

THE 2007-08 HYLTON RANKINGS

of American Law Schools

Introduction: The Hylton Rankings rank American law schools in an order which reflects the way that they are regarded by law school professors and students. The Rankings are named for their compiler, Professor J. Gordon Hylton of Marquette University.

The Hylton Rankings are calculated using data presented in the annual rating of law schools published by the U.S. News and World Report. However, while the US News rankings are based on a variety of factors, the Hylton Rankings are based only on the peer assessment ratings provided by law professors and by the mean LSAT scores of each law school. The other US News Report categories are either arbitrary or redundant with the two used in the Hylton Rankings. Grade point average depends on undergraduate institution and major; assessment by lawyers and judges is usually just blind guessing; acceptance rates are a function of the applicant pool and subject to manipulation; employment statistics are a function of the school's prestige and are affected by local and regional market conditions; and bar passage rates are a function of how rigorously the exam is graded and the composition of the pool of bar takers. In contrast, peer assessment tells us what law professors think about individual law schools, and LSAT scores tell us what students think about the school.

The Hylton Rankings are thus a rating based on institutional prestige and reputation rather than actual educational quality. The Hylton Rankings assume that the quality of legal education provided by ABA-accredited law schools varies very little from institution to institution.

Unlike the US News ratings, the Hylton Rankings list law schools from #1 to #184. This, of course, can be highly misleading, as the difference between one school and the next is always quite small. However, those schools at the top of the list contain a larger percentage of academically talented students and are more highly regarded by law professors than those at the bottom. The top 19 schools have raw scores above 70 (out of a possible 100) while the bottom 23 schools have raw scores between 30 and 40. The raw scores listed next to the names of the school can be used to compute the actual distance between any two schools on the list.

The 2007-08 Rankings:

FIRST QUARTILE	Raw Score	2006 Ranking
1. Yale	92	2
2. Harvard	90	1
3. Columbia	87.5	3

4. University of Chicago	86.5	5
4. Stanford	86.5	3
6. New York University	86	6
7. Michigan	83	8
7. Virginia	83	7
9. Pennsylvania	82	9
10. California—Berkeley	80	10
10. Georgetown	80	11
12. Northwestern	79	12
13. Cornell	78	14
13. Duke	78	13
15. UCLA	75.5	15
16. Texas	75	15
17. Southern California	73	17
18. Vanderbilt	72.5	18
19. Minnesota	70	19
20. Washington University	69.5	21
21. Boston University	68.5	23
21. George Washington	68.5	20
21. Notre Dame	68.5	25
21. Washington & Lee	68.5	21
25. Emory	68	27
26. Illinois	67.5	23
27. Boston College	67	29
27. Fordham	67	26
29. California-Davis	66	33
29. North Carolina	66	27
29. William & Mary	66	30
32. Iowa	64.5	30
32. Wisconsin	64.5	30
34. California—Hastings	63.5	33
34. Ohio State	63.5	37
34. University of Washington	63.5	64
37. Wake Forest	63	35
38. Indiana-Bloomington	62.5	37
39. Arizona	62	39
39. Colorado	62	42
41. Brigham Young	61.5	44
41. Maryland	61.5	47
43. Tulane	61	39
44. Yeshiva-Cardozo	60.5	45
45. Alabama	60	51
45. Connecticut	60	47
45. George Mason	60	47
45. Georgia	60	42

SECOND QUARTILE	Raw Score	2006 Ranking
49. American	59.5	46
49. San Diego	59.5	47
51. Brooklyn	59	52
51. Florida	59	39
53. Arizona St.	57.5	60
53. Florida St.	57.5	56
53. Pittsburgh	57.5	58
53. Villanova	57.5	53
57. Chicago-Kent	57	53
57. Oregon	57	63
57. SMU	57	67
57. Temple	57	56
61. Utah	56.5	53
62. Case Western	56	58
62. Lewis & Clark	56	71
62. Loyola-Chicago	56	71
62. Loyola-Los Angeles	56	60
62. Miami	56	63
62. Rutgers-Camden	56	63
68. Houston	55.5	60
68. Seton Hall	55.5	71
70. Baylor	54	63
70. Cincinnati	54	71
70. Kansas	54	79
70. Missouri	54	68
70. Tennessee	54	68
75. Kentucky	53.5	68
75. Richmond	53.5	76
77. Rutgers-Newark	53	76
78. Georgia St.	52.5	84
78. Pepperdine	52.5	87
78. Santa Clara	52.5	79
78. St. Johns	52.5	76
82. Catholic	52	83
82. DePaul	52	81
82. Hawaii	52	84
82. Northeastern	52	71
86. Denver	51.5	81
86. Indiana-Indianapolis	51.5	91
88. Nebraska	51	91
88. Oklahoma	51	87
90. UNLV	50.5	102
90. South Carolina	50.5	91

