



## Stanford Law School

[By Douglas May]

Stanford Law School, located near Palo Alto, California, is one of the most prestigious and elite law schools in the United States. It typically ranks among the top three law schools in the *U.S. News & World Report* annual rankings and currently ranks second.

The law school was established in 1893 when the university engaged former President Benjamin Harrison as its first professor of law. The school's list of alumni is quite impressive and includes late Chief Justice of the United States William Rehnquist and former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, as well as Chief Justice of California Ronald M. George.

Located in a beautiful setting, the school has a small student body and a very low student-to-faculty ratio. It offers an intimate and collegial environment, as class sizes are the smallest at any top law school. Stanford Law School cultivates a culture in which students, faculty, and alumni "inspire each other intellectually, share perspectives freely, and celebrate each other's successes."

The academic program is thorough and presents a wide array of courses. Stanford Law School's course offerings afford a solid foundation in legal theory and make it possible to acquire expertise in various legal specialties, including business, economics, science, technology, international law, and public service. Within this community, students can explore a vast array of legal subjects and specialties and can also take advantage of the ample resources of Stanford University and the greater San Francisco Bay Area, which is rich in cultural diversity.

Stanford Law began making broad changes to its J.D. curriculum last year to adapt to the changing needs of the legal profession. Lawyers need to be educated in broader terms with courses beyond the traditional law school curriculum.

"Our students should take courses outside the law school in order to develop the broad intellectual capital they need to practice law in the world today," said Stanford Law School

Dean Larry Kramer. "With our joint degrees and ability to offer students courses in other parts of the university, we can graduate students who think like lawyers and who also have additionally valuable skills and analytical abilities that are applicable to modern legal practice and public service and transferable to other serendipitous opportunities."

The school recently announced that it has introduced innovative joint-degree programs with 11 Stanford graduate departments and schools. Stanford Law now leads the nation's law schools in number and quality of joint-degree programs.

The formal J.D./master's degree and J.D./Ph.D. programs are unique in that they allow qualifying courses to be applied to both degrees. This can save students a year's time and, in some cases (with the J.D./Ph.D. programs, for example), two years' time, greatly reducing tuition costs.

"The formal joint-degree programs, the generic joint-degree program, and the wide latitude given students who are pursuing only the J.D. to receive credit for courses outside the law school all are designed to give our students a great deal of flexibility," said Jeff Strnad, professor of law, who holds a courtesy appointment as professor of economics with Stanford University's department of economics. "For our students, the task is simple: figure out what you want to do, based on your academic or career goals, and we'll help you make it happen."

Stanford Law School now offers the following formal joint-degree programs:

- Bioengineering (M.S. or Ph.D.)
- Business (M.B.A.)
- Economics (M.A. or Ph.D.)

- Education (M.A.)
- History (M.A. or Ph.D.)
- Health Research and Policy (M.S. or Ph.D.)
- International, Comparative, and Area Studies (M.A.)
- Management, Science, and Engineering (M.S. or Ph.D.)
- Philosophy (Ph.D.)
- Political Science (Ph.D.)
- Psychology (Ph.D.)
- Sociology (M.A. or Ph.D.)

More formal joint-degree programs will be added in the future.

Each year, Stanford Law School receives more than 4,500 applications from potential students and accepts 170. Students come from across the United States, from around the globe, and from all walks of life. Stanford has become one of the nation's leading institutions for legal scholarship and education. Its alumni can be found at the uppermost levels in the fields of law, politics, business, and technology.

Along with offering traditional law school classes, the school has adopted new subjects and new ways of teaching. Meghan Mead ('08) stated, "I chose law school because of the possibilities a legal degree gives me. A Stanford J.D. opens lots of doors and allows for many different career opportunities."

### ON THE NET

Stanford Law School  
[www.law.stanford.edu](http://www.law.stanford.edu)

*U.S. News & World Report's* Law School Rankings  
[www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/law/brief/lawrank\\_brief.php](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/edu/grad/rankings/law/brief/lawrank_brief.php)

Palo Alto, CA  
[www.city.palo-alto.ca.us](http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us)