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BEST LAW SCHOOL BUILDINGS

THE BEST BUILDINGS OFFER SPACE,
GREAT AESTHETICS, AMENITIES
AND CONNECT STUDENTS WITH THE
LOCAL COMMUNITY





Best Law School Buildings



These buildings feature great aesthetics, lots of space and amenities. They're also in locations that add to their mission.

BY JACK CRITTENDEN

This past November, people gathered outside Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at Arizona State University to watch the Trump impeachment hearings unfold. The audience was a mix of law students and others from the downtown Phoenix community, brought together by large screens and a unique building.

This was exactly the kind of interaction school leaders had hoped for when the law school moved from Tempe to Phoenix in 2016 and moved into a building that was conceived with openness to the public in mind.

"The driving principle was to bring in outside organizations to expose students to how law operates in the real world," said Dean Douglas Sylvester, who oversaw the move. "And second, to bring the local community into the buildings. These are

access to justice organizations, so you have people from all walks of life coming into the buildings."

The school's Great Hall has a massive, 40-foot-by-60-foot glass wall with a folding glass door that unifies indoor and outdoor space and allows the hall to act as the public's legal living room. A retractable seating system allows the Great Hall to be converted into a more formal auditorium configuration.

"We have the ability to close that wall and put in a bench and create a courtroom," Sylvester said. "About four or five times a year, students get to watch courts in action."

The building, known as the Beus Center for Law and Society, hosts about 300 events a year by outside organizations, bringing in judges, attorneys and politi-



cians. That helped the building place No. 2 in preLaw's biannual list of Best Law School Buildings.

Not just brick and mortar

Arizona State University is not the only law school that is embracing a new approach for its building and students.

The University of Memphis – Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law, No. 1 on our list, also reaches out to include the community. The law school is housed in an 1878 building that at various times has served as a U.S. customs house, a courthouse and a post office. It was renovated in 2010 and outfitted for the law school with up-to-date tech, modern classrooms and amenities.

Dean Katharine Schaffzin said the law school's move from the university campus to downtown was game changing.

"By moving downtown, even though it was only a few miles, it changed students' daily experience," she said. "We went from a dozen externships to 40 to 50 a semester, because they are downtown. And students are able to easily walk from law school to government offices and judicial chambers."

The law school serves as a hub for the legal community, with student sponsored events, school events and community events making the building a gathering place for legal education and knowledge.

"Other legal organizations want to have events here," Schaffzin said. "It's downtown, and there are beautiful views of the

Mississippi River."

The building is breathtaking as well. Take the courtroom where the school teaches trial advocacy and holds moot court. It is original to the building and exudes a beautiful, stately grandeur.

"It is stunning and practical, updated with technology," Schaffzin said. "It really is an amazing space that can't be re-created."

Aesthetics played a big part in preLaw's assessment of the best law school buildings, making up 50% of the final score. Other factors were square footage per student (10%); library hours and number of library seats per student (15%); amenities, including dining, fitness and lockers (15%); and parking, sustainability and other factors (10%).

	A+	Sq ft per student	Facility library hours	Ratio of library seats to students	
1	University of Memphis	403	168	0.83	A+
2	Arizona State University	272	168	0.41	A+
3	Stetson University	345	168	0.85	A+
4	Georgia State University	295	103	1.56	A+
5	University of Arizona	90	168	1.01	A+
6	American University	226	168	0.72	A+
7	Villanova Law	314	168	0.76	A+
8	Duke Law School	350	161	0.76	A+
9	University of Utah	497	90	1.52	A+

	A	Sq ft per student	Facility library hours	Ratio of library seats to students	
10	Marquette University	350	104	0.78	A
11	University of Colorado	331	107	0.84	A
12	Southwestern Law School	515	102	0.76	A
13	University of Richmond	303	105	1.69	A
14	University of Connecticut	483	92	2.18	A
15	Washington University	106	168	0.89	A
16	Catholic University	413	103	1.26	A
17	Quinnipiac University	397	168	0.83	A-
18	Faulkner Law	781	168	1.21	A
19	Baylor University	279	108	0.59	A
20	Yale Law School	380	104	0.75	A
21	Penn State Law	222	168	0.77	A
22	Lewis & Clark Law School	222	89	0.69	A
23	University of Florida	321	168	1.04	A



Memphis is still No. 1

This is the third time preLaw has conducted the study since 2016, with University of Memphis coming in first each time. Nine law schools earned an A+ this time around, with Arizona State and Georgia State University College of Law joining that elite set for the first time.

Georgia State Law recently moved into a new building. The 200,000-square-foot location is only a few miles away from the previous site, but it's in the heart of downtown Atlanta and reinforces the university's partnership with the city.

"We were centrally located before, but are closer to a lot more things now," said interim Dean Leslie Wolf. "We are still close to the (state) capitol and courthouses, but now close to the university's other professional and graduate schools. So there are greater disciplinary connections."

The school has started dual degree programs and other ventures, including the Legal Analytics & Innovation Initiative. That initiative, in conjunction with the business school, offers law students a certificate, LL.M. or dual degree in legal analytics.

