

RANK
13

Cornell University Law School



MAILING ADDRESS¹
Cornell Law School,
Myron Taylor Hall,
Ithaca, NY 14853-4901

MAIN PHONE
607-255-5141

WEBSITE
www.lawschool.cornell.edu

REGISTRAR'S PHONE
607-255-7190

ADMISSIONS PHONE
607-255-5141

CAREER SERVICES PHONE
607-255-9982

Overview²

When Andrew Dickson White began to lay plans for a law department at Cornell University, he wrote that he wanted to educate “not swarms of hastily prepared pettifoggers, but a fair number of well-trained, large-minded, morally-based lawyers in the best sense...” He hoped graduates of the school would become “a blessing to the country, at the bar, on the bench, and in various public bodies.”

A high school diploma was not a prerequisite for entry to Cornell’s new department and tuition was \$75 a year for three hours of classes a day. Students were thirsty for knowledge: “We had to drive them out of the library at night, and had a hard time answering their questions the next morning,” wrote faculty member Charles Evans Hughes.

The school’s growth mirrored that of legal schooling in the country and the number of law students in the U.S. tripled over the next ten years. By 1917, admission required at least two years of university education. World War I saw a halt in the stream of graduates, but students returned after the Armistice. Legal study was made a graduate degree in 1924, and the Department of Law became a professional school. In 1925, the trustees voted to give the new institution a new name: Cornell Law School.

By the end of World War II, law students who had fought overseas brought back internationally-scaled aspirations. In response, the Law School entered the arena of international legal studies in earnest.

The faculty grew in strength and numbers over the next thirty years. Graduates who had prospered endowed professorships and research flourished. Classes in legal history and philosophy found places in the catalogue of second- and third-year elective courses. The Legal Aid Clinic was established to give students the opportunity to confront real legal problems in the real world and other clinics followed.

Today, students still come to Cornell Law School from nearby upstate New York communities. But most now come from much farther away: Florida, Tulsa, L.A., Santo Domingo, and China. When they graduate, they join major law firms, go in-house, work as public defenders, or help AIDS victims win discrimination cases. They teach law and publish books. Andrew White’s dream has grown in a way he

could hardly have anticipated: the school's graduates serve not just this country, but several dozen others, as well. International graduates return to their own countries to posts in government and on the bench.

Student-Faculty Ratio³

10.3:1

Admission Criteria⁴

	LSAT	GPA
25th-75th Percentile	165-167	3.52-3.73
Median*	167	3.66

The above LSAT and GPA data pertain to the 2013 entering class.

*Medians have been calculated by averaging the 25th- and 75th-percentile values released by the law schools and have been rounded up to the nearest whole number for LSAT scores and to the nearest one-hundredth for GPAs.

Admission Statistics⁵

Approximate number of applications	4096
Number accepted	1226
Acceptance rate	29.9%

The above admission details are based on 2013 data.

Class Ranking and Grades⁶

As a matter of faculty policy, Cornell Law School does not release the academic rankings of students. After four semesters, the top five students in the class are ranked.

Grades awarded and their corresponding grade point values are:

A+	4.33
A	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C -	1.67

D +	1.33
D	1.00
D -	0.67
F	0.00

Grade Confidentiality: All student grades are considered by Cornell Law School to be strictly confidential information. Release of grade information to faculty members and administrators is granted only for bona fide educational purposes. The Law School Registrar will release grade information to prospective employers, investigators, or any other person only with written permission of the student.

Grade Normalization (Curve)⁷

Faculty grading policy calls upon each faculty member to grade a course, including problem courses and seminars, so that the mean grade for J.D. students in the course approximates 3.35 (the acceptable range is 3.2 to 3.5.)

However, under certain circumstances faculty can exceed the cap and in those cases the transcript of every student in the class will carry an asterisk* next to the grade for that class, and for various internal purposes such as the awarding of academic honors at graduation, the numerical impact of such grades will be adjusted to be the same as it would have been if the course had been graded to achieve a 3.5 mean.

