

University of Southern California, Gould School of Law

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THE BASICS

The **University of California, Gould School of Law** (commonly known as USC Law) was founded in 1896. It was approved by the ABA in 1924.

The school is located in the downtown Los Angeles area known as University Park. As a private school, it does not offer any tuition breaks for California residents. Combined with living expenses, students can expect to pay just over \$70,200 a year.

USC Law is on the smaller end of the size spectrum, with a total student enrollment of around 600 to 620 students, and an average incoming class size of 200. It counts among its alumni many prominent figures in entertainment, law, academia, and business, among them various California Supreme Court Justices.

The school has a nationally-recognizable name, but its reach could be categorized as primarily regional. Grads may have some trouble finding employment outside the West Coast, although the very strong USC Law alumni network often goes the extra mile in helping students secure interviews with firms and organizations across the country.

USC Law has a somewhat limited number of academic and extracurricular activities: 6 clinics, 5 study abroad programs, 1 joint degree option, 2 certifications programs, 3 scholarly journals, and 35 student organizations.

Application deadline: 2/1

Application fee: \$75

Financial aid deadline: 3/2

Type of school: Private

Tuition and fees: \$48,434 (2010 - 2011)

Admissions: Rolling (from mid-December to May 1)

Acceptance percentage: 22% (2009)

Incoming class size: 215 (2009)

Early Action/Early Decision available: No

Part-time program available: No

GPA AND STANDARDIZED TESTS

LSAT 25th - 75th percentile range: 165 - 167

GPA 25th - 75th percentile range: 3.47 - 3.71

TOEFL not required for international applicants.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Letters of recommendation: 2 required

Required essays: Personal statement

Optional essays: "Economically disadvantaged?" and "LSAT/GPA inaccurately represents academic ability?"

Dean's Certification: None required

Additional documentation: Résumé (required)

USC (Gould) Law: The PowerScore Perspective

Exceptional West Coast job placement

USC Law students enjoy excellent employment prospects within the state of California, particularly in Los Angeles. The USC name is also known nationally, which can help those students seeking positions in legal markets outside the West Coast. Be advised, however, there are some recent grads who have called USC “more of a regional school,” and have mentioned that the USC Career Services Office is better equipped to help those grads seeking jobs within California and the West Coast; once you start reaching outside those markets, they say, “you’re kind of on your own.” Nonetheless, USC is known for its powerful alumni network, which can go a long way to helping you secure an interview at many of the country’s largest and most prestigious law firms.

More expensive than UCLA (for about the same prospects)

For California residents, it may make more sense to look at USC’s neighbor across town as residents get a quite a break on UCLA tuition whereas there is no break at USC. Keep in mind, too, that UCLA Law’s location is much better than USC’s. For non-residents, though, it’s a bit of a toss-up: Both schools costs almost the same, the quality of the education will be great no matter where you go, and the employment prospects are fairly equal.

Facilities: They’re okay

Ask any USC student and they’ll likely tell you the same thing: The law school building is nice, but not incredible. The classrooms are functional, the building has wireless connectivity, and the building is ultimately comfortable, and “can come to feel like home.” The school renovated the library and inaugurated a brand-new cafeteria in 2005, which were highly welcome improvements. All in all, the building gets a solid B+.

Beautiful campus, sketchy area

The USC campus, though, is truly gorgeous. Sprawling lush lawns, wide walkways, impressive architecture, and palm trees everywhere—you can’t go wrong. The weather in Southern California is amazing too: “It almost seems like we have sunny days 24/7/365,” says one grad. The area surrounding the campus is another story altogether, though. Although some alums say the area surrounding University Park gets a “bad rap” due to high crime rate in the late 90s, the fact remains that it is still not a particularly safe area of Los Angeles. Much of the area around USC is still gang-controlled, and students are often advised not

to walk around alone at night, and to avail themselves of campus transportation after dark. Visiting the campus is a definite must to make sure you are comfortable with your potential surroundings.

Commuter school?

