

# The Employment Race

Who are the winners and losers among Texas law schools?

BY ANGELA MORRIS

**BAYLOR UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW WON THE** horse race of finding jobs for 2015 law school graduates, with 93 percent of grads employed, while Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law came in last with a 61 percent employment rate.

Recent jobs statistics from the state's nine law schools also show the strengths of the schools' unique cultures, which put emphasis on different types of employment for a newly minted JD holder.

"I do think we are seeing the market loosen up a little bit. We are seeing more job postings in both private and public sectors and more on campus interview employers. Overall, more employers are engaging with our office, which has been a good thing for our students," said Angela Cruseturner, Baylor Law's assistant dean of career development.

Cruseturner said Baylor Law might have scored the highest employment because the career development office reorganized in 2012 to put more emphasis on reaching out to employers and gathering information to pass on to students.

Dannye Holley, dean of TSU Thurgood Marshall, said the recent job stats give only a snapshot of employment within nine months of graduation, not the whole picture. He noted that a student's success in finding a job close to graduation is tied to his passing the bar exam. Nationally, bar exam passage rates have decreased in recent years, and it has impacted employment outcomes, he said. But TSU Thurgood Marshall surveys alumni three years after graduation; 94 percent of the school's 2012 graduates were employed, Holley explained.

## DATA IS IN

In spring, law schools report graduates' employment stats to the American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar. *Texas Lawyer* analyzed the nine Texas law schools' numbers for 2015 graduates to see which schools did the best and the worst. We also examined the data to see where each school's graduates ended up working. Most employed graduates at each school found full-time, long-term jobs, but a handful at each school instead found part-time or short-term options.

PHOTO BY MATTHEW MINARD, BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

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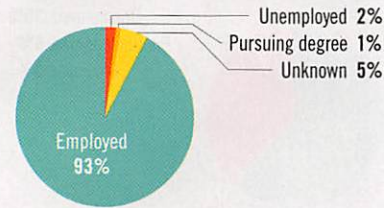
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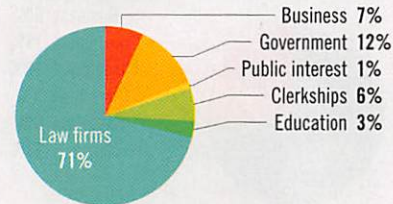


## Baylor University School of Law, Waco

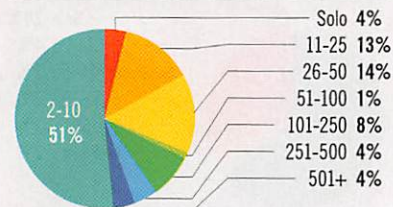
Employment Status Graduates: 108



Employment Type Employed: 100



Law Firm Employment Number: 71



### Raves

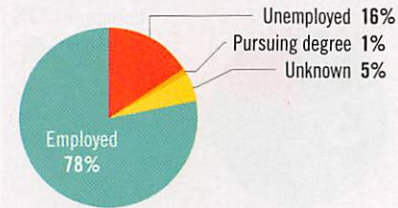
- Highest employment rate
- Highest law firm employment rate
- Highest employment rate in 26-50 and 101-250 lawyer firms

### Rants

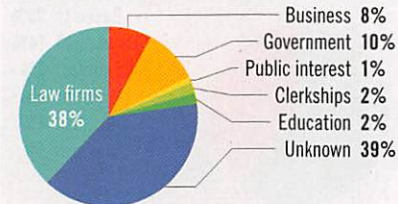
- Tied for lowest employment rate in public interest
- Lowest employment rate in 51-100 lawyer firms

## South Texas College of Law, Houston

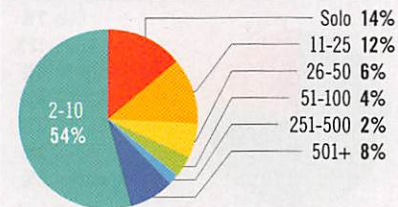
Employment Status Graduates: 350



Employment Type Employed: 273



Law Firm Employment Number: 105



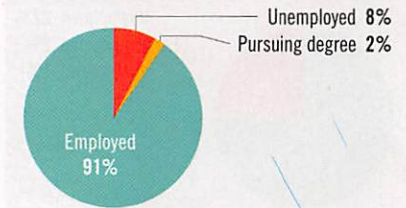
### Rants

- Lowest law firm employment rate
- Tied for lowest employment rate in public interest, and 101-250 lawyer firms

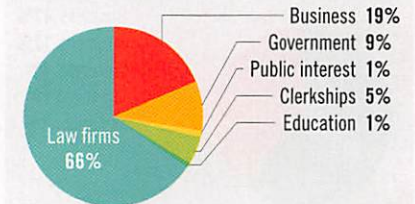
**Note:** Most law schools' employment statistics are current as of April 7, but South Texas updated its figures on April 15 to add data on graduates whose employment status was unknown.