Honors⁸

Honor	Criteria
Order of Coif	Top 10% of graduating class.
summa cum laude	Awarded in cases of exceptional performance.
magna cum laude	Top 10% of graduating class.
cum laude	Top 30% of graduating class.
Dean's List	Each semester, top 30% of their class.
Charles Evans Hughes Scholar	Top 30% of class at completion of second year.

Awards⁹

Name of Award	Awarded for/to
American Bankruptcy Law Journal Prize	For highest grade in any bankruptcy course.
American Bankruptcy Medal of Excellence	For excellence in bankruptcy law.
American Bar Association Prize	For two graduating students who excel in the areas of land use and local government.

Arthur S. Chatman Labor Law Prize	Given in memory of Arthur S. Chatman, A.B. 1952, LL.B. 1957, for general academic excellence, particularly in the field of labor law, or has written a paper on labor law.
Boardman Third-Year Law Prize	A gift of Judge Douglas Boardman, the first Dean of Cornell Law School, for the best work through the end of the second year.
CALI Excellence for the Future Award	For the highest grade in selected courses.
Cornell Law Library Prize for Exemplary Student Research	For academic research papers that best demonstrate sophistication, originality, or unusual depth or breadth in the use of research materials, exceptional innovation in research strategy, and skillful synthesis of research results into a comprehensive scholarly analysis.
Cuccia Prize	Gift of Francis P. Cuccia, LL.B. 1912, in memory of Mary Heagen Cuccia, for teams reaching the finals of the fall moot court competition.
Daniel P. Chernoff Prize	Established from the estate of Daniel P. Chernoff, B.E.E. 1956 LL.B. 1959, for a second- or third-year student who demonstrates general academic excellence in intellectual property and patent law, and demonstrates interest in the broader university community.
David Marcus Memorial Prize	Established by David Marcus, J.D. 1945, former co-editor of Cornell Law Review, for an outstanding comment in Cornell Law Review.
Fraser Prize	Gift of William Metcalf, Jr., LL.B. 1901, in memory of Alexander Hugh Ross Fraser, former librarian of Cornell Law School, for superior achievements in scholarship and attributes that earn the commendation of teachers and fellow students.
Fredric H. Weisberg Prizes	Established in memory of Fredric H. Weisberg, J.D. 1967, by Marc S. Goldberg, LL.B. 1967, for distinction in Constitutional Law and Legal Methods.
Freeman Award for Civil-Human Rights	Established from the estate of Professor Emeritus Harrop A. Freeman, J.D. 1930, J.S.D. 1945, for contributions to civil and/or human rights.
Harry G. Henn Prize in Corporations	Endowed in memory of Harry G. Henn, LL.B. 1943, the Edward Cornell Professor of Law, and faculty member from 1953 to 1985, for the highest grade in the upperclass Corporations course.
Helen Belding Smith and Henry P. Smith III Moot Court Fund	Established by gifts from Helen Belding Smith and the estate of Henry P. Smith III, J.D. 1936, for annual moot court competitions.
Herbert R. Reif Prize	Gift of Arthur H. Dean, LL.B. 1923, for the note or comment for Cornell Law Review that best exemplifies the skillful and lucid use of the English language in writing about the law.
Ida Cornell Kerr and William Ogden Kerr Memorial Prize	Established in memory of Ida Cornell Kerr and William Ogden Kerr by Jane M. G. Foster, LL.B. 1918, for a third-year law student who demonstrates general academic excellence.
International Academy of Trial Lawyers Award	For the most outstanding record in the course in trial and appellate practice.

