



How to Improve the Law School Rankings

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U.S. News has received some interesting suggestions for improving our law school [rankings](#) since they came out in March.

One of the more interesting ideas is from a [U.S. Appellate Court](#) judge who proposes that we take into account how many of each law school's graduates are placed yearly in federal clerkships. The judge said:

"The quality of our law clerks from year to year is one of the most important factors determining the productivity and efficiency of our individual chambers. Heavy caseloads and difficult legal issues make it imperative that we select not only the brightest students but also those who have received the best training in the law. Determining which law schools provide an excellent legal education is critically important to us, and we have a good opportunity to make that determination because we work with our clerks 'elbow to elbow' on a daily basis. We find out not only how much they know about the law but also how well they have been trained in legal research and analysis. Our willingness to hire law clerks from a particular school is dependent to a large extent on our past experience with the graduates of that law school. Incorporating the clerkship hiring decisions of federal judges into your rankings will provide you with what is, in a sense, a survey of the quality of law schools as reflected in the actions—not just the opinions—of a group of highly selective employers who have every reason and opportunity to learn which law schools do the best job of educating their students."

Carl J. Zahner, director of the Henry Latimer Center for Professionalism, and John T.

Berry, director of the Legal Division, both at the [Florida Bar](#), discussed the need for *U.S. News* to take into account in some way the degree to which legal ethics were being effectively taught at law schools. Dan Popeo, chairman and general counsel of the [Washington Legal Foundation](#), believes that law schools need to play a much bigger role in raising the [ethical standards](#) for future practicing attorneys, given some of the recent scandals. Zahner and Berry stressed that there was almost a complete lack of practical training at law school in how to be a lawyer and how to manage a legal practice, which some think is a key factor in why so many young lawyers are becoming quickly disillusioned with their field. Mentioning no specific ranking indicators, they merely pointed out the need to look at how effectively law schools teach [Professional Responsibility](#), or legal ethics and "Law Office Management."