

**HANDBOOK FOR PRE-LAW
ADVISORS**

SAPLA



**2019-2020
HANDBOOK
FOR
PRE-LAW ADVISORS**

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Compiled and Edited by

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Duke University
Twenty First Printing and Revision**

September 2019



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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

Pre-Law Associations such as SAPLA exist primarily for the purposes of promoting interchange among members and providing services to those members. This SAPLA Pre-Law Advisors Handbook represents one of the services provided by SAPLA. The intended audience for this publication is Pre-Law Advisors, though it is probable that some of these materials will be shared with pre-law students.

The Handbook itself has been divided into six sections for ready reference. Each section begins with a short introduction which gives an overview of its contents. It is important to note at this point that this Handbook in its present form is a bit more than a rough draft and considerably less than a finished product. It is the intent of SAPLA to view this as an on-going project. Through supplements and revisions SAPLA plans to update the Handbook periodically. Suggestions/contributions are welcomed.

Three basic sources have been utilized in the preparation of this Handbook. First contributions were solicited and received from members of SAPLA and we are grateful to them for their willingness to share their expertise. Second, portions of the Duke Pre-Law Handbook prepared by me and Harry H. Harkins, Jr., have been included. The third source utilized was the NAPLA (Northeast Association of Pre-Law Advisors) Pre-Law Advisors Guide, compiled and edited by Edward M. Stern, J.D., and Emily Soltanoff of Boston University. Since both NAPLA and SAPLA were involved in similar projects we agreed to share materials. As a result, the NAPLA and SAPLA were involved in similar projects we agreed to share materials. As a result, the NAPLA publication contains materials originally published in the Duke Pre-Law Handbook and SAPLA's Handbook contains materials originally published in the NAPLA Guide. These NAPLA materials (in most cases reprinted from the original) form a valuable and substantial part of the SAPLA Handbook and we are grateful for permission to reprint designated items.

Finally, as the word "editor" implies, other people have been involved in this project and deserve special mention and words of gratitude. I wish to begin by thanking the Executive Committee of SAPLA for its support throughout the course of this project. The time, effort and energy given by each individual contributor deserves more than a word of gratitude. Yet, as the song reminds us, "things don't just happen, you've got to make them happen," none of this project would have "happened" without the help of three people who share the suite in 116 Allen Building. My friend and colleague, Eileen King, College Recorder, Trinity College, Duke University devoted a great deal of time and energy to the design of the cover, the mechanics of assembling the book, typing (and retyping) these pages. Marilyn Hogge and Dianne Stutts assisted in the typing (and retyping). My wife Virginia S. Wilson, an expert proofreader, did just that. Typos and other errors will be found only in the sections she did not proof.

To all of these people I am truly grateful.

Gerald Lee Wilson
Duke University
September 25, 1984

PREFACE TO THIS EDITION

This edition of the SAPLA Handbook for Pre-Law Advisors has been revised and like most ongoing projects contains something old and something new. In an effort to provide its membership with the most “up to date” information, SAPLA began several years ago publishing (with NAPLA) an annual supplement now called “The Wilson/Stern Book of Law School Lists” which contains the latest information on law school programs, publications, opportunities, etc. This Handbook, on the other hand, contains articles which have, if not a timeless quality, at least a shelf life of several years. This edition contains a core of articles written for the first edition (and as timely today as they were when written), and some revised articles, as well as a number of new articles gleaned from various sources. It remains the view of SAPLA and this editor that this Handbook is process and not product and all suggestions and contributions are welcome.

Pre-law advisors may reproduce and distribute to their students any portions of the Handbook which may be of particular value to students. Please note the copyright conditions as printed on the back of the title page.

As was the case with the first edition, I am grateful to those who share the suite in 04 Allen Building, Terry Wilkerson who designed the cover and for her able assistance in compiling the information for this edition.

I hope that this volume will be of help to you in your endeavors and again invite your participation in future editions.

Gerald Lee Wilson
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September 2019

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*. The NAPLA Pre-Law Advising Guide, original edition, compiled and edited by Edward M. Stern, J.D., and Emily Soltanoff, Boston University. Reprinted by permission

CHAPTER I

THE PRE-LAW ADVISOR: OVERVIEW AND INNERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter begins with an overview of pre-law advising as presented in the PLANC statement on the Role and Responsibilities of Pre-Law Advisors. From this overview it moves to an "innerview" as experienced pre-law advisors, describe modes of pre-law advising in varying academic settings.

The intent of this chapter is not to present a definitive "How To" but rather to suggest and to describe "How Does." Since each pre-law advisor faces a unique situation there are no "Ten Easy Steps To Successful Pre-Law Advising." However, each pre-law advisor may find some suggestions in these articles that might be adaptable to his or her own particular situation.

THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRE-LAW ADVISORS

PREFACE

Definition and Overview

This statement was developed by the Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC) to suggest general guidelines for effective pre-law advising. Pre-law advising is a specialized function encompassing both personal counseling and career counseling. The pre-law advisor at an undergraduate college or university is called upon to know both the individual being counseled and the educational and career possibilities within the legal profession. Performance of the responsibilities of the pre-law advisor varies according to the individual style of the pre-law advisor, the resources available, and individual advising needs. Though a pre-law advisor should not make specific decisions for an advisee, it is entirely appropriate to suggest questions that stimulate thought and facilitate decision-making.

The basic functions of the pre-law advisor include providing or identifying appropriate resources concerning legal education and the legal profession, and assisting advisees in the law school application process. This assistance usually includes, but is not limited to, providing guidance on preparation for law school, including undergraduate curriculum; providing basic information on Law School Admission Council (LSAC) services, including the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), Credential Assembly Service (CAS), and online application process; informing students about deadlines and fees; providing information on financial aid for law school; writing dean's letters or letters of evaluation for applicants; reviewing application materials such as personal statements for law school; and answering questions. Pre-law advisors may wish to consider such additional functions as hosting recruiting events, coordinating pre-law events for students, sponsoring a pre-law club, facilitating internships or law related experiences, and developing contacts with alumni lawyers and local bar members.

In fulfilling these basic functions pre-law advisors are encouraged to use resources on the LSAC website at www.lsac.org, including the *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*,¹ LSAC's *Law School Admission Reference Manual*,² and other resources available in pre-law advisor accounts on the site.³ LSAC maintains a national directory of pre-law advisors at undergraduate institutions, and prepares Pre-law Advisor Action Reports containing law school admission data for each undergraduate institution. Electronic access to these reports is provided through the pre-law advisor accounts (login required).⁴

The six regional pre-law advisor associations (APLAs)⁵ offer many professional development and networking opportunities for pre-law advisors, including training for new pre-law advisors, during regional conferences and meetings; a variety of materials including handbooks and newsletters are available to association members. The Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC) hosts a national conference every Presidential election year and publishes *PLANC POINTS*. PLANC posts contact information for the six APLAs and other valuable information on its website at www.planc.org. NAPLA and SAPLA publish annually the *Law School Book of Lists* which is available to any pre-law advisor upon request.

¹ The 2013 *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* is the last print edition of this invaluable resource; the online version is available at www.lsac.org (US Law School Database Search).

² The annual *Law School Admission Reference Manual* is available to pre-law advisors (pre-law advisor login required) at www.lsac.org. LSAC also publishes a print edition, and sends a copy annually to sole/coordinating pre-law advisors.

³ LSAC offers pre-law advisor accounts at www.lsac.org to sole/coordinating pre-law advisors, as designated by the undergraduate institution, making available many resources through a secure log-in. Other "supporting" pre-law advisors may be provided electronic access by the sole/coordinating pre-law advisor. Pre-law advisors should contact LSAC if they have questions about this process.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Midwest Association of Pre-law Advisors (MAPLA), Northeast Association of Pre-law Advisors (NAPLA), Pacific Coast Association of Pre-law Advisors (PCAPLA), Southern Association of Pre-law Advisors (SAPLA), Southwest Association of Pre-law Advisors (SWAPLA) and Western Association of Pre-law Advisors (WAPLA).

Pre-law advisors are encouraged to contact their colleagues when they have questions or concerns. One of the notable characteristics of pre-law advising is the willingness of advisors to share with others.

I. RELATIONSHIP TO APPLICANTS

A. Delineation of Responsibilities

The primary obligation of the pre-law advisor is to meet the needs of students and graduates of the undergraduate institution the advisor serves. Given that approximately two-thirds of law school applicants nationwide apply to law school after graduation, pre-law advisors provide an important service by advising alumni, particularly recent graduates; at some institutions, however, resources may limit the ability to provide services after a student graduates.

Pre-law advisors often serve in multiple roles at their institutions. For instance, a pre-law advisor in a Career Service office may advise students and alumni about other non-legal career opportunities. Faculty pre-law advisors teach classes while also serving as pre-law advisor. Pre-law advisors in an Academic Advising or Dean's Office often hold other roles in the college or university. There are many configurations of pre-law advising responsibilities around the country, at institutions ranging from small colleges to large universities with multiple undergraduate units.

B. Conflict of Interest

A pre-law advisor at an undergraduate college or university should avoid taking on responsibilities involving a real or perceived conflict of interest. Pre-law advisors are expected to be objective and neutral. Pre-law advisors are encouraged to consult with their regional pre-law advisor associations (APLAs) if they have questions regarding specific responsibilities that may present a real or perceived conflict of interest.⁶

Pre-law advisors should be cognizant of the goals and standards of individual law schools as they assist advisees in making decisions about law school. However, the primary objective for the pre-law advisor is to help the advisee make the best decision, taking into account the advisee's goals and qualifications.

