- Peer Assessment — 25%
- Lawyer / Judge Assessment — 15%

  → Qual. Assessment — 40%

- Median LSAT — 12.5%
- Median UPGA — 10%
- Acceptance Rate — 2.5%

  → Selectivity — 25%

- Employment @ 9 months — 14%
- Employment @ Graduation — 4%
- Bar Pass — 2%

  → Placement — 20%

- Avg. Expenditure per Student — 9.75%
- All other / Financial Aid — 1.5%
- Student / Faculty Ratio — 3%
- Library Resources — .75%

  → Faculty Resources — 15%
Law School Rankings Methodology

BY ROBERT MORSE, SAM FLANIGAN

March 14, 2011

The rankings of 190 law schools fully accredited by the American Bar Association are based on a weighted average of the 12 measures of quality described here. Data were collected in fall 2010 and early 2011. Specialty rankings are based solely on nominations by legal educators at peer institutions.

[See the Best Law Schools rankings.]

Quality Assessment (weighted by .40)

Peer Assessment Score (.25) In the fall of 2010, law school deans, deans of academic affairs, chairs of faculty appointments, and the most recently tenured faculty members were asked to rate programs on a scale from marginal (1) to outstanding (5). Those individuals who did not know enough about a school to evaluate it fairly were asked to mark "don't know." A school's score is the average of all the respondents who rated it. Responses of "don't know" counted neither for nor against a school. About 66 percent of those surveyed responded.

Assessment Score by Lawyers/Judges (.15) In the fall of 2010, legal professionals, including the hiring partners of law firms, state attorneys general, and selected federal and state judges, were asked to rate programs on a scale from marginal (1) to outstanding (5). Those individuals who did not know enough about a school to evaluate it fairly were asked to mark "don't know." A school's score is the average of all the respondents who rated it. Responses of "don't know" counted neither for nor against a school.

In the fall 2010 lawyer and judge survey, U.S. News for the first time surveyed 750 hiring partners and recruiters at law firms who made the 2010 Best Law Firms rankings produced jointly by U.S. News and the publication Best Lawyers. Their ratings are included in the lawyer and judge survey score. About 14 percent of those lawyers and judges surveyed responded. The two most recent years lawyers' and judges' surveys were averaged and are weighted by .15.

Selectivity (weighted by .25)

Median LSAT Scores (.125) The combined median scores on the Law School Admission Test of all full-time and part-time entrants to the J.D. program's 2010 entering class.

Median Undergrad GPA (.10) The combined median undergraduate grade-point average of all the full-time and part-time entrants to the J.D. program's 2010 entering class.

Acceptance Rate (.025) The combined proportion of applicants to both the full-time and part-time J.D. program who were accepted for the 2010 entering class.

For the Best Graduate Schools 2012 edition, U.S. News continued the same main law school rankings methodology that was used in the 2010 and 2011 editions for admissions data. We used the combined fall 2010 class admissions data for both full-time and part-time entering students for the median LSAT scores, median undergraduate grade-point averages, and the acceptance rate in calculating the school's overall ranking.

Placement Success (weighted by .20)

Employment Rates for Graduates The employment rates for the 2009 graduating class determine success in this category. Employment rates are measured at graduation (.04 weight) and nine months after graduation (.14 weight). This year, we modified how we compute the new J.D. employment rates used in the law school rankings in an initial effort to publish employment data that is somewhat more reflective of the job market for new J.D. graduates compared to our previous calculation method.

In the past, new J.D.s counted as employed at graduation and at nine months out if they were working full or part time in a legal or non-legal job or pursuing additional graduate school education after their J.D.; so did 25 percent of those whose status was "unknown." Now, both the at graduation and nine months after employment rates are figured solely based on the number of grads working at that point in time full or part time in a legal or non-legal job divided by the total number of J.D. graduates. Also, those who are not seeking employment are now counted in the calculation as part of the total number of J.D. graduates; previously, they were excluded from the size of the graduating class and the calculation. U.S. News believes that this calculation is a more realistic presentation of the employment data that is currently available to U.S. News.

Bar Passage Rate (.02) The ratio of the school's bar passage rate of the 2009 graduating class to that jurisdiction's overall state bar passage rate for first-time test takers in winter 2009 and summer 2009. The jurisdiction listed is the state where the largest number of 2009
graduates took the state bar exam. The state bar examination pass rates for first-time test takers in summer 2009 and winter 2009 were provided by the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

The American Bar Association's 2010 Annual Questionnaire required law schools to report their bar passage rate results for first-time test takers for the same calendar-year, winter and summer 2009.

**Faculty Resources (weighted by .15)**

**Expenditures Per Student** The average expenditures per student for the 2009 and 2010 fiscal years. The average instruction, library, and supporting services (.0975) are measured, as are all other items, including financial aid (.015).

**Student/Faculty Ratio (.03)** The ratio of students to faculty members for 2010, using the American Bar Association definition.

**Library Resources (.00/5)** The total number of volumes and titles in the school's law library at the end of the 2010 fiscal year.

**Overall Rank**

Data were standardized about their means, and standardized scores were weighted, totaled, and rescaled so that the top school received 100; others received their percentage of the top score.

**Extended law school rankings**

In response to interest from both readers and institutions in knowing where more law schools sit, we have extended the list of numerically ranked institutions from the top 100 to the top three-quarters of the schools. The remaining schools, or the bottom 25 percent of those that are ranked, are listed alphabetically as Rank Not Published (see full explanation below of Rank Not Published).

**Schools Not Ranked and listed as Unranked**

University of La Verne in California, Charleston School of Law in South Carolina, Charlotte School of Law and Elon University in North Carolina, and Drexel University in Pennsylvania are not ranked because as of February 2011 they were only provisionally approved by the American Bar Association and are listed as Unranked. Three law schools in Puerto Rico—Pontific University, Inter American University, and the University of Puerto Rico—are listed as Unranked (see full explanation below for Unranked). To be ranked and listed on the overall ranking tables, a law school must be accredited and fully approved by the American Bar Association and must draw most of its students from the United States.

**Specialty Rankings**

These specialty rankings are based solely on votes by legal educators, who nominated up to 15 schools in each field. Legal educators chosen were a selection of those listed in the Association of American Law Schools Directory of Law Teachers 2009-2010 as currently teaching in that field. In the case of clinical and legal writing, the nominations were made by directors or members of the clinical and legal writing programs at each law school. Those programs that received the most top 15 nominations appear and are numerically ranked in descending order based on the number of nominations they received as long as the school/program received seven or more nominations in that specialty area. This means that schools ranked at the bottom of each law specialty ranking have received seven nominations.

Sources: U.S. News and the schools. Assessment data collected by Synovate. N/A means that the data were not provided by the school.

Rank Not Published means that U.S. News did calculate a numerical ranking for that school/program, but decided for editorial reasons that since the school/program ranked below the U.S. News cutoff that U.S. News would not publish the ranking for that school/program on usnews.com. U.S. News will supply schools/programs marked with RNP with their numerical rankings, if they submit a request following the procedures listed in the Information for School Officials in the About the Rankings section on usnews.com.

Schools/programs marked as Rank Not published are listed alphabetically. In law we have numerically ranked the top three-fourths of the law schools that were eligible to be ranked. The bottom one-quarter of the law schools are listed as Rank Not Published and are listed alphabetically.

Unranked means that U.S. News did not calculate a numerical ranking for that law school. The school or program did not supply U.S. News with enough key statistical data to be numerically ranked by U.S. News. Schools or programs marked as Unranked are listed alphabetically and are listed below those marked as Rank Not Published.

**Tags:** graduate schools, law, rankings, education, law school