

University of Chicago Becomes Law School to Beat with New 2016 Employment Data Report



Summary: The latest report released by the American Bar Association on employment rates for new graduates show a troubling trend.

The much anticipated American Bar Association report on employment data for the last year's graduating class has finally been released. The results may be surprising for some. The University of Chicago Law School ruled the numbers with the highest percentage of their 2016 graduates in law jobs, making them the school to beat next year. Here is the full chart for reference:



2016 LAW GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT DATA

	CLASS OF 2016	CLASS OF 2015	Change
Total Graduates	37,124	39,984	-2,860 (-7.15%)

	CLASS OF 2016		CLASS OF 2015		Change in %age point
	Total	%age of Total Grads	Total	%age of Total Grads	
Employment Status Known	35,749	96.3%	39,183	98.0%	-1.7%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS, EMPLOYMENT TYPE <i>definitions on next page</i>	CLASS OF 2016		CLASS OF 2015		Change	
	Total	%age of Total Grads	Total	%age of Total Grads	%age point	yr to yr
Bar Passage Required	23,928	64.5%	24,961	62.4%	+2.0	-4.1%
Long-Term/Full-Time	22,930	61.8%	23,687	59.2%	+2.6	-3.1%
Long-Term/Part-Time	489	1.3%	490	1.2%	+0.1	-0.2%
Short-Term/Full-Time	331	0.9%	523	1.3%	-0.5	-36.5%
Short-Term/Part-Time	178	0.5%	261	0.7%	-0.2	-31.4%
JD Advantage	5,246	14.1%	5,501	13.8%	+0.3	-4.5%
Long-Term/Full-Time	3,993	10.8%	4,342	10.9%	-0.1	-7.9%
Long-Term/Part-Time	500	1.3%	430	1.1%	+0.2	+16.3%
Short-Term/Full-Time	309	0.8%	472	1.2%	-0.4	-33.7%
Short-Term/Part-Time	444	1.2%	257	0.6%	+0.6	+72.8%
Unemployed/Seeking	3,271	8.8%	3,871	9.7%	-0.9	-15.5%
Law School Funded Positions	760	2.0%	1,037	2.6%	-0.6	-26.7%
Solo Practitioners	538	1.4%	688	1.7%	-0.3	-21.8%
Law Firm Positions (2-500+ Lawyers)	16,403	44.1%	16,282	40.7%	+3.4	+0.7%
Business & Industry	5,024	13.5%	5,854	14.6%	-1.1	-14.2%
Government	4,459	12.0%	4,655	11.6%	+0.4	-4.2%
Public Interest	1,645	4.4%	1,883	4.7%	-0.3	-12.6%
Clerkships (Federal, State, Other)	3,327	8.9%	3,368	8.4%	+0.5	-1.2%
Education	601	1.6%	645	1.6%	—	-6.8%

This data was compiled in April 2017 and 2016 from school reports on, respectively, class of 2016 and 2015 employment outcomes, as of the required annual reporting cut-off date of March 15, approximately 10 months after spring graduations. Please note, "Law School Funded Jobs," while positive employment outcomes, are reported only in the aggregate on this report and individual school reports. They are not also included in Bar Passage Required and JD Advantage jobs reported.

The report is put together by examining the reported data from the 204 ABA-approved law schools to the ABA Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. Of the collected data, they determined that 73 percent of all 2016 graduates had obtained full-time, long-term Bar Passage Required or J.D. Advantage jobs by 10 months after graduation. The previous year was 70 percent so things are looking up for the legal profession for new graduates. To better understand the different definitions for each type of reported job, look at the photo below:

DEFINITIONS:

• **Employed – Bar Passage Required.** A position in this category requires the graduate to pass a bar exam and to be licensed to practice law in one or more jurisdictions. Notwithstanding the preceding sentence, any position that is a Law School/University Funded position as that term is defined below must be classified as “Employed – Law School/University Funded” rather than Employed – Bar Passage Required. The positions that have such a requirement are varied and include, for example, positions in law firms, business, or government. However, not all positions in law firms, business, or government require bar passage; for example, a paralegal position would not. Positions that require the graduate to pass a bar exam and be licensed after beginning employment in order to retain the position are included in this category. Judicial clerkships are also included in this category.

