

On Tuesday morning, March 13, U.S. News released to law schools an embargoed confidential electronic version of the 2019 edition of its annual rankings to be published online a week later, on Tuesday, March 20. We immediately analyzed the data U.S. News used in calculating the rankings. To our horror, we learned that we had made an inadvertent data entry error in reporting our median LSAT for the class that began in Fall 2017.

Background

On November 29, 2017, we correctly reported to the American Bar Association that the median LSAT for our full-time students was 160 (up from 159 in the prior year). We correctly reported that we do not have a part-time program and that the median LSAT for the entire student body (full- and part-time) thus also was 160. (See the pdf of our report to the ABA below.) This information is available for all the world to see in our 509 report published on the ABA's website and on Pepperdine law school's website. (See the pdf of our 509 report below.)

On December 5, 2017, we correctly reported to U.S. News that the median LSAT for our full-time students was 160, and that we do not have a part-time program. But we mistakenly reported that our median LSAT score for our combined full-time (157 students) and part-time (0 students) programs was 162. (See the pdf of our report to U.S. News below.)

2019 U.S. News Law School Rankings

We contacted Robert Morse, Chief Data Strategist at U.S. News, at 11:04 am on Tuesday morning, March 13, immediately after discovering this mistake. In a telephone call and in a subsequent email that morning, I relayed the facts outlined above and requested that U.S. News update the rankings with this correct information, especially since we self-reported the error so quickly after the embargoed rankings were released to law schools and the rankings would not be published online for another week. Bob said he would take my request to his superiors at U.S. News and report back to me as quickly as he could. On Tuesday afternoon, anonymous source(s) leaked the embargoed rankings which were posted on several blogs, showing Pepperdine's ranking as 59 (up from 72 last year).

Later that day, after crunching the numbers, we determined that substituting the correct 160 LSAT median would cause us to lose 1 point, or at most 2 points, off our overall score, dropping our ranking from 59 (tied with Penn State, Seton Hall, and UNLV) to 62 (tied with Denver and Oklahoma) or 64 (tied with Case Western, Cincinnati, Georgia State, Kentucky, Loyola-L.A., Miami, Missouri, and Tennessee). I passed along this information to Bob via email before going to bed Tuesday night, and concluded as follows:

I informed our university about our error and we are all hopeful that U.S. News will find a way to not unduly penalize us for what the facts I outlined in my earlier email clearly show was an inadvertent error that we reported as soon as we discovered it this morning after we received the confidential advance copy of the rankings.

Bob informed me on Wednesday, first by email and then in a follow-up telephone conversation, that U.S. News had issued a revised embargoed electronic version of the rankings that replaced the original. In the new version, Pepperdine was entirely removed from the rankings. Instead, Pepperdine was listed later as "unranked due to a data reporting error by the school."

We have contacted three national experts on the U.S. News rankings and they confirm our analysis of our ranking with the correct 160 LSAT median:

William Henderson, Stephen F. Burns Professor of Law at Indiana University Maurer School of Law:

My simulation of the U.S. News rankings model clearly indicates that replacing Pepperdine's reported 162 LSAT median with the corrected 160 LSAT median would result in a one-point, or at most a two-point, reduction in Pepperdine's overall score, lowering its ranking from 59 to 62 or 64.

Andrew Morriss, Dean, School of Innovation and Vice President for Entrepreneurship and Economic Development, Texas A&M University:

Based on over 10 years' experience with analyzing U.S. News rankings, I believe that a reported 160 median LSAT rather than a 162 median would have put Pepperdine only 1 or 2 places lower in the rankings.

Mike Spivey, former administrator at Colorado, Vanderbilt, and Washington University law schools and founder of Spivey Consulting:

Based on my experience in working for three law schools, with a strategic job responsibility of examining U.S. News rankings at two of those schools at the assistant dean level, and having now consulted for more than ten law schools independently, the data in its entirety has me certain that a change in median LSAT from a 162 to a 160 would have resulted in a raw score reduction in only 1 or 2 overall points. This would now have Pepperdine ranked at either 62nd or 64th out of all 195 law schools, for a gain of +10 or +8 places over its ranking last year.

