



## Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts

[By Akbar Ali]

As the oldest law school in the nation in continuous operation, Harvard Law School needs little introduction. It has served as the launching pad for some of history’s most distinguished (and in some cases infamous) legal and political careers and has served as fodder for a disproportionate number of fictitious retellings of what law school is really about. Dean Elena Kagan bills Harvard Law as “a big city, not a small town” where “engagement with the world is a key feature and object.”

However one chooses to look at its history as both an educational and a legal institution of unique power and position in the world of academia, Harvard Law is — and has been — the template for all legal education in the United States since its founding in 1817.

Harvard Law is the school that first introduced the standard first-year curriculum which has since become standard throughout the world: 1L classes in contracts, property, torts, criminal law, and civil procedure. It is also home to the world’s largest academic law library, housed in the university’s famous Langdell Hall. The school offers a number of joint degrees in addition to a J.D., an LL.M., and an S.J.D., including the following:

- J.D./M.B.A. (with the Harvard Business School)
- J.D./M.P.H. (with the Harvard School of Public Health)
- J.D./M.P.P. (with the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government)
- J.D./M.P.A./I.D. (with the Harvard John F. Kennedy School of Government)
- J.D./M.U.P. (with the Harvard Graduate School of Design)

- J.D./LL.M. (with the Cambridge University Faculty of Law)

Students may also apply for admission into a J.D./Ph.D. program with the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Additionally, Harvard Law is home to an enormous collection of law school programs which range from being entirely student-run to being hosted by outside organizations and committees. These organizations include the following:

- The Harvard Legal Aid Bureau
- The Berkman Center for Internet & Society
- The Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice
- The Labor & Worklife Program
- The WilmerHale Legal Services Center
- The Ames Moot Court Competition
- The Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program
- The Child Advocacy Program

- The East Asian Legal Studies Program
- The European Law Research Center
- The Fund for Tax and Fiscal Research
- The Human Rights Program
- The Islamic Legal Studies Program
- The John M. Olin Center for Law, Economics, and Business
- The Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy, Biotechnology, and Bioethics
- The Prison Legal Assistance Project
- The Program on Corporate Governance
- The Program on Empirical Legal Studies
- The Program on International Financial Systems
- The Program on Negotiation
- The Program on the Legal Profession



- The Public Interest Auction
- The Harvard Legal Aid Bureau
- The Harvard Association for Law and Business

Given the virtually endless number of opportunities available to students at the law school, Dean Kagan notes, "Harvard Law School is a place for people who love ideas because ideas make a difference, who want to think about the law's interaction with public policy, who care about how things work and how to improve them, who wish to avail themselves of the diverse opportunities that the legal profession offers to serve the public.



"The Law School's faculty regularly argue cases before the Supreme Court, testify before Congress, and advise developing nations on how to create effective legal systems. The Law School's students work during the year and in the summers for human rights groups abroad, DC-based public interest organizations, and Boston-area prosecutors' offices, as well as for the nation's most significant law firms and businesses. The Law School's alumni are an astonishing collection of individuals — leaders in every part of the legal profession, in all branches of government, in academia, in for-profit companies and non-profit organizations.

"At Harvard Law School, and for all these people connected with it, the study of law is not an arid intellectual exercise. The study of law matters, and this is what gives Harvard Law School its sense of purpose and mission."

Admission to Harvard Law is, of course, very selective, though the student body is significantly larger than at other similarly ranked law schools. For the class entering in 2007-2008, a total of 6,984 applications were received, of which 817 were accepted. Total enrollment at the beginning of the academic year in the J.D. program was 555. The current teacher-student ratio stands at 1:11.

Forty-seven percent of new students were female, with one-third being of minority background. Ten percent held advanced degrees, and nearly half (46%) had been out of college between one and four years. Seven percent had not been in college for more than five years.

LSAT scores for the 75<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentile were 175 and 170, respectively. The corresponding GPA percentile figures were 3.95 and 3.75. The school's first-time bar exam passage rate currently stands at an impressive 98%.

Standard full-year tuition at Harvard Law in 2007-2008 was \$39,325, with more than 80% of students receiving financial aid. Need-based scholarships are also widely dispersed by the university.

Virtually all Harvard Law graduates are employed within a few months of graduation; currently, their average starting salary is nearly \$110,000.

Almost a quarter of new students at the school come from three states — New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania — though many also come from California, Illinois, Hawaii, and Rhode Island. Seven percent of new enrollees in 2007 hailed from foreign countries, including China, Canada, France, Ireland, Jamaica, Pakistan, South Africa, and Spain.

Noted alumni include the 19<sup>th</sup> U.S. president, Rutherford B. Hayes, as well as a number of other political figures, including Barack Obama, Michael Dukakis, Pat Schroeder, and Mitt Romney. Obama also holds the distinction of having been the first African American to serve as president of the *Harvard Law Review*.

Harvard has also turned out the largest number of Supreme Court justices of any American law school, among them Harry Blackmun, Louis Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, Lewis Powell (LL.M.), and Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. Current justices Roberts, Scalia, Kennedy, Souter, Ginsburg, and Breyer also attended Harvard Law.

The school has also had a vast array of legal professors whose work has been noted in many fields apart from law, including the following: Soia Mentschikoff, the first woman to teach at Harvard Law; Lani Guinier, Harvard Law's first black woman tenured professor; Randall L. Kennedy, author of *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*; and Lucian Arye Bebchuk, economics and finance professor, who co-authored *Pay without Performance: The Unfulfilled Promise of Executive Compensation*.