

Updating the Transfer Market Analysis for 2015

By [Jerry Organ](#)

This blog posting updates my blog postings [here](#) and [here](#) of December 2014 regarding what we know about the transfer market. With the release of the 2015 Standard 509 Reports, we now have two years of more detailed transfer data from which to glean insights about the transfer market among law schools.

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF TRANSFERS – 2011-2015

The number of transfers dropped to 1,979 in 2015, down from 2,187 in 2014 and 2,501 in 2013. The percentage of the previous fall's entering class that engaged in the transfer market also dropped slightly to 5.2%, down from 5.5% in 2014 and 5.6% in 2013. In other words, there is no reason to believe the transfer market is "growing" as a general matter. It has been fairly consistently in the 4.6% to 5.6% range for the last five years, with an average of 5.2%

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of Transfers	2427	2438	2501	2187	1979
Previous Year First Year Enrollment	52,500	48,700	44,500	39700	37900
% of Previous First-Year Total	4.6%	5%	5.6%	5.5%	5.2%

SOME LAW SCHOOLS CONTINUE TO DOMINATE THE TRANSFER MARKET

The following two charts list the top 15 law schools in terms of receiving transfer students in descending order in Summer 2013 (fall 2012 entering class), Summer 2014 (fall 2013 entering class), and Summer 2015 (fall 2014 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.

Note that in these two charts, the "repeat players" are bolded – those schools in the top 15 for all three years are in **black**, those schools in the top 15 for two of the three years are in **blue**. Seven of the top ten by number in 2015 and seven of the top ten by percentage 2015 have been among the top 15 on each list for all three years.

Largest Law Schools by Number of Transfers from 2013-2015

School	Number in 2013	School	Number in 2014	School	Number in 2015
Georgetown	122	Georgetown	113	Georgetown	110

George Wash.	93	George Wash.	97	George Wash.	109
Florida St.	90	Arizona St.	66	Arizona St.	65
Emory	75	Idaho	57	Harvard	55
Arizona State	73	Cal. Berkeley	55	Emory	51
American	68	NYU	53	NYU	51
Texas	59	Emory	50	Cal. Berkeley	49
Columbia	52	Columbia	46	Rutgers	45
NYU	47	American	44	Columbia	44
Minnesota	45	UCLA	44	Miami	44
Arizona	44	Wash. Univ.	44	UCLA	43
Northwestern	44	Texas	43	Texas	37
UCLA	41	Minnesota	37	American	33
Cardozo	38	Northwestern	35	Florida St.	32
Southern Cal.	37	Harvard	33	Minnesota	31
TOTAL	928		817		799
% of All Transfers	37.1%		37.4%		40.4%

Largest Law Schools by Transfers as a Percentage of Previous First Year Class - 2013-2015

School	% 2013	School	% 2014	School	% 2015
Florida State	48.1	Arizona State	51.6	Arizona State	45.5
Arizona State	48	Idaho	51.4	Emory	22.9
Utah	34.7	Washington Univ.	23.3	George Wash.	20.2
Emory	29.6	Emory	22.9	Miami	19.2
Arizona	28.9	Georgetown	20.8	Georgetown	19
Minnesota	22	George Wash.	20.2	Cal. Berkeley	17.9
George Wash.	21.8	Cal. Berkeley	19.4	Florida St.	17
Georgetown	21.2	Florida St.	18.2	Florida Int'l	16.7

Rutgers – Camden	20.7	Rutgers – Camden	17.1	Minnesota	16.1
Southern Cal.	19.7	Southern Cal.	17.1	Utah	16
Texas	19.1	Minnesota	16.7	UNLV	14.3
Cincinnati	17.5	Utah	15.9	UCLA	13.7
Northwestern	17.1	Northwestern	15.3	Texas	12.3
Washington Univ.	15.4	UCLA	15	Chicago	12.1
Univ. Washington	15.3	Seton Hall	14.5	Rutgers	12.1

Interestingly, the number of law schools welcoming transfers representing more than 20% of their first-year class has fallen from nine in 2013 to only three in 2015.

