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# Texas Law School Enrollment Outpaces National Percentage Growth

The size of this year's entering class at Texas law schools rose by 4 percent this year compared to last, but total enrollment numbers for 2017 still...

By Angela Morris | December 22, 2017



The size of this year's entering class at Texas law schools rose by 4 percent this year compared to last, but total enrollment numbers for 2017 still dropped by 0.3 percent.

Legal educators closely watch the size of the first-year class, since it has financial implications for a law school for the next three years. There were 2,199 first-year law students at the 10 Texas law schools in the Fall of 2017, which is 89 students more than the Fall of 2016.

Compared to [national figures \(https://www.law.com/sites/almstaff/2017/12/15/law-school-enrollment-edges-up-overall-with-surprise-spike-in-non-jd-programs/\)](https://www.law.com/sites/almstaff/2017/12/15/law-school-enrollment-edges-up-overall-with-surprise-spike-in-non-jd-programs/), the 4 percent jump in Texas 1L students is significant. The 203 accredited law schools across the country counted 37,398 1L students, which is just 0.8 percent more than last year, according to

data from the American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar.

## ENROLLMENT AT TEXAS LAW SCHOOLS

Law School	2017 1L class	2016 1L class	Difference	2017 total enrollment	2016 total enrollment	Difference
Baylor University School of Law	167	140	19%	384	365	5%
South Texas College of Law Houston	361	338	7%	940	969	-3%
Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law	208	220	-5%	744	741	0.4%
St. Mary's University School of Law	291	242	20%	773	727	6%
Texas A&M University School of Law	138	133	4%	412	484	-15%
Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law	256	227	13%	612	544	13%
Texas Tech University School of Law	139	160	-13%	440	518	-15%
University of Houston Law Center	227	211	8%	708	710	-0.3%
University of North Texas Dallas College of Law	104	144	-28%	423	387	9%
University of Texas School of Law	308	295	4%	896	904	-0.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2199</b>	<b>2110</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6332</b>	<b>6349</b>	<b>-0.3%</b>

Source: American Bar Association Section of Legal Education and Admission to the Bar

However, not all of the Texas law schools increased the size of their entering class equally. Only seven schools saw an increase ranging from 4 to 20 percent, and three schools actually decreased the size of their 1L class.

The three schools with the largest increases in their 1L classes were: St. Mary's University School of Law, with a 20 percent jump compared to last year; Baylor University School of Law, which had a 19 percent increase; and Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law, with a 13 percent increase.

The schools with the largest decreases in their 1L classes were: the University of North Texas Dallas College of Law, which had a drop of 28 percent compared to last year; Texas Tech University School of Law, with a 13 percent decrease; and Southern Methodist University Dedman School of Law, with a drop of 5 percent.

Some schools intentionally choose to cut their entering class and begin targeting highly credentialed students with high LSAT scores and undergraduate GPA's. Such strategies can improve a school's U.S. News and World Report rankings or help a school to improve students' performance in class and on the bar exam.

Despite the increasing 1L class at most Texas law schools, overall enrollment statewide still dropped by 0.3 percent, winding up at 6,332 law students. That's very similar to trends on the national stage: there were 110,156 J.D. students nationally, which is 0.7 percent less than last year. These trends sometimes reflect the fact that due to enrollment declines since the Great Recession, each graduating class has been slightly larger than the classes that come after it.

However, school-by-school, half of the Texas law schools saw increases in overall enrollment, while the other half saw decreases.

The schools with increases included: Texas Southern, with 13 percent; UNT Dallas, with 9 percent; St. Mary's, with 6 percent; Baylor University School of Law, with 5 percent; and Southern Methodist, with 0.4 percent.

The schools with decreases included: Texas Tech University School of Law and Texas A&M University School of Law, both with 15 percent declines; South Texas College of Law Houston, with a 3 percent drop; the University of Texas School of Law, with a 0.9 percent decline; and the University of Houston Law Center, which saw a 0.3 percent drop.

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