

# EMPLOYMENT HONOR ROLL



BY MIKE STETZ

# You're hired!

Grads of some law schools land jobs at better-than-expected rates, according to a preLaw analysis. Those schools work hard to get those results, they say.

If you're a graduate of, say, Cornell Law School, you really don't have to sweat landing a job. From the 2017 class, 94 percent got legal jobs. The other 6 percent? They're astronauts, we guess.

Graduates of Cornell Law and other top-tier schools should be the most employable because they're academic stars.

But which law schools have employment results that rise above their graduates' more average academic profiles? These are schools whose graduates somehow get jobs at clips that exceed their predicted rates.

Are their graduates luckier? Better dressed? Not showing visible tattoos?

Or are these schools doing something special?

preLaw magazine used a procedure called linear regression to find the algebraic equation that best predicted a law school's employment rate based on its students' average LSAT scores and undergraduate GPAs. Students' incoming achievement levels accounted for about 58 percent of the difference between law schools in terms of eventual student employment, leaving 42 percent of the variability in employment to be explained by other aspects. By comparing a school's actual employment rate with the rate predicted by LSATs or GPAs alone, we can see how a school fares in comparison to an average law school with similar incoming-student scores.

For this analysis, we used a weighted employment rate that gives more weight to full-time, bar-passage-required jobs, and less weight to part-time and non-legal jobs.

Eight law schools managed to rate at least 10 percentage points higher than expected. Eleven schools

came in at least 10 percentage points lower than expected.

This is meaningful because ...

Actually, there's no reason to finish that sentence ...

"I can't think of anything more important that a law school can do than getting their students jobs," said Harry Ballan, dean of Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center, which finished first in our analysis, with an employment rate 15 percentage points higher than predicted.

The Long Island, N.Y. school's employment rate is 80 percent.

Most certainly, having a rigorous and robust academic curriculum that prepares students for the field of a law is a law school's primary mission. But given the evolution of the legal job market and the competition for jobs — as well as the need for many grads to pay off student loans — schools, arguably, need to do more. Tackling today's job market takes a level of expertise that many students simply don't have.

Improving alumni connections, reaching out to local employers and teaching students how to create relationships within the legal community are all tools that can be in a law school's toolbox.

But schools don't have to worry about a poor employment rate threatening their American Bar Association accreditation. Yes, they are required to make public their employment rates, but a lame outcome doesn't result in punishment.

Scott Norberg, a law professor at Florida International University College of Law in Miami, would like to see that change. He believes employ-



**"I can't think of anything more important that a law school can do than getting their students jobs."**

—Harry Ballan,  
dean, Touro College  
Jacob D. Fuchsberg  
Law Center



# Highest performers

| Law School                  | Predicted Employment | Actual Employment | Percentage Point Difference |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Touro Law Center            | 65.3%                | 80.3%             | 15.1                        |
| University of Tulsa         | 76.1%                | 91.1%             | 15.0                        |
| Seton Hall University       | 78.3%                | 92.0%             | 13.7                        |
| Concordia University        | 63.5%                | 77.1%             | 13.5                        |
| Texas Southern University   | 61.5%                | 74.2%             | 12.7                        |
| Pace University             | 72.8%                | 85.4%             | 12.6                        |
| Oklahoma City University    | 67.6%                | 79.7%             | 12.1                        |
| University of Kentucky      | 79.1%                | 90.9%             | 11.8                        |
| Lincoln Memorial University | 67.2%                | 76.5%             | 9.2                         |
| Louisiana State University  | 77.5%                | 86.6%             | 9.1                         |
| Saint Louis University      | 76.6%                | 85.4%             | 8.8                         |
| Rutgers Law                 | 77.1%                | 85.7%             | 8.7                         |
| University of Montana       | 75.9%                | 84.4%             | 8.4                         |
| University of Louisville    | 74.8%                | 83.0%             | 8.2                         |
| University of Missouri - KC | 75.8%                | 83.9%             | 8.1                         |
| West Virginia University    | 74.9%                | 82.8%             | 7.8                         |
| University of New Hampshire | 78.6%                | 85.9%             | 7.3                         |
| University of Missouri      | 79.3%                | 86.6%             | 7.3                         |
| University of Oklahoma      | 81.2%                | 88.3%             | 7.0                         |
| Baylor University           | 81.8%                | 88.7%             | 6.9                         |
| Drexel University Kline     | 77.1%                | 83.8%             | 6.8                         |