C. The Pre-law Advisor as Facilitator

The pre-law advisor should seek to be a facilitator in the pre-legal decision-making and admissions process, bringing together knowledge of the advisee's needs and ambitions with information on various law schools and law-related careers. Advisors are in a unique position to combine these variables into satisfactory and rewarding applications and admission patterns.

Properly performed, this role implies asking thought-provoking questions, directing advisees to resources, and helping them make good decisions. Many advisees need assistance in preparing for law school and navigating the law school admission process. Some may know very little about the legal profession, and after investigation and discussion may conclude that a legal career is not the best choice or that more experience is needed before starting law school. It is helpful to suggest criteria and resources to be used by the student in decision-making with reference to choosing law as a career, selecting schools to which applications should be sent, completing the

⁶ For example, a pre-law advisor should avoid assuming the dual responsibilities of undergraduate pre-law advisor and member of a law school's admission staff. In this situation, advisees may feel concerned about seeking or relying upon advice from the pre-law advisor regarding confidential academic or disciplinary issues or law school admission or financial aid decisions, knowing the pre-law advisor's affiliation with a particular law school. Law school representatives often collaborate with pre-law advisors by participating in campus programs (see II.B. below); this is a successful programming model in which a pre-law advisor and law school representative can work together, in their respective roles.

Another example of a real or perceived conflict of interest is when an undergraduate pre-law advisor serves as an employee or paid representative of a commercial vendor providing LSAT prep or other law admission-related services; advisees may perceive a lack of neutrality in advice given regarding LSAT prep or other law admission-related services.

applications, and choosing the school to attend. Pre-law advisors may find it useful to contact appropriate persons or organizations on behalf of students as appropriate, e.g. LSAC, regional pre-law advisors associations (APLAs), other Pre-law advisors, leaders.

The role of facilitator can also be described as that of a coach - who prepares the players and advises during the game, but does not play in the game itself. The advisor may choose, for example, to review a student's personal statement and other application documents and make suggestions, but should not assume the responsibility of actually completing applications or writing personal statements. Above all, the advisor as facilitator should not assume the role of decision-maker.

D. Counseling Students from Underrepresented or Marginalized Backgrounds

Pre-Law Advisors should be aware of the unique characteristics presented by students who come from identity groups that are underrepresented or historically marginalized in the legal profession. Preparation on understanding challenges related to, as well as advocating for resources to support, the needs of various identity groups (including, but not limited to: students of color, students with a disability, students from a low socio-economic background, first-generation college students, veteran students, and LGBTQ students) should be an important priority for pre-law advisors to develop competency. In addition, advisors should have proficiency in understanding programs offered by law schools and other entities to encourage students to consider the legal profession and opportunities for involvement with law school student organizations when assisting these advisees in the admission process. Visit the LSAC website for information and programs on ways pre-law advisors may help this important population of prospective law students.

E. Sponsoring A Pre-Law Club

A student pre-law club can be of great value in helping students gain knowledge of the legal profession, its options, opportunities, and pitfalls. Such a club or organization can serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of information and as a focal point for law school admissions officers, practicing lawyers, and others who are invited to campus. A number of colleges and universities have such organizations, and pre-law advisors can often share their experience and expertise with those who want to organize and sponsor a club on their campus. Advisors may wish to consider establishing pre-law clubs on their campuses and might look into organizations that relate directly or indirectly to pre-law advising including, but not limited to Phi Alpha Delta (PAD), the American Mock Trial Association (AMTA), and the American Collegiate Moot Court Association (ACMA), and the Council of Forensic Organizations.

F. Providing Information Concerning Specific Law Schools

Most information about law schools is available in electronic format. The pre-law advisor should help advisees find the best objective sources of information about specific law schools, including the *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*, law school websites, and other important websites (www.lzac.org, www.abanet.org; www.nalp.org). Pre-law advisors may share with their advisees non-confidential information from the summary reports in the Pre-law Advisor Action Reports, available in the Pre-law Advisor's account at www.lzac.org. A secure login is provided by LSAC to pre-law advisors designated by their undergraduate institutions. Pre-law advisors may contact LSAC if they have questions about accessing their LSAC accounts. Law schools are also willing to honor requests for print information concerning special opportunities and programs, and other information useful to the prospective applicant.

It is appropriate for the pre-law advisor to suggest to applicants criteria for selecting law schools. Such criteria might include, but are not limited to, admissions standards, costs, and availability of financial aid, location, employment data, special programs, and special opportunities. It may be equally appropriate for the pre-law advisor to suggest specific schools for the student's consideration. Such suggestions should be based on available information, the pre-law advisor's own knowledge of and experience with specific schools, as well as the experience of alumni from the particular undergraduate institution who have graduated from, or are currently,

attending law schools. Such specific suggestions should be as bias-free and current as possible. Once a student has examined and explored potential options in terms of specific law schools, the pre-law advisor may wish to assist the student in refining a list of schools, keeping in mind the considerations noted above. The advisor should encourage applicants to apply to as many schools as appropriate and consistent with their individual interests, qualifications, and resources.

G. Evaluating and Ranking Law Schools for Applicants

Pre-Law Advisors are frequently requested to evaluate an advisee's chances of obtaining admission to specific law schools. Through the use of LSAC's Pre-Law Advisor Action Reports, *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved US Law Schools*, and other published information provided by individual law schools about LSAT scores and grade point averages of their accepted and enrolled students, an advisor can help a student prepare a reasonable list of possible schools to which applications may be made. However, non-quantitative factors like work experience, demonstrated leadership ability, and outstanding achievement may well play a role in the reviewing of an application. Additionally, since quantitative standards for acceptance may vary from year to year, the advisor should be cognizant of both subjective criteria and varying data not readily apparent to applicants, and encourage applicants to apply to schools that may appear to be "long shots" as well as to those that are considered as "good chance" and "likely admit."

H. Advising the Pre-law Student on Undergraduate Curriculum

According to the American Bar Association (ABA), "there is no single path that will prepare you for legal education. Students who are successful in law school, and who become accomplished professionals, come from many walks of life and educational backgrounds..." (Pre-law Committee of the ABA's Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, www.abanet.org/legaled/pre-law/prep.html). Some schools offer a well-defined "pre-law" curriculum while others do not recommend specific courses for pre-law students. Whichever approach is taken, there is a common consensus that a broad-based academic experience well grounded in the liberal arts provides the best preparation for law school.

The sections on "Preparing for Law School," on the LSAC website (www.lsac.org) suggest approaches to advising the pre-law student on an undergraduate curriculum. By common agreement, courses that lend themselves to the creation of a context in which the law may be better understood, courses that augment communication skills and courses that sharpen analytical skills provide valuable preparation for law school. Pre-law advisors should identify themselves to other academic advisors and express their willingness to consult with both students and advisors on matters pertaining to curriculum and course selection.

I. Advising the Pre-law Candidate on Preparation for and Taking the LSAT

The pre-law advisor should be knowledgeable about LSAC's website, Credential Assembly Service (CAS), and online application process. *The Law School Admission Reference Manual* published annually by the LSAC and also available online on the Pre-law Advisor website (login required), provides important information and examples. Students should be advised to register in a timely manner for the LSAT and CAS. Fee waivers for LSAC services are available for students with serious financial need; candidates apply for a fee waiver on the LSAC website. For most students, it is advisable to take the LSAT in the summer or fall prior to the year of entrance into law school. Students should be informed of the advantages and disadvantages of each test date.

There are a variety of opinions on the question of preparation for the LSAT, but most pre-law advisors agree that some kind of preparation for the LSAT is advisable and beneficial. According to LSAC, "most law school applicants familiarize themselves with test mechanics and question types, practice on sample tests, and study the information available on test-taking techniques and strategies. Though it is difficult to say when examiners are sufficiently prepared, very few people achieve their full potential without some preparation" (www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/preparing-for-lsat.asp). The pre-law advisor should acquaint students with various means of preparing for the LSAT in addition to the commercial preparation courses. These alternatives include

sample/practice materials available from LSAC and commercial preparation books. In situations where it is practical and advisable, the pre-law advisor may wish to set up preparation sessions. Some pre-law advisors have done this with a great deal of success and may be willing to share their experience.

Commercial preparation courses present the most difficult part of the question of preparation for the LSAT. In advising a student about these commercial courses the following caveats should be kept in mind: commercial preparation agencies are in the business primarily to make money; alternate means of preparation, such as LSAC test prep publications, are available; the student should be skeptical of any course that makes extravagant claims or guarantees about its ability to raise a student's score; the LSAT is not an achievement test; therefore, there are limits as to what any form of preparation can do (i.e., there is a difference between being able to prepare for a test and studying a given body of knowledge for a test).

Although students have the option of retaking the LSAT, they should be made aware of the problems associated with multiple test scores. First, all scores are reported to the law schools and law schools use their own judgment in evaluating multiple scores in the admission process; however, law schools are required to report the highest score when submitting data about each entering class to the American Bar Association. Second, for most students, retaking the test does not result in a significant increase in the score. Pre-law advisors may want to direct advisees to LSAT Repeater data posted at www.lsac.org. Candidates may take the LSAT a maximum of three times over a period of two years (including a test for which the score was canceled). In deciding whether or not to retake the test, students should consider such factors as their physical health or emotional state at the time of the first test, the extent to which they prepared for prior LSAT(s), and consistency of their LSAT score(s) with scores from previous standardized tests. The overall guideline is to proceed with caution before retaking the test.