• **Employed – J.D. Advantage.** A position in this category is one for which the employer sought an individual with a J.D., and perhaps even required a J.D., or for which the J.D. provided a demonstrable advantage in obtaining or performing the job, but which does not itself require bar passage or an active law license or involve practicing law. Examples of positions for which a J.D. is an advantage include a corporate contracts administrator, alternative dispute resolution specialist, government regulatory analyst, FBI agent, and accountant. Also included might be jobs in personnel or human resources, jobs with investment banks, jobs with consulting firms, jobs doing compliance work in business and industry, jobs in law firm professional development, and jobs in law school career services offices, admissions offices, or other law school administrative offices. Doctors or nurses who plan to work in a litigation, insurance, or risk management setting, or as expert witnesses, would fall into this category, as would journalists and teachers (in a higher education setting) of law and law related topics. It is an indicator that a position does not fall into this category if a J.D. is uncommon among persons holding such a position.

• **Employed – Professional Position.** A position in this category is one that requires professional skills or training but for which a J.D. is neither required nor a demonstrable advantage. Examples of persons in this category include a math or science teacher, business manager, or performing arts specialist. Other examples include professions such as doctors, nurses, engineers, or architects, if a J.D. was not demonstrably advantageous in obtaining the position or in performing the duties of the position.

• **Employed – Non-Professional Position.** A position in this category is one that does not require any special professional skills or training.

• **Short-term.** A short-term position is one that has a definite term of less than one year. Thus, a clerkship that has a definite term of one year or more is not a short-term position. It also includes a position that is of an indefinite length if that position is not reasonably expected to last for one year or more.

• **Long-term.** A long-term position is one that does not have a definite or indefinite term of less than one year. It may have a definite length of time as long as the time is one year or longer. It may also have an indefinite length as long as it is expected to last one year or more. The possibility that a short-term position may evolve into a long-term position does not make the position a long-term position. A position that is envisioned by the graduate and the employer to extend for one year or more is not a short-term position even though it is conditioned on bar passage and licensure. Thus, a long-term position that is conditioned on passing the bar exam by a certain date does not become a short-term position because of the condition.

• **Full-time.** A full-time position is one in which the graduate works a minimum of 35 hours per week. A full-time position may be either short-term or long-term.

• **Part-time.** A part-time position is one in which the graduate works less than 35 hours per week. A part-time position may be either short-term or long-term.

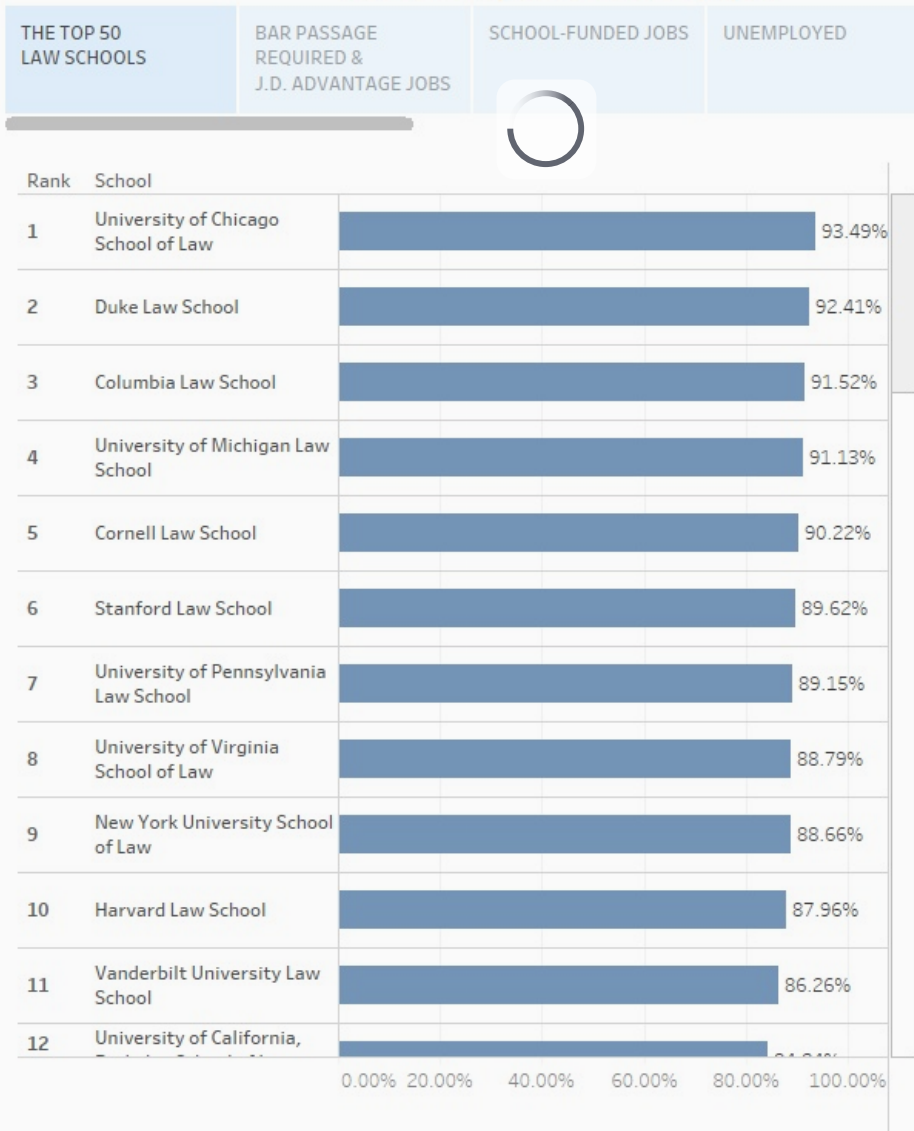
A big part of the change in percentages is from smaller graduating classes. The actual number of jobs obtained went down 4 percent. In 2015, 28,029 students had full-time long-term legal jobs compared to 2016 was only 26,923. There were nearly 3,000 fewer students on the market in 2016.

