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OREGON LEGAL EDUCATION

Oregon Schools

Oregon has three law schools. Two of the schools - Willamette University College of Law and the Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College - are private. The third school, at the University of Oregon, is public.

History

Willamette University College of Law, founded in 1883, is the oldest law school in the Pacific Northwest. It was the first independent Northwest law school to be accredited by the American Bar Association (1938) and the first independent law school in the region approved for membership in the Association of American Law Schools (1946).

In 1884, the state's law school was founded by the University of Oregon in Portland as an unaccredited, part-time, night school program. With growing emphasis on rising standards and accreditation, the University moved its law school to Eugene in 1915 where accreditation was made possible by being sited on a campus with full-time faculty. It received American Bar Association (ABA) accreditation in 1923 and American Law Schools accreditation in 1919.

The teachers who stayed behind in Portland formed their own law school, retaining the evening, part-time format for 50 years. In 1965, the school became affiliated with Lewis and Clark College, and the school was renamed Northwestern School of Law of Lewis and Clark College. At this time a day program was initiated. The school gained ABA and American Law Schools accreditation in 1973.

Willamette University College of Law

Willamette University's location in the state's capital city provides students ready access to government and state courts. Academic credit may be earned as a judicial "extern" with the Oregon Supreme Court and the Oregon Court of Appeals as well as with the federal courts. Through the Willamette Clinical Law Program law students represent low-income individuals referred to them by a variety of social service programs. The College of Law also offers a joint degree program in law and management, which can be completed in four years. The Center for Dispute Resolution provides students with dispute resolution theory and technique. Students seeking a career in international law also have the opportunity to travel to China for a month to learn about Pacific Rim legal issues.

Willamette Law School's student body numbers about 458, enrolling approximately 150 new students a year. In 1995, there were 141 first-year students, 177 second-year students, and 140 third-year students; 158 students graduated from the law school. Willamette has no master's degree program. The Admissions Office reported that nearly everyone takes a bar exam, and, last year, 91 percent of those who took the Oregon bar passed it.

The law school has 20 full-time and 19 part-time teachers and 12 administrators/deans/librarians.

Annual tuition is \$15,450.

*Northwestern
School of Law of
Lewis & Clark*

The school reports it has the largest and most comprehensive law library in the state and the second largest in the five-state region and boasts ready access to the U.S. District Court of Oregon, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and numerous county courts. The school offers a legal clinic to serve low-income clients, "externships" for job experience, and a masters degree program in environmental and natural resources law.

Lewis & Clark enrolls about 220 new students from approximately 2,200 applicants each year, for a total 717 students in 1995. There were 177 full-time, first-year students, 44 first-year part-time students; 173 full-time second-year students, 53 part-time, second-year students; and 134 full-time third-year students and 79 part-time third-year students. There were 38 part-time fourth-year students. In 1995, Northwestern awarded 182 J.D. law degrees and 1 LL.M. (master) degree. The Admissions Office reported that about two-thirds of the students start in the three-year day program, and one-third enroll in the four-year evening program.

About 70 - 85 percent of the graduates take the Oregon bar exam, and about 85 percent of those pass it. Because many of their students take the Washington State bar exam, fewer of their students take the Oregon bar, which may skew the results. Northwestern is the only Oregon law school that offers evening classes for working adults; they are able to do this because of the populous area they draw from.

The school has 27 full-time and 74 part-time teachers and 26 administrators/deans/ librarians.

Annual tuition is \$15,625 for full-time students and \$11,000 for part-time students.

*University of
Oregon School of
Law*

In addition to the law (J.D.) degree, the University of Oregon School of Law offers two joint degrees: Doctor of Jurisprudence/Master of Business Administration and the Doctor of Jurisprudence/Master of Science. Both are four-year programs. Students have the option of interning to a federal court or state appellate court. Law clinics, where students have the opportunity to work on legal cases, are available in appellate advocacy, civil practice, health law, mediation law, environmental law, criminal defense and criminal prosecution.