J. Advising the Pre-law Student on Financial Issues in Preparation for Legal Education

It is important for the pre-law advisor to talk frankly with advisees about how they plan to pay for law school, the realities of a significant debt burden, and income expectations as a lawyer. Consumer debt and increasing cost of attendance can affect a student's ability to enroll in law school. Education debt (from undergraduate education and law school) can limit options and create hardships after law school, particularly in a weak legal job market. Pre-law advisors can direct advisees to information and resources about the cost of law school and the job market, including those available through the American Bar Association (ABA) employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org/home.aspx, NALP www.nalp.org, law school websites, and to resources to help them understand the law school financial aid process, including the LSAC website and the Access Group's WiseBorrower materials on financing a legal education www.accessgroup.org. Students may hesitate to apply to law school because of their financial situation. The pre-law advisor should help advisees understand the possibilities of arranging a combination of grants, loans, personal savings, and part-time earnings to defray the expenses of a legal education. Some pre-law advisors host Financial Aid for Law School programs for students, inviting experts in the field to help students understand the realities of paying for law school. Pre-law advisors are encouraged to attend sessions on Financial Aid for Law School at regional APLA conferences and meetings. Advisees who are considering a career in public interest law or government should be made aware of loan repayment programs. A comprehensive list of such programs is available at www.equaljusticeworks.org.

K. Suggesting Alternative Career Options

The pre-law advisor should encourage self-evaluation of talents, strengths, weaknesses and interests, and at the same time encourage students to seek real knowledge of professions that may match these characteristics. It may be appropriate to suggest and encourage students to consider alternative career patterns. Such an approach may be especially valuable early in a student's academic career if there is evidence that the student may be better suited to another career, the student's academic performance may seriously limit law school options, or if the student has an unrealistic self-image or view of the legal profession. The pre-law advisor should discuss the option of waiting and working a year or more before applying to law school. The student may be reassured by the fact that

a typical student entering law school is 24 or 25, and some law students qualify for the category of "senior citizens." Students who choose to take time off before law school are well advised to establish a file of letters of recommendations before graduation from college, either by registering for LSAC's Credential Assembly Service or by establishing a credentials file through their college or university.

II. RELATIONSHIPS WITH LAW SCHOOLS

The interests of student, pre-law advisor and law school can best be met by the establishment of a close working relationship with law school admissions officers. This relationship can be fostered in many ways, the best and most efficient being attendance at regional pre-law advisor conferences.

A. Visits to Law Schools

Many pre-law advisors have found that visits to law schools enhance their knowledge. Increasingly, law schools are inviting pre-law advisors to visit as their guests. These invitations may raise ethical questions for some pre-law advisors. No one should feel under any obligation either to accept an invitation or, if the invitation is accepted and the visit made, to take anything other than an objective attitude toward that law school. Law schools planning such events should be urged to give advisors, during the course of the visit, an opportunity to meet privately with students from their undergraduate institution who are currently enrolled in the school.

B. Visit by Law School Representatives to Campus

Pre-law advisors should encourage law schools to visit their campuses, given available resources and other scheduling priorities. Recruiting visits can take various forms, an individual visit or a law school fair in which a number of law school representatives are invited to visit at a designated time. Where a fair seems to be desirable, participating law schools may be asked to pay a nominal fee. Such charges should be fair and equitable and have a reasonable relationship to expenses incurred. These charges should not be assessed for income-generating purposes.

In planning for visits by law school recruiters, efforts should be made to organize the event well in advance, to notify students adequately, and to see that the event is mutually beneficial for both the student and the recruiter. For maximum efficiency, the pre-law advisor may wish to coordinate such events with neighboring institutions by either holding joint fairs or holding events on successive days. LSAC's Recruitment Work Group of pre-law advisor and law admission representatives has developed guidelines for recruitment events: www.lsac.org/Members/EventsRecruitment/PDFs/Guidelines-for-Planning-a-Law-Fair.pdf Additional information is available in the Pre-law Advisor's Account at www.lsac.org, under Events and Recruitment.

Pre-law advisors often find it valuable to invite law school representatives to participate in programs for students, such as panels on mock admissions, personal statements, financial aid for law school, law school curriculum, legal careers, or other topics. Such programs provide important information to students. When a law school is part of a university campus, students can learn much about legal education and the law school admission process in general by attending law school information sessions and tours, and attending a first year class if available. There are many opportunities for productive collaboration between the undergraduate pre-law advisor and the law school when both are located on the same campus, or when a law school is located near the undergraduate institution. It is important for students to understand that the pre-law advisor does not favor or represent a particular law school, even when a law school is located on the same campus.

C. Interpreting Indefinite Application Responses

Often the initial response from a law school will be to place a student's application in a "hold" or "wait-list" category. The pre-law advisor can be of assistance in two major ways. First, the advisor can assist in determining the implications of being placed on a wait-list at a given school. Since admissions offices vary in their procedures, few general rules apply. Some schools maintain large wait-lists, others keep short ones. In any given year a school's ability to admit additional students from wait lists may vary according to the initial yield or to decisions being made by other law schools. The pre-law advisor should encourage students to contact the law school to ascertain the likelihood of eventual admissions and the operative time frame.

Second, the pre-law advisor should encourage students placed on wait-list or hold category to find out what additional information – updated transcript and résumé, additional letters of recommendation, applicant letter of continuing interest, etc. - might be helpful to the law schools. In brief, both the pre-law advisor and the applicant should assume active roles in wait-list situations. Additionally, pre-law advisors should encourage students to take their names off wait-lists once they have decided not to attend a particular school.

D. Multiple Acceptances/Deposits

Applicants may be accepted at several law schools and, in an extension of Murphy's Law, will frequently hear from their last choice first. Initial deposits are often due before the student is able to make a final decision. In its *Statement of Good Admission and Financial Aid Practices*, LSAC recommends that no law school should require an enrollment commitment of any kind to an offer of admission or scholarship prior to April 1, except under binding early decision plans or for academic terms beginning in the spring or summer (LSAC's annual *Law School Admission Reference Manual for Law School Administrators and Pre-law Advisors*). Any failure by a law school to adhere to this deadline should be reported to the appropriate regional Pre-law Advisor Association. The pre-law advisor should urge the student to seek an extension of the deadline for a deposit, especially if the student has not received a decision on financial aid or has heard nothing from a more preferred law school. Should a law school deny the request, the student should be urged to make a deposit at the most desired school where admission has been offered. Sometimes it may be appropriate for a student to place deposits at more than one school in order to create more time for making a decision, but multiple deposits should be discouraged unless there is a valid reason. When multiple deposits are made, the student should be urged to release a seat no longer wanted as soon as possible, in fairness to both the law school and other applicants. Beginning on May 15 of each year, law schools that participate in the Commitment Overlap Service will be provided with information concerning all enrollment commitments to any law school made by those applicants who have indicated an intention to enroll in that school's entering class. The Pre-law Advisor should direct advisees to read and understand each law school's policy on multiple enrollment commitments.

III. Dean's Certifications and Letters of Recommendation

At many institutions, the pre-law advisor is the official designated to write dean's letters and to complete dean's certifications, college questionnaires, or other forms required by law schools; the pre-law advisor may also write letters of evaluation or recommendation. Though these tasks can be time consuming and demand a great deal of effort, they are both a necessary and a valuable part of the process.

Dean's letters and forms should be completed promptly. As a part of the pre-law advisor's professional responsibility, all deadlines should be met if the request from the student was made on a timely basis. When, for valid reasons, pre-law advisors cannot meet stated deadlines, law schools should be informed of this. Students should be urged to monitor their files to insure that all materials have been received. Since many law schools use a "rolling admissions" procedure, it is valuable to submit letters prior to stated deadlines.

A. Confidentiality/Waiver of Right to Access

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the so-called Buckley Amendment, students applying to law schools in the United States have the right of access to letters of evaluation/recommendation written for them. Though students may exercise this right, they should be aware that a number of law schools have indicated that the most helpful letters are those for which the right of access by the student has been waived, thus ensuring confidentiality and candor. Pre-law advisors should also be familiar with their own institution's policy on the release of information. Regardless of whether or not the student has signed a waiver, all transactions between student and pre-law advisor should be treated as confidential.

B. Dean's Certification or Letter/College Questionnaire

Some law schools require documentation, commonly known as a "Dean's Certification, "Dean's Letter" or "College Questionnaire," from undergraduate and graduate institutions attended by the applicant. The primary purpose is to obtain information about academic and disciplinary misconduct (or lack thereof); some law school forms also include questions about the applicant's academic performance, leadership, motivation and character. Law schools vary widely in their approach to obtaining this information. Many law schools do not use a dean's certification process, relying entirely upon the applicant to disclose relevant disciplinary information. A few law schools require a dean's certification for all applicants. Others require a dean's certification or dean's letter only for applicants who answer "yes" to a question relating to disciplinary misconduct on the law school application. A number of schools require a dean's certification for matriculating applicants only; such requests are made late in the spring semester or during the summer. Currently, dean's forms must be sent from the undergraduate institution directly to the law school in question. LSAC is developing a common dean's certification form, and is considering an optional service for submitting dean's forms (law schools would elect to participate in this service).