## SMU Dedman School of Law, Dallas

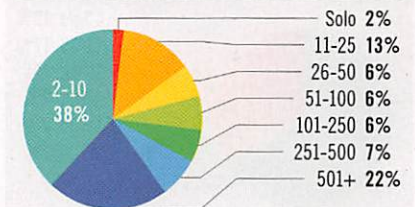
Employment Status Graduates: 239



Employment Type Employed: 217



Law Firm Employment Number: 143



### Raves

- Second highest employment rate
- Highest employment rate in 51-100 lawyer firms

### Rants

- Tied for lowest employment rate in public interest, and education

Coming in right behind Baylor Law for overall employment were Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law in Dallas and the University of Texas School of Law in Austin. Meanwhile, the schools with the lowest overall employment, behind TSU Thurgood Marshall, were St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio and Texas A&M University School of Law in Fort Worth.

### LAW FIRM JOBS

Baylor Law sent the highest percentage of employed grads to work for law firms, while South Texas College of Law in Houston sent the lowest.

Cruseturner said, "This goes back to the long-standing tradition of Baylor and our reputation as a school that creates practice-ready graduates."

Bruce McGovern, associate dean for academic administration at South Texas Law, said that the school was still tracking down its graduates' employment information at the deadline to submit the ABA report. He said when South Texas's law-firm employment numbers are finalized they'll be similar other schools.

At most schools, the graduates enter private practice in solo or small firms. Many schools send more than half of their firm-employed grads to work for firms with just two to 10 attorneys. They also send significant rates of students into firms with 11 to 25 attorneys.

TSU Thurgood Marshall sent the highest percentage of firm-employed graduates into solo practices, and Texas A&M Law sent the highest rate of graduates into two- to 10-lawyer firms. Texas Tech University School of Law sent the highest percentage into 11- to 25-lawyer firms.

When asked why so many TSU graduates become solo practitioners, Holley said, "A lot of them come with the expectation that one of the things they want to do with their licenses is go out and enter practice either in association with a few folks or on their own."

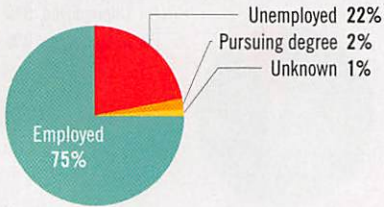
He added that TSU graduates come from diverse racial



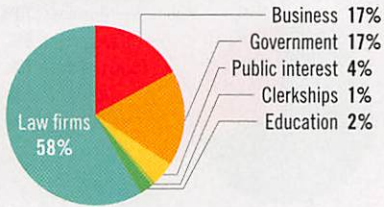
BRUCE MCGOVERN

**St. Mary's University School of Law, San Antonio**

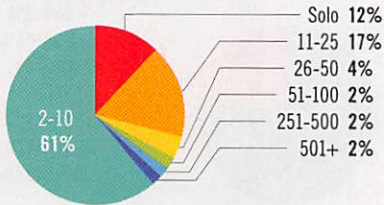
**Employment Status** Graduates: 216



**Employment Type** Employed: 161



**Law Firm Employment** Number: 94



**Raves**

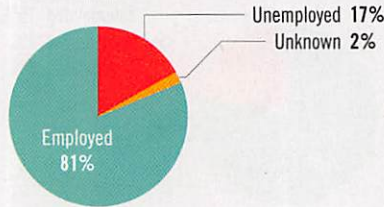
- Highest employment rate in government

**Rants**

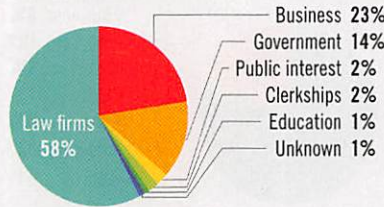
- Second highest unemployment rate
- Lowest employment rate in clerkships
- Tied for lowest employment rate in 101-250 and 501+ lawyer firms

**Texas A&M University School of Law, Fort Worth**

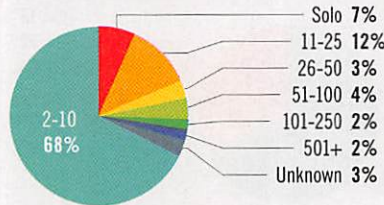
**Employment Status** Graduates: 227



**Employment Type** Employed: 185



**Law Firm Employment** Number: 107



**Raves**

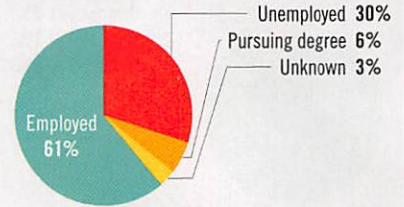
- Highest employment rate in business, and 2-10 lawyer firms

