

Marshall-Wythe School of Law Picked Up a Couple Spots in New Rankings



Summary: *The U.S. News rankings have moved Marshall-Wythe down from their position four years ago but the school made up a few spots from last year.*

Law school rankings are a big deal for some, especially potential students. When U.S. News releases their annual rankings of the 203 law schools across the country, many students use this list to help determine which schools are worth applying to. The rankings affect the reputation of a school, which translates into money. Law schools need money to survive so falling in the rankings, and falling big can be a bad sign.

The [College of William and Mary's Marshall-Wythe School of Law](#) was ranked 25th in 2015 down to 37th in this year's ranking, which is a slight improvement over last year's drop to 41, according to The Flat Hat. The law school has remained in the top 50 elite law schools so a slight increase this year is a good sign. Dean Davison Douglas, also an Arthur B. Hanson Professor of Law, says the rankings are imperfect but the law schools knows they need to care about them since everyone else does. Douglas said, "They're important because there are certain constituencies that think they're important: students, admitted students, some alumni so because those are important constituencies for us, it's important to do well in U.S. News."

U.S. News ranks the schools according to four main categories: selectivity, faculty resources, quality assessment, and placement success. The factor that may be affecting Marshall-Wythe's rankings is their cost-per-student ratio or LSAT scores. The expenditures per student fall in the faculty resources category of the rankings.

Douglas explained, "I think one of the biggest things that hurts us is a category of dollars that you spend per student and the education that you provide to your students. We are a low-cost law school. We hold our cost down; we think that's good. Our students have to borrow a lot less than most law students do. ...But, there's a downside to that. The down side is we're spending less dollars per student."

The expenditures include instruction, library, and other supporting services like financial aid for students. The full-time residential student, tuition is an average of \$5,158, which is significantly less than most law schools in the country.

The law school has also kept a consistent class size since the recession of 2008 whereas other law schools have decreased class sizes to make up for the lower number of applicants. Had Marshall-Wythe dropped their class sizes, the cost spent per student would have increased. Douglas added, "They were dramatically decreasing their classes because when you shrink your class, your dollars per student go up, and we weren't doing that. Now we did do it this past year – we cut our class. Our class until the past year was averaging, you know, 215 probably this year 183, and that happened for a number of reasons, but it has the benefit that our dollars spent per student went up because we had fewer students."

Like Douglas mentioned, this past year the law school did decrease their class size, which affects their dollars spent per student. "It may impact what the school would be able to give. If their budget is based upon X number of students but only Y number of students show up, they may have over-projected how much they can give in aid and still maintain the level of income they need to run the schools, so that could potentially have an impact down the line."

Do you think the rankings are important? Share your thoughts with us in the comments below.

To learn more about law school rankings, read these articles:

- [Forbes Ranks America's Most Expensive Law Schools](#)
- [How U.S. Law School Rankings Help Lower-Ranked Schools](#)
- [2017 Law School Rankings by U.S. News & World Report](#)

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