THIRD QUARTILE	Raw Score	2006 Ranking
92. Marquette	50	91
92. New Mexico	50	102
92. Penn St.-Dickenson	50	105
92. San Francisco	50	87
92. St. Louis	50	87
92. Wayne St.	50	97
98. LSU	49.5	95
98. Louisville	49.5	97
98. Michigan St.	49.5	97
98. Seattle	49.5	105
98. SUNY-Buffalo	49.5	95
103. Syracuse	49	97
104. Hofstra	48.5	84
104. Willamette	48.5	111
106. Arkansas-Fayetteville	48	105
107. Maine	47.5	104
107. Pacific-McGeorge	47.5	97
107. Quinnipiac	47.5	111
107. Toledo	47.5	105
111. Mississippi	47	109
112. Albany	46	111
112. Gonzaga	46	121
114. Akron	45.5	111
114. Drake	45.5	124
114. Mercer	45.5	117
114. New York Law	45.5	111
114. Samford-Cumberland	45.5	128
114. Stetson	45.5	121
114. Suffolk	45.5	121
121. Creighton	45	135
121. Missouri-Kansas City	45	111
121. Pace	45	117
121. Vermont	45	109
125. Arkansas-Little Rock	44.5	117
125. Washburn	44.5	142
127. Cleveland St.	44	128
127. Idaho	44	117
127. St. Thomas (MN)	44	---
127. Texas Tech	44	124
127. William Mitchell	44	134
132. Chapman	43.5	148
132. Hamline	43.5	128

132. Loyola-New Orleans	43.5	124
132. Memphis	43.5	128
136. Howard	43	139
136. Montana	43	128
136. Southwestern	43	128
136. West Virginia	43	146

FOURTH QUARTILE

	Raw Score	2006 Ranking
140. Baltimore	42.5	135
140. Duquesne	42.5	139
140. John Marshall	42.5	142
143. City Univ. of New York	42	152
143. Franklin Pierce	42	142
143. South Dakota	42	148
143. Texas Wesleyan	42	148
143. Tulsa	42	142
143. Wyoming	42	139
149. Dayton	41.5	135
149. Northern Kentucky	41.5	148
149. Southern Illinois	41.5	124
152. Widener	41	158
152. Valparaiso	41	146
154. California Western	40.5	152
154. Northern Illinois	40.5	135
154. Roger Williams	40.5	158
154. South Texas	40.5	152
154. St. Mary's	40.5	152
159. Capitol	40	152
159. North Dakota	40	161
159. Western New England	40	163
162. Campbell	39.5	152
162. Florida International	39.5	---
164. New England	39	163
164. Nova Southeastern	39	166
164. Touro	39	163
167. Golden Gate	38.5	161
167. Ohio Northern	38.5	169
169. Ave Maria	38	158
170. Regent	37.5	169
171. Whittier	37	167
172. Oklahoma City	35.5	171
172. Thomas Jefferson	35.5	167
174. Detroit Mercy	35	173
175. Florida Coastal	34.5	173

175. Mississippi College	34.5	171
177. U. of the District of Columbia	34	173
177. North Carolina Central	34	177
179. St. Thomas (FL)	33.5	176
180. Thomas Cooley	33	178
181. Appalachian	32.5	---
181. Texas Southern	32.5	179
183. Barry	31	---
184. Southern	30.5	180

Additional Comments

1. The Formula for the Hylton Ratings.

To obtain a single number for ranking purposes the Hylton Rankings combine the US News Peer Assessment Score times 10 with the mean of the 25th and 75th LSAT percentiles minus 130. These adjustments produce a number between 10 and 50 for both categories. For example, Yale Law School, the highest ranked school in the US News rankings, has a Peer Assessment score of 4.9 which converts to 49. Its 25th and 75th LSAT scores are 170 and 176 which average 173. 173 minus 130 equals 43 which is then added to the Peer Assessment score for a total score of 92 out of a possible 100.