John J. Kelly Memorial Prize	Established by the children of John J. Kelly J.D. 1947, A.B. 1942 (Arts) in honor of their father's life and career, for a graduating student who best exemplifies qualities of scholarship, fair play and good humor.
Louis Kaiser Prize	For the upperclass team submitting the best moot court brief.
Marc E. and Lori A. Kasowitz Prize for Excellence in Legal Writing and Oral Advocacy	For distinction in writing and oral advocacy skills.
Morris P. Glushien Prize	Established in honor of Morris P. Glushien, A.B. 1929, LL.B. 1931, former editor of Cornell Law Quarterly, member of the Law School faculty, associate general counsel of the National Labor Relations Board, and general counsel of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, for the best student note or comment concerning current social problems published in the Cornell Law Review, Cornell International Law Journal, or any other Cornell student law journal.
Myron C. Taylor Scholar	For students in the top 30% of their class at the completion of their second year of law school.
Nathan Burkan Memorial Competition	For the best papers on copyright law.
Peter Belfer Memorial Prize	Gift of Jean Belfer in memory of Peter Belfer, J.D. 1970, for proficiency and insight in federal securities regulation and related laws.
Robert S. Pasley Memorial Prize Fund	Established in honor of Robert S. Pasley, LL.B. 1936, the Frank B. Ingersoll Professor of Law and a member of the Law School faculty from 1954 to 1976, for the student who best exemplifies Professor Pasley's scholarship interest in both the law and the arts, classics, or humanities.
Seymour Herzog Memorial Prize	Endowed in honor of the late Seymour Herzog, LL.B. 1936, for a third-year student who demonstrates excellence in the law and commitment to public interest law, combined with a love of sports.
Stanley E. Gould Prize for Public Interest Law	Gift of Stanley E. Gould, J.D. 1954, for outstanding dedication to serving public interest law and public interest groups.
The Esther and Irving Rosen bloom Prize Fund	Gift of Evelyn B. Kenvin and Arthur H. Rosenbloom, J.D. 1959, in memory of Mr. Rosenbloom's parents, for excellence in the area of law and finance including damage quantification in securities cases, valuations of closely held corporations for estate and gift tax purposes, and other corporate finance-related issues.
The Honorable G. Joseph Tauro Dean's Prize	For a law student on the basis of general academic excellence.

The Student Legal Ethics Award	For the student who demonstrates, in a law review note, a seminar paper or independently-written paper, or through work in a clinical program or in some other significant way, an exemplary understanding of the issues concerning the professional responsibility of lawyers.
West Publishing Company Awards	For first-year students with excellent overall scholastic achievement.

Journals

The **Cornell Law Review** is one of the nation’s leading law journals. From its inception in 1915, the law review has regularly published contributions from the nation’s leading scholars in legal education, including Justices of the Supreme Court such as Robert Jackson, John Harlan, William Douglas, Felix Frankfurter or Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The law review has also drawn on the strength and excellence of the Cornell Law School faculty—publishing contributions by Professor Kevin Clermont on jurisdictional questions, Professor Theodore Eisenberg’s empirical work, Professor James Henderson (co-Reporter on the Third Restatement of Torts) on products liability, and Professor Steven Shiffrin on the religion clauses of the First Amendment.¹⁰

The **Cornell International Law Journal** is one of the oldest and most prominent international law journals in the United States. Three times a year, the Journal publishes scholarship that reflects the sweeping changes that are taking place in public and private international law. Each issue features articles by legal scholars, practitioners, and participants in international politics, as well as student-written notes. Recent contributors include: John F. Kerry, Senator from Massachusetts and longstanding member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Senator George J. Mitchell, moderator of the historic Good Friday Accords in Northern Ireland and 1998 Nobel Peace Prize nominee; Senator Orrin G. Hatch, former Presidential candidate and ranking Republican member of the Senate Judiciary Committee; and Ambassador David J. Scheffer, Clinton negotiator for the establishment of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.¹¹

The **Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy** has quickly risen to become one of the leading public policy journals in the nation. A fixture among the top 10 policy journals, JLPP has consistently been among the top 100 student-edited law journals. JLPP publishes articles, student notes, essays, book reviews, and other scholarly works that examine the intersections of compelling public or social policy issues and the law. Part of JLPP’s success comes from a commitment to diversity of opinion on a wide variety of topics.¹²