Perhaps the fact that the area isn’t the safest place is why the majority of USC Law students not only live off-campus, but live a considerable commute away (in fact, many of them live near UCLA). This could very well lead to the school feeling like a bit of a “commuter” institution—however, the school and student groups make a concerted effort to host lots of events (particularly weekly Bar Reviews, which are very popular) to keep everyone connected, and each class is fairly tight-knit.

Diversity can get you in

USC prides itself on its diversity and heritage, and keeps up this tradition in the students they admit. As per the school, 40% of the most recent incoming class were minorities and students of color. This focus on diversity may be of particular interest to “splitters” (i.e., those applicants with a high GPA/low LSAT or low GPA/high LSAT combination) who may be able to make up for lackluster numbers by emphasizing their diverse backgrounds.

Grading gripes

The school has a forced curve with a mean of 3.3 for 1L classes and 3.2 for upper-level courses, along with a “constrained spread” for grades outside the median. Students and grads have complained about the curve, saying that they feel it unfairly

skews their efforts, and doesn’t accurately reflect the work they put into class.

Want cash? Apply early

USC Law is very generous with their financial aid—as long as there’s money to give out. They have tuition scholarships that range from \$5,000 to full tuition, and their median grant amount in 2009 was \$12,000. Awards are also usually guaranteed for all three years of school. However, the earlier you apply, the more funds will be available. If you’re a late-comer, you may end up staring at the bottom of an empty money pot.

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USC (Gould) Law: The Numbers

ACCEPTANCE RATES

Full-time: 22% (1,322 of 6,024 admitted)
Part-time: N/A

GPA AND LSAT SCORES

GPA - 75th percentile: 3.71
GPA - Median: 3.60
GPA - 25th percentile: 3.47

LSAT - 75th percentile: 167
LSAT - Median: 167
LSAT - 25th percentile: 165

ENROLLMENT AND ETHNICITY

African-American: 15 (M); 29 (F); 7.1% of student body
American Indian: 4 (M); 0 (F); 0.6% of student body
Asian-American: 49 (M); 78 (F); 20.6% of student body
Caucasian: 144 (M); 129 (F); 44.2% of student body
Hispanic: 19 (M); 8 (F); 4.4% of student body
Mexican-American: 21 (M); 17 (F); 6.1% of student body
Puerto Rican: 1 (M); 2 (F); 0.5% of student body
International: 3 (M); 8 (F); 1.8% of student body
Non-Reported: 51 (M); 40 (F); 14.7% of student body

TRANSFERS (FIRST-YEAR) AND ATTRITION

Transfers in: 19
Transfers out: 4

1L attrition: 7 (0 Academic, 7 Other)
2L attrition: 1 (0 Academic, 1 Other)
3L attrition: None

FINANCIAL AID

Merit aid available? Yes
Grants and scholarships available? Yes
Students receiving grants: , % of student body
Median grant amount: \$12,000.00
LRAP program available? Yes

The school awards scholarships based on a combination of merit and financial need, but does not grant need-only monies. Scholarships can range from \$5,000 to full tuition, and aid awards are typically guaranteed for all three years of school.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

Wireless network availability? Yes
Number of wired connections available: 42
Hours per week the library is open: 100
Study seating capacity inside the library: 230
Number of full-time professional librarians: 9

CAREER SERVICES

On-campus Career Services Office? Yes
Number of full-time career services staffers? 7
Career services specializations: private firms, public interest, government, corporate, academia, judicial clerkships, and non-traditional careers.
On-Campus Interview (OCI) program? Yes, during the fall and spring.

EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS*

**All statistics are 9 months after graduation*

Employment status known: 206, 98.1% of class
Employment status unknown: 4, 1.9% of class
Employed: 201, 97.6% of class
Pursuing graduate degrees: 2, 1.0% of class
Unemployed: 3, 1.5% of class

TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

Academia: 6, 3.0% of class
Business and Industry: 13, 6.5% of class
Government: 8, 4.0% of class
Judicial Clerkship: 10, 5.0% of class
Law Firms: 152, 75.6% of class
Public Interest: 11, 5.5% of class

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The West Coast, particularly California, is the biggest employment market for the school.