Although it may seem arbitrary, deducting 130 from the LSAT score actually converts the score into a meaningful number. LSDAS and ABA data suggest that virtually no one is accepted to law school with an LSAT score below 140, hence the real range of LSAT scores is the 40 point range between 140 and 180. The current medium Peer Assessment score is 2.3 (or 23 for rankings purposes), and the current medium LSAT score is 157 (or 27 for ranking purposes).

2. Which Law Schools Were Most Hurt and Most Helped by the US News Formula?

There is very little variation between the Hylton Rankings and the US News Ratings at the top of the chart. The 21 highest ranked schools in the US News Rankings are all ranked between 1 and 21 in the Hylton Rankings. There are, however, significant differences below this level.

The six schools which benefit most from the U.S. News' use of additional categories are New Mexico (ranked 22 places higher than in the Hylton Rankings); Toledo (also +22); SUNY Buffalo (+21); Kentucky (+15); Mercer (+14); Stetson (+14). In addition, four schools ranking in the "3rd Tier" in the US News Ratings (Florida International, Franklin Pierce, Southern Illinois, and Wyoming) would be in the "4th Tier" if the Hylton Rankings scoring system was used.

The schools that are harmed most by the additional US News categories are San Diego (which dropped 36 places below where it would have been under the Hylton Rankings); Lewis & Clark (-20); Oregon (-15); Catholic (-15); and Santa Clara (-13). In addition, Wayne State which ranks number 92 in the Hylton Rankings drops to Tier 4 in the US News Rankings. Similarly, Michigan St., ranked 98 in the Hylton Rankings, is placed in Tier 3 in the US News Ratings. Willamette, Chapman, and Hamline, all placed in Tier 4 in the US News Rankings would be in Tier 3 if the Hylton Rankings formula was used.

3. Which Law Schools Experienced the Greatest Change in their Hylton Ranking Between 2006 and 2007?

Because the Hylton Rankings use fewer categories, and the categories are relatively stable from year to year, there is less movement from one year to the next in the Hylton Rankings than in its US News counterpart. As the above chart reveals, the schools at the top of the Hylton rankings remained very stable. None of the top 21 schools moved more than one place in the rankings. However, a small number of schools did make seemingly significant movement up or down in the rankings.

Six schools moved up more than ten places in the rankings. They were: Washburn (+17, from #142 to #125); Chapman (+16, from #148 to #132); Samford-Cumberland (+14, from #128 to #114); Creighton (+14, from #135 to #121); Penn St-Dickenson (+13, from #105 to #92); and UNLV (+12, from #102 to #90).

The reason for the improvement in ranking is primarily the result of increased LSAT scores. All six schools reported higher LSAT scores this year, and four of the six (Washburn, Chapman, Samford, and UNLV) saw their Peer Assessment scores increase by one-tenth of a point over 2006. All six schools were ranked below #100 in 2006, though Penn State-Dickinson and UNLV are now ranked #92 and #90, respectively.

Eight schools dropped more than ten places in the rankings. They were: Southern Illinois (-25, from #124 to #149); Hofstra (-20, from #84 to #104); Northern Illinois (-19, from #135 to #154); Dayton (-14, from #135 to #149); Florida (-12, from #39 to #51); Vermont (-12, from #109 to #121); Northeastern (-11 from #71 to #82); and Ave Maria (-11 from #158 to #169). Southern Illinois, Hofstra, Florida, and Ave Maria experienced both a one-tenth of a point drop in their Peer Assessment scores and a decline in LSAT scores. The peer assessment scores remained the same for the other four, although each experienced a drop in LSAT scores.

Of the fourteen schools that moved more than ten places in the rankings, only one (the University of Florida) was ranked among the top fifty schools in 2006. Florida also experienced the large change in its raw score of any school as it dropped from 62.5 in 2006 to 59 in 2007. This was the result of its Peer Assessment score dropping from 3.2 in 2006 to 3.1 in 2007, and its LSAT 25% / 75% range declining from 157/164 to 155/161.

4. Why Are There 184 Schools Ranked This Year?

Four schools which recently achieved full ABA accreditation were ranked for the first time in 2007. They were St. Thomas of Minnesota (#127); Florida International (#162), Appalachian (#181), and Barry (#183).