larger percentage of their classes online.

Mitchell Hamline School of Law was granted the first variance and started its distance learning program in January 2015. It brings students to campus for one week at the start of each semester and compresses simulation training and other hands-on skills into a 56-hour marathon. The students then take classes online for the rest of the semester.

Loyola University Chicago School of Law offers a part-time, hybrid program in which students attend classes on campus every other weekend. During the week, they take classes online. This means about one-third of their time is online.

The third school is Southwestern Law

Distance Education LL.M.s

Graduate law programs for U.S. lawyers

Agricultural & Food Law
Michigan State University
University of Arkansas
Vermont Law School

Business
Boston University
Emory University
Loyola University Chicago
University of Alabama

Compliance
Seton Hall University (Financial Services Compliance)
University of St. Thomas (Organizational Ethics and Compliance)
Widener University Delaware (Higher Education Compliance)
Widener University Delaware (Corporate Law Regulatory Analysis & Compliance)

Corporate Law & Finance
WMU - Cooley Law School

Criminal
University of New Hampshire

Economics
George Mason University (Global Antitrust Law & Economics)
Loyola University Chicago (Global Competition Law)
University of Arizona (International Economic Law and Policy)

Elder Law
Stetson University
Western New England University

Employee Benefits
John Marshall Law School

Employment Law
Atlanta’s John Marshall

Energy
Vermont Law School

Continued on page 19
School, which was granted a variance in the fall to run a program similar to Mitchell Hamline’s. It hopes to launch the program in January 2019.

The ABA recently discussed doubling the number of allowable online hours to 30. But the process is moving slowly. The Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar is expected to seek comment shortly. However, it could take several months before a decision is made.

Many observers feel the ABA will become more lenient if a high percentage of Mitchell Hamline’s first hybrid class passes the bar exam. The school’s hybrid program recently graduated 16 students, most of whom were expected to take the bar exam in February.

“The bellwether will be bar-pass rates for Mitchell Hamline’s online students,” said Ken Randall, CEO and president of iLaw Ventures and a former chair of the ABA’s Technology Committee. “I think we will see them perform equally as well. That is what we see in other disciplines and licensing exams.”

Cristina Buskohl, one of those graduates, is currently studying for the exam. She is a paralegal at a law firm and hopes to become an attorney at the same firm after she passes the bar.

“I am hopeful that if there are good pass rates, then other schools will consider doing this too. A lot of people have careers and families to take care of, and excluding those people from the profession is a detriment to the profession.”

— Cristina Buskohl, Mitchell Hamline’s first hybrid class graduate

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The ABA is cautious about online offerings for a number reasons, said William Adams Jr., deputy managing director of the ABA’s Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, who participated in a panel discussion on distance learning at the Association of American Law Schools’ annual meeting in January.

For one, not everyone in the ABA is onboard with this new technology and what it may portend.

“There are people who worry about a lack of bonding [between students and professors],” he said.

Assessment is also an issue. How good are these programs? How do you judge their worthiness?

But the ABA is more open with graduate law programs and programs for non-
Distance Education LL.M.s (continued from page 17)

Graduate law programs for U.S. lawyers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Florida State University</th>
<th>Vermont Law School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Estate Planning</td>
<td>John Marshall Law School</td>
<td>Western New England University</td>
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<td>Forensic Justice</td>
<td>West Virginia University</td>
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<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>Florida Coastal School of Law</td>
<td>University of Arizona</td>
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<td>Health Law</td>
<td>Emory University (Health Care Law, Policy, &amp; Regulation)</td>
<td>Hofstra University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>American University (International Human Rights &amp; Humanitarian Law)</td>
<td>American University (Derechos Humanos y Derecho Humanitario)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigration &amp; Naturalization</td>
<td>Texas Southern University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>UConn School of Law</td>
<td>WMU - Cooley Law School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual Property</td>
<td>John Marshall Law School</td>
<td>Seton Hall University</td>
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<td>International</td>
<td>Liberty University</td>
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<td>Logistics and Transportation</td>
<td>Florida Coastal School of Law</td>
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<td>National Security</td>
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<td>Real Property Development</td>
<td>University of Miami</td>
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<tr>
<td>Securities &amp; Financial Regulation</td>
<td>Georgetown University</td>
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<td>Space Law</td>
<td>University of Mississippi</td>
<td>University of Nebraska</td>
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<td>Taxation</td>
<td>Boston University</td>
<td>Georgetown University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trial Advocacy</td>
<td>California Western School of Law</td>
<td>Stetson University</td>
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*Taft Law School is not accredited by the American Bar Association

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AlabamaLLM.ua.edu/jurist
attorneys. The number of online LL.M. programs has grown from 30 in 2014 to 73. (See list on page 17). There are an additional 52 online Master of Legal Science programs, which 24 law schools offer to non-attorneys.

Loyola University Chicago, which was one of the first schools to implement such programs, enrolls 375 to 410 online students, or about 35 percent of its total student body.

By starting with online programs for graduate law students and non-attorneys, the school was able to work out the kinks before launching its part-time hybrid program, which has about 50 students in each class.

Randall, whose company runs distance education courses for law schools, said law schools have been using distance education to make up for the drop in traditional students and to enhance the credentials and makeup of incoming J.D. classes.

With distance learning, they can attract a more diverse and inclusive student body, he said. Some people live too far from law schools or can’t afford both tuition and living costs.

“This is not to supplant traditional law school, but to provide an alternative,” said Randall, who was dean of The University of Alabama School of Law for 20 years.

Plus, elements of online learning, such as video conferencing, are being used today by working lawyers and businesspeople, he noted. Face-to-face meetings are not as common anymore.

“This is the way law is practiced today,” he said. “Everything is being done via technology. There’s no reason you can’t do the same with legal education.”

Mississippi College offers video conferencing.

“Students who are participating off campus simply log on to the website when the class is scheduled to meet on campus and participate in the class essentially the same way that students who are in the classroom do,” McIntosh said.