The **Legal Information Institute** was founded in 1992. Its work is supported by the National Center for Automated Information Research, a growing number of corporate sponsors, and the Keck Foundation through grants and funded joint studies. The LII publishes electronic versions of core materials in numerous areas of the law, both on the web and in other electronic products. They range from the Constitution to the U.S. Code, from Supreme Court decisions to the Code of Federal Regulations. The LII is known internationally as a leading “law-not-com” provider of public legal information. Search engines and ranking systems identify the LII as the most linked-to web resource in the field of law. Sites ranging from CSPAN to Fedlaw to the Dow Jones Business Directory, as well as numerous off-line references, e.g., Web Feet, the New York Times, and The National Jurist (4/2000), recommend starting with the LII for law.¹³

The **Journal of Empirical Legal Studies** fills a gap in the legal and social science literature that has

often left scholars, lawyers, and policymakers without basic knowledge of legal systems. Always timely and provocative, studies published in JELS have been covered in leading news outlets such as the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Economist, Forbes Magazine, the Financial Times, and USA Today.¹⁴

Moot Court¹⁵

Every year, CLS students participate in moot court competitions held at the Law School under the auspices of the student-run Moot Court Board: the Cuccia Cup Moot Court, held during the Fall term and concluding in late October or early November; the Winter Cup Upperclass Moot Court, which begins shortly after the intersession recess and concludes in February; and the Langfan Family First-Year Moot Court, which gives first-year CLS students a chance to compete against each other as solo practitioners. Cornell Law's winning moot court teams compete in four extramural, nationwide competitions, the final rounds of which are judged by appeals-court judges, including a circuit judge from the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Clinical Programs¹⁶

Since the 1970's, clinical courses at Cornell Law School have helped students move beyond the classroom into the world of practice. A variety of courses provide students with opportunities to assume the role of advocate on behalf of real clients with real legal problems. All of this is done under the supervision and mentoring of experienced faculty, who work closely with students to assist their development into excellent, ethical professionals. Clinics offered by the school include:

- Child Advocacy Clinic
- Capital Punishment: Post Conviction Litigation
- Criminal Defense
- Global Gender Justice Clinic
- Immigration Appellate Law and Advocacy Clinic
- International Human Rights Clinic
- Labor Law Clinic
- LGBT Clinic
- Prosecution
- Regulation Room
- Securities Law Clinic

Placement Facts¹⁷

Starting Salaries (2012 Graduates Employed Full-Time)

Private sector (25th-75th percentile)	\$160,000 - \$160,000
Private sector - Median	\$160,000
Public service - Median	\$60,742

Employment Details

Graduates known to be employed at graduation	77.9%
Graduates known to be employed nine months after graduation	85.8%

Areas of Legal Practice

Graduates Employed In	Percentage
Law Firms	67.8%
Business and Industry	2.3%
Government	11.3%
Judicial Clerkships	10.2%
Public Interest Organizations	7.3%
Academia	0%
Unknown	1.1%

Externships/Internships

Externships¹⁸⁻²²

Full-Term Externship:

The Full-Term Externship allows students to craft a unique educational experience. Each student locates a setting that will advance his or her educational goals. These can include the following areas: not-for-profit sector, governmental agencies, in-house counsel offices in media or sports, or judicial clerkships.

Judicial Externship:

The Judicial Externship course provides the student with the opportunity to learn about judges, the judicial decision-making process, and the justice system in general, while working as a clerk in one of a wide range of New York state and federal trial and appellate judge's chambers.

Law Guardian Externship:

Students interested in children's rights have found the Law Guardian Externship to offer important insights into the representation of children in Family Court. In this externship, students work in the Law Guardian Office, which provides representation to children in abuse and neglect, custody, juvenile delinquency and Persons In Need of Supervision (PINS) cases.

