

Law Students of the Year:
25 who excel in school & beyond

Guide to summer specialty
courses across the U.S.

the National Jurist

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WHY PRACTICAL TRAINING MATTERS



From helping immigrants affected by the recent travel ban to assisting the indigent, law students are not only helping society but also learning to be better lawyers.

Plus: Best Schools for Practical Training

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YALE LAW SCHOOL'S Worker & Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic assisted in filing the first lawsuit after President Trump's executive order banning travel from seven countries. It was on behalf of an Iraqi man at risk of being deported.

Best Schools for Practical Training

Practical training continues to play a key role in legal education, even as schools struggle with bar passage rates. We identify schools that offer the most opportunities.

BY KATIE THISDELL

Within hours of President Trump's executive order banning citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries from entering the U.S., hundreds of attorneys around the country rushed to airports to help families of travelers who were being held and threatened with deportation.

Students and faculty at Yale Law School's Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic also got to work.

Working in partnership with a coalition of leading civil rights' groups, including the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), the school's 30-person clinic team helped file the first legal challenge to the Trump administration on behalf of two Iraqi refugees detained at John F. Kennedy International Airport. The next day, a federal judge issued a nationwide temporary stay, after a lawyer

from the American Civil Liberties Union argued it at an emergency hearing. The team — which included many former students at the clinic — had worked around the clock, and also created a template for other lawyers to use.

"It was amazing — everyone swung into action and we were up all night drafting it," Becca Heller, a Yale graduate and co-founder of IRAP, told *The New York Times*.

Immigration clinics at schools around the country joined similar efforts, allowing students to get on-the-job training with outcomes that affected real people. Universities also called on their law schools to aid the students, faculty and staff who are at risk of deportation. For example, New York University launched the NYU Immigrant Defense Initiative, coordinated

by the law school's Immigration Rights Clinic; immigration clinics at Harvard Law School and Stanford Law School held town halls for their university communities; participants in American University's Immigrant Justice Clinic warned clients of new risks, protested at the White House and offered services at airports.

Yale has expanded its clinical offerings in recent years — now 80 percent of its law students take part in its 20 clinics, and many students participate in more than one.

That helped Yale earn an A+ in our annual assessment of the best schools for practical training. It placed third behind Northeastern University School of Law and University of St. Thomas School of Law — Minneapolis.

Those three schools have been at the top for the past few years.

Fifteen schools are new to the list year, including Valparaiso University Law School (A+) and University of Connecticut (A-). Schools that have improved the most are University of Cincinnati College of Law (from B+ to A), The University of Mississippi School of Law (from A- to A) and Syracuse University College of Law (from B to A-).

Around the country, law school students are getting experience with clients and in courtrooms. Students may work in clinics and externships. They may compete in moot court and practice trial skills. Or, they may participate in simulation courses, where they can practice their lawyering skills in a controlled setting.

All students now must complete six credit hours of practical training courses, per the American Bar Association's 2015 rule. That has ensured that experiential learning is here to stay, and has led more schools to better prepare law students for the real world.

What is practice ready?

What is practice readiness? And who is responsible for cultivating it?

These are among the big questions law schools —and employers — have been trying to answer during the past few years as a result of the rupture in the legal job market. They want to know who is responsible for making sure graduates are ready to go into the workplace and represent clients.

Is it the role of the law school? Or are schools supposed to provide a three-year introduction to the law? This dichotomy has sometimes placed clinical and doctri-

attorneys and judges. The score was based on the number of positions filled compared to the number of students enrolled in the school. We obtained data from the ABA.

Simulations accounted for 21 percent. This training method seems to be growing more popular as schools seek to promote lawyering skills in classroom settings. It's effective and less expensive, experts say. The score was based on the number of positions filled compared to the number of students enrolled in the school. We obtained data from the ABA.

Interschool competitions account for 5 percent. The score was based on the number of students who participated compared to the number of students enrolled in the school. We obtained data from the ABA.

We asked schools to provide information about additional offerings that are not reflected in ABA data, and this accounted for the final 10 percent. For example, schools requiring pro bono work were awarded points for those efforts.

