

Further Understanding the Transfer Market -- A Look at the 2014 Transfer Data

By [Jerry Organ](#)

This blog posting is designed to update my [recent blog posting](#) on transfers to incorporate some of the newly available data on the Summer 2014 transfer market. [Derek Muller](#) also has written about some of the transfer data and I anticipate others will be doing so as well.

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF TRANSFERS – 2006-2008, 2011-2014

While the number of transfers dropped to 2187 in 2014 down from 2501 in 2013, the percentage of the previous fall's entering class that engaged in the transfer market remained the same at roughly 5.5%, down slightly from 5.6% in 2013, but still above the percentages that prevailed from 2006-2008 and in 2011 and 2012.

	2006	2007	2008	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of Transfers	2265	2324	2400	2427	2438	2501	2187
Previous Year First Year Enrollment	48,100	48,900	49,100	52,500	48,700	44,500	39700
% of Previous First-Year Total	4.7%	4.8%	4.9%	4.6%	5%	5.6%	5.5%

SOME SCHOOLS DOMINATE THE TRANSFER MARKET – 2012-2014

The following two charts list the top 20 transfer schools in Summer 2012 (fall 2011 entering class), Summer 2013 (fall 2012 entering class) and Summer 2014 (fall 2013 entering class) – with one chart based on “numbers” of transfers and the other chart based on the number of transfer students as a percentage of the prior year's first year class.

Largest Law Schools by Number of Transfers from 2012-2014

School	Number in 2012	School	Number in 2013	School	Number in 2014
Florida State	89	Georgetown	122	Georgetown	113
Georgetown	85	George Wash.	93	George Wash.	97

George Wash.	63	Florida St.	90	Arizona St.	66
Columbia	58	Emory	75	Idaho	57
Mich. State	54	Arizona State	73	Cal. Berkeley	55
NYU	53	American	68	NYU	53
American	49	Texas	59	Emory	50
Cardozo	48	Columbia	52	Columbia	46
Loyola Marymount	46	NYU	47	American	44
Rutgers - Camden	42	Minnesota	45	UCLA	44
Minnesota	42	Arizona	44	Wash. Univ.	44
Arizona State	42	Northwestern	44	Texas	43
Cal. Berkeley	41	UCLA	41	Minnesota	37
Emory	41	Cardozo	38	Northwestern	35
UCLA	39	Southern Cal.	37	Harvard	33
Northwestern	38	Utah	34	Mich. State	33
Florida	37	Harvard	34	Loyola Marymount	32
Maryland	34	Florida	33	Florida State	31
Michigan	33	Cal. Berkeley	32	Southern Cal.	30
SMU	31	Wash Univ.	31	Miami	29
Harvard	31				

Largest Law Schools by Transfers as Percentage of Previous First-Year Class

2012-2014

School	% 2012	School	% 2013	School	% 2014
Florida St.	44.5	Florida State	48.1	Arizona State	51.6
Arizona State	24.6	Arizona State	48	Idaho	51.4

Michigan State	17.5	Utah	34.7	Washington Univ.	23.3
Utah	17.5	Emory	29.6	Emory	22.9
Minnesota	17.1	Arizona	28.9	Georgetown	20.8
Emory	16.5	Minnesota	22	George Wash.	20.2
Cal. Berkeley	16.2	George Wash.	21.8	Cal. Berkeley	19.4
Rutgers - Camden	14.9	Georgetown	21.2	Florida St.	18.2
Georgetown	14.7	Rutgers – Camden	20.7	Rutgers - Camden	17.1
Southern Cal.	14.7	Southern Cal.	19.7	Southern Cal.	17.1
Northwestern	14.4	Texas	19.1	Minnesota	16.7
Cincinnati	14.3	Cincinnati	17.5	Utah	15.9
Columbia	14.3	Northwestern	17.1	Northwestern	15.3
Buffalo	14.2	Washington Univ.	15.4	UCLA	15
Arizona	14	Univ. Washington	15.3	Seton Hall	14.5
Cardozo	13.8	Columbia	14.2	Florida Int.	13.9
SMU	13.4	American	13.8	Texas	13.5
Florida	12.7	SMU	13.3	Columbia	13.1
Chicago	12.6	UCLA	13.3	Richmond	12.8
George Wash.	12.5	Chicago	13	Univ. Washington	12.6
				Houston	12.6

Note that in these two charts, the “repeat players” -- those schools in the top 20 for all three years -- are bolded. In 2013 and 2014, nine of the top ten schools for number of transfers repeated. (The notable newcomer this year is Idaho, which received 55 transfers from the Concordia University School of Law when Concordia did not receive provisional accreditation from the ABA.) Across all three years, eight of the top ten schools for percentage of transfers repeated.