And talk about flexibility. McIntosh recalled that one student was hurt in a car accident and couldn’t leave his bed. But he could still go to law school — via this technology.

Schools can also hire adjunct professors from anywhere in the nation. For instance, at Mississippi College, online courses are offered in matrimonial regimes and Louisiana family law, both of which are taught by adjuncts off campus. This allows the school to offer courses that would be difficult to staff locally, McIntosh said.

“There is some real untapped potential here,” he added.

Online learning uses two primary methods. One is called synchronous, in which you participate in the class in real time. With the other type, called asynchronous, you access recorded lectures at your convenience. There are benefits to both. Synchronous is more interactive, while asynchronous is more flexible.
First to graduate

Mitchell Hamline’s first hybrid J.D. class graduated in December, marking a new chapter in legal education

Cristina Buskohl is a full-time paralegal, a wife and a mother of three school-age children. Now she can add law school graduate to her list.

This is something she would not have been able to do before Mitchell Hamline School of Law launched its hybrid J.D. program three years ago.

Buskohl and 15 other law students were the first to graduate from Mitchell Hamline’s hybrid J.D. program on Jan. 4. The hybrid J.D. program began in January 2015, becoming the nation’s first on-campus/online J.D. program at an ABA-approved law school.

“Accessibility to legal education is something that affected me,” Buskohl said. “I would not have been able to go to law school and do all the things I was able to do but for this program. I would have had to make a choice. I would have to decide to quit my job or move my family closer to a law school so that I could go full time.”

The program has attracted students from around the country, many of whom are established professionals searching for a law degree while continuing their full-time jobs. Students study online then travel to campus for one to two weeks of intense experiential learning each semester.

Buskohl, who has worked at a law firm in Sterling, Ill., for the past seven years, continued to work full time while pursuing her J.D. She worked 45 to 55 hours each week, spending time with her family in the evenings before retreating into her home office to study. While others slept, she watched lectures online, communicated with other students and studied case law. At the end of each semester, she drove six hours to Mitchell Hamline’s Minnesota campus to attend class.

“I think that the option to do a hybrid program like this is going to open the door for a lot of people,” Buskohl said. “It is going to bring in a lot of people whom I think will be really good lawyers who would not otherwise go into the profession.”

The 16 hybrid J.D. students came from two classes, one that began in January 2015 and another that began in September 2015. These 16 students took an accelerated path to complete the program, which allowed them to finish in two-and-a-half to three years instead of four.

From the beginning, the hybrid J.D. program has had to overcome skepticism from the legal profession. Buskohl said that when she told co-workers (who attended traditional law schools) about the hybrid program, they expressed concern about the loss of the Socratic method and closed-book exams. Buskhol explained that the online classes were set up in a way that facilitated class discussion and rigorous examination of case law.

“The school created an environment where we still had to challenge each other, even though we were not face to face, and we had to do it through writing,” she said.

Buskohl also completed an externship for credit at her law firm, sitting in during mediations, hearings, client interviews and trials.

—Tyler Roberts
With 49 law schools open to visiting students this summer, there are plenty of course options. We highlight the most unique courses to help you escape your comfort zone and boost your education.

BY TYLER ROBERTS

After a year or more, you may be feeling pretty comfortable at your law school. You have your favorite chair in the library. Your professors know you on a first-name basis. You may have even selected a concentration with all of your classes neatly in place up until graduation.

But maybe you are a little too comfortable. Maybe it’s time to get out of the comfort zone and try something that will enhance your education and career prospects.

Law schools across the country open up their online and in-person classes every summer, allowing visiting students to explore a new region, learn a new area of the law and network with industry leaders.

While 49 law schools offer summer classes to visiting students, a smaller number have specialized offerings that you probably can’t get at your school.

Here are some of the more unusual summer school offerings that enhance your law school experience.

**Alaska**

**University of Wyoming College of Law**

Are you looking to make an escape this summer but still want to build on your lawyering skills? Consider a getaway to Anchorage, Alaska, to participate in the Summer Trial Institute hosted by University of Wyoming College of Law.

The two-week course walks students through all phases of a trial, breaking down each component for a more comprehensive look. It is an intensive, boot camp-style program involving members of Alaska’s legal community. After completing the course, students may reward themselves by tacking on an additional week or two to explore the surrounding wilderness.

- **Dates:** May 27 - June 8
- **Pre-requisite:** Evidence
- **Deadline:** March 15
- **Contact:** 307-766-6562

**Other Alaska options:**

- **Seattle University**
  - **Law in Alaska**
  - **Dates:** June - July
  - **Deadline:** Rolling
  - **Contact:** johanknh@seattleu.edu

**Animal Law**

**Lewis & Clark Law School**

So, you want to be an animal activist. This summer, skip SeaWorld, ditch the animal-tested shampoo and buy a pleather couch. Oh, and don’t forget you can bone up on animal law at Lewis & Clark Law School.

Located in Portland, Ore., one of the greenest cities in America, Lewis & Clark Law School offers two summer courses for students interested in animal law. Students
cybersecurity
Albany Law School

Threats to the global supply chain are significant and can cost billions of dollars. As more manufacturing processes go digital, the need for lawyers who understand cybersecurity risks to the supply chain is growing. This summer program at Albany Law School exposes students to management practices for assessing the risk of cybersecurity in the supply chain across many industries and processes.

The course looks at the impact of cyber crime on the supply chain and examines strategies to mitigate risks. Key issues include organizational response planning in the supply chain, developing a risk planning methodology and cost associated with corporate breaches.

Dates: June 4 - 25
Deadline: March 15
Contact: 518-445-2326

business or corporate Law
Widener University Delaware Law School

Students interested in corporate law should consider a trip to Delaware this summer. Dubbed America’s “corporate capital,” Delaware is home to more than one million business entities and the Court of Chancery. More than half of the Fortune 500 companies are incorporated there. Did we mention that Widener University Delaware Law School is also located there?

