

When the *U.S. News* rankings come out each year, law school administrators react predictably with obsession and derision. They articulate methodological flaws and lament negative externalities, but nevertheless commit to a rat race through their statements, actions, and inaction. As a result, these rankings play a direct role in increasing legal education costs and decreasing the commitment schools can have to access, affordability, and innovation. They affect tuition and scholarship strategies, faculty and staff hiring, curriculum development, and racial, gender, and socioeconomic diversity.

Such a pervasive influence requires a multi-pronged approach that accounts for competing interests in legal education. One prong seeks to change the rankings themselves; another seeks to change how people think about the rankings; the last seeks to provide applicants better tools so they make more informed decisions and schools focus less on *U.S. News*.

Update the Methodology

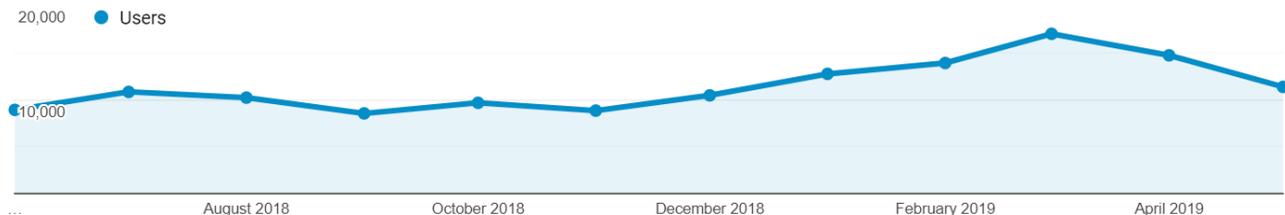
Schools direct resources according to various components of the *U.S. News* ranking methodology. The logic behind some components makes sense—job and bar exam outcomes would matter in any reasoned assessment of value or quality. But *U.S. News* proxies educational quality with an expenditures per student metric. Schools that spend more do not necessarily deliver a better education. We will convince *U.S. News* to replace this metric with one that values efficiency over wasteful spending. Law schools that do more for less deserve to be rewarded, not penalized.

Change the Narrative

If people cared a little less about annual rankings changes, law school deans would be able to think more clearly about how they allocate resources and deliver value to students. We will provide toolkits for stakeholders to use in their decision-making to free schools from a toxic narrative so that they can achieve their missions better and more affordably.

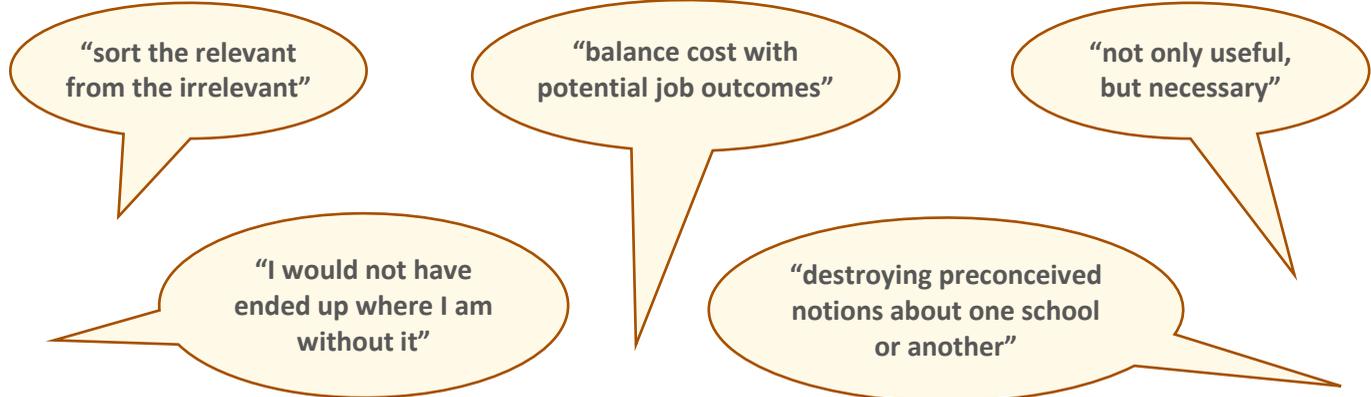
Promote Competition to the *U.S. News* rankings

The transparency era ushered in real competition. The most visible competitors are Above the Law (ATL) and LST. ATL publishes a traditional ranking focused on outcomes and ranks only 50 schools. The LST Reports take a more nuanced approach than traditional rankings and profiles all ABA-approved law schools with extensive, well-organized admissions, jobs, and financial data.



The LST approach has a proven track record with pre-law students—at least those who we reach. The next page surveys feedback from students, graduates, and advisors. The chart above, however, indicates further opportunity to mitigate the impact of *U.S. News*. While our site received an impressive 116,000 unique user visits during the 2018-19 cycle, we can help many more prelaw students. The top 50 schools (by job outcomes) receive considerably more traffic than the other 150 schools. Further, more people use the site later in the cycle after submitting applications, which constrains their ability to make informed choices about whether and where to attend law school. Reaching everyone earlier—and reaching more people who attend local and regional schools—requires boots on the ground at colleges across the country, better site design, and more visibility on the social media today's applicants use daily.

What People Say About the LST Reports



"LST put me in a good position to start to ask some questions based on a thousand-mile view of what I didn't realize was a personalizable experience."

"It **makes data infinitely easier to obtain and compare**. Perhaps more than anything else LST makes it clear that law is a relatively local profession (i.e. it makes much more sense to go to school where you want to practice, which is not as significant for undergrad, even at the expense of rankings)."

"It's easy to think from school promotional materials that all law schools are all things to all people. Most law schools appear as if they have the same cost and allow you to practice anywhere in any sort of legal job. LST clarifies the data and shows that, yes, there are differences between different law schools, and some schools are a better fit for my goals than others."

"LST is **absolutely critical to my job as a pre-law advisor**. It is my most-used and most-important tool making my students literate about the legal job market. I only wish it had been around when I was going to law school."

"Allowed me to directly **compare schools beyond the one-dimensional U.S. News rankings**."

"Without LST, I likely would have been tempted to attend a school with less favorable outcomes, meaning the slight savings in cost would end up costing more in the end with lack of gainful employment actually utilizing the degree I'm earning."

"I used LST extensively to research and understand employment prospects across various schools and regions. I also used it to **help predict and negotiate scholarship offers**. There is no other centralized tool available for applicants to get well sorted and vital information."

"It has **changed my complete outlook and expectation** of what I am going to need from a law school. I viewed the admissions process as if only I as the applicant had something to prove. Because of LST, law schools have now something greater than a U.S. News ranking to prove to their applicants."

Changes to the LST Reports

User feedback is consistent: they love how we organize and highlight the data that matter. But we also know where we fall short: who we reach, when we reach them, and how we help applicants through the process. User behavior and observation reveal more than surveys ever will. To that end, we will apply a design-thinking philosophy to the re-design of the LST Reports to ensure that we communicate with our intended audience properly. We will make our proprietary algorithm for selecting and sorting law schools free. We will add new features based on user feedback. And we will build tools for prelaw advisors and consultants to use alongside their students. The result will be more informed decision-making by students and even less reliance on *U.S. News*.