Top Ten Law Schools as a Percentage of All Transfers

	2006	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total Transfers	482	570	587	724	625
Transfers to 10 Schools with Most Transfers	2265	2427	2438	2501	2187
Transfers to 10 Schools with Most Transfers as % of Transfers	21.3%	23.5%	24.1%	28.9%	28.6%

The chart above demonstrates an increasing concentration in the transfer market between 2006 and 2014 and even moreso between 2012 and 2014, as the ten law schools with the most students transferring captured an increasing share of the transfer market.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MARKETS BASED ON NEW DATA

Starting this fall, the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar began collecting and requiring schools with more than five transfers in to report not only the number of students who have transferred in, but also the schools from which they came (indicating the number from each school) along with the 75%, 50% and 25% first-year, law school GPAs of the pool of students who transferred in to a given school (provided that at least twelve students transferred in to the school). This allows us to begin to explore the nature of the transfer market by looking at where students are coming from and are going and by looking at the first-year GPA profile of students transferring in to different law schools.

Percentage of Transfers from Within Geographic Region and Top Feeder School(s)

USNews Ranking	School	# Transfers	Region	Regional Transfers	Reg. %	Feeder Schools	#
2	Harvard	33	NE	6	18	Emory-Wash. Univ.	3
4	Columbia	46	NE	19	41	Brooklyn	5
6	NYU	50	NE	20	40	Cornell	8
9	Berkeley	55	CA	43	78	Hastings	18
12	Northwestern	35	MW	24	69	DePaul-Chicago Kent-Loyola	5
13	Georgetown	113	Mid-Atl	49	43	American	13
15	Texas	43	TX	27	63	Baylor	5

16	UCLA	44	CA	31	70	Loyola Marymount	8
18	Wash. Univ.	44	MW	20	45	SLU	4
19	Emory	53	SE	40	75	Atlanta's John Marshall	20
20	GWU	97	Mid-Atl	78	80	American	54
20	Minnesota	37	MW	21	57	William Mitchell	6
20	USC	30	CA	22	73	Southwestern	5
31	Azizona St.	66	SW	51	77	Arizona Summit	44
45	Florida St.	31	SE	24	77	Florida Coastal	9
61	Miami	29	SE	21	72	Florida Coastal	5
72	American	44	Mid-Atl	14	32	Baltimore-UDC	6
87	Michigan St.	33	MD	33	100	Thomas Cooley	31
87	Loyola Marymount	32	CA	26	81	Whittier	15

For this set of 19 schools with the most transfer students, the vast majority obtained most of the transfers from within the geographic region within which the law school is located. Only two schools (Harvard and American) had fewer than 40% of their transfers from within the region in which they are located and only four others (Columbia, NYU, Georgetown and Washington University) had fewer than 50% of the transfers from within their regions. Meanwhile, ten of the 19 schools had 70% or more of their transfers from within the region in which the school is located.

Moreover, several schools had a significant percentage of their transfers from one particular feeder school. For Berkeley, roughly 33% of its transfers came from Hastings; for Emory, nearly 40% of its transfers came from Atlanta's John Marshall Law School; for George Washington, over 55% of its transfers came from American; for Arizona State, 67% of its transfers came from Arizona Summit; for Michigan State nearly 95% of its transfers came from Thomas Cooley; for Loyola Marymount, nearly 50% of its transfers came from Whittier; and for Idaho, over 95% of its transfers came from Concordia.

