

US News Criticizes Law Schools Opting Out of Ranking System



In recent months, several law schools in the United States have decided to opt out of the U.S. News rankings, with Yale Law School leading the charge in November 2022. Since then, over 20% of law schools have followed suit, with some elite medical schools also boycotting the rankings. In response, U.S. News CEO Eric Gertler penned an op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, accusing schools of gatekeeping information that prospective students need to make informed decisions.

Gertler argued that choosing the right school is one of the most important decisions students will ever make and that U.S. News provides comprehensive information that allows students to compare institutions and identify the factors that matter most to them. He rejected critics' claims that students must be more capable of discerning which school is the best fit, stating that U.S. News rankings are a valuable tool in helping students make informed decisions.

However, critics argue that U.S. News has no expertise in legal education and that its methodology is sometimes nonsensical. For example, LSAT and GPA are weighted five times as much as bar passage, and career outcomes account for only 18% of the weight, while reputational surveys of law professors and deans account for 25%. Critics argue that prospective students are more interested in job prospects than the opinions of law professors and deans about other schools they know little about.

Moreover, U.S. News keeps a significant amount of its data on law schools paywalled, and there are other sources for comprehensive law school data that do not require payment. Despite this, Gertler maintains that elite schools object to U.S. News rankings because they cannot control them and do not want to be held accountable by an independent third party.

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It is still being determined why so many law schools have chosen to opt out of the U.S. News rankings, but some speculate that the dominance of Yale Law School in the rankings played a role in the decision. Yale has consistently been ranked number one, and by pulling out of the rankings, they have given other law schools a chance to be at the top. However, there are better ways to avoid accountability than abandoning the rankings, as U.S. News never held Yale accountable in the first place.

In conclusion, the boycott of U.S. News rankings by law schools is a significant development that shows the problematic nature of the rankings powerhouse. While U.S. News maintains that its rankings provide valuable information for prospective students, critics argue that the methodology needs to be revised and that other comprehensive law school data sources exist. The reasons for law schools opting out of the rankings are unclear, but there is likely a diverse set of reasons for this decision.