Students employed in-state: 85.6%
Students employed in foreign countries: 0.0%
Number of states where students are employed: 13

The top ten locations where employers came from to interview USC Law students during OCI were Washington, California, Arizona, Colorado, Texas, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and Washington, DC.

ALUMNI NETWORK

USC Law has an alumni network of over 9,500 grads who live all over the country. Recent grads are primarily located in California, Colorado Texas, Illinois, New York, and Florida.

BAR PASSAGE RATES

First-time takers: 207 (87.92% reporting)
Average school pass rate: 89.56%
Average state pass rate: 78.07%
Average pass rate difference: 11.49%

USC (Gould) Law: The School

Intimate section and class sizes are one of the perks of attending USC Law, according to students. “The sections are pretty small, so you get to know your classmates really well,” says one grad. “It helped when you needed notes or outlines.” Getting into even the most popular classes isn’t difficult, particularly during 2L and 3L years.

Incoming class size: 215 (2009)

Typical first-year section size: 70

CURRICULUM

During the first year, students take **Law, Language, and Values** (which USC Law describes as an introduction to “foundational concepts in legal reasoning, including theories of interpretation, the rule of law, and normative reasoning”), **Torts, Procedure, and Contracts** in the fall.

In the spring of 1L year, students take **Criminal Law, Constitutional Law, Property, and Legal Profession** (which covers “the role of the lawyer in society” in addition to “other issues of ethics and professional responsibility”).

During both the fall and spring terms, students will also take **Legal Research, Writing and Advocacy**, which focuses on teaching the fundamentals of legal writing and analysis.

All 1L courses are graded on a number scale from 1.9 (failing) to 4.0 (A). If a student is given a failing grade in any 1L course, they must re-enroll in it and obtain a passing grade. As per the school, “A student who does not successfully complete the entire first-year curriculum will not be allowed to graduate.”

FACULTY

Student-to-faculty ratio: 12.4 : 1

USC Law’s prominent faculty includes:

Susan Estrich, author and expert in law and politics, criminal law, and gender discrimination.

Elizabeth Garrett, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and USC Law, as well as authority on state, national, and presidential politics.

George Lefcoe, real estate finance, development, and land use planning expert.

ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITIES

CLINICS: USC Law currently has six clinics available to students interested in adding a practical component to their legal education. They include the Immigration Clinic, Intellectual Property and Technology Law Clinic, International Human Rights Clinic, Mediation Clinic, Post-Conviction Justice Project, and Small Business Clinic.

STUDY ABROAD: The school has five study abroad options, which encompass both dual degree programs and semester-abroad study. Students can obtain a JD/LLM by participating in the school’s dual degree program with the London School of Economics in London, England; they can also study abroad for a semester (as part of their regular JD curriculum) at the University of Hong Kong, Bocconi University (Milan, Italy), University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 (Lyon, France), and Bond University (Queensland, Australia).

JOINT DEGREE: USC Law has a dual degree JD/LLM program with the London School of Economics. It also offers a certificate in Business Law, and a certificate in Entertainment Law.

JOURNALS AND PUBLICATIONS

The school has three journals: *The Southern California Law Review*, *The Interdisciplinary Law Journal* (ILJ), and *The Review of Law and Social Justice* (RLSJ). Grades and writing competitions form the basis of admission for all three journals: the Law Review selects based on 1L grades or performance on a writing competition, ILJ looks at grades and/or writing competition performance, and RLSJ looks at a combination of both.

MOCK TRIAL AND MOOT COURT

USC Law’s **Hale Moot Court Program** starts in 1L year, when the forty students with the best written and oral performance in **Legal Research, Writing and Advocacy** are invited to participate in the **Hale Moot Court Competition** their second year. Students participating in the 2L Hale competition can then apply to become members of the **Moot Court Executive Board** (which administers the Hale competition) and **National Moot Court team** (which participates in competitions) during their third year.