During the 1995-96 school year, the University of Oregon had a total of 478 law students: 181 first year students, 159 second-year students and 138 third-year students. It awarded 133 law degrees in 1995. The school has no master's degree programs. The school reports that anywhere from 70-90% of the graduates sit for the bar exam, and the same percentage of those taking it succeed in passing it (see attached chart).

The school has 25 full-time and 8 part-time teachers and 13 administrators/ deans/ librarians.

Annual tuition is \$8,000 for residents and \$13,190 for non-residents.

*UO's Accreditation
Problems*

In January of 1990, the American Bar Association recommended the withdrawal of its accreditation of the University of Oregon Law School unless the school upgraded its programs. Specifically, the ABA found faculty salary levels, physical facilities (especially the law library) and student-faculty ratios deficient.

In 1991, the school's entering class was reduced by one-third to cope with Measure 5 and satisfy ABA accreditation requirements.

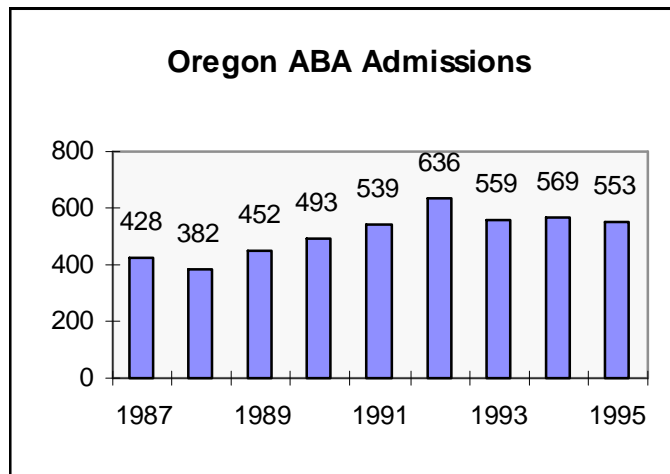
University officials believed the school's deficiencies were the result of a history of under funding. The 1991 budget adopted by the legislature included a law center library addition, budgeted at \$2,315,000. In 1995, the legislature appropriated \$4,700,000 for law library center additions through the sales of XI-G bonds. School administrators also launched an aggressive fundraising effort for the law school, raising over \$25 million in donations to date.

*Proposed
Legislation*

In 1991, SB 812 was introduced by Sen. Mae Yih and Rep. Rod Johnson. It proposed to close the UO law school and provide law school students with \$6,500 each to attend either of the two private law schools. The bill did not receive a hearing and died in committee.

*Number of law
school graduates
remain steady*

Marlyce Gholston, OSB, reports that the number of new lawyers accepted to the OSB stays at a fairly even level, as follows:



Ms. Gholston reports that statistics of students successfully passing the bar exam had been collected by the Bar on a college-by-college bases, but was directed by the Oregon Supreme Court to no longer keep track of these figures, at the request of the law schools.

Other states

Law schools are approved by two entities: the American Bar Association (ABA) and the Association of American Law Schools (AALS).

Nationally, 179 law schools are approved by the ABA. Of these, 102 are private and 77 are public. Alaska and Nevada are the only states that have no law schools. No public law schools are found in Delaware, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. No private law schools are found in Arizona, Arkansas, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

No rating of law schools beyond their accreditation status is done by the ABA. The ABA expressly disapproves of correspondence law school courses. Correspondence law school graduates may take bar examinations only in California and even there only under special conditions.

A law school is not eligible for Association of American Law Schools membership until the school has been in operation five years and has graduated three classes. Of the 178 ABA-approved schools, 160 are members of the AALS.