Undergraduate institutions vary on the handling of dean's certifications or letters. Pre-law advisors should be thoroughly familiar with their institutions' methods of processing such requests and are advised, where the situation permits, to be designated as the college official responsible for completing law school dean's forms. Since this documentation is required in order for the applicant's file to be complete, pre-law advisors should be aware of what information their particular school provides (e.g., class standing, the nature of disciplinary actions that are deemed reportable, etc.) and so inform the student. Information about how to request a dean's certification or letter should be posted on the undergraduate institution's website and elsewhere, so that current students and alumni have clear information about the process.

Most law school applications also require the applicant to provide information about prior disciplinary, judicial, or academic history, whether or not a dean's certification is required. The law schools typically ask "have you ever been subject to disciplinary action for scholastic or other reasons?" This question is broader than the information provided in the dean's letter or dean's certification, which is based upon university records. Applicants should be advised to answer such questions truthfully and completely, disclosing information even when records have been expunged or sealed. Failure to disclose this information can trigger severe consequences in the admissions process and later in the bar admission process. A law school application is considered to be a "continuing" application; it must be updated if anything occurs that makes the initial response inaccurate or incomplete. It is appropriate and helpful for a Pre-law Advisor to discuss and review an applicant's response to application questions regarding disciplinary or judicial history. Applicants should be advised to keep copies of their law school applications and any addenda submitted, so that this information is readily available when applying for admission to the bar after law school.

C. Letters of Recommendation/Evaluation by Pre-law Advisors

In addition to the "Dean's Letter" or "College Questionnaire," pre-law advisors may be requested to write letters of recommendation or an evaluation on behalf of an applicant. Pre-law advisors can perform a valuable

service in writing these letters because they have a unique opportunity to view the student in a total setting: academic; non-academic; and personal. In general, these letters should include:

- (1) a statement describing how the recommender knows the applicant;
- (2) an assessment of the student's overall academic performance, including difficulty of curriculum, course selection, improvement (or decline) in performance, factors affecting performance, and testing history;
- (3) an assessment of the student's contributions to campus life; and
- (4) an assessment of personal qualities relevant to the student's performance as a law student and lawyer.

The pre-law advisor is under no obligation to write a letter of recommendation or evaluation for any applicant. The advisor should inform the applicant that the letter will be written with candor. Neither the applicant nor the law school benefits from a letter lacking candor.

IV. BEST PRACTICES FOR ADVISING APPLICANTS ON PERSONAL STATEMENTS

A personal statement is exactly what it says it is, a “personal statement.” Law school admission officers often refer to this as the applicant’s “interview” with the law school admission committee. There are a number of publications that offer advice on the crafting of these essays and applicants often seek advice from their pre-law advisors. Pre-law advisors are, of course, free to establish their own policies in terms of working with applicants on personal statements (and other essays) and may choose not to offer assistance in essay writing. For those who do assist in reviewing essays, PLANC suggests the following best practices for assisting applicants in their essay writing. The guidelines below are consistent with the metaphor used in I.C. above: pre-law advisors can serve as coaches but they do not play the game for students.

(1) The personal statement must be the work of the applicant. Pre-law advisors should not write or edit extensively these essays. Applicants should be encouraged to consult each prospective target school’s guidelines and requirements for the personal statement before soliciting guidance from a pre-law advisor or others (writing tutors, editors, etc.). If the applicant has a question about the law school’s guidelines and requirements, the applicant should consult the school directly.

(2) When asked to assist in the writing of the personal statement, pre-law advisors may want to ask applicants to verbalize their reasons for applying to law school and engage in conversations that force applicants to clarify their reasons. It is appropriate to request a copy of an applicant’s résumé, transcript, and other information that will facilitate brainstorming and discussion about possible approaches and topics for the personal statement. Pre-law advisors may also alert applicants to variations in law school instructions and requirements for personal statements, word or page expectations and limitations, and the possibility and purpose of additional optional statements.

(3) Pre-law advisors may offer to read a draft of the personal statement or other essay and to comment and make suggestions. Pre-law advisors should not feel obliged to serve as proof readers or final editors. Perhaps the best analogy at this point is for pre-law advisors to take the stance of a book reviewer who does not write or edit the material but offers a critique.

(4) Applicants should be reminded when signing an application stating “this is my work” that this is considered by the Bar Examiners to be an integrity issue.

V. INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Pre-law advisors should stress the value of their function and promote it as an important service to both

students and the institution by:

- (1) raising the level of awareness of pre-law advising on the part of both students and administration
- (2) requesting financial support to the fullest extent possible for programs, publications, secretarial assistance, membership in regional pre-law advisor associations (APLAs), attendance at regional and national conferences, and purchase of materials from LSAC;
- (3) securing adequate space for print resources, and computer access to electronic resources about law school and the legal profession;
- (4) reporting annually their activities to appropriate administrative officers of their institution;
- (5) seeking adequate time to perform pre-law advising duties; this may involve release time or a reduced teaching load, in the case of a faculty pre-law advisor or a reduced general advising load for a pre-law advisor with general academic advising responsibilities;
- (6) obtaining professional recognition of pre-law activities.
- (7) establishing and/or advising law-related student organizations to enhance the knowledge of undergraduates at their institutions.

VI. PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Pre-law advisors are encouraged to share their knowledge, experience, publications, and ideas with other pre-law advisors. When publications are shared, any use by the recipient should give appropriate credit to the originating source.

The most effective way of getting to know other advisors and law school admission officers is by actively participating in one of the regional pre-law advisor associations (APLAs): the Midwest Association (MAPLA), the Northeast Association (NAPLA), the Pacific Coast Association (PCAPLA), the Southern Association (SAPLA), the Southwest Association (SWAPLA) and the Western Association (WAPLA). The primary goal of these associations is to increase the effectiveness and professionalism of pre-law advising. At the same time, getting to know other advisors and admission officers provides an opportunity for networking with an interesting and enjoyable cadre of people whose common interest, the pre-law student, can lead to valuable interchanges of ideas and resources. The Pre-law Advisors National Council (PLANC) acts as a liaison among the APLAs and serves as a link with the agencies and organizations involved in legal education and the legal profession. For further information about the APLAs, go to www.planc.org.

VII. RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMERCIAL VENDORS

A. Relationships Between Individual Pre-Law Advisors and Commercial Vendors

The term “commercial vendor” is defined, for these purposes, as any for-profit organization, group or individual, who is not officially connected with an institution of higher learning and whose pre-law advising function is primarily for profit. Although pre-law advisors have no real authority over commercial vendors, pre-law advisors, with the backing of regional pre-law advisor associations (APLAs) and PLANC, ought to be able to exert some influence over the activities of these vendors. The following actions are suggested:

- (1) In areas where the commercial vendors operate, the local pre-law advisors may meet with representatives of the vendors to reach an agreement that will benefit both parties. Pre-law advisors will let their students know of the availability of the commercial test prep courses. Advisors may clearly state that this is for

information purposes only and in no way implies an endorsement of the vendor. Pre-law advisors may offer handouts identifying their services which commercial vendors agree to make available.

(2) Pre-law advisors should make a concerted effort to advertise on their campuses the services and materials provided by their offices, and emphasize the fact that these services are provided at no cost by their institution. Where feasible and appropriate, the students should be informed that it is the institution's pre-law advisor who has direct connection with law school admission officers, has the latest information from Law Services, is a member of the regional APLA, and receives updates on admission practices from the APLA and from PLANC.

B. Relationships Between the APLAs and Commercial Vendors

The question of the relationship between the commercial vendors and APLAs presents an interesting problem. When APLAs hold their annual conferences, to what extent may the commercial vendors participate? Should they attend our workshops and have access to materials prepared by pre-law advisors? Materials prepared by pre-law advisors are generally available at no charge to applicants and other pre-law advisors but when commercials have access to these materials they are used for profit. Conversely, since commercial vendors do, in fact, advise applicants, is there an obligation on our part to see that all applicants have access to the best information available?

In view of these questions, the Committee recommends the following guidelines:

(1) Commercial organizations, including individual for-profit pre-law advisors may attend our annual conferences but will be charged at a "commercial rate." This is the current practice for most APLAs. They may have display tables in areas designated by the APLAs.

(2) Commercial vendors may have access to all materials distributed at the conferences but may not reproduce any of these materials for in-house use or distribution to applicants without the consent of the authors or organizations, as appropriate. If such reproductions and distribution is requested and approved, an appropriate fee will be charged and paid to the institution of the author, or the APLA or PLANC as appropriate.

(3) Commercial vendors may send representatives to all sessions, except business sessions, they may participate in panels and discussions only by invitation of the APLA.

C. Relationships with PLANC and PLANC's Role in the Monitoring Process

PLANC, in cooperation with the APLAs, will serve in a monitoring capacity. When an individual pre-law advisor wishes to lodge a complaint against a commercial vendor, the pre-law advisor will report to his/her APLA. The APLA will then investigate the matter, and if the matter is found valid, the president of that APLA will write an appropriate letter to the local offending commercial with a copy to the national office. If a suitable response is not forthcoming, and appropriate action taken, the APLA may refer the matter to PLANC. The Chair of PLANC will draft a letter to the national office of the commercial, with a copy to the individual offending office. If a appropriate action is still not take, then both the APLA newsletter and PLANC POINTS will publicize the matter. The commercial vendor may no longer be allowed to participate in APLA events until the matter has reached a mutually agreeable resolution.