| Law School                      | Predicted Employment | Actual Employment | Percentage Point Difference |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| University of South Dakota      | 72.6%                | 79.4%             | 6.8                         |
| Columbia Law School             | 87.9%                | 94.7%             | 6.8                         |
| Marquette University            | 75.7%                | 82.3%             | 6.6                         |
| Duke University                 | 88.5%                | 95.0%             | 6.5                         |
| University of Miami             | 78.1%                | 84.6%             | 6.5                         |
| Ohio Northern University        | 72.8%                | 79.2%             | 6.4                         |
| Cornell Law School              | 88.4%                | 94.4%             | 6.0                         |
| Hofstra University (Deane)      | 75.5%                | 81.4%             | 5.9                         |
| University of South Carolina    | 76.6%                | 82.5%             | 5.9                         |
| University of Wyoming           | 72.8%                | 78.5%             | 5.7                         |
| UNM School of Law               | 77.0%                | 82.6%             | 5.6                         |
| University of Memphis           | 73.9%                | 79.5%             | 5.6                         |
| Duquesne University             | 76.9%                | 82.4%             | 5.6                         |
| University of Utah              | 82.2%                | 87.7%             | 5.5                         |
| John Marshall                   | 67.6%                | 73.0%             | 5.4                         |
| Samford University              | 74.1%                | 79.5%             | 5.4                         |
| Creighton University            | 74.1%                | 79.4%             | 5.3                         |
| Appalachian School of Law       | 59.0%                | 64.3%             | 5.3                         |
| University of Tennessee         | 81.1%                | 86.4%             | 5.2                         |
| University of Nevada, Las Vegas | 80.9%                | 86.1%             | 5.2                         |
| Cardozo School of Law           | 81.5%                | 86.5%             | 5.0                         |



## CONSIDERING LAW SCHOOL? EXPLORE THE PACE PATH TO PRACTICE.

- Superb location in the heart of the nation's most dynamic legal marketplace
- 92% of the Class of 2017 is employed
- Focus on student preparation and success
- Opportunity to spend final semester entirely in supervised practice
- Broad and diverse alumni network
- Exceptional value through scholarships and grants
- Learn from exceptional scholars and practitioners
- Preeminent reputation in environmental law, public interest law and international scholarship

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE OFFICE OF ADMISSIONS AT (914) 422-4210 OR [ADMISSIONS@LAW.PACE.EDU](mailto:ADMISSIONS@LAW.PACE.EDU).

**PACE**  
UNIVERSITY

ELISABETH HAUB  
SCHOOL OF LAW

[www.law.pace.edu](http://www.law.pace.edu)

78 North Broadway  
White Plains, NY 10603

ment results should matter. Indeed, schools that have low employment rates tend to be the same ones that are lowering admission standards to keep their doors open, which only worsens the problem.

Norberg outlined his argument in a paper called “The Case for an ABA Accreditation Standard on Employment Outcomes.”

“There is nothing in the ABA accreditation standards that directly influences schools to focus on employment outcomes,” he said. “As long as they are

meeting the existing requirements (attrition, bar passage), they are free to ignore employment outcomes, and most of the schools with the poorest employment outcomes fully exploit the gap.”

Poor employment rates will hurt independent rankings, but “few if any of the schools with persistently very weak employment outcomes are concerned with the rankings,” he added.

Being required to meet a reasonable employment goal in order to maintain accreditation could help correct the problem of some schools pumping out too many grads in a market that can’t absorb them. The schools might face difficulty in meeting these goals, but an effort

would have to be made, he said.

“As when the bar-pass standard was first adopted, schools that are on the margin would do what is necessary to comply with an employment-outcome standard,” Norberg said.

This is a big deal because the employment picture for law grads remains stagnant. Data from the American Bar Association shows that 75.3 percent of the 2017 graduates were employed in full-time, long-term bar passage required or J.D. advantage jobs 10 months after graduation.

While that’s better than the year before, when 72.6 percent got such jobs, the number is misleading because the 2017 class size was smaller. The number of jobs actually fell by 630 year-over-year.

Some schools had dreadful results, according to our analysis. Thomas Jefferson School of Law in San Diego, for instance, had an employment rate of 39 percent, which is 20 percentage points lower than its predicted number.

And some schools performed as expected, such as Harvard Law School, which had

an employment rate just 1 percentage point higher than predicted. That’s because it’s hard to improve on an employment rate of nearly 92 percent. The median LSAT score of its students is, after all, 173.