The Top 20

	2016 grade	School
1	A+	Northeastern University
2	A+	University of St. Thomas - Mn.
3	A+	Yale Law School
4	A+	University of Arizona
5	A+	Pepperdine University
6	A+	UC - Irvine
7	A+	Valparaiso University
8	A+	University of Wisconsin
9	A+	University of Denver
10	A	University of Colorado
11	A	Northwestern Law
12	A	University of Utah
13	A	University of Cincinnati
14	A	Cardozo School of Law
15	A	Golden Gate University
16	A	Liberty University School of Law
17	A	Washington and Lee University
18	A	Pacific McGeorge School of Law
19	A	Brigham Young University
20	A	University of Mississippi

A-

School
Baylor University
Brooklyn Law School
Campbell Law School
Case Western University
Florida Coastal School of Law
Mitchell Hamline
Syracuse University
Temple University
University of Connecticut
University of Georgia
University of Hawai'i
University of Kansas
University of New Hampshire
University of Washington
University of Wyoming
William & Mary Law School

METHODOLOGY

The rankings are based on experiential learning opportunities, with data from the American Bar Association (ABA) and individual law schools. We looked at five categories: clinics; externships; simulation courses; interschool competitions; and "other."

We placed the most weight on clinical experience, at 38 percent. Experts say it is a particularly effective practical training tool. Students, under faculty direction, work with clients in a number of legal areas. The score was based on the number of clinical positions filled compared to the number of students enrolled in the school. First-year students were included, since some schools open clinics to them. We obtained all data from the ABA.

Externships were given the second highest weight, at 24 percent. Students get experience by working in prosecutor offices, government agencies and nonprofits, to name but a few. They get hands-on training by working with



LAWYERS OFFERED FREE LEGAL AID at airports across the country after President Donald Trump banned visitors, refugees and immigrants from seven countries to the U.S. Joining those lawyers were law school students in immigrant rights clinics, who also helped do research and file legal challenges.

tion's primary duty of ensuring that law school prepares students for entry into the legal profession and a successful career," Robert Kuehn of Washington University School of Law wrote in a blog post. "If studies of practicing lawyers and recent law graduates matter, it is clear that law schools are failing, even worse than in preparation for bar admission, to adequately prepare their students for legal practice."

There are also questions as to whom should be getting lawyers ready to practice law. Many countries require law school graduates to complete yearlong apprenticeships before they are officially licensed.

In a 2015 study by LexisNexis, 95 percent of hiring partners and senior associates who supervise new attorneys said recent graduates lack key practical skills at

nal faculty at odds about their mission.

And what does it mean to be "practice ready"?

Much attention has been paid to the trend of declining bar passage rates. However, the bar exam tests knowledge, not necessarily practice skills. But some argue that if law students don't have a

core understanding of the law — and bar results seem to show that's increasingly the case — how can they possibly be good lawyers? Indeed, they could receive all the practical training in the world and still flounder.

"In focusing on the bar exam, it's important not to lose sight of legal educa-

Where in the World Are You Going?

The important thing is that you go!

TORONTO - MAY 17-JUNE 29, 2017

Toronto, Canada's largest and most culturally diverse city, is dynamic, from its professional sports teams and museums to its theatre and financial districts.

OXFORD - JULY 3-AUG 4, 2017 Oxford, known as the city of dreaming spires because of its unique and historic churches and buildings, is near London and home of the oldest university in the English-speaking world.

STUDY DOWN UNDER JAN-APRIL

Leave the northern hemisphere and winter behind and enjoy warm weather in Australia and New Zealand. The semester program begins in Hamilton, New Zealand and finishes in Melbourne, Australia.

WMU-Cooley Law School's study abroad programs include a variety of legal and social events, including visits by prominent lawyers, tours of the courts and parliaments, and dinners and gatherings.



cooley.edu/foreignstudy

the time of hiring. As a result, law firms are increasingly evaluating these skills during the hiring process. The study goes on to pinpoint skills that legal employers desire new associates to have, such as the ability to do advanced legal research.

“Hiring newly graduated lawyers without practical skills is costly to law firms,” the report said. “In-house training programs, particularly in large firms, are filling the gap in advanced legal research, drafting and transactional skills which are needed in their young associates.”