*This document was initially approved by the Pre-law Advisors National Council (PLANC) in 1985. It has been revised and edited periodically since then. The current version was approved by PLANC on March 3, 2013. **The Roles and Responsibilities of Pre-law Advisors** is included as an Appendix in LSAC's **Law School Admission Reference Manual for Law School Administrators and Pre-law Advisors**.*

A Bird's Eye View: Pre-Law Advising as Career Development

*Written by Rodia Vance, Associate Director & University Pre-Law Advisor
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In my years of doing pre-law advising (over a decade now), I have had the opportunity to meet many great colleagues along the way. I have learned that ours is not a monolithic profession; pre-law advisors hail from all corners of a college setting, including faculty, staff, and even administration. While I find that the vast majority of pre-law advisors are full-time faculty in various disciplines, we also have academic advisors, academic deans, and career counselors (my personal favorite) thrown into the mix. The diverse perspectives that each of these groups brings to the table certainly serve to enlighten us all about ways in which we can better assist our advisees.

But there is one characteristic of pre-law advising that I have found to be consistently true no matter the wing of the university from which the advisor hails: a focus on explaining and guiding applicants through the law school application process as the primary point of discussion. While the application process itself is certainly a critical moment in the lifespan of the advisor-advisee relationship, I believe that having such a singular focus can result in an oversimplification of the complex decision that is becoming a lawyer. Because of my background as a career counselor, I tend to take a more holistic approach. Before I ever move to the discussion of the application process with an applicant, I feel it's important to help them "zoom out" and consider the bigger picture, get a "bird's eye view", if you will. Let me explain...

The Career Development Process: Steps to Engagement

From my perspective as a career counselor, the decision to go to law school is, at its core, a career decision. That means that a person choosing to pursue a legal education has, in fact, taken a step in a much larger overarching process, namely the career development process. For those of us who are college career counselors, we work with students on a daily basis to prepare themselves for their professional lives beyond schooling. Whether a student wants to be a lawyer, doctor, engineer, consultant, politician, or entrepreneur, they are each responsible for engaging in the total career development process. It is a process that encourages them to be introspective about themselves, exploratory about careers, and intentional about their chosen professional pursuits. The fact that a student will be engaging in an application process to a graduate/professional school program rather than the job search for their first step out of college is not license to ignore or skip over the total career development process.

For the purposes of simplification, I am going to break down the Career Development Process, as I have defined it in my work with students, into four main steps:

1. Self-Exploration
2. Career Exploration
3. Skill Development
4. Implementation

Each of these steps challenges the student in different ways, whether that is by asking themselves a set of clarifying questions, taking the time to do thorough research on a career field, or devising a strategy around building the requisite skills to work in a given profession. As they work through each part of the process, the results of the work done in each step build upon the previous one, the culmination being the student making a self-aware, well-researched career decision and then executing an intentional plan to position themselves for success in their chosen career field.

As it relates to pre-law advising, each of these steps has a specific relation. The most direct and easiest of these connections to understand is the latter two steps of the process, Skill Development and Implementation. For all intents and purposes in working with pre-law students, these two steps comprise the law school application process, both in terms of application strategizing and moving through the actual process. As is the premise of this article, I believe that pre-law advising, as a profession, has this part of the process down pat. Therefore, I will be focusing on the former two steps of the process, Self-Exploration and Career Exploration, to make my point about the importance of having

broader conversations with applicants before simply engaging in discussions about the application process. In some cases, it may turn out that the advisee does not need to partake of the law school application process at all, as we shall see later.

Self-Exploration. As it pertains to a student's career development, self-exploration is the process of clarifying themselves in four main areas:

1. Interests & Passions – *What do I like to do?*
2. Talents & Skills – *What am I good at doing?*
3. Values & Motivations – *What is important to me to do?*
4. Personality & Temperament – *How do I like to “be”?*

Taking the time to address each of these questions in sincerity can help a student to gain clarity on exactly who they are and what they have to offer to the professional world. The self-knowledge garnered through this exercise will also make it easier for a student to know whether or not a particular career choice is feasible for them to pursue, both in terms of desire and competence. When it comes to working with my pre-law students, there are a few self-exploration strategies that I use in particular:

❖ **“That’s my story, and I’m sticking to it!”**

This technique requires the student to start from the beginning, meaning that they are able to discuss their original interest in law as a career. What were their earliest experiences with or thoughts about the law? All too often, students have become enamored with the legal profession as a function of its pop-culture representations, such as television shows. But as those of us in the “real world” know, these idealistic notions of being a lawyer are skewed heavily for dramatic effect rather than sobering realism. In other instances, students have been exposed to real-life lawyering through parents or other family members. This, too, can be a trap – as students are pursuing the profession more as a function of familial expectations rather than genuine interest. Having this conversation with student upfront allows the advisor to discover the influences on the student, whatever they may be, and also to understand the meaning of the profession to the student. Their values and motivations for pursuing a J.D. should be apparent by the end of this conversation.

❖ **“Mirror, Mirror on the wall...”**

Another technique that I often use, especially with new pre-law students, is something I call “Reflective Review” – using past experiences to assess interests, skills, and motivations. When a student comes in to meet with me for the first time, I ask them to bring a copy of their resume to the appointment. I use the document as a guide to help me better understand the student's background as well as their interests, skills, and values. While advising, I will point out themes that I notice in their experiences, such as a heavy involvement in community service, leadership roles, or other types of activities. I will explore with them what they like to do in general to see if there are connections between their natural preferences and potential practice areas of law. I find that students become even more interested in the potential of a legal career if they can see connections between their natural interests and passions and the use of a law degree.

❖ **Career Assessments**

As a career counselor, I am trained in the use of career assessments. Some examples of assessments in use today in career counseling include the Strong Interest Inventory (SII), the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), and Values Card Sorts. These assessments can be used to open up discussions particularly with a student who professes to be pre-law but doesn't seem to have a real sense of their own interests or values. This is the student who may have a resume filled with various involvements, but who isn't very clear on why he chose to be involved with any of those experiences, beyond the notion that it may have been required of him or because it was “just something to do”. Of course, interpretation of formal assessment instruments is best left to those professionals with adequate training to do so. If you are not specifically trained in reading assessment results, I would encourage you to partner with your Career

Services Office to see if they provide this service to students. They may also be willing to give you a cursory overview of understanding the assessment results.

Of course, college is a time of exploration on a lot of levels. As students have new and diverse experiences, their self-exploration process will continue. They may develop new perspectives that change their interests and passions and alter their values and motivations. They will continue to develop and refine their skills and talents. And the “life experience” that is college will certainly affect the development of their personality and temperament as it pertains to how they interact with others. The techniques mentioned above are not necessarily intended to be “one and done” exercises. They can always be revisited as needed to help students continue to hone their self-awareness.

Career Exploration. Once a student has taken the time to gain some clarity on themselves, they would ideally move into the part of career development where they begin active investigation of specific career pathways and industries. For the pre-law student, this amounts to learning as much as possible about all the various aspects of becoming a legal professional, ranging from gaining familiarity with the process of law school itself to researching practice areas and understanding the realities of life as a lawyer. There are several strategies that I suggest to pre-law students to help them explore the profession in greater depth:

❖ **Bibliotherapy**

There are several great books that have been written by legal professionals, law school faculty, and law admissions representatives that I would include on any good pre-law reading list. One of my favorites to recommend to students is *The Official Guide to Legal Specialties* by Lisa Abrams, written for The National Association for Law Placement (NALP). This book is a standard in the field for providing a breakdown of the 30 major practice areas within law, ranging from Admiralty and Maritime Law to Trusts & Estates. Some other good options include the following:

- *So You Want to Be a Lawyer* by Law School Admission Council
- *So You Want To Be A Lawyer?* by Marianne & Susanne Calabrese
- *Should You Really Be a Lawyer?* by Deborah Schneider & Gary Belsky
- *The Lawyer’s Career Change Handbook* by Hindi Greenberg
- *Nonlegal Careers for Lawyers* by Gary Munneke and William Henslee
- *How To Succeed in Law School* by Gary Munneke
- *Law School Confidential* by Robert Miller
- *What Every Law Student Really Needs to Know* by Tracey George and Suzanna Sherry

The books listed above are only a sampling of the wide variety of publications available to pre-law students. While some books will speak more to some students than others, I am of the opinion that there is no such thing as too much information when it comes to researching a career path, especially one that involves such a substantial commitment as lawyering.

❖ **Informational Interviewing**

One of my favorite tactics for pre-law students to use in their research is to set up informational interviews with lawyers to ask them about the good, bad, and ugly of the profession. Talking to those who have walked down the path before them can be greatly enlightening to a student. There are several avenues that students can use to locate attorneys, including their own personal network, your school’s alumni network, or even local bar associations. Information interviewing works best when students are prepared for the meeting, and therefore can make best use of the professional’s time without wasting it. Students can prepare for the meeting by writing down a list of questions beforehand and also taking some time to research the person who they are interviewing. Having a little background knowledge on the professional can help in the development of other questions which the student might not have considered. The typical informational interview lasts for 20 minutes or so, and students should be prepared to respect the lawyer’s time. After all, they are probably very busy!

❖ Shadowing

Another way to gather some insight into the professional world is through shadowing experiences. Of course, these arrangements can be fraught with logistical challenges, depending on the attorney's caseload and the nature of their work. Confidentiality issues may preclude this kind of experience for certain professionals. While these experiences can be difficult to come by for pre-laws, I believe that it's worth the task of asking lawyers if they would be open to letting a student shadow them for a day.