This summer, the law school is offering Advanced Concepts in Corporate and Business Law. The course is designed for law students who want an in-depth program on the workings of Delaware and U.S. corporate law, exploring the frontier of fiduciary standards of review and standards of conduct arising under leading Delaware corporate cases. The course will also address topics such as shareholder electoral power, the directors’ fiduciary duty of disclosure under state law and the role of directors and shareholders in mergers and acquisition transactions.

Dates: June 4 - 25
Deadline: April 1
Contact: 302-477-2780 or delawarelawgicls@widener.edu

Other Business Law options:

University of Memphis
Business Organizations
Dates: May 22 – July 18
Deadline: April 8
Contact: 901-678-5403 or lawadmissions@memphis.edu

Where you can take summer classes
Highlighted schools are advertisers in this issue
Albany Law School NY
American University DC
Ave Maria School of Law FL
Boston College MA
Boston University MA
Brooklyn Law School NY
California Western School of Law CA
Case Western Reserve University OH
Charleston School of Law SC
Cleveland-Marshall College of Law OH
CUNY School of Law NY
Drake University IA
Duquesne University PA
Fordham Law School NY
George Washington University DC
Georgia State University GA
Golden Gate University CA
John Marshall Law School IL
Lewis & Clark Law School OR
Loyola Law School, Los Angeles CA
Marquette University WI
Mercer University GA
Mississippi College MS
Mitchell Hamline School of Law MN
North Carolina Central University NC
Northeastern University MA
Pepperdine University CA
Seattle University WA
Southwestern Law School CA
St. John’s University NY
St. Thomas University FL
Temple University PA
UC Hastings CA
University of Hawaii HI
University of Kansas KS
University of Maryland MD
University of Massachusetts MA
University of Memphis TN
University of Minnesota MN
University of Mississippi MS
University of Montana MT
University of the District of Columbia DC
University of Toledo OH
University of Wyoming WY
Vermont Law School VT
Wake Forest University NC
Whittier Law School CA
Widener Delaware Law School DE
William & Mary Law School VA
WMU-Cooley MI

Entertainment and Sports Law
Southwestern Law School

For students interested in pursuing entertainment and media law, or just want to learn a little more about the industry, Southwestern Law School offers one of the most comprehensive entertainment, media and intellectual property curricula in the United States — and it’s available to visiting students this summer.

The school is in the heart of Los
Angeles, so students can take full advantage of the surroundings as well as the school’s offerings through the Donald Biederman Entertainment and Media Law Institute. For the last six years, Southwestern Law has been listed in The Hollywood Reporter’s Top 10 entertainment law schools.

**Dates:** June 10-July 13  
**Deadline:** May 22  
**Contact:** 213-738-6734 or registrar@swlaw.edu

**Other Entertainment or Sports Law options:**
- **Case Western Reserve University**  
  **Great Lakes Sports and Entertainment Law**  
  **Dates:** July 10 - Aug. 6  
  **Deadline:** June 30  
  **Contact:** greatlakeslaw@case.edu
- **Lewis & Clark Law School**  
  **Environmental Law**  
  **Dates:** May 29 – June 22  
  **Deadline:** April 1  
  **Contact:** 503-768-6882 or elaw@lclark.edu
- **Widener Delaware Law School**  
  **Environmental Human Rights**  
  **Dates:** June 4 - 25  
  **Deadline:** Rolling  
  **Contact:** 302-477-2780 or delawarelawgicls@widener.edu

Vermont Law School offers the perfect site for law students interested in studying environmental law.

Whether you are interested in a specific area of study — such as energy law, international environmental law, water law, land use law or agricultural law — or want to pursue broader legal topics, the summer program offers a wide array of options.

Located on the bank of the scenic White River, Vermont Law School is an ideal location for students to connect with the environment as well. Hiking, swimming, tubing, biking and cookouts are just some of the outdoor activities you can enjoy once class is dismissed.

**Dates:** May 29 – Aug. 4  
**Deadline:** Rolling  
**Contact:** 802-831-1000 or admis@vermontlaw.edu

**Other Environmental Law options:**
- **American University**  
  **Environmental Law**  
  **Dates:** May 29 - June 22  
  **Contact:** 202-274-4415 or summerenvironment@wcl.american.edu
- **Lewis & Clark Law School**  
  **Environmental Law**  
  **Dates:** May 29 - Aug. 3  
  **Deadline:** Rolling  
  **Contact:** 503-768-6882 or elaw@lclark.edu
- **Widener Delaware Law School**  
  **Environmental Human Rights**  
  **Dates:** June 4 - 25  
  **Deadline:** Rolling  
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**Dates:** June 7 - 23  
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**Contact:** scielzo@wcl.american.edu

**Other Health Law options:**
Northeastern University  
**Health Law**  
**Deadline:** April 19  
**Contact:** 617-373-2395, lawadmissions@neu.edu

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Cleveland-Marshall College of Law

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**Dates:** May 21 - 25  
**Deadline:** Rolling  
**Contact:** 206-398-4068 or wipfm@seattleu.edu; tapias@seattleu.edu

**U.S. Law**

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University

Initially designed for foreign lawyers who wanted an introduction to U.S. Law, the Global Leadership in Law and Business program exposes students and lawyers from around the world to the U.S. judicial system.

This will be the first summer that the program is open to current J.D. students, providing students with opportunities to learn first-hand from judges and practicing lawyers working in general counsel offices, the Securities and Exchange Commission and legislative bodies.

Law students may be teamed with junior lawyers from Paris, for example, and work through various hypotheticals to learn more about corporate governance, intellectual property and the adversarial judicial system. The program is based in New York City, but students will travel to Washington, D.C., for two days to tour various agencies and the U.S. Supreme Court.