On average, attorneys estimated their firms spend nearly \$19,000 to train a new associate.

“Integrating more practical skills instruction and experiences is the best way for law schools to better equip their graduates with the skills their future employers need, making them more marketable and better able to quickly contribute to their profession,” the report concludes.

Some of the country’s largest companies are thinking about how they can train their new hires, and how schools can assist. They know they need to prepare for the lawyering of the future as technology plays a part in reshaping education and business, said Brad Smith, Microsoft’s president and chief legal officer, in a keynote address at a recent law school conference.

The third year of law school should be more practical and experiential in nature, Smith said. That presents more challenges, though, as clinics require a higher faculty-student ratio and can be more expensive.

He said that’s perhaps one of the greatest needs for fundraising at law schools across the country. A firm’s clients certainly don’t want to pay for a first-year associate’s training.

“But, somebody has to pay for a first-year associate to get trained,” Smith said. “One great law firm in this country is going to do the unexpected but, in fact, something that the great management consulting firms have already done. If you graduate from college and go straight to one of the top-tier management consulting firms, they basically say, ‘Our expectation is that we will not bill out at all our entry-level people for the first six months.’”

Clients should be excited to get free help from young attorneys who are smart but just not yet fully trained, he said.

“You can see dominos start to fall,” Smith said.

Connecting law school experiences and post-graduate training can go hand in hand, he said.

Yet, it’s not just legal expertise and experience that new lawyers need. In a report released this year, *Educating Tomorrow’s Lawyers* cited a disconnect between legal education’s focus on legal knowledge and the competencies new lawyers should have.

The study found “that characteristics (such as integrity and trustworthiness, conscientiousness and common sense), as well as professional competencies (such as listening attentively, speaking and writing, and arriving on time), were far more important in brand new lawyers than legal skills.”

Washington University’s Kuehn noted that these “soft skills” are only addressed in clinical and first-year legal writing courses.

Most Improved

The daughter of small business owners, Sarah Ambach had seen first hand the work that goes into getting a business off the ground and running it successfully.

Ambach wanted to help entrepreneurs, and she knew getting firsthand experience in law school would pave the road for her career. She was drawn to a school in a Rust Belt city that’s been called an “unexpected” hub for tech startups: University of Cincinnati College of Law.

Ambach, who is scheduled to earn her J.D. this spring, has participated in the school’s Entrepreneurship and Community Development Clinic and has had several externships, which allowed her to help business owners and tech startups. As a result, she has gained experience in drafting documents, assisting with intellectual property matters and filing incorporation papers.

“When they have these clinic opportunities, you’re getting this hands-on work and client face time,” said Ambach, who also founded the school’s student-run Entrepreneurship Law Club. “You’re handling the relationship from the initial meeting to filing documents to closing out. In most normal settings, you’re not getting to be one-on-one with a client until a couple of years in. This is giving you that experience while you’re in law school.”

University of Cincinnati is among the schools that improved the most this year. The school’s Center for Professional Development oversees externships, volunteer opportunities and job placement. That means all real-world opportunities are under one umbrella.

“I think the students are very much

B+

School
Chapman Fowler School of Law
Chicago-Kent College of Law
CUNY School of Law
Drake University
Elon University
Emory University
Howard University School of Law
IU Bloomington (Maurer)
John Marshall
Lewis & Clark Law School
Loyola University Chicago
Pace University
Southern Illinois University
Southwestern Law School
SUNY Buffalo Law School
Touro Law Center
UMKC School of Law
University of Illinois
University of Miami
University of Minnesota
University of Montana
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of Oregon
University of Tennessee
University of the District of Columbia
Villanova Law
Washburn University
Whittier Law School

benefiting from a comprehensive approach,” said Dean Jennifer Bard, adding that the school’s academic advising department is also becoming more career-focused. “It’s linking the course work, the academic work, with the practical training.”

The school is also trying to reinforce in students the value of practical training opportunities. This year’s entering class was the first to be required to meet with the career services office annually, said Mina Jones Jefferson, associate dean and director of the Center for Professional Development.