❖ Professional Experience

Beyond shadowing for a day or two, students can gain deeper insights into the profession through working in internships and jobs in legal environments. This is especially true if the position will allow the students the opportunity to pick up some skills that would be valuable to them in law school and as attorneys themselves, such as legal research and writing. As with shadowing, legal internships for undergraduate pre-laws can be difficult to find, as most law firms look to hire current law students. However, positions do exist for those who diligently seek them.

A note about professional experience. While I do believe that obtaining experience in a legal work environment can be helpful to a pre-law student in their career development process, as a career counselor, I would advise against a student seeking only this type of experience in preparation for law school. The reason for this is that the profession of law is vast in its applications, and as a result, a student will have many options open to them for how they want to use their law degree. Students should choose experiences that not only inform their knowledge of the legal profession but also connect to their larger interests and passions. For example, if a student expresses an interest in environmental law, they could look to gain experience in any type of organization that deals with environmental issues, not just law firms where that area of law is practiced. This could include non-profit organizations, government agencies, or even corporate entities that deal with environmental matters. Working in these types of organizations will increase the student's understanding of the environment overall (which is the true interest/passion), not just the law. Seeking experience in both legal and non-legal settings provides students with the greatest freedom for long-term professional preparation. This multifaceted approach also keeps the student from "pigeon-holing" themselves in the mind of employers, should they opt not to pursue law school. Having a resume that is replete with legally-related experience could look suspicious to a non-legal employer who is interviewing the student for a full-time job after graduation. In the mind of the employer, they are likely to be concerned that the student is really planning to go to law school in a year or two, and they will lose their investment of time and money spent on training their new employee. For better or for worse, this is the way that employers think, and students would be wise to prepare for it.

Why Does This Matter???

So, now that we've gone over the first two steps in the Career Development Process in some detail, it's important to understand why these steps should not be skipped. In short, the answer is because the work of the first two steps fundamentally informs the work of the latter two steps. A well-done self-exploration and career exploration journey serves to make it easier for the student to effectively plan and execute a successful application strategy.

In terms of Skill Development, students will be looking to increase their knowledge bases and skill sets in their chosen areas of interest. This might mean they opt for a particular major or certain elective courses based on that interest. They might also be selective about the extracurricular involvements in which they participate, such as community service, leadership roles in clubs/activities, and professional experiences, based upon those same interests, skills, and values. Staying with the example from above of a student interested in the environment, that student might choose an Environmental Studies major or opt to join a community clean-up service organization or intern at a local conservation non-profit group. When it comes down Implementation (the actual process of applying), the legwork of self-exploration and career exploration will still be critical. It will likely affect the choice of schools for application (and eventually, matriculation), the choice of personal statement topic, and even the choice of recommenders. Ultimately, the goal is for the student to emerge into their professional life with a focus, confidence, and sense of competence that will contribute to their career success long after college and law school are behind them.

A Scenario: What Does This Look Like in Real Life?

In an effort to bring the ideas of this article down from the abstract to the tangible, I will present the case of a student with whom I worked recently. For the purposes of confidentiality, I will refer to her as “Jane Student”. I met Jane when she was a sophomore. She came to a pre-law orientation session that I do at the start of every school year as a part of our two-day sophomore class conference, Sophomore Summit. After the session was over, Jane approached me to explain that she was interested in going to law school and was a Political Science and Economics double major. I encouraged her to set up an appointment with me so that we could discuss her pre-law plans.

Upon meeting with Jane, I began asking her about her interest in law and where it had originated. She shared with me that her parents got divorced when she was 14 and that she had been raised by her single mom since then. Jane’s parents had a bitter, difficult divorce in which her father attempted to remove her, her mother, and her two siblings from their family home and refused to pay alimony or child support to her mother, even though her mom had not worked since the birth of Jane’s oldest sibling, who was 7 at the time of the divorce.

With assistance from other family, Jane’s mom was able to secure a top-notch family law attorney to handle the divorce proceedings. In Jane’s words, her mom’s attorney was “amazing” and “became a great friend of the family”. It was clear through my conversation with Jane that she was completely in awe of this woman who had served as her mother’s attorney. The attorney even gave Jane a part-time job in her firm during high school assisting with general office duties. Other than her parents’ divorce, Jane had no knowledge of or experience with the law. She intimated that she wanted to become a lawyer to “help people” the way her mom was helped and to “make my mom proud.” Jane also confided that she wanted a career that would allow her to “take care of myself, no matter what” and be financially independent in a way that her mother was not.

In addition to the personal background that Jane provided, we discussed her academics. She acknowledged that she struggled with writing in school, but much better with numbers and data. She was also struggling in her political science coursework due to the intensive writing demanded in the courses, but was concerned about dropping the major because she feared that she wouldn’t be competitive for law school without it. After allaying her fears about the Political Science major and how she did not need to continue down the path to be competitive for law school, we moved on to discuss her resume.

Conducting a Reflective Review on Jane’s resume, I immediately noticed that she had a demonstrated interest in and capacity for math and business. She had participated in several math camps in a teaching role during high school. To my amazement, she also owned her own tutoring business with employees during high school! She had also founded a service organization in her local community aimed at tutoring elementary school children in a free after-school care program. In addition to the resume review, I also had Jane take the SII and MBTI career assessments. The assessments confirmed what I had seen in her resume, which was a strong propensity for math and business-related career themes and a strong, extroverted personality that is decisive and likes organization and structure.

We determined from further discussions in follow-up appointments that it might be helpful for Jane to consider some alternative careers besides law. Her SII profile showed a high interest in several financial careers, and Jane was open to investigating them further because she was also an Economics major. To conduct her career exploration, we employed the Emory Alumni Database to locate several alumni working in both the financial sector as well as attorneys. Jane conducted roughly nine informational interviews before making a return visit to my office several months later. When she came back, she was definitely singing a new tune.

So, why did the process of self-exploration and career exploration matter for Jane? Because the new tune that she was singing didn’t have a single note that had to do with law school! She had dropped the Political Science major and opted to add Math instead, which resulted in an immediate improvement in her GPA. Her informational interviewing had led her to open her options to explore other more suitable career pathways based on her interests and skills. This led her to decide upon a career in personal finance management because it would allow her to operate in her strengths, as discovered through her self-exploration:

- ✓ Interests & Passions – Finance and economics
- ✓ Talents & Skills – Math and business management
- ✓ Values & Motivations – Helping people and personal sense of independence
- ✓ Personality & Temperament – Being a “Go-Getter”

Jane graduated last year with a position at a small private wealth management firm. After establishing her roots in the corporate sector, she plans to own her own business as a personal financial advisor one day.

Let’s Sum Up!

While it is true that all pre-law advisors do not come from a career counseling background, I believe that viewing the work of pre-law advisors as simply explaining and guiding students through the tactics of the law school application process is incomplete. Critical conversations about the student’s career choices can expose both external and internal pressures that may be acting as faulty motivators. Even advisors who are not career counselors can engage students in these conversations through deeper probing and “listening between the lines”. Pointing out inconsistencies to students can encourage them to be more introspective. Of course, some areas of career development are better suited for professionals in that area. I would encourage you to partner with and refer students to the Career Services Office at your institution for career counseling work, especially if you feel that the scope of the conversation is beyond you or if it is clear that the student may be better suited to another career pathway. It may even be helpful to find one or two Career Center staff members with whom you could work on providing counseling and/or programming specifically for pre-laws in this area.

Dated September 15, 2013

WHO ME? WHAT IS PRELAW ADVISING ALL ABOUT?

***Gerald Lee Wilson
Duke University***

No seven or ten or sixteen year old, when asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" has probably ever said, "I want to be a pre-law advisor." For this matter probably no thirty year old being interviewed for a faculty or staff position volunteers or even knows anything about pre-law advising. But, the mere fact that the reader has read this far indicates that the responsibility has been accepted.

The PLANC (Pre-Law Advisor's National Council) statement on "The Role and Responsibilities of Pre-Law Advisors" defines pre-law advising as "a specialized function encompassing both personal counseling and career counseling." The statement, prepared by experienced pre-law advisors, continues, "The pre-law advisor is called upon to know both the individual being counseled and the educational and career possibilities within the legal profession." This definition is certainly cogent and accurate but it raises questions rather than answering them for the newly appointed or drafted or perhaps shanghaied pre-law advisor. The bottom line question is, "what is pre-law advising all about and why do we bother to do it?"

The second half of the question is easier to deal with and can be broken down into two parts. First, institutions establish pre-law advising programs as part of their total personal and career guidance services. In many cases, pre-law advising programs have come into being either as a result of student demand or from an institutional sense of obligation, or both. Recent studies have suggested that the major concern of parents when their sons or daughters are choosing a college or university is job opportunities and/or graduate or professional school opportunities after graduation. Second, as the necessity and value of pre-law advising has become more apparent over the past few years and as more assistance to the pre-law advisor has become available in terms of publications and professional organizations, the position of pre-law advisor has, in many cases, moved from being an assignment for the most junior member of a department or group who dares not refuse, to a responsibility which is recognized as a valuable, interesting and challenging task.