**Contact:** 212-790-0361 or myteberi@yu.edu

**Other U.S. Law options:**

Widener Delaware Law School

**The U.S. Legal System**

**Dates:** July 9 - 30  
**Deadline:** April 1  
**Contact:** 302-477-2780 or delawarelawgics@widener.edu

U.S. Law

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Widener Delaware Law School

**The U.S. Legal System**

**Dates:** July 9 - 30  
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Law Students
of the Year

We honor the 20 law students who contributed the most to their law schools and communities in the past year

By Katie Thisdell

Law school isn’t just about going to school. The law students who grow the most tend to be the ones who stretch and push themselves. They push themselves to help better their law schools, to help better their communities and to help those in need.

For the third year, we recognize the law students who contributed the most to their schools or communities.

These leaders were involved in everything from moot court to clinics, externships or clerkships. They participated in programs that help people who face a host of problems, from deportation to female genital mutilation to child abuse.

Wrongfully convicted people got out of prison thanks to their efforts. People in poverty received key assistance.

One student even found time to run for – and win – a seat on his local city council.

We asked law schools to nominate their top students. We then whittled down the list to 20, not an easy task. We profile those 20, five from each region.

MIDWEST

Alison Epperson
Case Western Reserve University School of Law
During her first year of law school, Epperson lost one of her biggest supporters.

Her longtime boyfriend took his life. He suffered from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) after playing high school football.

But this traumatic experience didn’t derail Epperson. Instead, she used it as motivation to excel both in and out of law school. Upon graduation, she’ll join Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe as a full-time associate in New York.

“IT’s an achievement maybe five years ago I didn’t think I could accomplish,” she said.

After her boyfriend’s death, Epperson helped found CTE Hope, a small organization that’s received national recognition for its advocacy regarding concussion protocols in high school sports’ programs and for its work on how to diagnose and treat CTE before someone dies from it. She has served as the group’s chief communications officer.

Her work with the organization has been challenging but also fulfilling.
“I never wanted anything to hinder how I did in law school, because it’s such a big goal and a big thing to accomplish,” Epperson said. “But also, in a way, it has made me not just work harder but work harder and keep my goals really clear and work toward them very diligently.”

Michael Scharf, co-dean at Case Western Reserve University, said Epperson has compiled an impressive record of achievements, scholarship and extracurricular accomplishments.

She ranks near the top of her class and served as the executive notes editor of the International Law Journal. She is also co-president of the National Security and Law Society, and she volunteers as a tutor to help first-year students.

This semester, she is externing in the Office of the Legal Adviser of the U.S. Department of State, one of the most competitive internships in the federal government. She hopes to focus her career on international law.

MIDWEST FINALISTS:

Amanda Bagwell-Chase
Valparaiso University Law School

After losing her vision as a child, Bagwell-Chase has seen discrimination everywhere. She wants to build a career in politics, where she can enact legislation to improve the lives of others, including nonviolent offenders, who often need help reintegrating into society. At Valpo Law, she is a member of the trial advocacy team and the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund. She encourages all minorities to speak out to institute change. “Make your voice heard on important issues to drive positive change in the world,” she said.

Victor Feraru
Southern Illinois University School of Law

Feraru has helped his classmates by developing a student chapter of the Illinois Lawyers’ Assistance Program, and he has helped survivors of child abuse and neglect through his appointment to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Children’s Justice Task Force. To that role, he brings the point of view as a survivor. He was raised in more than 40 foster homes and group homes.

“He will graduate from law school having already made a positive impact on the legal profession,” said Chris Behan, acting dean at SIU Law. “That’s a rare thing for a law student to accomplish.”

Jun Qiu
Chicago-Kent College of Law at Illinois Institute of Technology

Born and raised in China, Qiu is a licensed CPA who has been active in and out of law school. She has served as president of the Asian Pacific American Law Student Association and the Law Firm Management Society and as founding president of both the Tax Law Society and the China Law Society. She’s a research assistant for the Law Lab, an interdisciplinary teaching and research center at Chicago-Kent College of Law devoted to legal futurism, and she helped initiate an Honors Scholar project that uses technology to help legal-aid attorneys prioritize and more effectively assist those facing eviction.

Erin Romar
Drake University Law School

Romar didn’t wait to earn a J.D. before actively bringing about change in Iowa. She has had a direct hand in two statewide matters. She worked with faculty and legislators to advocate for a bill, which became law in May 2017 and makes revenge porn a crime punishable by jail and fines. She also advocated for the adoption of a new Iowa Juvenile Court rule banning the routine shackling of children during court proceedings. Iowa is the 30th state to ban or limit the practice.

Mahesh Cleveland
University of Hawai‘i at Manoa – William S. Richardson School of Law

As a Native Hawaiian law student with a deep appreciation for his culture, Cleveland has strived to promote sustainable resource management and protection of indigenous rights.

His path to law school began during the Great Recession. He was a freelance carpenter and musician, but the building industry slowed. Cleveland stopped to examine what he wanted to do with his future. Law would give him the chance not just to rant and rave about problems but to help those who can’t help themselves.

“How can I speak for people that basically don’t have a voice, or don’t have a strong voice?” Cleveland said.

He said he is grateful for the many opportunities he’s been granted while pursuing his J.D., and he’s proud of the
successful team projects he's been a part of.

“School has been fun, and classes are interesting, but where it takes off is we get all these opportunities to participate in very real decision-making scenarios,” he said. “I have jumped at some of those that I have found interesting.”

Those include being a member of the nominating committee for the state Commission on Water Resource Management and a volunteer court reporter for the recently formed Hawai‘i Environmental Court. He also worked as a legislative intern in Washington, D.C., for two semesters.

Cleveland was a member of the law student team that helped to draft and advocate motions protecting Pacific Ocean resources and native rights, which were accepted by the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which met in Hawaii in 2016.

Additionally, Cleveland served on a law school hiring committee; he is helping to plan and implement water law training for beneficiaries of the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands; he has helped lead the Native Hawaiian Law Student Organization; and he was part of the Richardson Environmental Law Moot Court Team that won a “Best Party Brief” award in national competition at Pace University.