Percentage of Transfers from Different Tiers of School(s)

Along With First-Year Law School GPA 75th/50th/25th

USNews Ranking		# of Trans .	Top 50 # -- %		51-99 # -- %		100-146 # -- %		Unranked # -- %		GPA 75th	GPA 50th	GPA 25th
2	Harvard	33	23	70	10	30	0	0	0	0	3.95	3.9	3.83
4	Columbia	46	29	63	14	30	3	7	0	0	3.81	3.75	3.69
6	NYU	50	41	82	7	14	2	4	0	0	3.74	3.62	3.47
9	Berkeley	55	17	31	27	33	6	11	5	9	3.9	3.75	3.68
12	Northwestern	35	16	46	12	34	6	17	1	3	3.73	3.56	3.4
13	Georgetown	113	27	24	38	34	17	15	31	27	3.77	3.67	3.55
15	Texas	43	17	40	13	3	9	21	4	9	3.62	3.45	3.11
16	UCLA	44	15	34	23	52	2	5	4	9	3.73	3.58	3.44
18	Wash. Univ.	44	3	7	25	57	1	2	15	34	3.43	3.2	3.06
19	Emory	53	3	6	7	13	8	15	35	66	3.42	3.27	2.93
20	GWU	97	13	13	73	75	11	11	0	0	3.53	3.35	3.21
20	Minnesota	37	4	11	12	32	18	49	3	8	3.3	3.1	2.64
20	USC	30	1	3	11	37	6	20	12	40	3.71	3.59	3.44
31	Arizona St.	66	4	6	5	8	8	12	49	74	3.51	3.23	2.97
45	Florida St.	31	2	6	4	13	3	10	22	71	3.29	3.1	2.9
61	Miami	29	1	3	4	14	6	21	18	62	3.3	3.07	2.87
72	American	44	2	5	14	32	3	7	25	57	3.25	2.94	2.78
87	Michigan St.	33	0	0	0	0	1	3	32	97	3.19	3.05	2.83
87	Loyola Mary	32	0	0	0	0	1	3	31	97	3	3	3

The chart above shows the tiers of law schools from which the largest schools in the transfer market received their transfer students. Thirteen of the top 19 schools for transfers are ranked in the top 20 in USNews, but of those 13, only six had 80% or more of their transfers from schools ranked between 1 and 99 in the USNews rankings – Harvard, Columbia, NYU, Northwestern, UCLA and George Washington. Three additional schools had at least 50% of their transfers from schools ranked between 1 and 99, Berkeley, Georgetown and Washington

University. The other ten schools had at least half of their transfer students from schools ranked 100 or lower, with some schools having a significant percentage of their transfers from schools ranked alphabetically. This data largely confirms the analysis of [Bill Henderson](#) and [Jeff Rensberger](#) regarding the rankings migration of transfers – from lower ranked schools to higher ranked schools.

In addition, as you move down the rankings of transfer schools, the general trend in first-year law school GPA shows a significant decline, with several highly-ranked schools taking a number of transfers with first-year GPAs below a 3.0, including Emory, Minnesota, Arizona State, and Florida State.

STILL MANY UNKNOWNNS

This new data should be very helpful to prospective law students and to current law students who are considering transferring. This data gives them at least a little better idea of what transfer opportunities might be available to them depending upon where they go to law school as a first-year student.

Even with this more granular data now available, however, as I noted in my earlier posting on transfer students, there still are a significant number of unknowns relating to transfer students. These unknowns cover several different points.

First, what is the acceptance rater for transfers? We now know how many transferred came from different schools and we have some idea of first-year GPA ranges for those admitted as transfers, but we do not know the acceptance rate on transfers. Are a significant percentage of transfers not admitted or are most students interested in trasnferring finding a new home someplace.

Second, what are motivations of transfers and what are the demographics of transfers? Are transfers primarily motivated by better employment opportunities perceived to be available at the higher-ranked law school? Are some subset of transfers primarily motivated by issues regarding family or geography (with rankings and employment outcomes as secondary concerns)?

Third, how do the employment outcomes of transfer students compare with the employment outcomes of students who started at a given law school? Does the data support the perception that those who transfer, in fact, have better employment outcomes by virtue of transferring?

Fourth, what are the social/educational experiences of transfers in their new schools and what is the learning community impact on those schools losing a significant number of students to the transfer market?

For those interested in these issues, it might make sense to design some longitudinal research projects that could help find answers to some of these questions.

[Further Understanding the Transfer Market – A Look at the 2014 Transfer Market](#), Legal Whiteboard, December 20, 2014