Legislative Externship:

For students interested in politics, policy issues, legislation and the legislative process, the Legislative Externship offers important insights in these areas as well as an opportunity to work in a less traditional legal setting. In this externship, students work with Assembly member Barbara Lifton and other members of her staff.

Neighborhood Legal Services Externship:

For students interested in providing legal assistance to indigent clients in civil matters with the opportunity to observe the workings of a legal services office, the Neighborhood Legal Services Externship is the perfect match. In this externship, students work under the guidance of attorneys and help represent clients of the Ithaca office of Legal Assistance of Western New York (LAWNY).

Internships²³

For students interested in international law, students can pursue internships based around a particular country or global region (India, South Asia) and/or an interest in particular policy issues (hunger, poverty). Interns are encouraged to study not just law during the internship, but also develop an appreciation for social and political norms, customs, and geography.

Student Organizations²⁴

- Alternative Dispute Resolution Society
- American Constitution Society
- Art Law Society
- Asian Pacific American Law Student Association
- Bioethics & Health Law Society
- Black Law Students Association
- Briggs Society of International Law
- Business Law Society
- California Law Students Association
- Christian Legal Society
- Cornell Advocates for Human Rights
- Cornell Association of Law and Economics
- Cornell International Law Journal
- Cornell Journal of Law and Public Policy
- Cornell Law Review
- Cornell Law Second Amendment Club
- Cornell Law Students Association
- Cornell Sports & Entertainment Law Society
- Environmental Law Society
- Federalist Society
- Intellectual Property and Technology Association
- Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
- Italian American Law Students Association
- Jewish Law Students Association
- Lambda Law Association (LGBTQ)
- Latino American Law Students Association
- Law Students for Reproductive Justice
- Legal Information Institute
- LLM Association
- Mock Trial Board
- Moot Court Board
- Muslim Students Association
- National Lawyers Guild
- National Security Law and Policy Society
- Native American Law Students Association
- Public Interest Law Union
- Society of Wine & Jurisprudence
- South Asian Law Students Association
- Spring Break Service Trip
- St. Thomas More Catholic Society
- Student Animal Legal Defense Fund

- Student Leadership Council
- Women's Law Coalition

References

1. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/about/people.cfm>
2. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/about/history.cfm>
3. <http://premium.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/cornell-university-03105>
4. <http://premium.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/cornell-university-03105/admissions>
5. <http://premium.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/cornell-university-03105/admissions>
6. <https://support.law.cornell.edu/students/forms/2014-15StudentHandbook.pdf> page 23, 24, 25
7. <https://support.law.cornell.edu/students/forms/2014-15StudentHandbook.pdf> page 23
8. <https://support.law.cornell.edu/students/forms/2014-15StudentHandbook.pdf> page 18
9. http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/alumni/giving/endowed_funds/prizes.cfm#__topdoc__
10. <http://cornelllawreview.org/about-us/cornell-law-review-history/>
11. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/research/ILJ/about-the-ilj.cfm>
12. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/research/JLPP/jlpp-history.cfm>
13. http://www.law.cornell.edu/lii/about/who_we_are
14. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291740-1461/homepage/ProductInformation.html>
15. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/alumni/giving/MootCourt.cfm>
16. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/clinical-programs/>
17. <http://premium.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/cornell-university-03105/career-prospects>
18. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/Clinical-Programs/externships/Full-Term-Externship.cfm>
19. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/Clinical-Programs/externships/Judicial-Externship.cfm>
20. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/Clinical-Programs/externships/Law-Guardian-Externship.cfm>
21. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/Clinical-Programs/externships/Legislative-Externship.cfm>
22. <http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/Clinical-Programs/externships/Neighborhood-Legal-Services-Externship.cfm>
23. http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/international/study_abroad/internships.cfm
24. http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/careers/employers/why_cornellian/student_groups.cfm