Nonetheless, as shown in the following chart, we are continuing to see a modest increase in concentration in the transfer market between 2011 and 2015 as the ten law schools with the most students transferring in captured an increasing share of the transfer market, from 23.5% in 2011 to 31.5% in 2015. Nearly one-third of all transfers in 2015 transferred to one of the ten schools with the most transfers.

Top Ten Law Schools as a Percentage of All Transfers

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total Transfers	2427	2438	2501	2187	1979
Transfers to 10 Law Schools with Most Transfers	570	587	724	625	623
Transfers to 10 Law Schools with Most Transfers as % of Total Transfers	23.5%	24.1%	28.9%	28.6%	31.5%

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL MARKETS

Starting in 2014, the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar began collecting and requiring schools with more than twelve transfers in to report not only the number of students who have transferred in, but also the law schools from which they came (indicating the number from each law school) along with the 75%, 50% and 25% first-year, law school GPAs of the students who transferred in. This allows us to look at where students are coming from and are going to, and to look at the first-year GPA profile of students transferring in to different law schools. The following chart focuses on the top 15 law schools in terms of transfers in for 2015 presented in descending USNews ranking. It indicates the extent to which these law schools were attracting transfers from their geographic region and also identifies the law school that provided the largest number of transfers to each listed law school as well as the percentage of transfers that came from that school.

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

School	# of Transfers 14/15	Region	Regional # of Transfers 14/15	Regional % of Transfers 14/15	School from Which Largest Number of Transfers Came in 2015	#/% of Transfers
Harvard	33/55	NE	6/15	18/27	GWU	6/11%
Columbia	46/44	NE	19/19	41/43	Wash. Univ.	5/11%
NYU	50/51	NE	20/15	40/29	Georgetown	7/14%
Berkeley	55/49	CA	43/29	78/59	Hastings	19/39%
Georgetown	113/110	Mid-Atl	49/43	43/39	GWU	11/10%
Texas	43/37	TX	27/22	63/59	Texas Tech	6/16%
UCLA	44/43	CA	31/26	70/60	Hastings	9/21%
Emory	53/51	SE	40/31	75/61	Atlanta's John Marshall	11/22%
Minnesota	37/31	MW	21/17	57/55	Hamline	9/29%
GWU	97/109	Mid-Atl	78/70	80/64	American	44/40%
Azizona St.	66/65	SW	51/48	77/74	Arizona Sum.	47/72%
Florida St.	31/32	SE	24/27	77/84	Florida Coastal	11/34%
Miami	29/44	SE	21/27	72/61	St. Thomas	12/27%
American	44/33	Mid-Atl	14/6	32/18	Charleston	3/9%
Rutgers*	45	NE	29	64	Widener- Delaware	10/22%

*Rutgers is a unified school as of 2015, but for 2014 reported data separately for the Newark campus and the Camden campus, so this only reports the 2015 data.

For these top 15 law schools for transfer students in 2015, 10 schools obtained most of their transfers (55% or more) from within the geographic region within which the law school is located, while five schools (Harvard, Columbia, NYU, Georgetown and American) had fewer than 45% of their transfers from within the region in which they are located. Interestingly, 11 of the 14 law schools with data for both 2014 and 2015 saw a decline in the percentage of transfers from within the region in which the law school is located. Only two law schools in 2015 had more than 70% of their transfers from within the region in which the law school is located (Arizona State and Florida State), down from seven such law schools in 2014.

Moreover, several law schools had a significant percentage of their transfers from one particular feeder school. For Miami, roughly 34% of its transfers came from St. Thomas University (Florida); for Berkeley, roughly 39% of its transfers came from Hastings; for George Washington, 40% of its transfers came from American; and for Arizona State, 72% of its transfers came from Arizona Summit.