The question of "What is pre-law advising all about?" is again one which has been addressed by the PLANC Statement on "The Role and Responsibilities of Pre-Law Advisors", a statement reprinted in the Law School Admissions Reference Manual as well as in some of the APLA Handbooks: "The basic functions of the pre-law advisor include collecting, organizing and providing for students appropriate information concerning legal education and the legal profession, sponsoring a pre-law club, and assisting students in the application process." In offering this assistance, the pre-law advisor assumes the role of a facilitator, providing aid throughout to those students actively engaged in applying for admission to law schools. Although the role of facilitator varies according to institutions, individual advisors and those being advised, there are defined limits to the role of the facilitator. The PLANC Statement continues, "Perhaps these limitations can best be conveyed by using the imagery of a coach - one who prepares the players and advises during the game, but does not play in the game itself." If the imagery is appropriate, pre-law advisors "coach" their students and "scout" their opponents, eg. the law schools.

Much of what is accomplished will be determined by the first meeting between the pre-law advisor and the applicant. This meeting will set the tone of subsequent conferences and establish the level of trust between advisor and applicant. Applicants will readily sense both the level of knowledge and the depth of concern on the part of the advisor and, conversely, the advisor will sense the seriousness of purpose and level of thoughtful preparation on the part of the applicants.

Two caveats might well be entered here. First, students who see the pre-law advisor often assume that this advisor is a "recruiter" for the legal profession and consequently they are reluctant to express any doubts they may have about attending law school or planning a legal career. It has been my own practice, when sensing any doubt on

the part of students to try to handle the situation with humor and say something like "I don't care whether you want to go to law school or not, I don't get a bounty for each pre-law. I am here to help you in any way I can, even if you really just want to go off and be a poet."

The second caveat centers around another assumption on the part of the applicant. Oft times applicants see the pre-law advisor as a "gatekeeper" who can open or shut the gates to law schools or a given law school. This has the effect of giving applicants an unrealistic view of the pre-law advisor's role, raising applicants' expectations beyond reality and, incidentally, making students far less candid with the pre-law advisor. The proper role of the advisor should clearly be defined from the outset.

Both efficient use of time and effectiveness of counseling can best be achieved when the advisor has sufficiently meaningful background information on the student. Advisors should obtain transcripts, and resumes; where possible, before the initial meeting. Many pre-law advisors have found it helpful to have applicants fill out information sheets which ask about the student's curriculum and courses, activities, reasons for wanting to attend law school, law schools under consideration by the student and a student's strengths and weaknesses. One pre-law advisor asks on her form, "What question about yourself do you not want me to ask?"

A quick examination of this information by the pre-law advisor prior to meeting with the students will aid in giving this initial meeting a sense of direction. A pre-law advisor, as any advisor, looks for clues provided by the students which determine the starting point of the conference. At times gentle probing may reveal that law school is not so much the student's idea as it is the parents'. In this case the advisor may want to discuss other career possibilities with the student or make an appropriate referral to another office on campus. More likely than not, the equally important issue looming large in this student's mind will be how to confront his or her parents with the fact that he or she does not want to go to law school.

Gentle probing based on background information may also reveal that the student has an unclear vision of both the realities of law school and the legal profession and his or her own particular skills and talents. In this instance, the pre-law advisor must serve as both an educator, informing the student about law school and the legal profession, and as a referral source, pointing the student to the appropriate counseling offices on campus.

Finally, having prior knowledge of the schools the applicant is considering gives the advisor clues as to the students' estimate of their own credentials, interests, financial status, geographic preferences. This allows the advisor to make helpful suggestions of additional schools which might be considered. Sometimes the advisor needs to inject a sense of realism into a student by suggesting schools at which the student will be more competitive, given the student's credentials. Sometimes there are schools more appropriate for a student in terms of costs, location and career opportunities afterwards.

The point is that the initial meeting will determine the future relationship between the advisor and the advisee. When an advisor is knowledgeable and concerned, it will be readily evident to the advisee and encourages a continuing relationship.

In the end, it is this continuing relationship that is the most meaningful one for both the student and the advisor for it is from this kind of relationship that the profits of "psychic income" are realized. Over the past few years there has been a change in the attitude of those who perform the functions of pre-law advising. Formerly, many who performed these functions did so because they had no alternative. Increasingly, people are choosing to become pre-law advisors because they see the value and enjoy the meaningful relationships which grow out of this advising. In the end, that is what pre-law advising is all about.

***NO SOLO VENTURE, PRE-LAW ADVISING AS A SHARED VENTURE:
THE APLAs AND LAW SERVICES AS PRIME RESOURCES***

***Gerald Lee Wilson
Duke University***

There was a time when each prelaw advisor was as lonely as the Maytag repair person and was able to gain information about the law school application process only in a manner which resembled the assembling of a potluck supper. Much of what the prelaw advisor knew came from personal experience and, in a real sense, each prelaw advisor was forced to "reinvent the wheel." Though now there is no individual guru or "How to be a Pre-Law Advisor in Ten Easy Steps" kit, there are opportunities for "connectedness" and a quantity of useful publications to which the prelaw advisor may turn.

Relationship To Regional Pre-Law Advisor's Associations

The process of "professionalization" of prelaw advising began in the 1970's with the formation of the first of the APLAs, the Northeast Association of Prelaw Advisors (NAPLA). In subsequent years five other regional associations, the Midwest Association of Prelaw Advisors (MAPLA), the Southwest Association of Prelaw Advisors (SWAPLA), the Western Association of Prelaw Advisors (WAPLA), the Southern Association of Prelaw Advisors (SAPLA) and the Pacific Coast Association of Prelaw Advisors (PCAPLA) were all founded. Geographically defined, with some friendly overlapping and poaching, these organizations cover the nation so that each prelaw advisor is in an area represented by one of the APLAs. One of the first things a person should do, upon becoming a prelaw advisor, is to contact the appropriate APLA President and become a member of that APLA. Membership and participation in the activities of an APLA provide an opportunity for information gathering, training, and coming to know other prelaw advisors and law school admissions officers in a learning and sharing environment. This opportunity presents itself in three ways: (1) annual conferences, (2) networking and (3) publications.

Each of the APLA's holds an annual conference except when there is a National Conference that is attended by both prelaw advisors and law school admission officers. The programs vary from year to year and from organization to organization, but they all are aimed at improving the effectiveness of prelaw advising. Standard fare of any of these conferences includes seminars or workshops on the admissions process, financial aid, advising minority applicants, and the job market; and there is always a session with officials of Law Services who give updates for the year and offer current information about the application process. These conferences also have "How To" sessions for both new and experienced prelaw advisors. Many of these sessions are lively and quite imaginative. All of them are aimed at increasing the effectiveness of prelaw advising.

Yet, it is not only the formal sessions, but the informal opportunities for meeting with the prelaw advisors and law school admissions officers which make these meetings worthwhile. This process of "networking" enables each prelaw advisor to establish a personal relationship with others involved in the law school process. Not only is there an exchange of information, but also there is a growth of relationships as colleagues come to know each other. Someone has said that half of what any law student learns both inside and outside of the classroom comes from interchanges between students themselves. Indeed, there is a parallel between this and what goes on at APLA Conferences. Half of what is learned comes from these informal exchanges between and among participants. These interchanges also facilitate further communication at a time when advice is needed from a fellow prelaw advisor or a law school admission officer.

Not only does membership in an APLA bring the benefits of conference participation with its formal and informal learning opportunities, but also each APLA publishes newsletters that help the prelaw advisor keep abreast of current happenings and trends. These newsletters offer timely information as well as "think pieces" on topics of value. In addition, several of the APLA's publish their own Handbooks for Prewlaw Advisors, valuable tools that contain helpful information written by those who are actively engaged in the process. Each APLA is a member of PLANC, the Prewlaw Advisors National Council, a federated body which "acts as a liaison among the associations and serves as a link with agencies and organizations involved in legal education and the legal profession." and sponsors a National Pre-Law Advisors Conference every four years. As a footnote, individual advisors do not hold membership in PLANC, but rather it is a federated body comprised of representatives from each of the APLAs.

Relationship To Law Services

The other major source of information for Prewlaw Advisors is, of course, Law Services. Immediately upon assuming the responsibilities of a prelaw advisor a person should contact Law Services and make sure that he or she is on the list of official pre-law advisors. Advisors on this list receive invaluable publications from Law Services. First, and most important, is The Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools compiled annually, describing ABA-approved Law Schools and their admissions procedures. The Guide also combines helpful articles on the application process, selecting a law school, the study of law and the legal profession. Also included are charts summarizing "Key Facts about ABA-Approved Law Schools" and "Key Facts for Minority Law School Applicants." All designated prelaw advisors receive a complimentary copy of this annual publication each spring.

A companion volume, the Law School Admission Reference Manual for Law School Administrators and Prewlaw Advisors describes in detail all of the services provided by Law Services and the publications available to prelaw advisors. Those on this mailing list receive two other invaluable resources, the "Undergraduate College Score Report" and the "Prewlaw Advisor Action Report." The Score Report, sent after each administration of the LSAT, contains the score (or scores) of all test-takers from an individual institution who have given permission for their scores to be released to the prelaw advisors. The "Action Report," available to prelaw advisors upon request, includes a Summary Report, a Law School Report, an Applicant Report and a Law School Summary. This information is of great value to the prelaw advisor in advising students about schools they should consider.

In addition, there are a number of publications directed to specific topics such as financing law school, preparation for the LSAT, etc. Law Services provides a Prewlaw Advisor Directory containing the addresses and phone numbers of all prelaw advisors and law school admission officers and a Recruitment Calendar which lists prelaw and recruitment activities across the nation.