“He has been an exceptional law student in many ways, including in his quiet leadership on environmental projects large and small,” said Ronette Kawakami, associate dean of student services.

After graduation, Cleveland will be a judicial clerk for Hawaii First Circuit Court Judge Todd Eddins.

WEST FINALISTS:

Connor Smith
Seattle University School of Law
A fourth-generation Bristol Bay boat captain from Western Alaska, Smith plans to work as a lawyer during the off-season. He is executive editor of the American Indian Law Journal, president of the Labor and Employment Law Association and active in the Workers’ Rights Clinic. He’s completing his third year of law school at Seattle University’s Anchorage campus and will clerk for the chief justice of the Alaska Supreme Court upon graduation.

Rosio Flores
Southwestern Law School
A first-generation Mexican-American, Flores is the first in her family to pursue higher education. She is the editor-in-chief of the Southwestern Law Review and was a member of the moot court honors program. Flores’ legal advocacy journey began when she translated victims’ statements at a public interest law firm. After being a summer clerk, she accepted a post-bar associate position at Sheppard Mullin.

Jessalyn Hopkin
University of Idaho College of Law
Hopkin is pursuing a J.D. so she can address problems of the child welfare system. A single mother of a young son, Hopkin has been an advocate for students at the growing Boise campus. She is a driving force in the Idaho Trial Lawyers Association Street Law Clinic; she has advocated for equal representation of Boise students in the student bar association; and she is part of many campus organizations. She also volunteers with a legal aid clinic and with the ACLU of Idaho.

Andrew “Andy” Navratil
Georgia State University College of Law
Navratil has been a leader in and out of the classroom, and he was a driving force in creating two programs for the law school: the pro bono program and an alternative spring break program.

Enrolled in the public interest law and policy program, Navratil is an executive board member of the Georgia State Law Review, a senator for the Student Bar Association, a board member of the Public Interest Law Students Association and an award-winning member of the Student Trial Lawyers Association.

His achievements extend outside the

SOUTH
classroom, as well, to benefit the Center for Access to Justice. He realized that many schools around the country had organizations that would perform volunteer work in the South. Certainly, there would be demand at his own school, especially among non-traditional students. So, he started the Alternative Spring Break program and coordinated a successful first session that showed participants how access to justice – or the lack thereof – affects the lives of some of Atlanta’s low-income community members.

“It was wonderful. We had a great time, the participants did meaningful service, and they felt rejuvenated about why they went to law school,” Navratil said.

It’s now an official school program.

That experience led him to become the first student director of the pro bono program, which connects students with legal volunteer opportunities. He helps find quality projects and then helps publicize the opportunities to students.

“I think pro bono service is really important for attorneys,” he said. “I think we have an obligation as lawyers to give back to society, and we have a duty to make sure the law is applied fairly for everyone, even people who can’t afford an attorney.”

**SOUTH FINALISTS:**

**Kirsten Jackson**  
*University of Virginia School of Law*

Jackson has helped lay the groundwork for talking about social justice at the Charlottesville, Va., law school. She helped co-found the Minority Rights Coalition to improve communication among student affinity groups. As the social action chair for the Black Law Students Association, she focused on promoting events to open conversations between students who are minorities and those who are not. Jackson also started a well-attended book club on the African-American experience; served as a peer adviser to first-year students; and was co-chair for the Admitted Students Open House Cabinet.

**Gracie Wood**  
*Baylor University School of Law*

Wood was the school’s first student to volunteer with the local chapter of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and with her mentorship and encouragement, nearly 20 students are now working with CASA. Wood, who plans to practice family law in Austin, Texas, has contributed more than 500 pro bono hours. She holds leadership positions with three organizations: senior executive editor on Baylor Law Review; three terms as the president of the Student Bar Association; and president of the Baylor Public Interest Legal Society.
Marcol Harvey  
*University of Georgia School of Law*

Harvey has overcome poverty and a broken family to succeed in law school, as well as contribute to the school and the community. He founded the One Smartboard at a Time project, which aims to provide Smart Boards for every classroom of the school he attended as a child. His own generous contributions inspired two benefactors to nearly fully fund the program.

Emily Scotton  
*Wake Forest University School of Law*

Through the school’s pro bono project, Scotton spearheaded the Family Preparedness Project, which helps provide durable powers of attorney for North Carolina residents who may be at risk of deportation.

She helped organize bilingual student volunteers, supervising attorneys and faculty members, who met with clients in Winston-Salem over the course of four evenings in April 2017. The project will continue this spring.

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**NORTHEAST**

Erin Varley  
*Pennsylvania State University, Dickinson Law*

Varley used to think she wanted to help people by becoming a doctor. Then she realized during a hospital visit that she wanted to do a lot more than interact with patients in 30-second intervals.

“I wanted to make a bigger impact,” Varley said.

After earning an MBA and a stint with the NCAA, the former college athlete realized that in order to do the things she wanted to do to help people, she would need a law degree.

Being a lawyer means helping people when they have the greatest needs, she said.

“For me, it’s a combination of helping people recover from something that may have happened to them already and help them to move on and improve their quality of life, and it may also be more policy driven and preventative in nature,” she said.

An international human rights course at Dickinson Law reinforced her interest in addressing gender-based violence and human rights violations. And she’s made quite an impact through her work with multiple organizations, including the Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and the Pennsylvania Innocence Project, to name just a few.

She’s currently working on creating domestic legislation and an international convention against female genital mutilation. She found that international law barely mentions the subject and that Pennsylvania does not have a law prohibiting it. She’s leading a team of students who, along with professor Dermot Groome, are planning a mini-conference this spring that will bring together doctors and other experts on the subject.

Also, she is proud of her work drafting a fictional advocacy problem and scenario for the International Criminal Court. She was on a team that administered a fictional advocacy problem and scenario for the International Criminal Court. She was on a team that administered it. She’s leading a team of students who, along with professor Dermot Groome, are planning a mini-conference this spring that will bring together doctors and other experts on the subject.