A-	Sq ft per student	Facility library hours	Ratio of library seats to students
Boston University	197	100	0.90
Chapman Fowler School of Law	266	106	0.79
Cornell Law School	323	168	0.70
Creighton University	350	106	1.19
Fordham Law School	220	126	0.56
Georgetown University	357	107	0.53
Gonzaga University	293	90	1.35
New York Law School	295	93	0.41
Notre Dame Law School	166	168	0.92
Penn State University - Dickinson Law	563	168	0.63
Saint Louis University	355	100	0.85
Seattle University	251	119	0.63
Seton Hall University	312	168	0.91
Stanford Law School	442	105	1.01
Syracuse University	303	106	0.48
University of Michigan	172	112	0.52
University of Tulsa	375	104	2.24
University of South Carolina	296	99	0.81
University of St. Thomas - Mn.	296	67.25	0.82
University of Virginia	380	112	0.80

Georgia State University COLLEGE OF LAW

No. 1

OVERALL BAR PASSAGE RATE IN GEORGIA FOR THE CLASS OF 2017

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While location is important, Georgia State's new building also delivers when it comes to comfort. It has natural light throughout, and there is plenty of space for students to congregate, whether in a lounge, a cafe or study rooms.

"There is a reason to stay together and to enjoy being in the building," Wolf said. "We have always had strong bonds from the experience, but now we have the facility that really enables that."



UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS has a classic look both inside and out.

The fifth floor features a patio with outdoor seating, and the sixth-floor terrace has plentiful seating and beautiful views of downtown Atlanta. The sixth floor of the law library is a quiet floor for studying.

The on-campus clinic space is designed to function like a real-life law firm. Students have private offices to meet with clients as well as conference rooms to meet with each other and supervising attorneys. The clinic space also has a patio with outdoor seating.



UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS historic courtroom

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B+	Sq ft per student	Facility library hours	Ratio of library seats to students
Albany Law School	299	102	0.85
California Western School of Law	292	110	0.66
Chicago-Kent College of Law	336	83	0.53
CUNY School of Law	346	168	0.37
Florida State University	331	168	0.73
IU Bloomington (Maurer)	284	115	1.34
Louisiana State University	343	102	0.81
Santa Clara Law	131	98	0.50
SMU Dedman School of Law	279	104	1.04
Suffolk University	206	103	0.64
University of Mississippi	301	111	0.74
Touro Law Center	361	112	0.95
University of Baltimore	261	96	0.64
UC Davis School of Law	253	168	0.77
University of Denver	208	108	0.45
University of Nebraska	181	109	0.95
University of Oklahoma	347	102	0.92
University of Washington	313	84	0.41
University of Wisconsin	208	104	0.94



Great amenities

For Lewis & Clark Law School in Portland, Ore., location is also a key attribute. Not because it is located in the heart of the city, but because it sits amid a forest of trees.

The law school adjoins Tryon Creek State Natural Area, and the building focuses on the park's natural beauty. It's the per-

fect setting for a school that prides itself on its environmental law emphasis.

"The building is designed to be viewed from the park and not the entrance," said Dean Jennifer Johnson. "The view from the library is trees, and all the buildings have glass on the side that faces the park."

Lewis & Clark's campus was established in the early 1970s, but recent improve-

ments to the buildings elevated its grade to an A.

It recently added an entrance plaza, complete with nine benches, one to represent each seat on the U.S. Supreme Court.

The school also renovated an older building that had been a mishmash of offices. It now houses student lockers as well as the career services and admissions offices. The Chester E. McCarty Classroom Complex was gutted and completely renovated a year ago.

"It's about nature, and the buildings are very student centered," Johnson said. "There is a huge space for student gatherings, a big quiet area in the library."

It all leads to a relaxed atmosphere that helps combat the stresses of law school.

Arizona State also sought to design a building that would minimize stress.

"The building was built for students first, with places to study, relax and live," Sylvester said.

It includes a study lounge on the top floor with lockers, pingpong tables and even showers.

"Students can go to the gym and then shower and get ready to meet an employer on campus," Sylvester said.

Most of the top law school buildings are loaded with amenities, such as suit-sized lockers, showers, fitness facilities and din-



GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY



LEWIS & CLARK's building is one with nature.

ing options.

University of Memphis recently opened a cafe in an innovative partnership with the university's school of hospitality. The school of hospitality runs it as a clinical course, with students planning the menu, making purchasing decisions and receiving academic credit.

"The course is on the business (of food service)," Schaffzin said. "The (hospitality students) surveyed the (law) students to determine the menu. There is lots of coffee and salads. Much lighter fare than what undergrads would request."

Technology is also an important part of the best buildings. Arizona State has large



STETSON'S building in Gulfport, Fla., was once home to the Rolyat Hotel.



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UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA, based in Tucson, renovated its law building in 2007.

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digital screens in the lobby that allow students to look up their class schedules and to let prospective students learn about various courses of study.

The building features more than 40 screens, and people can connect to them via the school's mobile app. For example, a person can check in via the mobile app, and then others can see what part of the building they're in. Users also can access maps of the building and get directions.

"We invested a lot of time thinking through scheduling systems," Sylvester said. "Every classroom doubles as a study room. Students have an app to use to reserve rooms, a real optimization of the building."

Georgia State also planned its building with the needs of students in mind. There are numerous places for students to gather and study, including tables, couches and chairs in the first floor atrium and on the second and third floors overlooking the atrium. Students may reserve one of the many study rooms in the library as well as meeting rooms throughout the building. Co-curricular activities (law review, moot court, mock trial and student bar association) have separate offices, and other student organizations share a dedicated space with storage.

At Arizona State, expansive windows give a good view of street life, and large display screens — visible from across the street — share information about school events or show law-related news events, such as the impeachment hearings.

Few law schools have risen as we have risen," Sylvester said. "When anyone comes and sees this facility, they realize it is real and sustainable. This is a special place that is accomplishing things that few others have been able to accomplish."



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