

# School of Law ranked No. 78 nationwide by annual report

Officials blame the law school's second-tier ranking on low state funding, but said that law students still receive a 'four-star education'

By A. Sho Ikeda  
Reporter

U.S. News & World Report's annual law school rankings have placed the University's School of Law in the second tier this year, putting it among the nation's top 100 law schools.

The School of Law tied with five other schools for No. 78, and it has consistently placed in the top two tiers since 1995, when it placed in the top tier at No. 40.

U.S. News & World Report bases its rankings on several measures of quality, including median Law School Admission Test scores, median undergraduate GPA and average per-student spending. The ranking also takes into account employment rates for graduates, library resources, student-to-teacher ratio and other data.

The greatest weight in the rankings are given to surveys, which are filled out by the dean and three faculty members at each participating school. The participants are asked to rate other schools from "marginal" to "outstanding." Additionally, lawyers, judges and other law professionals are invited to participate in the survey.

Law school Assistant Dean Merv Loya said he was "generally pleased" with the rankings, but he warned that the scores could mislead potential law students.

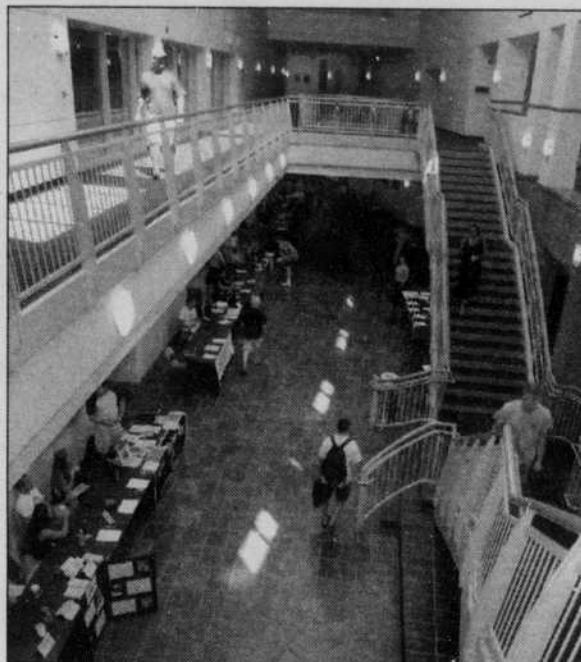
"I think that most law schools feel that the rankings aren't something students should rely on when making decisions on picking a school," Loya said.

Loya blamed low state funding for the School of Law's second-tier ranking.

"I think that it has become common knowledge that the dollar-to-student ratio at this school is less than that of schools in other states," Loya said. "As Dean Kirkpatrick likes to say, 'We provide students here with a four-star education on a two-star budget.'"

Loya said the most important feature of the rankings is how well graduates are viewed by employers. He said lawyers and judges participating in the survey have favorably ranked the law school for the past several years.

"What counts for me is what our reputation is among people who will hire and work with our graduates,"



The University School of Law Orientation, designed to familiarize new students with Eugene and the law school community, finished Tuesday. Legal groups and organizations gather in the lower hall of the Knight Law Center to give out information and greetings to potential members.  
Jessica Waters  
Emerald

Loya said. "Based on what they see, we're a top-tier school."

Loya said most employers familiar with the law school will ignore the school's second-tier ranking.

"I think that the rankings are not particularly important to employers who have hired our students over the years," Loya said. "They have a good sense of who we are."

Margie Paris, associate dean of Academic Affairs for the School of Law, said the rankings can be helpful to some students looking for law schools, but that they omit certain information.

U.S. News & World Report measures the volume of the law library of each school, Paris said. However, the rankings' statistics do not include general libraries, such as the Knight Library. Paris stated that many important government documents law students use are located in the Knight Library and are not included in the rankings.

Paris added that there are better methods to research academic institutions.

"If I were to give some advice, I would tell students to take a trip to a school that they're interested in," Paris said. "Visit the school's Web site and talk to people who teach there because that will give you a multifaceted view of the school."

Contact the reporter  
at shoikedadailyemerald.com.

## TOP LAW SCHOOLS

1. Yale University
2. Stanford University
3. Harvard University
4. Columbia University
5. New York University
6. University of Chicago
7. University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, University of Pennsylvania (Tie)
9. University of Virginia
10. Cornell University, University of California-Berkeley (Tie)

Tier 2 includes:

45. University of Washington

69. Lewis & Clark Law School  
(Second place in environmental law)

78. University of Oregon

Tier 4 includes:

Willamette University

SOURCE: U.S. News & World Report

## Lawyer

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"lawyer's lawyer" — doing research and writing for lawyers in complex cases. He also did some limited private practice and was a mediator.

"I'm a good mediator," he said. "I'm not attuned to the adversarial courtroom process."

Though he no longer practices law, Meisner said he still benefits from the lessons learned in the legal universe to help manage city affairs — a time-consuming and multifaceted process, because city councilors deal with many issues at once. Meisner said the volume of work at Eugene City Hall was part of his motivation for resigning from the bar in 2001.

"It was so hard to be available for research and clients when I'd taken an oath of office saying my first loyalty was to be available for service to the city," he said.

In his work, diversity is one of Meisner's key concerns.

"Civil rights is a long-time commitment of mine, and the city presents an opportunity to be proactive," he said. He cited the decision to create a domestic partner registry last year as one example of the city's work to foster diversity.

Meisner said he is also concerned about community growth.

"I'm still interested in how the city grows and how well it grows," he

said. "We've all been to communities that have grown badly and places that we might have once loved and are appalled by now, and I don't want that to happen here."

All issues on city growth and maintenance are connected because livability depends on everything from the quality of roads and schools to building codes, he said, adding that the city's biggest challenge is how to pay for all its services. Diminishing funds both in the city and across the state are affecting fire and police departments and social and cultural services within the community and schools.

"We lose money every year; every year we have less money than the year before," he said. "And yet, the population isn't shrinking ... and people want all the services they've had — and they want more."

Finding answers to problems requires collaboration at local and state levels, Meisner said.

"We can't come up with a solution in isolation," he said.

Meisner was also instrumental in the construction of the Eugene Public Library and its branches, a project completed in 2002.

"My biggest legacy — I guess is the word sometimes used — is the new public library, and I've worked hard for that," he said. "It's up and running and thriving."

Eugene Public Library Public Ser-

vices Manager Rob Everett, who worked closely with Meisner on library planning, said he met Meisner before his council days because Meisner is an avid reader.

"He really is passionate about libraries," Everett said. "He reads a lot. He knows a lot." Everett, who has observed Meisner at various meetings, also said the councilor always does his homework on all issues.

"He spends the time it takes to know the issue and make a fair decision," Everett said.

Meisner said a great part of his job is listening to what people have to say.

"You can listen to everybody, you can't satisfy everybody," he said. "Eventually there's going to be a decision that is going to please some people, but not someone else. That's sort of the nature of the beast, but they all get heard."

When Meisner isn't toiling at the City Hall, he restores antique furniture in a workshop at home.

"It's very satisfying work," he said. "It's something to do with my hands besides all of the work I do with my head most of the time."

Meisner said he also walks and bicycles a lot and spends time with his cat, Max. And of course, he reads.

"I think it's important to live life every moment," he said.

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