

# THOUGHTS ON FALL 2013 ENROLLMENT AND PROFILE

## DATA AMONG LAW SCHOOLS

By [Jerry Organ](#)

**DECLINING ENROLLMENT** – Between fall 2012 and fall 2013, the 199 law schools in the 48 contiguous states and Hawaii (excluding the Puerto Rican schools) accredited by the ABA’s Section for Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, experienced the following first-year enrollment changes:

- 25 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 25% or more,
- 34 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 15%-24.99%,
- 44 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 5% to 14.99%,
- 62 schools had “flat” first-year enrollment of -4.99% to 4.99%,
- 19 schools had an increase in first-year enrollment of 5% and 14.99%, and
- 15 schools had an increase in first-year enrollment of 15% or more.

Overall, more than half (103) had a decrease in first-year enrollment of at least 5%, while roughly 17% (34) had an increase in first-year enrollment of at least 5%.

Across these 199 schools, first-year enrollment declined from 42,590 to 39,109, a decrease of 8.2%. The average decline in first-year enrollment across U.S. News “tiers” of law schools was 2.6% among top 50 schools, 8.2% among schools ranked 51-99, 7.7% among schools ranked 100-144 and 7.9% among schools ranked alphabetically.

Between fall 2010 and fall 2013, the 195 law schools in the 48 contiguous states and Hawaii fully-accredited by the ABA’s Section for Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar as of 2010 (excluding Belmont, LaVerne, California-Irvine, and Massachusetts-Dartmouth), experienced the following first-year enrollment changes:

- 28 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 40% or more,
- 29 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 30% to 39.99%
- 43 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 20% to 29.99%
- 43 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 10% to 19.99%
- 36 schools had a decline in first-year enrollment of 0% to 9.99%
- 10 schools had an increase in first-year enrollment of 0.01% to 9.99%
- 6 schools had an increase in first-year enrollment of 10% or more.

Overall, more than half (100) had a decrease in first-year enrollment of at least 20%, while only roughly 8% (16) had any increase in first-year enrollment.

Across these 195 schools, first-year enrollment declined from 50,408 to 38,773, a drop of 23.1%. The average decline in first-year enrollment across U.S. News “tiers” of law schools was 14.7% among top 50 schools, 22.5% among schools ranked 51-99, 22.8% among schools ranked 100-144, and 26.8% among schools ranked alphabetically.

**DECLINING PROFILES** -- Across the 195 law schools in the 48 contiguous states and Hawaii fully-accredited by the ABA’s Section for Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar as of 2010 (thus excluding Belmont, LaVerne, California-Irvine, and Massachusetts-Dartmouth) the entering first-year class average LSAT profile fell one point at all three measures between 2012 and 2013, from 159.6/157/153.5 to 158.6/156/152.5. The entering first-year class average LSAT profile fell roughly two points at all three measures between 2010 and 2013, from 160.5/158.1/155.2 to 158.6/156/152.5.

The average decline in median LSAT scores between 2012 and 2013 across U.S. News “tiers” of law schools was .98 among top 50 schools, 1.18 among schools ranked 51-99, .72 among schools ranked 100-144, and 1.13 among schools ranked alphabetically.

Notably, 133 law schools saw a decline in their median LSAT between 2012 and 2013, with 80 down one point, 38 down two points, 12 down three points, one down four points, one down five points and one down six points, while 54 law schools were flat and 7 saw an increase in their median LSAT.

In terms of schools experiencing “larger” declines in median LSAT scores between 2012 and 2013, five schools in the top 50 saw a three point decline in their median LSAT, five schools ranked 51-99 saw at least a three point decline (of which one was down four points), three schools ranked 100-144 saw a three point decline, and two schools ranked alphabetically saw large declines – one of five points and one of six points.

The average decline in median LSAT scores between 2010 and 2013 across U.S. News “tiers” of law schools was 1.54 among top 50 schools, 2.27 among schools ranked 51-99, 2.11 among schools ranked 100-144, and 2.79 among schools ranked alphabetically. If one were to unpack the top 50 schools a little more, however, one would discover that the top 20 schools saw an average decline in their median LSAT of 1.05 between 2010 and 2013, while the bottom 15 schools in the top 50 saw an average decline in their median LSAT of 2.53.

In terms of schools experiencing “larger” declines in median LSAT scores between 2010 and 2013, three schools in the top 50 have seen declines of four or more points, nine schools ranked 51-99 have seen declines of four or more points, 11 schools ranked 100-144 have seen declines of four or more points and 17 schools ranked alphabetically have seen declines of four or more points.

When looking at the 2012-13 data in comparison with the 2010-2013 data, one sees that lower ranked schools have had more of a sustained challenge in terms of managing profile over the last few years, while schools ranked in the top 50 or top 100 had been managing profile fairly well until fall 2013 when the decreased number of high LSAT applicants really began to manifest itself in terms of impacting the LSAT profiles of highly ranked schools.

The overall decline in the LSAT profile of first-year students also can be demonstrated with two other reference points. In 2010, there were 74 law schools with a median LSAT of 160; in 2013,

that number has fallen to 56. At the other end of the spectrum, in 2010, there were only 9 schools with a median LSAT of less than 150 and only one with a median LSAT of 145. In 2013, the number of law schools with a median LSAT of less than 150 has more than tripled to 32, while the number of law schools with a median LSAT of 145 or less now numbers 9 (with the low now being a 143).

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS** – Over the last three years, few schools have had the luxury of being able to hold enrollment (or come close to holding enrollment) and being able to hold profile (or come close to holding profile). Many schools have found themselves in a “pick your poison” scenario. A number of schools have picked profile and made an effort to hold profile or come close to holding profile by absorbing significant declines in first-year enrollment (and the corresponding loss of revenue). By contrast, a number of schools have picked enrollment and made an effort to hold enrollment or come close to holding enrollment (and maintaining revenue) but at the expense of absorbing a significant decline in LSAT profile. Some schools, however, haven’t even been able to pick their poison. For these schools, the last three years have presented something of a double whammy, as the schools have experienced both significant declines in first-year enrollment (and the corresponding loss of revenue) and significant declines in profile.