

# A Closer Look at The Best Law School Values

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## Can Attending a Cheaper Law School Lead to a Big Firm Job?

by Brian Baxter

Times are tough for today's law students. Big law firms are reducing the size of their summer classes and even graduates of top-ranked law schools are having a tough time finding a job.

Given the state of the economy, it seems an appropriate time to compare two recent surveys to consider whether attending a cheaper, less prestigious law school can still land students lucrative jobs at Am Law firms.

The National Jurist this week released its list of Best Value Law Schools, the 65 schools that offer law students the "best bang for their buck" based on the cost of attending those schools and on the percentage of those schools' graduates who passed the bar and got jobs.

To determine what makes a law school a "best value," the magazine considered only public schools with in-state tuition of less than \$25,000 and private schools with annual tuition of less than \$30,000. The magazine for law students then narrowed its list to schools with an employment rate of at least 85 percent and a bar passage rate higher than the state average. It then ranked the schools, giving the greatest weight to tuition, followed by employment statistics.

So the students passed the bar and landed jobs. But what types of jobs? Are these grads, we wondered, going on to work as associates at Am Law 200 firms? To find out, we compared the top 25 schools from the magazine's ranking against The National Law Journal's 2008 survey of the 20 schools that send the most graduates to the country's largest 250 firms (the survey appeared in the NLJ's annual Law Schools Report, published every spring).

The results weren't surprising.

None of the firms in the National Jurist's top 25 were among the 20 law schools with the highest-percentage of graduates landing jobs in The NLJ 250. (Predictably, law schools like Columbia, Chicago, Pennsylvania, NYU, and Northwestern topped The NLJ's list with more than 65 percent of graduates landing jobs at large firms.)