**Rants**

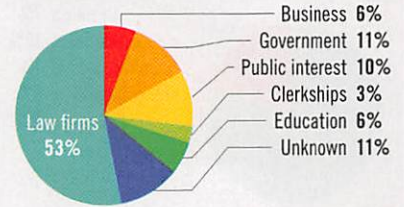
- Third highest unemployment rate
- Tied for lowest employment rate in education, and 251-500 lawyer firms

**TSU Thurgood Marshall School of Law, Houston**

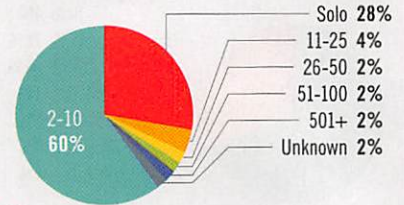
**Employment Status** Graduates: 147



**Employment Type** Employed: 89



**Law Firm Employment** Number: 47



**Raves**

- Highest employment rates in public interest, education and solo firms

**Rants**

- Highest unemployment rate
- Lowest employment rate in business, and 11-25 and 26-50 lawyer firms
- Tied for lowest employment rate in 101-250, 251-500 and 501+ lawyer firms

and socioeconomic backgrounds, and it's well known that larger firms struggle with recruiting diverse attorneys.

The way firms recruit may also explain why so many graduates enter small law. Big firms recruit nationally and only consider the top of the class, McGovern explained.

"The smaller firms tend to recruit on a more regional basis and are willing to look at a larger proportion of the class," McGovern said.

Across the board at all the schools, very low rates of firm-employed grads find jobs with midsize firms.

"The midsize firms just are very few and far between," said Karen Sargent, SMU Dedman's assistant dean and director of career services. "That's just the nature of the legal market. ...Sixty percent of all lawyers are in either solo or firms under 11 attorneys. That's where the opportunities are for recent grads to learn how to practice law."

UT Law dominated the big law categories—60 percent of firm-employed grads went to big law firms with

.....  
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 .....

251 to 500 and 501-plus lawyers. SMU Dedman and the University of Houston Law Center also sent high rates of students into 501-plus lawyer firms.

"The numbers reflect, I think, individual choices and the competitiveness of the school," said David Montoya, UT Law's assistant dean for career services. "Texas Law is

really considered a go-to school among the big law firms in Texas. Part of that is just having an exceptional pipeline and graduates who dominate the ranks of those firms."

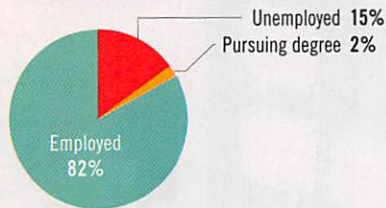
Sargent said that it helps that the three schools with the highest big law employment are in major metropolitan areas. They're also the highest-ranked law schools in Texas, she noted.

**OTHER EMPLOYMENT**

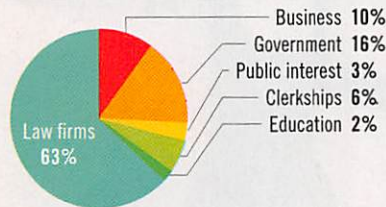
Although more than half of employed graduates at most Texas law schools went to work for firms, the rest found jobs in other sectors. Comparing these categories might

**Texas Tech University School of Law, Lubbock**

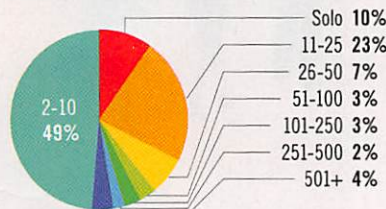
Employment Status Graduates: 211



Employment Type Employed: 174



Law Firm Employment Number: 110

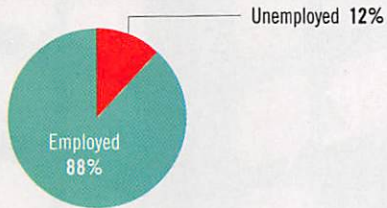


**Raves**

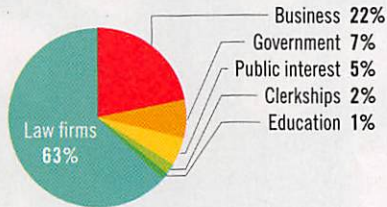
- Highest employment rate in 11-25 lawyer firms