NORTHEAST FINALISTS:

Ryan Wallace  
*West Virginia University College of Law*

In July, Wallace started a two-year term as a member of the Morgantown, W.V., City Council. He has already helped pass significant city ordinances, including non-discrimination ordinances for LBGTQ+ and veterans. As a student, he has worked for West Virginia Senior Legal Aid and the school’s Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic.

and Sustainable Development Law Clinic. He serves on several commissions and volunteers with several organizations.

Stephanie Alvarez-Jones  
*Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University*

Alvarez-Jones has dedicated herself to ensuring access to justice for low-income community members. Her efforts include volunteering with the Courtroom Advocates Project, interning at the ACLU Immigrant’s Rights Project and Sanctuary for Families in New York City, and working for two years in the Kathryn O. Greenberg Immigration Justice Clinic. She will clerk for the chief judge of the New Jersey Supreme Court upon graduation.

Christopher Fernandez  
*New York Law School*

Fernandez is a claims examiner at a small Manhattan law firm, and at night he’s at the top of his class. He’s a member of the Moot Court Association, the Trial Competition Team and the New York Law School Law Review. He volunteers at a community organization that helps motivated low-income high school students.

Denisha Jones  
*University of the District of Columbia David A. Clarke School of Law*

A former teacher and a current assistant professor, Jones was driven to law school by her desire to become a more effective advocate and activist for public education. She has served as a student attorney in the UDC Law Legislation Clinic, helping to enact D.C. legislation to repeal the tax on feminine hygiene products.

Jones also holds leadership positions with the UDC Law Review, the Black Law Student Association and the UDC Law chapter of the National Lawyers Guild.
Maybe you’ve heard the horror stories. The exam software crashed. A testing center lost electricity during the exam, forcing applicants to write their essays by hand in the dark. An army of rats terrorized the test takers, scurrying across their toes and climbing onto tables.

Woeful tales of medical emergencies, fire alarms and power outages are common on law school forums online. Even though most exams are without incident, it pays to plan ahead for the unexpected.

BY TYLER ROBERTS

While most students prepare for the bar exam’s substantive questions, it’s also important to be ready for unexpected challenges.

FOOD AND SHELTER

The majority of law grads travel to take the bar exam, and that means staying in a hotel. Experts say this is the first part of the experience to plan for.

Consider staying within walking distance of the testing facility or close to reliable public transportation. Check online for hotels now. You will not be the only law grad traveling to take the exam. Hotel rooms will fill up fast. One test taker reported that all of the rooms within walking distance were booked before the end of the previous semester.

If you can’t find a satisfactory hotel close by, renting an apartment or a house through Airbnb may be a cozier, homey alternative.

“Many hotels around conference centers can be, well, less than inviting,” said Lee Burgess, co-founder of Bar Exam Toolbox. “They are often business hotels that can feel somewhat cold. Perhaps this doesn’t sound like an environment you want to stay in during your bar exam experience. Perhaps being in a home is a way to feel a bit more at ease. It is worth considering, as hotels aren’t for everyone.”

Also, what are you going to eat? You won’t want to take the exam on an empty stomach, so scout out a place where you can get a healthy breakfast. You probably will need to pack a lunch, so plan ahead and think of things that will fill you up and give you energy to push through the day. When dinner comes around, you may want to find a quiet place to unwind with a warm meal.

Kerriann Stout, owner of the bar-exam coaching company Vinco, suggested taking the path of least resistance when making lodging and dining decisions. “You don’t want to pile on the stress just to save a few bucks,” she said.
**BAR EXAM INSTRUCTIONS**

Maybe you found a comfortable hotel in a killer location, but the fire alarm goes off in the middle of the night. Maybe you left home early to get to the testing facility with time to spare, but someone rear-ended you on the way. Maybe you got to the exam fine but discovered during the lunch break that your car had been towed.

When it comes to the bar exam, few things are outside the realm of possibility. Still, there are some things you can prepare for in advance, Stout said. For example, take the instructions on your bar exam admission ticket.

Every jurisdiction has different rules, and the rules tend to change year to year. In New York, for example, you can bring soft snacks and water. But in Vermont, you are limited to tissues and mints. In Virginia, you must wear courtroom attire, and in Pennsylvania you must wear quiet, soft-soled shoes.

In the weeks leading up to the exam, review the rules of your jurisdiction and plan accordingly.

“Do you really want to have a meltdown at 8 o’clock in the morning before the bar exam because you are wearing the wrong footwear,” Stout said. “It doesn’t seem like a good reason to panic right before you take the bar.”

**TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES**

You are probably planning to use your laptop to take the bar exam, and why wouldn’t you? Typing is faster than writing by hand. Your answers will be legible. You can run spellcheck. And, you can avoid a paralyzing hand cramp.

But what if the power goes out during the exam? What if the exam software fails unexpectedly? What if your laptop, overloaded with outlines, crashes? What if, by some grave oversight, you left your charger at home? What will you do then?

“This can obviously throw someone off their game,” Stout said. “I highly recommend that students practice hand-writing one or two essays over the course of their bar prep. That way, they will know how to handle it if something like that happens to them.”

If hand-writing your bar exam essay absolutely terrifies you, there are a few other precautions you can take to avoid problems on game day.

First, clear space on your hard drive before downloading and installing the exam software. If you are pushing capacity, adding that software could be your laptop’s undoing.

Second, charge up your laptop the night before the exam. If the testing facil-
ity loses power or you happen to leave your charger behind, you should have enough power to get you through at least the morning.

If you are concerned, get your laptop checked out by a pro before the exam. It is better to learn that you need repairs (or a new laptop) before it melts down in the middle of an essay.

“You want to have loaded the testing software on the computer, tested it, and even done some practice questions on it,” Burgess said. “Computer failures are no fun during the bar exam, so make sure you try to do what you can to eliminate that possibility.”