So what’s the secret of Touro Law Center, whose students have a median LSAT of 147?

It works at improving its employment goals — and aggressively so, it says.

“Our goal and hope is our students will flourish in the ways that humans flourish,” Ballan said. “Without jobs, they cannot. So we have an obligation to work strenuously



**“There is nothing in the ABA accreditation standards that directly influences schools to focus on employment outcomes.”**

—Scott Norberg,  
Florida International  
University College  
of Law

## SETON HALL | LAW

### Consistently Posting Strong Employment Outcomes



**#17**

**National Law  
Journal ranking**

(based on percentage of  
graduates in full-time, long-term  
positions requiring bar passage)

For the  
Class of 2017

**88.62%**

**Employment rate**  
in positions in which  
passage of the bar exam is  
required, or a J.D. is  
an advantage

[law.shu.edu](http://law.shu.edu) | 973-642-8500

**BE THE DIFFERENCE.  
BECOME  
A MARQUETTE  
LAWYER.**



[law.marquette.edu](http://law.marquette.edu)

— as much as humanly possible — to help them become working lawyers.”

The school has taken a number of concrete steps to brighten its graduates’ employment picture, Ballan said. For one, it has increased its focus on engagement with employers and alumni. That has greatly increased the number of on-campus interviews, so students get more opportunities to meet with potential employers.

And the students come prepared, he said. From the first semester on, they are taught job-building skills. The staff of the Career Services office takes a very hands-

on approach when working with students. They learn the students’ strengths and career hopes and goals early on.

“They have a sense of who (the students) are and help them come up with a plan,” Ballan said.

The school has worked with its students and with the legal community to create these two complementary pieces, he said. Teaching students how to land a job does little good if the school fails to provide job possibilities. Likewise, employers would be hard-pressed to look at Touro students as potential employees if the students didn’t

know how to step up to the plate.

“We created a culture that employers love and a culture that students love,” Ballan said.

This was a very strategic plan, he said, which was devised by the former director of career services, Jim Montes. A former partner at Nixon Peabody in Manhattan, Montes brought an employer’s perspective to the job.

“I can’t speak for other schools, but that has helped us,” Ballan said.

Could other variables be at play when it comes to Touro’s success? The New York job market is one of the hottest in the nation. Ballan isn’t certain what role that plays because the market is so fragmented. Legal jobs run the gamut, from Big Law to public defenders to prosecutors to corporate counselors to legal aid. So it’s hard to quantify which jobs in which sectors are becoming more plentiful.

“It’s a complex question,” he said.

Lyn Entzeroth, dean of The University of Tulsa College of Law in Oklahoma, said the legal market appears to be improving. But if that’s the case, all schools should be seeing better employment numbers. They are not. So some schools may be placing more emphasis on helping graduates get jobs.

University of Tulsa is, she said. Her school has an employment rate of 91 percent, its best ever. Our predicted employment rate for the school is in the 76 percent range, a difference that made it second in our analysis.

“We’re seeing results that exceed other schools,” Entzeroth said.

A strong academic core, vigorous practical training and a committed faculty are all necessary, but so is professional development, she said.

“On top of everything else, we make



**“Diversity also brings new thought and ideas to the table.”**

— Nikki Wright  
assistant dean of career and professional development, Texas Southern University - Thurgood Marshall School of Law

**OU LAW**

**TOP 25**  
**FOR JD REQUIRED**  
**& LONG-TERM EMPLOYMENT**  
**FOR THE CLASS OF 2017**

— American Bar Association —

**TOP 20**  
**MOST INNOVATIVE LAW SCHOOL**  
— *preLaw Magazine* —

**TOP 10**  
**BEST VALUE LAW SCHOOL**  
**IN THE NATION**  
— *National Jurist* —

**TOP 5**  
**MOOT COURT**  
**COMPETITION PROGRAM**  
**IN THE NATION**  
— The Blakely Advocacy Institute —

**95%**  
**BAR EXAM PASSAGE RATE**  
for first-time exam takers – the highest in the state  
— Oklahoma Board of Bar Examiners —

**law.ou.edu**

For admissions questions or to schedule a visit, email [tour@law.ou.edu](mailto:tour@law.ou.edu).  
The University of Oklahoma is an equal opportunity institution. [www.ou.edu/eoo](http://www.ou.edu/eoo)



career services a focus,” she said. “It starts at orientation.”