The chart below shows the tiers of law schools from which the largest 15 law schools in the transfer market received their transfer students. Ten of the top 15 law schools for transfers are ranked in the top 20 in USNews, but of those 10, only six had 75% or more of their transfers from schools ranked between 1 and 99 in the USNews rankings – Harvard, Columbia, NYU, Berkeley, UCLA and George Washington. Two additional schools, Georgetown and Texas, had at least 50% of their transfers from schools ranked between 1 and 99. The remaining two law schools ranked in the top 20 in USNews (Emory and Minnesota) and the other five law schools in the list had at least half of their transfer students from law schools ranked 100 or lower, with five of those law schools having 75% or more of their transfers from law schools ranked 100 or lower.

In addition, it shows that as you move down the rankings of law schools that are large players in the transfer market, the general trend in first-year law school GPA shows a significant decline, with several schools taking a number of transfers with first-year GPAs below a 3.0, including Minnesota, Arizona State, Florida State, Miami and American.

Percentage of Transfers from Different Tiers of School(s) for 2014 and 2015 Along With First-Year Law School GPA 75th/50th/25th)

(In each column, the number on the left is the 2014 number and the number on the right is the 2015 number.)

(Highlighted cells indicate the modal response for each law school.)

(Color-coding of GPA data Reflects increases (Green) or decreases (Red) of .05 or more points.)

	# of Transfers	Rank Top 50		Rank 51-99		Rank 100+		GPA 75 th	GPA 50 th	GPA 25 th
		#	%	#	%	#	%			
Harvard	33/55	23/41	70/75	10/13	30/24	0/1	0/2	3.95/3.98	3.9/3.92	3.83/3.85
Columbia	46/44	29/30	63/68	14/10	30/23	3/4	7/9	3.81/3.82	3.75/3.76	3.69/3.66
NYU	50/51	41/40	82/78	7/10	14/20	2/1	4/2	3.74/3.76	3.62/3.68	3.47/3.52
Berkeley	55/49	17/15	31/31	27/26	49/53	11/8	20/16	3.9/3.87	3.75/3.81	3.68/3.69
Georgetown	113/110	27/30	24/27	38/30	34/27	48/50	42/45	3.77/3.77	3.67/3.66	3.55/3.59
Texas	43/37	17/10	40/27	13/13	30/35	13/14	30/38	3.62/3.6	3.45/3.46	3.11/3.32
UCLA	44/43	15/15	34/35	23/23	52/53	6/5	14/12	3.73/3.7	3.58/3.58	3.44/3.46
Emory	53/51	3/5	6/10	7/8	13/16	43/38	81/75	3.42/3.45	3.27/3.3	2.93/3.06
GWU	97/109	13/21	13/19	73/63	75/58	11/25	11/23	3.53/3.46	3.35/3.32	3.21/3.15
Minnesota	37/31	4/6	11/19	12/7	32/23	21/18	57/58	3.3/3.43	3.1/3.12	2.64/2.96

Arizona St.	66/65	4/0	6/0	5/6	8/9	57/59	86/91	3.51/3.5	3.23/3.17	2.97/2.95
Florida St.	31/32	2/0	6/0	4/2	13/6	25/30	81/94	3.29/3.32	3.1/3.14	2.9/2.96
Miami	29/44	1/3	3/7	4/7	14/16	24/34	83/77	3.3/3.26	3.07/3.05	2.87/2.9
American	44/33	2/0	5/0	14/1	32/3	28/32	64/97	3.25/3.04	2.94/2.89	2.78/2.74
Rutgers	45	0	0	2	4	43	96	/3.29	/3.05	/2.75

STILL MANY UNKNOWNNS

As I noted last year, this more detailed transfer data should be very helpful to prospective law students and pre-law advisors, and to current law students who are considering transferring. This data gives them a better idea of what transfer opportunities might be available depending upon where they go to law school (or are presently enrolled as a first-year student).

Even with this more granular data now available, however, there still are a significant number of unknowns relating to transfer students. In an upcoming post, I will touch on some questions that remain unanswered about the transfer market as well as a few other aspects of the transfer experience.

[Source: Updated Analysis of Attrition through the 2014-15 Academic Year](#), Legal Whiteboard, Saturday, February 27, 2016