• NOTABLE ALUMNI •

USC Law’s alumni list includes many prominent figures in law, entertainment, business, academia, and government. They include **Frank Rothman** ’51, CEO of MGM/UA studios from 1982 to 1986, and prominent litigator who represented companies and organizations such as the National Football League, Paramount Pictures, and 20th Century Fox; **Joseph Wapner** ’48, judge who presided over the popular television show *The People’s Court* from 1981 to 1993; **David Eagleson** ’50, **Marcus Kaufman** ’56, **Joyce Luther Kennard** ’74, and **Malcolm M. Lucas** ’53, all of whom served as justices on the California Supreme Court (Lucas served as Chief Justice, and Kennard is still on the California Supreme Court today); and **Amy Trask** ’85, CEO of the Oakland Raiders (NFL).

For the most part, students say the environment at USC Law is inviting. “I found the atmosphere at USC to be very welcoming,” says one grad. “Maybe it’s the weather,” speculates another alum, “but everyone is surprisingly nice.”

The positive environment definitely helps to ameliorate the intensity of the first year. “The class load is pretty heavy,” warns one alum. “It can definitely weigh you down if you don’t keep up.” “I hated the forced curve,” gripes one recent grad. “It made the jitters I felt taking exams much worse.”

Students enjoy their faculty. “Some of the professors are really spectacular, and giants in their fields.” The teaching quality of by-and-large good, although there are some disappointments: “There’s a little of everything: Stellar teachers, great instructors, not-so-great lecturers...but for the most part, the faculty at USC is very good.” A few students felt that there wasn’t enough feedback or assistance from professors: “I felt that I was constantly playing a game of ‘hide the ball’ with my professors,” says a grad. “For some reason, it seems they almost expect you to come into law school knowing things...but why would I? Isn’t that why you go to school in the first place?”

The cozy class and section sizes were almost universally lauded: “I liked the class size. It was small, but not stifling, and you really got to know the people you were going to school with.” “The school is pretty small and tight-knit. You really got to know everyone in your class.” The only negative, according to one grad, is that a class this small can sometimes “feel like high school, and the gossip can drive you insane.” Some students mention that “everyone pretty much lives off-campus, which can sometimes mean that you don’t see the people you don’t have class with for days.”

Employment prospects are very solid, particularly within the state: “Career Services was great if you’re looking for a job in California and L.A. If you were looking for a job on the East Coast, they were less helpful.”

ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

The student government at USC Law is the Student Bar Association (SBA). All USC Law students are automatically members of the SBA. The organization is led by a group of eighteen elected students, who represent the voice and interests of the students to the administration, provide funding to other student groups, and organize law school events throughout the year.

The SBA puts on events such as galas, football tailgates, fundraisers, and weekly bar reviews at a variety of Los Angeles hot spots. In addition, the Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF) hosts a yearly auction to help raise funds for fellowships given to students pursuing summer public interest work. USC Law’s various diversity student organizations also sponsor speakers, events, and lunches throughout the year, which are open to all students.

- American Constitution Society
- Armenian Law Students Association
- Asian Pacific American Law Students Association (APALSA)
- Black Law Students Association (BLSA)
- Christian Legal Society
- Community Service Affairs
- Corporate Law Society
- Critical Legal Studies Association
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy Committee
- Entertainment Law Society
- Environmental Law Society
- Federalist Society
- Gould /Marshall Alliance
- Health Law and Bioethics Society
- Intellectual Property and Technology Law Society
- International Law and Relations Organization
- Jewish Law Students Association (JLSA)
- Latino Law Students Association
- LawCapella
- Legal Aid Alternative Breaks (LAAB)
- Los Angeles Public Interest Law Journal (LAPILJ)
- Middle Eastern South Asian Law Association (MESALA)
- Muslim Law Students Association
- OUTLaw
- Phi Alpha Delta (PAD)
- Phi Delta Phi International Legal Fraternity
- Public Interest Law Foundation (PILF)
- Real Estate Law
- Street Law
- Student Bar Association (SBA)
- Surf Law Society
- USC Art Law Society
- USC Law Democrats
- USC Sports Law Society
- Women’s Law Association (WLA)

• CLASS PROFILE •

In 2010, the University of California Gould School of Law received 6,587 applications requesting admission into the Class of 2013. Of those, 1,435 were admitted, and 220 student eventually matriculated.

The 25th and 75th GPA percentiles for this class were 3.46 and 3.73, respectively.

The median GPA was 3.64.