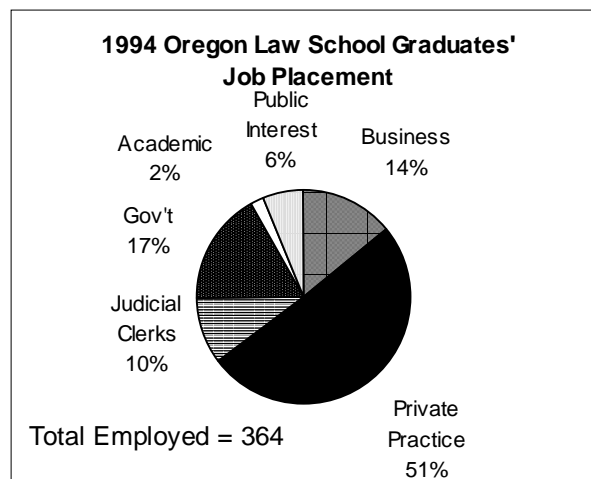
Schools formerly granted Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) degrees to those getting their first degree in law; Juris Doctor (J.D.) had been reserved to those graduating with honors, but in recent years, all schools have changed to granting J.D. degrees. There is no difference between the two degrees. The Master's degree (LL.M.) usually involves a one-year program combining course work and research; the Doctorate of Judicial Sciences (S.J.D.) involves major academic advanced publishable work; the Master's in Comparative Law (M.C.L.) involves advanced work for foreign-educated lawyers.

It is the position of the ABA that graduation from a law school should not, in itself, confer the right of admission to the bar, and that every candidate should be subject to an examination by public authority to determine his fitness. The bar exam is given twice a year.

Employment Opportunities

The National Association of Law Placement (NALP) tracks law school students upon graduation and their job status. The NALP documented that in 1995, a total of 39,199¹ graduated from the country's law schools, a slight decrease compared to the prior class, and for the second consecutive year, overall employment increased. Of the 1995 graduates for whom employment status was known, 86.7% were employed, compared with 84.7% of the 1994 graduating class. Of graduates for whom employment status was known, 70.7% obtained full-time, legal positions which is (a slight) increase, the first since 1988.

The NALP reported the following employment choices for Oregon law school graduates in 1994:



Of the thirty-five states tracked, only eight states have a higher percentage of students choosing public service than Oregon, and only seven states have a lower percentage of students choosing private practice. The average percentage of those choosing private practice is 56.1 percent.

¹ The figure from the ABA is 39,191 for the J.D. degrees.

*Legal employment
in Oregon*

A study group appointed by the Oregon State Bar's Board of Governors examined the issues of lawyer over-population and lawyer competency and made recommendations in 1995. They found that recent Oregon graduates were finding positions at a comparable rate as other states' students, but that all students were taking longer to find jobs within six months of graduation, decreasing from 90 percent in 1990 to 83 percent in 1993. The group recommended that information be provided to law school applicants and recent graduates regarding legal employment opportunities and where such opportunities may be found; expand the Modest Means Program which matches unemployed or underemployed lawyers with those who cannot afford an attorney; and mentor new bar members to give them practical skills needed to practice law successfully.

*Should law schools
decrease
enrollment?*

Should law schools limit the number of graduates on the grounds that it is unethical to graduate large numbers of debt-ridden students for whom no legal jobs are available? Do large numbers of lawyers lead to frivolous lawsuits? Or should a pure market economics theory be applied and allow as many graduates as want the degree, as long as they are informed about the job market?

Some schools decreased their incoming class size recently in response to a slowing economy. Other reasons for decreasing incoming class sizes cited were quality control (applicant's tests scores were lower than in the past), and adjustments after larger incoming classes in prior years. William B. Powers, the ABA's assistant legal consultant on education, sees the number of incoming students at law schools as being stable. Carl Monk, executive director of the AALS, does not favor denying students' entry in law schools and believes law schools should focus on providing employment information to their graduates.²

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² Barnes, Patricia. *Cutting Classes*. ABA Journal. December 1995.