

THE US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT RANKINGS WITHOUT THE CLUTTER

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The only categories that should matter in law school rankings are the quality of the students and the quality of the faculty. In the US News & World Report rankings these concepts are best, though imperfectly, captured by the categories “Peer Assessment” (a ranking of law schools by law faculty) and LSAT score (a reasonable accurate measure of student ability). All the other categories are clutter and too ambiguous. 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 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. Peer assessment tells us what other law professors think about individual law schools; LSAT scores tell us what students think about the school.

I have recalculated the US News and World Report Ratings using the “2007” data (actually compiled in 2005) for my two categories. To obtain a single number for ranking purposes I 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 40 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 25% and 75% LSAT scores are 168 and 175 which average 171.5. 171.5 minus 130 equals 41.5 which is then added to the Peer Assessment score for a total of 90.5 out of a possible 100. Deducting 130 from the LSAT score actually converts the score into a meaningful number. LSDAS and ABA data suggest that virtually no one gets into law school with an LSAT score below 140, hence the real range is a 40 point range (180-140).

I would prefer a better index of peer assessment than the US News’ practice of surveying the five most recently tenured professors at each law school, but this is all we have at the moment. Since few law schools admit students solely on the basis of LSAT score, I am confident that LSAT score is a valid indication of general student abilities. For Louisiana law schools, I have used the US News data which, due to Hurricane Katrina, had to be derived from an earlier year.

Below are the uncluttered rankings and composite scores of all 178 law schools listed in the US News rankings.

TOP QUARTILE

1. Harvard	92.0
2. Yale	90.5
3. Stanford	87.5
3. Columbia	87.5
5. Chicago	87.0
6. NYU	86.0
7. Virginia	84.0
8. Michigan	83.5
9. Pennsylvania	82.5
10. Cal-Berkeley	81.5
11. Georgetown	80.5
12. Northwestern	80.0
13. Duke	79.0
14. Cornell	78.5
15. Texas	75.5
15. UCLA	75.5
17. Southern California	73.5
18. Vanderbilt	73.0
19. Minnesota	70.5
20. George Washington	69.5
21. Washington Univ.	69.0
21. Washington & Lee	69.0
23. Boston University	68.5
23. Illinois	68.5
25. Notre Dame	68.0
26. Fordham	67.5
27. Emory	67.0
27. North Carolina	67.0
29. Boston College	66.5
30. Iowa	65.5
30. William and Mary	65.5
30. Wisconsin	65.5
33. California-Davis	65.0
33. California-Hastings	65.0
35. Univ. of Washington	64.0
35. Wake Forest	64.0
37. Indiana	63.0
37. Ohio State	63.0
39. Florida	62.5
39. Tulane	62.5
39. Arizona	62.5
42. Georgia	62.0
42. Colorado	62.0
44. Brigham Young	61.5

45. Cardozo 61.0

SECOND QUARTILE

46. American University 60.5
47. Connecticut 60.0
47. George Mason 60.0
47. Maryland 60.0
47. San Diego 60.0
51. Alabama 59.0
51. Miami 59.0
53. Brooklyn 58.5
54. Utah 58.0
54. Chicago-Kent 58.0
54. Villanova 58.0
57. Florida St. 57.5
57. Temple 57.5
59. Case Western 57.0
59. Pittsburgh 57.0
61. Arizona St. 56.5
61. Houston 56.5
61. Loyola-Los Angeles 56.5
64. Baylor 56.0
64. Rutgers-Camden 56.0
64. Oregon 56.0
67. Southern Methodist 55.5
68. Missouri 55.0
68. Tennessee 55.0
68. Kentucky 55.0
71. Cincinnati 54.0
71. Loyola-Chicago 54.0
71. Seton Hall 54.0
71. Northeastern 54.0
71. Lewis & Clark 54.0
76. Richmond 53.5
76. Rutgers-Newark 53.5
76. St. John's 53.5
79. Kansas 53.0
79. Santa Clara 53.0
81. Denver 52.5
81. DePaul 52.5
83. Catholic 52.0
84. Georgia St. 51.5
84. Hawaii 51.5
84. Hofstra 51.5

87. St. Louis	51.0
87. Oklahoma	51.0
87. Pepperdine	51.0
87. San Francisco	51.0

THIRD QUARTILE

91. Marquette	50.0
91. Indiana-Indianapolis	50.0
91. Nebraska	50.0
91. South Carolina	50.0
95. SUNY-Buffalo	49.5
95. Louisiana State	49.5
97. Pacific-McGeorge	49.0
97. Syracuse	49.0
97. Louisville	49.0
97. Wayne St.	49.0
97. Michigan St.	49.0
102. New Mexico	48.5
102. Nevada-Las Vegas	48.5
104. Maine	49.0
105. Penn St.-Dickenson	47.5
105. Seattle	47.5
105. Toledo	47.5
105. Arkansas-Fayetteville	47.5
109. Mississippi	46.5
109. Vermont	46.5
111. Albany	46.0
111. New York Law School	46.0
111. Quinnipiac	46.0
111. Akron	46.0
111. Missouri-Kansas City	46.0
111. Willamette	46.0
117. Mercer	45.5
117. Pace	45.5
117. Arkansas-Little Rock	45.5
117. Idaho	45.5
121. Gonzaga	45.0
121. Stetson	45.0
121. Suffolk	45.0
124. Southern Illinois	44.5
124. Drake	44.5
124. Loyola-New Orleans	44.5
124. Texas Tech	44.5
128. Cleveland St.	44.0
128. Samford	44.0

128.	Southwestern	44.0
128.	Memphis	44.0
128.	Montana	44.0
128.	Hamline	44.0
134.	William Mitchell	43.5
135.	Creighton	43.0
135.	Baltimore	43.0
135.	Dayton	43.0
135.	Northern Illinois	43.0

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FOURTH QUARTILE

139.	Duquesne	42.5
139.	Howard	42.5
139.	Wyoming	42.5
142.	Washburn	42.0
142.	Franklin Pierce	42.0
142.	John Marshall	42.0
142.	Tulsa	42.0
146.	Valparaiso	41.5
146.	West Virginia	41.5
148.	Chapman	41.0
148.	Northern Kentucky	41.0
148.	Texas Wesleyan	41.0
148.	South Dakota	41.0
152.	California Western	40.5
152.	Campbell	40.5
152.	Capital	40.5
152.	CUNY-Queens	40.5
152.	South Texas	40.5
152.	St. Mary's	40.5
158.	Widener	40.0
158.	Ave Maria	40.0
158.	Roger Williams	40.0
161.	North Dakota	39.5
161.	Golden Gate	39.5
163.	New England	38.5
163.	Touro	38.5
163.	Western New England	38.5
166.	Nova Southeastern	38.0
167.	Thomas Jefferson	37.5
167.	Whittier	37.5
169.	Ohio Northern	37.0
169.	Regent	37.0
171.	Mississippi College	36.0

171. Oklahoma City	36.0
173. Florida Coastal	35.0
173. Univ. of Dist. Col.	35.0
173. Detroit Mercy	35.0
176. St. Thomas-Miami	33.5
177. North Carolina Central	32.5
178. Thomas Cooley	32.0
179. Texas Southern	31.5
180. Southern	29.5