Looking at all of the data, the school that graduates had the best chance of getting a job was at the University of Chicago Law School. The law school had 215 graduates last year, 93 percent of which were able to find full-time, long-term jobs that require bar passage and not part of the school's programs all within 10 months of graduation.

Right behind Chicago were Duke Law School and Columbia Law School with 92 percent of their class of 2016 graduates in full-time, long-term bar passage requiring jobs. The other top five schools were the University of Michigan and Cornell Law School at 91 percent and 90 percent. See more information in the charts below:

WHERE THE JOBS ARE

These 50 law schools placed the highest percentage of their 2016 graduates in full-time, long-term jobs that require bar passage and were not funded by the schools themselves—the gold standard for lawyer jobs.



Bruce Elvin, the associate dean of career and professional development at Duke's law school noted that everyone in their law community works together to help their students find jobs. Being a relatively small school allows them to provide such individual attention to their students. This begins during a student's first year. They meet with a career services advisor at least three times during the year to start the groundwork for their job search. Elvin said, "Everybody is committed to helping each student launch his or her career in the right job. It's the dean. It's faculty. It's alumni. It's staff. It's friends. It's students helping each other."

The school with the highest percentage of graduates in either a J.D. advantage or bar-passage required job was the University of Pennsylvania Law School at 96 percent. Penn Law Dean Theodore Ruger said, "We're very pleased our 2016 graduates, like their cohorts in recent years, did so well securing employment in law firms, public interest organizations, judicial clerkships, government and in rewarding 'JD Advantage' fields like investment banking and consulting."

Trying to understand why fewer graduates are being hired is difficult. Many law professors' study and blog about the trends they find in employment trends. One such professor, Jerome Organ at University of St. Thomas School of Law believes a big factor in the employment rates are the bar pass rates which have been declining. Organ wrote on Tax Prof Blog, "Part of the continuing decline in the number of graduates in full-time, long-term bar passage required positions is attributable to the decline in the number and percentage of graduates passing the July bar exam." Since 2013, the number of graduates that pass the bar exam on their first attempt has dropped from 82 percent to 74 percent. This means there are fewer graduates eligible for many of the jobs within the 10-month time frame.

Charlotte School of Law had the highest rate of unemployed graduates from the class of 2016 at 31 percent.

Would this data play a big role for you in deciding what law school to attend? Tell us what you would look for in a law school in the comments below.

To learn more about the top rated law schools, read these articles:

- [Top 12 Most Expensive Law Schools in 2017](#)
- [Top 12 Law Schools with the Highest LSAT Scores](#)
- [Top Law Schools Unable to Attract Enough Students](#)

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Data Photos: American Bar Association

Charts: nationallawjournal.com