The 25th and 75th LSAT percentiles were 166 and 169, respectively.

The median LSAT was 167.

The class was 45% female, and 55% male.

40% were students of color.

68% of the class were California residents; 32% hailed from within the state.

The average age for an incoming 1L student in this class was 24.

9% of the students of the class held advanced degrees.

81 undergraduate institutions were represented. Those with the highest number of students in the USC Law Class of 2013 included the University of California (Berkeley), the University of California (Los Angeles), the University of Southern California, the University of California (Santa Barbara), the University of California (Irvine), New York University, the University of California (San Diego), and George Washington University.

USC (Gould) Law: The City

Setting: Urban

USC is located in the University Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. The edge of campus is close to downtown LA. While students love their campus, most will say that the area around it “isn’t great,” although crime in the surrounding neighborhoods has gone down since the 1990s. Most law students, however, do not live near campus, and many live a significant commute away.

LIVING EXPENSES

The living expenses for a USC Law student are almost identical to those attending peer area law schools, and are slightly above average for schools on this list. The primary expense for students, after room and board, is transportation, since most students commute and must find and pay for parking near the school.

Estimated academic year living expenses*

Room and board	\$15,700.00
Books and supplies	\$1,990.00
Transportation	\$2,250.00
Personal/Miscellaneous	\$1,828.00
TOTAL	\$21,768.00

**Values provided by USC Law*

HOUSING

Although the school does have enough housing to host about one-fourth of the incoming JD class every year, most students live off campus. USC Law provides a “roommate matching service” to help with the off-campus process. Most students live a considerable distance away, in the Westwood, Santa Monica, Los Feliz, and Manhattan Beach areas, among others.

On-campus housing available? Y - 46 units
Average apartment rental cost (1 BR/1 BA) \$1,500/mo

DEMOGRAPHICS

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the 2006 population of Los Angeles, CA to be 3,849,378 people, with 63.7% of the population between 18 and 65 years of age. 25.5% of the population has a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Population density in the Los Angeles area (as per the 2000 census) is 7,877 persons per square mile.

The 2000 census puts the ethnic makeup of the city as 46.9% white, 46.5% of Hispanic or Latino origin, 11.2% African American, 0.8% American Indian or Alaskan native, 10.0% Asian, 0.2% native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 5.2% from two or more races.

PARKING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

“Everyone has a car,” says a grad. “The city is very spread out, and you need one to get from point A to point B.” However, parking can be “extremely expensive,” and finding street parking close to the school can be “impossible.”

Students are encouraged to carpool or ride the Tram (USC’s bus system) to campus. If students drive their own car to school, they can purchase parking passes (which range from \$225 to \$396 a semester) allowing them to park in many of the structures around town (some grads suggest using the Parking Center, which is relatively close to campus, and has a Tram stop nearby).

The university also has CampusCruiser and ZipCar services available, and some students ride bicycles to school.

AREA ATTRACTIONS & ENTERTAINMENT

When it comes to things to do and sights to see, there is very little that you can’t do or find in Los Angeles. The list of attractions in the city is huge.

Within Los Angeles, you can find just about any type of cuisine or nightlife possible. Popular tourist attractions (like Grauman’s Chinese Theater, Rodeo Drive, and the Hollywood Walk of Fame) are interspersed with science and history museums, and tours of the city.

LA is also home to six professional sports teams (the Clippers, Dodgers, Galaxy, Kings, Lakers, and Sparks), and hosts the Los Angeles Marathon every year. Horse racing and car racing are also available near or just outside the city, making them popular diversions.

USC Trojan football is a major attraction for both students and residents, and tailgates are not to be missed.

CITY MUST-DOs

“The music, entertainment, and sports in LA are awesome!” says one grad. “One of the great things about LA is that you can go to all sorts of small music shows and know that you’ll probably see one or more of those bands make it big while you’re still in school,” agrees another.

“USC football is one thing you *have* to go to at least once,” enthuses one alum. “Not only is the team great (we’re national champs and are almost always ranked highly), but the energy at the games is unbelievable.”

“Really, it’s LA,” says another grad. “What CAN’T you do here? Everything you’d want is right here.”