**UNKNOWN LEGAL ISSUES**

Regardless of how hard you study, which bar-prep course you take or how many all-nighters you pull while falling down hypothetical rabbit holes, there will be, without fail, at least one legal issue on the exam that you are unfamiliar with.

“Just expect you are going to see something that you don’t know the day of the test, and prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for that,” Stout said. “The difference between passing and failing for some students is how they react in that moment. If you have a plan, practice under time constraints and know what it feels like to write an essay on a topic you are unfamiliar with, then you can get through it and move on.

“A big problem I see is students trying to outlearn the bar exam. They think that if they learn enough law, then they don’t have to worry about the mechanics of writing an essay or concern themselves with MBE strategies. That’s just not true.”

The absolute last thing you should do is spend valuable time trying to conjure up something you did not learn.

“You should really go into the exam with an understanding that even though you are prepared, there will be things that you don’t know,” Stout said. “That is OK.”

When it comes to staying calm and focused before the bar exam, many people have been tested — and we mean tested. One woman lost everything in a house fire just days before the bar, and a man was served a subpoena for alienation of affection as he waited outside the testing center. Both passed, and so can you.

“Once you hit the week before the bar exam, you are as prepared as you are going to be and just going through the motions until you get to the bar,” Stout said. “If something happens in that time frame, either right before or during the bar exam, nothing can take away from what you know at this point.”

Plan the things you can control, such as lodging, transportation and food. But also expect the unexpected and have predetermined strategies for staying focused on the exam.

In other words, if you think there could be rats, don’t wear flip-flops.
How to handle bar exam stress

BY MAGGY MAHALICK

The bar exam is meant to be overwhelming. Remember that. It’s a test designed to weed out those who can’t cut it. The exam tests you intellectually, physically and psychologically. Your entire academic career comes down to those two days. Bar examiners put this pressure on you intentionally to see how you perform under such conditions. Recognizing this puts you one step ahead of everyone else.

Three days before my exam, I awoke covered in hives. I ended up in the emergency room instead of the library. As it turns, I have an allergy to certain metals, which was exacerbated by extreme stress. I did manage to recover in time to sit for my exam and pass.

What I realized afterward was how easy it is to get overwhelmed by this test. My advice is: Don’t let the test overtake you. It will be stressful; it’s supposed to be. But you can find small ways to be smarter than the exam.

USE ALL YOUR RESOURCES

You are not the first person to study for this exam. You are not in this alone. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel. Save yourself time and energy by using resources that are already out there.

The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) has countless free and fee-based resources on their website (www.ncbex.org). They provide samples of past Multistate Essay Exam (MEE) questions, along with the analyses of the correct answers. They also provide a limited number of sample multiple-choice Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) questions, with the correct answers, for free. They provide more questions, with answer explanations, for a fee.

Sign up for a bar-prep program that uses questions from previous bar exams. The NCBE allows some companies to use these questions instead of simulated questions. Real questions will give you a better idea of how the exam will look and feel.

If you like using flashcards but don’t have the time or the patience to make your own, there are several websites that provide online flashcards for you. Other websites help you make your own.

DIRECT YOUR STUDY

It’s easy to get overwhelmed when you think about the mountain of material that could be covered on the exam. There is more material than you could ever manage to study. Remember that just because all the material could be on the test, it doesn’t mean it will be on the test.

The NCBE has subject-matter outlines on its website that break down which areas of law will be tested. The MBE outline also gives a distribution of how much each subtopic is tested in proportion to others. Let this outline be your guide.

For example, in Evidence, one-third of the questions will be on Relevancy and Excluding Relevant Evidence, while only one-sixth of the questions will be from Privileges and Policy Exclusions and Writing, Recording and Photographs combined.

This means you’ll get roughly nine Relevancy questions on the exam but only four or five questions from both Privileges and Policy Exclusions and Writing, Recording and Photographs combined. If you’re struggling in Evidence or short on time, you know that you should focus more of your study efforts on Relevancy.

USE YOUR TIME WISELY

Many students have an urge to dive right into bar prep. Avoid this urge. Jumping right into practice questions will only frustrate you and waste time. Instead, start off by reviewing substantive materials. Once you have refreshed your memory on the concepts, begin answering questions. Starting with a knowledge base allows you to evaluate your performance more accurately.

If during law school you focused on Criminal Law or you received the CALI Award for your Torts class, these may be areas that don’t need as much of your attention. Trust yourself on subjects that you know. Your time is limited. Instead, focus on subjects you struggle with.

Don’t be afraid to customize your study plan or integrate technology to help you. Know your own study habits, your strengths and your limitations. Save time where you can. Put in the hard work, and you can be smarter than this exam.
Tips for MBE and Essays

BY DENNIS SACCUZZO AND NANCY JOHNSON

Bar exam advice is easy to come by. The problem is separating the good from the bad. A lot of what you hear is uninformed, untested and sometimes just plain wrong.

Take Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) practice, for example. There is a time-honored tradition of reading and studying, if not trying to memorize, every rule found in explanations of MBE items. Most of these rules are obscure, difficult to learn outside the context of an organized body of knowledge, and unlikely to be on the test.

Therefore, the best approach is to be concerned with only two answer choices: the one you chose and the one the answer bank says is correct. Try to figure out why the answer you picked was wrong and why their answer choice was better. If you can’t figure it out in three or four minutes, move on. Do not try to learn or memorize the law from the obscure rules you will find in the explanations. This will save a lot of time, which can be better spent answering more practice questions.

Here is a method we recommend for those who want to improve on the MBE:

Take the items one at a time, and look up your answers as you go. Begin with the call of the question and try to determine what subject is being tested. Then, read the hypothetical with two goals: to remember the facts; and to draw subconclusions if possible. Then, treat each answer choice as a yes-no problem. If you say, “No” to an answer choice, supply the reason that choice is wrong (such as “misstates the law” or “misstates the facts”). Then, check your answer as discussed above.