Students participate in an orientation called Foundations of Legal Studies before taking a single class. In that, they visit the federal courthouse and meet judges, as well as going to social events where they meet deans and faculty.

In the first semester, students are required to take the Dean’s Seminar, which is led by Entzeroth and Director of Professional Development Christy Caves. The seminar gives first-year students an introduction to

the legal word and gets them started on their career development. Each student then has a one-on-one meeting to begin mapping out career plans.

By Thanksgiving of the first year, each student is required to write a resume, which is then reviewed by Professional Development staff.

Students are also expected to hold informational interviews with legal professionals, she said. This provides them with the chance to learn interviewing skills without the pressure of having a job on the line. The school

also has a mentoring program, which teams 2L and 3L students with legal professionals.

The Professional Development office makes it a goal to work with students throughout their law school years, Entzeroth said.

“They continue the relationship that was started at the beginning,” she said. “It takes a lot of work, but that kind of personal connection makes a difference.”

Students do think about their careers from an early stage, she said.

“Many come to law school wanting to do something in particular,” she said.

The story is not much different from when she went to law school.

“Did I want a job? You bet,” she said. “Was I anxious about it? You bet. Some things never change.”

Texas Southern University - Thurgood Marshall School of Law made a change. And that was to rebrand its career services office as the Office of Career and Professional Development. Why? The school wanted to let students know it was moving in a new direction when it came to helping them land jobs. The new office has a larger staff and offers additional services.

“We wanted students to see it as more of a resource to help them develop their professional lives, both now and into the future,” said Nikki Wright Smith, assistant dean of career and professional development, who was brought in two years ago to help with the transformation.

And it’s working.

“We’re seeing more foot traffic into the office,” she said. “They’re getting to know us more.”


Texas Southern University needed to do something. Not that long ago, the Houston-based law school’s graduate employment rate was 50 percent — the kind of number that was only fueling criticism of law schools.

However, the Class of 2017 had an employment rate of 74.18 percent, 12 percentage points greater than the predicted rate, placing it fifth in our analysis. Despite the improvements, Smith realizes the school’s work is hardly done.

“Jobs remain hard to find,” she said.

She advises students to be savvy about their job search. As an example, take health law, a growing, in-demand specialty. A student may not love it, but he or she may have shown an aptitude for it while in law school. Why not give it a shot?

“You can always transition to another



**100%**  
**THE HIGHEST  
ULTIMATE BAR  
PASSAGE RATE  
IN THE NATION.**

— DATA FROM THE ABA SECTION OF LEGAL EDUCATION AND ADMISSIONS TO THE BAR

**BAYLOR LAW GRADUATES DO MORE THAN PASS THE BAR, THEY RAISE IT.**

**Baylor Law.**  
BAYLOR.EDU/LAW



Hear  
yourself  
think



1169 Edgewater Drive, Grundy, Va. 24614  
www.asl.edu • admissions@asl.edu  
(276) 244-1203



specialty later,” Smith said.

Same goes with relocating. If a student is interested in tech, they might want to consider moving from Houston to Austin, which has a thriving tech scene. California may be another option.

“You don’t have to live there forever,” Smith said. “I encourage my students to be open.”

To make the job outcomes more successful, the office has been working to build more relationships, Smith said. She meets with area employers and goes to networking events.

The school is also diverse and was once recognized by preLaw magazine as the top law school in the nation in that regard. The law profession needs more diversity, and that’s another reason employers should look at Texas Southern University, Smith said. The nation is growing more diverse, and that means a law firm’s client base is growing

more diverse.

“And diversity also brings new thoughts and ideas to the table,” she said, which makes a law firm more dynamic.

Both Smith and Ashley Scott, assistant director of the office, were working lawyers until a few years ago, so they know the ins and outs of the profession. “We’re able to share our experiences,” Smith said. “Plus, we’ve been where they are. We can relate.”

That’s important at Texas Southern University. Most are first-generation law school students. Many were the first in their families to graduate from college. They may not know how best to integrate themselves into the legal community. They’ve had no one to learn from.

“For them, it’s a whole new world,” she said. “They finish law school and, say, ‘OK, what do I do now?’”

Smith is there to show them. And the numbers show that it’s working.



The end of law  
is not to abolish  
or restrain, but  
to preserve and  
enlarge freedom.

— John Locke

**JOIN US ON  
LAW SCHOOL  
HILL.**

[law.wvu.edu](http://law.wvu.edu)