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The ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar (ABA) and the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) have collaborated to establish a verification program to allow schools to obtain a certified report of their first-year class credentials. The program is voluntary. Each law school must provide information for all students in the first-year class, whether or not the law school participates in the verification program.

Information must be provided for every student in the first-year class, whether or not that student has an LSAT score. Scores on alternative tests are reported in Section 6.

12. Does the Law School participate in the verification program? Yes ▾

13. The school understands, acknowledges, and agrees the ABA will transmit the information provided in response to Question 3 to the LSAC in furtherance of the ABA's role as an accrediting agency and for the purpose of verifying first-year class credentials. Yes ▾

	All 1L Students	Full-Time 1L	Part-Time 1L
75th Percentile UGPA	<input type="text" value="3.73"/>	<input type="text" value="3.73"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
50th Percentile UGPA	<input type="text" value="3.62"/>	<input type="text" value="3.62"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
25th Percentile UGPA	<input type="text" value="3.27"/>	<input type="text" value="3.27"/>	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>
Number not included in UGPA calculation	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>

	All 1L Students	Full-Time 1L	Part-Time 1L
75th Percentile LSAT	<input type="text" value="162"/>	<input type="text" value="162"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
50th Percentile LSAT	<input type="text" value="160"/>	<input type="text" value="160"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
25th Percentile LSAT	<input type="text" value="154"/>	<input type="text" value="154"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Number not included in LSAT calculation	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="0"/>

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PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY - 2017 Standard 509 Information Report

24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA

Phone: 310-506-4611

Website: <http://law.pepperdine.edu/>

<http://www.abarequireddisclosures.org>

Last Site Visit: 2016-2017

Next Site Visit: 2023-2024

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The Basics

Type of school	Private
Application deadline	02/01/2018
Application fee	\$0
Financial aid deadline	04/01/2018

Academic Calendar

Term	Semester
Months students may begin studying law	May, August
Months the Law school confers degrees	December, May, August
# of credit hours required to earn the JD	88
Total # of credit hours to be taken in required courses	
First Year courses	29
Upper-level courses	20-23

Curricular Offerings 2016-2017

	2016 - 2017
Typical first-year section size, excluding all small sections taught by full-time faculty	53
Number of course titles,beyond the first year curricular,offered last year	128
Number of upper division class room course sections with an enrollement :	
Under 25	124
25 to 49	56
50 to 74	15
75 to 99	4
100 +	1
Number of seats available in law clinics last year	183
Number of field placements positions filled last year	282
Number of seats available in simulation courses	1949

2017 First Year Class (Oct 6th 2016-Oct 5th 2017)

	2017
Completed Applications	2077
Offers of Admission	870
Acceptance Rate (Percent)	41.89%
Enrollees from Applicant pool	154
Enrollment rate from Completed Applications	7.41%
Enrollment rate from Offers of Admission	17.70%
Other first-year enrollees	3
Total in First-year class	157
LSAT	
75th Percentile	162
50th Percentile	160
25th Percentile	154
# not included in LSAT calculations	0
UGPA	
75th Percentile	3.73
50th Percentile	3.62
25th Percentile	3.27
# not included in UGPA calculations	1

Faculty Resources 2016 - 2017

	Male	Female	Other	Minority	Total
Full-time faculty members	33	19	0	9	52
Non-full-time faculty	59	21	0	8	80
Total	92	40	0	17	132

[U.S. News]

	All Students	Full-time Students	Part-time Students
75th percentile GPA	3.73		
25th percentile GPA	3.27		
75th percentile LSAT	162		
25th percentile LSAT	154		

37.) Median Test Scores:

This question is used in the Rankings calculation. This data is rolled over from last year.

	2017	2016
Median undergraduate GPA for full-time program entrants.	3.62	
Median LSAT score for full-time program entrants.	160	
Median undergraduate GPA for part-time program entrants.		
Median LSAT score for part-time program entrants.		
Median undergraduate GPA for all program entrants.	3.62	
Median LSAT score for all program entrants.	162	