“I think that is just further evidence of how the faculty understands that what they’re being taught in classrooms needs to play out in the marketplace, and we’re very integrated on that front,” Jefferson



UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI COLLEGE OF LAW students work with Judge Robert Winkler at the courthouse. The school's Center for Professional Development oversees externships, volunteer opportunities and job placement, so all real-world opportunities are under one umbrella.

are now working on what we think is the only active food-law trial in the country. They have done cutting-edge work on privacy issues, gay rights, environmental reform, housing, immigration and labor/employment. It's been a great run."

Food law is a growing specialty area at Yale Law School, and during the past few years, a thriving community of students interested in food law has blossomed. The school has thus added special courses through the Environmental Protection Clinic and the Ludwig Center for Community & Economic Development Clinic, which has worked with CitySeed for more than 10 years. The clinic works with the nonprofit on legal issues surrounding the operation of farmers markets, researches and analyses food policy and advocates for improvement in food-related laws and regulations.

Northeastern University, which consistently scores an A+ for its practical training offerings, says it remains more committed than ever to placing experiential education at the core of its legal training.

"Nobody has as much as we do," said professor Martha Davis. "Many schools offer it now, but we're the only one that requires it."

Students must complete four externships (called co-ops at the school) before graduating, and first-years participate in a clinic in which they represent an institutional client. Students will help organizations such as the National Law Center for Homelessness & Poverty, doing research, for example, on allocation of resources or legal policies.

"We think theory is important, but the way you really learn what theory is, is by doing," Davis said.

That's why the law school at Northeastern, which itself was founded as a co-op university, requires students to do lots of doing, such as the four field placements. The idea is drawn from engineering students, who get training before they're put on the job. Law is another profession where that's critical, Davis said. Students can focus their co-ops in one area and develop competency in their future specialty, or they can use the co-ops to learn about multiple practice areas.

said. "Now, not only do we have all these activities and we're talking about them and coordinating them, we actually are sitting down with students, and we can talk to them from a career perspective about how those experiences will then help them professionally in the workplace."

The school is just minutes away from the heart of downtown Cincinnati, allowing for opportunities with major law firms, Fortune 100 companies and one of the top legal-aid organizations, Bard said.

Among the school's clinics is the Ohio Innocence Project, which assists prison inmates who claim to be innocent of crimes for which they have been convicted. This year, the school received a \$15 million donation from local philanthropist Richard Rosenthal, marking the largest-ever gift to any innocence program in the country. This has funded three new full-time clinical faculty members.

But clinics are not the only resources for practical training.

"It sounds as if clinic is the gold standard and anything else is less than, but the experiences that our students are getting in the externship arena rival the experiences they would get at the clinic," Jefferson said.

The Best Schools

One of the most robust clinical programs in the country can be found at Yale Law School.

During the second semester of their first year, students at the school can begin participating in clinics and appear in court or before other tribunals with a practice license. At most schools, students

can't participate in clinics until their second or third years. But Yale's clinical programs were founded on the belief that "students should move back and forth between clinical course work and traditional doctrinal courses throughout their legal education, bringing theory to their practice and practical experience to theoretical inquiry," Michael Wishnie, deputy dean for experiential education, wrote in a chapter of the 2015 book "The New 1L: First-Year Lawyering With Clients."

Eighty percent of Yale Law School students participate in one or more of the school's 20 clinics, and unlike some schools, where the student-faculty ratio is low — no more than six to eight students per term — Yale's clinical faculty admit more students, which means they can serve more clients, Wishnie said.

Just this spring, the school launched four new clinical courses, he said.

Among the most popular Yale clinics is the San Francisco Affirmative Litigation Project, which is now in its 11th year. Students work with San Francisco deputy city attorneys to conceive, develop and litigate some of the most innovative public-interest lawsuits in the country. Since its founding, nearly 200 students have worked in the clinic, clocking roughly 30,000 hours of work for the city.

"They've worked on a consumer-protection suit that made the cover of Business Week," said professor Heather Gerken. "They helped win a billion-dollar judgment against the lead paint industry, which has been notoriously hard to hold accountable. They worked on the Proposition 8 marriage equality case, dubbed 'the trial of the century.' They