

# preLaw



## The Greenest Law Schools

**PROFESSOR PATRICK PARENTEAU,** pictured with his class at Vermont Law School, has taught a variety of environmental law courses including **Environmental Policy and Management, Citizen Suits, Watershed Protection and the Extinction seminar.**

Environmental law and green practices have exploded nationwide. But Vermont Law School and three other schools are at the top of the class.

**BY KAREN DYBIS**

**A**lthough environmental law has been taught at the nation's law schools for decades, it has enjoyed new growth, respect and student interest in recent years.

The result is a plethora of impressive and interesting programs. That also means today's law students are challenged to find the right school among the many law schools "going green."



### Summa Cum Laude

- American University Washington College of Law
- Lewis & Clark Law School
- University of Colorado Law School
- Vermont Law School

### Magna Cum Laude

- Albany Law School
- Stetson University College of Law
- UC Davis School of Law
- University of Minnesota Law School
- University of San Diego School of Law
- Wayne State University
- Widener University School of Law

### Cum Laude

- Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law | Yeshiva University
- Indiana University School of Law-Indianapolis
- Northeastern University School of Law
- Thomas M Cooley Law School
- University of Georgia School of Law
- University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law
- Willamette University College of Law

### Honorable Mention

- Thomas Jefferson School of Law
- Maryland School of Law

To help, *preLaw* has created an Honor Roll to highlight the best and brightest. The editors collected information about law schools' curriculum, campus environment and building trends. Additional weight was given to those schools with a strong green focus in their classes, faculty and other academic offerings, such as externships, legal journals and summer programs.

Four schools received the magazine's Summa Cum Laude ranking as the best of the best. In alphabetical order they are: **American University Washington College of Law, Lewis & Clark Law School, University of Colorado Law School** and **Vermont Law School**. Surprised? Here's why.

### American University

Located in Washington D.C., American University is best described as "a student-orientated law school in a great city for studying environmental law," said David Hunter, an AU law professor and director of the Program on International and Comparative Environmental Law.

Students also benefit from the unique and long-running Joint Research Program with the independent Center for International Environmental Law. This past academic year, these projects have included participating in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund Spring Meetings. The law school also has an intensive three-week summer program, which brings in experts from the nearby political center as teachers, mentors and resources, Hunter said.

Another important aspect of AU's program is its commitment to externships and other experiences that will help its alumnae in the near term, Hunter said.

"[It] not only gives students exposure to practical skills and practicing lawyers but gives them a network to find jobs in the process," Hunter said.

On the campus side, AU created an Office of Sustainability, and Hunter participates in campus-wide task-forces working on sustainability issues. AU has committed to a Zero Waste Policy and has created a committee to develop a plan to eliminate or divert 100 percent of the university's waste stream.

### Lewis & Clark

Lewis & Clark consistently ranks among the top environmental law schools in the nation. In 2010, the Portland, Ore., campus was ranked No. 2 in this category by *U.S. News and World Report*.

What makes this collaborative campus stand out is its long history and commitment to environmental issues as well as those within the law, said Shannon Davis, assistant dean of admission.

"The Northwest region and the city of Portland in particular, are places where people have led green efforts for decades," she said. "Our students can benefit from the innovative businesses, community engagement, thoughtful discussions and forward-thinking green practices of the people who are leading the nation in this movement."

The law school has a two-week intensive environmental summer school, co-curricular offerings with its well-received animal law area, the nation's oldest student-run environmental law review and an award-winning moot court. In fact, its moot court trumped 67 other teams this year to once again win the national championship.

"A big part of our mission is to remain relevant and also address the latest issues within such areas as climate change, sustainability and global environmental concerns. The curriculum naturally translates to our campus efforts," Davis said.

### University of Colorado

The law school was at the forefront of the environmental era, with teaching, the creation of its Natural Resources Law Center 28 years ago, a Natural Resources Clinic more than 20 years ago and – more recently — the Center for Energy and Environmental Security.

Students also can earn a variety of dual degrees and certificates. Some unique offerings include Juris Doctor/Master of Urban and Regional Planning, American Indian Law Certificate and Graduate Energy Certificate Program.

The school's deep commitment to teaching and research in these areas complements the school's physical location in the Rocky Mountain West — a region defined by its vast natural resources, public lands and parks and many Indian reservations.



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“The Law School and the University of Colorado campus ‘walk the talk,’” said David Getches, dean and Raphael J. Moses Professor of Natural Resources Law.

To that end, the new Wolf Law Building is LEED Gold Certified. And last year, Sierra magazine ranked the

Boulder campus as its top “green” university in the nation. It also was ranked one of the top campuses for sustainability by the Sustainable Endowments Institute.

“The area is full of non-profit organizations, governmental agencies and private companies working to solve the

nation’s and the world’s environmental and natural resources problems through innovation, education, advocacy, collaboration and better policies,” Getches said. “Law students can get a head start on meaningful careers.”

## Vermont Law School

*U.S. News* ranks this law school No. 1 for good reason. Its environmental curriculum offers more than 50 courses in environmental law and policy, more than any other school. And nearly half of its first-year JD class is pursuing a Master of Environmental Law and Policy degree.

The coursework, respected faculty and predominance of students who care about the environment separates Vermont from other law schools, said Marc Mihaly, head of the Environmental Law Center.

“You’ve got a critical mass of people talking, thinking and writing about the environment,” Mihaly said. “Some 60 percent of the students who come to Vermont Law School do so because they’re interested in the environment.”

This commitment also translates into a huge summer school. Every summer, Mihaly helps organize a program that provides up to 40 courses taught by experts, government officials and legal practitioners.

“We’ve got 250 to 300 people every summer,” he said. “It’s like [renowned music festival] Tanglewood – there is so much going on here. We’ll bring people in just to be here and hang out.”

The rest of campus is just as active. The law school serves local and sustainably grown food whenever possible in its café and at catered events. Vermont also has Composting toilets, motion-sensor lighting and fuel-efficient Zipcars zipping around.

“This is a different kind of atmosphere,” Mihaly said. “We’re pretty determined that we want to change things. ... I would never think of teaching anywhere else.”