ESSAYS

Write practice essays open-book and only after you have reviewed the subject. It should not take more than 12 to 15 written essays (across all subjects) to get you up to speed. Anything beyond that should be careful issue-spotting. Too much writing without rapid, accurate feedback from an expert wastes time and tends to reinforce errors by giving you a false sense of confidence. The best way to improve is to make deliberative adjustments based on expert feedback.

Memorization comes at the end – not at the beginning. Understanding precedes memorization. In fact, understanding is a necessary first step in all learning. After understanding and learning, memorization falls right into place. The critical question is: What to memorize? It is not productive to memorize everything. Focus on a small core of material made up of your culled-down final outlines. Less is better.

Here are some additional tips that should survive passing fads and stand the test of time.

1. Have an approach to the MBE before you sit for the exam. This should include a timing strategy and a guessing strategy.
2. When answering any essay question, after you headnote an issue, the very next thing you must do is write down a responsive rule of law or legal doctrine. Then, discuss that doctrine using the facts in the hypothetical.
4. Have a plan for memorization and know that retrieval and phased learning are two of the most effective ways to memorize a large body of knowledge. Retrieval is the effort to recall or, as psychologist William James used to say, “fish back the information” you just studied. Phased learning requires coming back to the material in a systematic way over time, rather than simply trying to amass all of your practice of one subject and then be done with it. It is well recognized by psychologists that phased learning produces far better recall than massed practice does. In our phased learning approach, we guide people through all of the test subjects in depth and then go back through each of them two more times.

Dr. Dennis Saccuzzo is a professor emeritus of psychology at San Diego State University, where he taught from 1975 to 2011. He is co-author of “Psychological Testing: Principles, Applications and Issues.” Dr. Nancy Johnson is a statistician and researcher who has taught law and psychology at the graduate level since 1992. They both are practicing California attorneys, licensed psychologists and co-founders of Applications of Psychology to Law Inc., which produces PowerLaw and other study tools for bar candidates.
Maximize your bar exam essay score in one step

BY JAIME MOLBREAK

There is a great deal of literature professing to contain the secrets to passing the bar exam. Most are useless. The fact is that the only proven method of passing the bar is actually knowing the law. Every subject that you will be tested on has an intrinsic structure to it according to which you can organize the material, memorize the elements and keep the information accessible for immediate recitation.

For example, take the common-law tort of negligence. The typical bar exam has at least one essay with a fact pattern where negligence is at issue. For example:

Billy Bob rushed to enter his vehicle. He plugged his phone into the charger, started the vehicle, and pulled out of his driveway. As he was driving, his phone buzzed, signaling a text message from his love interest. Billy Bob then initiated the millennial mating-call: snapping “selfies.” He took his eyes off of the road in order to eliminate any unflattering photos. While selecting a heavy-duty filter from the choices on his app, Billy Bob crashed into Ms. Bellbottom, a pedestrian and public school math teacher leaving work early at 5 p.m. As a result of the accident, Ms. Bellbottom sustained serious injuries and will be unable to work for six months. A witness at the scene noted that Ms. Bellbottom had not been in a crosswalk at the time of the accident, and also appeared to be staring at her phone at the time of impact.

What you see: A fact-pattern themed cross-word puzzle. What you think: I wonder if my old job is still hiring? What you should see: A massive amount of potential points.

Let’s start with the free points. Once you have identified a situation where the question relates to a party who has failed to act reasonably towards another party, you will get points by writing:

In order to prove negligence, the plaintiff must show a duty owed by the defendant, a breach of that duty, a causal relationship between the breach and the injury, and that the plaintiff has sustained damages compensable by law.

This simple statement of law will net you points without any reference to the facts. You will get points for the above response to every fact pattern where negligence is at issue. You must commit to memory the elements of negligence (duty, breach, causation, damages) and do the same for every other cause of action, along with the pertinent defenses and excuses.

After you state the law relevant to the fact pattern, you must then explain how the law applies. But what does that look like? Here is an example:

As an operator of a motor vehicle, Billy Bob owed a duty to drive with reasonable care to all others who could foreseeably be harmed by his failure to drive with reasonable care. Billy Bob breached that duty by snapping “selfies” while driving. A reasonably prudent driver would not take his eyes off the road in order to feed his insatiable ego. These actions caused Billy Bob to drive directly into Ms. Bellbottom, breaking her legs. It is foreseeable that someone operating a motor vehicle without looking at the road will injure a pedestrian. Ms. Bellbottom suffered damages in the form of medical damages, pain and suffering and lost wages. Luckily for Billy Bob, he didn’t hit someone who is paid a living wage.

The essay fact patterns are drafted to elicit some defense, excuse, mitigation, or exception to a cause of action, which should be viewed as a source of more points. (I’m sure you didn’t miss that Ms. Bellbottom wasn’t entirely without fault.) Whenever you see a complicated, multi-layered fact pattern, you should breathe a sigh of relief and then take a huge data dump on the essay sheet. Do not waste time on creative or artful phrasing. Instead, employ laser-like focus on producing answers with the most buzzwords and substance because those answers have the most potential to net you points.

These are just simplified examples, but they can be generalized to every area of law and any question that you may encounter. You are always confronted with the task of stating what claims the various parties have against one another, along with the defenses to those claims. You must therefore memorize the elements to every cause of action, along with every defense and learn when to apply them. Your bar outlines will be structured in a manner that makes learning the various causes of actions and their defenses a straightforward task.

There is no magic pill to guarantee you success over this last great hurdle of your legal career. There is no quick-fix. If you find yourself Googling “last minute tips to pass the bar exam,” then something has gone terribly awry. The deciding factor will be your level of commitment and the self-discipline that will keep you from projectile vomiting during the exam.

Jaime Molbreak, is an attorney with Themis Bar Review
Register early. Enrollment limited. For course descriptions, faculty bios, registration information, and program tuition and fees, visit our website: MITCHELLHAMLINE.EDU/DRI/SUMMER

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