**University of Houston Law Center, Houston**

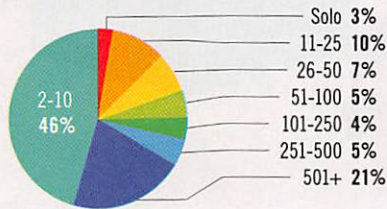
Employment Status Graduates: 220



Employment Type Employed: 194



Law Firm Employment Number: 123

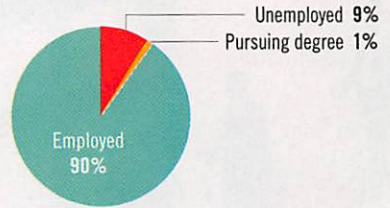


**Rants**

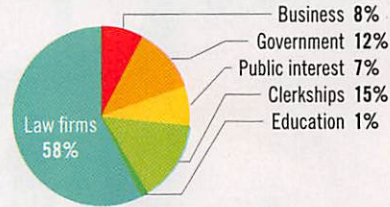
- Lowest employment rate in government
- Tied for lowest employment rate in education

**University of Texas School of Law, Austin**

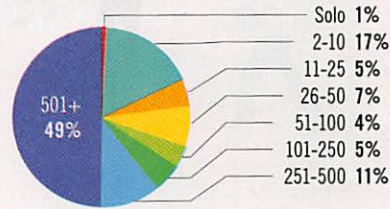
Employment Status Graduates: 354



Employment Type Employed: 319



Law Firm Employment Number: 184



**Raves**

- Third highest employment rate
- Highest employment rates in 251-500 and 501+ lawyer firms
- Highest employment rate in clerkships

**Rants**

- Tied for lowest employment rate in education
- Lowest employment rate in solo and 2-10 lawyer firms

show each school's unique culture.

One trend among all the schools is that the rates of students entering government jobs stayed fairly consistent. St. Mary's Law sent the highest rate of employed graduates to work in government.

"We talk so much of service, and we do have such an alumni presence in service. I think that's part of the draw: [Students] know more about it here, and they see us value it here," said Stephen Sheppard, dean of St. Mary's Law. "[Government jobs] are good experience. Many lawyers realize it's a ticket punch that can be valuable moving to a variety of types of practice."

While government jobs are consistent between schools, the rates of students entering business and industry positions fluctuated wildly school-to-school, from a low of 6 percent at TSU Thurgood Marshall to a high of 23 percent at Texas A&M Law.

Arturo Errisuriz, Texas A&M Law's assistant dean for career services, didn't return a call seeking comment.

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 .....

Holley said that TSU Thurgood Marshall has placed more emphasis on graduates taking public sector employment and less emphasis on private-sector business jobs.

Although all the law schools sent low rates of students into public interest jobs, TSU Thurgood Marshall sent the highest rate there.

Holley said that TSU Thurgood

Marshall students are likely to gravitate to those positions.

"I think part of it is the heavier representation of our students in groups underrepresented in respect to legal representation," he explained.

Sargent said that public interest organizations—such as legal aid groups—don't have many job openings.

"Yes, there are opportunities in legal aid, but it's not that many of them that come up at any given time and students have to be bar licensed in order to get those jobs. Quite often, they want more experienced attorneys," Sargent explained. ■



## INCOMING BAR PRESIDENT PLANS TO LAUNCH LAWYER INCUBATOR

BY ANGELA MORRIS

**FRANK STEVENSON, WHO BECOMES STATE BAR OF Texas president June 17, is leading the state bar to launch a legal incubator for young attorneys wishing to serve low- and middle-income Texans in family, probate, consumer and landlord-tenant law.**

*Texas Lawyer* emailed Stevenson, a partner in Locke Lord in Dallas, some questions about his vision for the incubator. Here are his answers, edited for style and length.

**Texas Lawyer:** For someone who has never seen a legal incubator like you imagine, how would you describe the look and feel of it?

**State Bar of Texas President-Elect Frank Stevenson:** The model for our incubator—Chicago’s Justice Entrepreneur Project—is housed in a repurposed warehouse. The

core of its office is a large, unadorned, open space with numerous work stations, all to encourage its lawyers to interact with and learn from each other. During business hours, the place crackles with energy. The appearance of our incubator may be different, but I hope we can capture that same sense of energy, opportunity and entrepreneurship.

**Texas Lawyer:** How do you hope your incubator might impact the careers of the young attorneys in the program?

**Stevenson:** Our intention is to propel recently admitted Texas lawyers into successful practices serving low- and moderate-income Texans—a population confronted by profound legal needs and equally profound barriers to legal access. We want



FRANK STEVENSON