In brief, what has been described here is the process and product whereby prelaw advising has evolved from a solo venture to a cooperative effort. Through formal connections with the APLA's and Law Services and informal networking, pre-law advising can be enhanced and, incidentally, be made a very enjoyable experience.

A Symbiotic Relationship: Pre-Law Advisors and Admission Professionals
Michele L. Rahman, University of Richmond

“So, I don’t understand *why* those prelaw advisors won’t talk to me.”

“I invited several to come to my school and they tell me “no” – I’m really getting down about it. Is it because I’m not from an “elite” school?”

Such are the anguished words I hear from some law school colleagues (admittedly fairly new ones). Prelaw advisors can be powerful partners in the law school admission process and who doesn’t want to have a powerful partner? The partnership between the law school professional and the prelaw advisor is the quintessential example of the best kind of symbiotic relationship. It’s a win-win without doubt

From the law school professional side, our goal is fairly simple: we want you to know more about our school – a place we truly believe is worth knowing more about. We understand that you may not recommend our school to every advisee you counsel, however, we believe that we are a good “fit” for *some* of those advisees. Just as we advise law school applicants to cast their net widely and have a range of schools to which they apply, we hope prelaw advisors will be knowledgeable about a wide range of law schools to which they recommend their students look.

You may be invited to visit a law school with the offer of a day or several days at the law school’s expense. Even if you only have an occasional student who may be interested in this law school, if you can spare the time, accept the offer. Your host law school does not expect a quid pro quo – unlike vacation time-share presentations. Nope – just come and visit with an open mind. Enjoy yourself, ask questions, talk to students – you may be surprised to find that there are even some of your alums in the student body. The trip will be fun and will surely add to your body of knowledge in a very real way. As we encourage law school visits to check out the “vibe” for prospective students, we do the same for prelaw advisors.

Law school professionals also love to come to your school, alone or in groups, to provide programming for your students. Often these programs validate what you’ve been telling your students. Coming directly from “the horse’s mouth” may be the exact same advice you’ve been giving but heard “differently.” Wouldn’t it be great to be able to say to your students, “I told you so”?

The law school admissions world changes rapidly and our visits with you can impart information that’s the most current and not yet widely known information. Not long ago we had a tough time convincing prelaw advisors that the February test date was acceptable although perhaps a tad late for full scholarship consideration. Now, we’re saying, “Sure, take the June test if you must”. This may be the year in which we’re giving both offers and scholarships in a slightly different range than we did last. Criteria change quickly and being able to give the most current advice is critical to your student’s success. Having that symbiotic relationship can be hugely effective in communicating changes in policy that can be exchanged in real time.

Law school professionals want to be a resource for you. We want you to call us, or email us, when you are advising a student but have a question that can be best answered by someone who is actually a decision-maker. Should I tell my student to retake the LSAT? That question cannot be answered simply by yes or no. Amongst the questions I would ask you is about previous testing experience with the SAT or the ACT, how did your student prepare and, most important – what schools does she want to apply to because a few more points on that score could make thousands of dollars difference in scholarship offers – or no offer at all. Perhaps that’s not an issue. Perhaps the GPA is really a strong one and a slight rise in LSAT could

make a huge difference. Or not. Please call us! We'd love to have this conversation with you – or any conversation you feel would be helpful! Really.

Some of my best friends are prelaw advisors - and I'm hugely grateful for that. They tell me what their students are thinking and the questions they're being asked so that I too can keep current. They appear happy to accept my offer to visit them and do a presentation. They know that my job is to help them *and* their students; that I will treat both with integrity and with a balanced view acknowledging that every student isn't the right "fit" for every school. My colleagues share this perspective and our goals are your goals.

o

With a strong partnership prelaw advisors and admissions professionals can, and do, make a difference!

The Pre-Law Advisor's Annual Report, Facts and Figures
Gerald Wilson, Duke University

It is Important to note that you should report only the acceptance rate for applicants, **not for applications**. Reporting the acceptance rate for applications really is not an accurate indication of the effectiveness of your role as an advisor. For example, at our school we urge students to apply to a couple of longshots. We do this for two reasons. First, we think that it is important for an applicant, wherever the applicant ends up enrolling, to know that she or he is at the appropriate school given their credentials. Second, sometimes, very rarely, for unusual circumstances, a student ends up being accepted at a long-shot school. This is rare, but what was it a poet wrote, "hope springs eternal in the human breast." The most "rare" case I have experienced in my 49 years as a pre-law advisor was the case of a male applicant who was admitted to a "top" (whatever that means) law school with only modest credentials. I was happy for the student but really confused. Years later I found out that he had married the daughter of the Faculty Chair of the Admissions Committee of that school. That worked ! Back to the point: Reporting the acceptance rate for applications really is misleading if we, as advisors, encourage students to take longshots.

At my school we do an Annual Report

Using the Summary Report we receive from Law Services along with the overall acceptance rates as reported by the law schools themselves we do a summary in this way:

Law School/Duke Acceptances/Total Duke Applicants/Overall Acceptance Rate %/Duke Applicant Acceptance Rate%/%Difference/Matriculants/ %of Duke Students accepted-matriculate

We began doing this in 1997 do a summary of all these statistics for the last 20 years.

We then do colorful charts showing for each Law School where we have applicants the acceptance rate for our students compared with the Overall acceptance rate of applicants at that school.

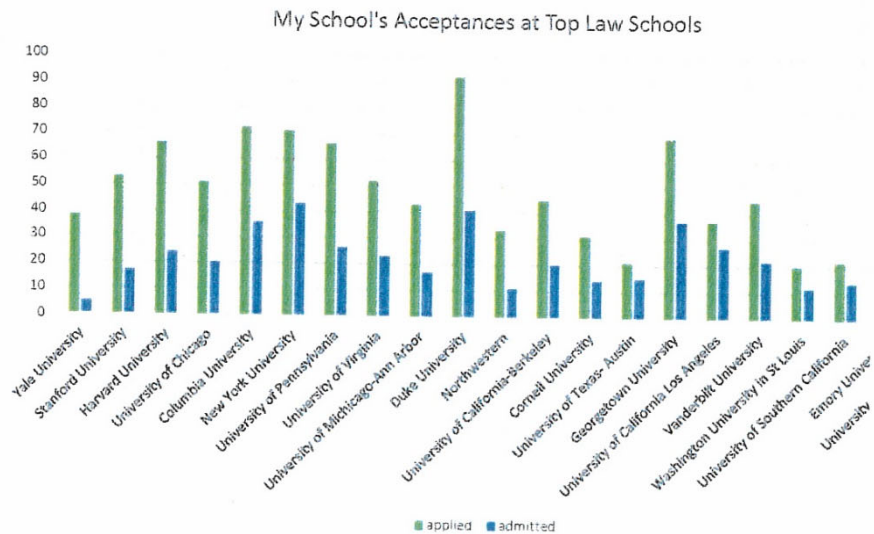
We find this sort of Annual report to be valuable in informing our supervisors of the work of our office and its effectiveness (and sometimes as an aid in receiving more financial support!) but is also can be a valuable resource in advising our students.

Examples of charts can be seen below:

My University's Twenty Year Admission Rates Example

	RANK*	MY U ACCEPTANCES	MY U APPLICANTS	OVERALL RATE	My U Acceptance Rate	DIFFERENCE	MATRICULANTS	% MATRI- CULATED	
Law School X	12	1997	22	79	29.0%	28.6%	-0.4%	2	9.1%
	10	1998	13	36	28.6%	36.1%	7.5%	6	46.2%
	10	1999	21	66	28.4%	31.8%	3.4%	1	4.8%
	12	2000	25	76	22.0%	32.9%	10.9%	2	8.0%
	13	2001	23	106	21.6%	21.7%	0.1%	4	17.4%
	10	2002	28	100	11.5%	28.0%	16.5%	5	17.9%
	12	2003	13	72	16.5%	18.1%	1.6%	3	23.1%
	11	2004	13	65	19.2%	20.0%	0.8%	2	15.4%
	13	2005	13	55	20.6%	23.6%	3.0%	1	7.7%
	13	2006	19	51	22.6%	37.3%	14.7%	4	21.1%
	12	2007	26	77	21.6%	33.8%	12.2%	3	11.5%
	13	2008	14	52	21.0%	26.9%	5.9%	2	14.3%
	13	2009	19	71	21.0%	26.8%	5.8%	2	26.3%
	13	2010	21	101	17.0%	20.8%	3.8%	5	23.8%
	14	2011	27	83	21.0%	32.5%	11.5%	2	7.4%
	13	2012	16	61	29.0%	26.23%	-2.8%	0	0.0%
	13	2013	25	54	30.0%	46.3%	16.30%	3	12.0%
	13	2014	18	48	30.0%	37.5%	7.50%	1	5.6%
	13	2015	19	47	30.0%	40.4%	10.4%	1	5.3%
	13	2016	14	31	30.0%	45.2%	15.2%	1	7.1%
AVERAGES		12.26	19.5	66.6	23.5%	30.7%	6.89%	2.4	14.19%

* FROM US NEWS AND WORLD REPORTS



The Pre-Law Advisor's Annual Report
Heather Struck, Assistant Dean and Pre-law Advisor
Cornell University, College of Arts and Sciences

The annual report is an effective tool to assess the effectiveness of the pre-law program, and to promote awareness of the program throughout the campus. Through the process of writing an annual report, the pre-law advisor can describe trends and changes in the applicant pool, and determine appropriate pre-law advising priorities and responsibilities. The report has value for others on campus and can be an important public relations and recruiting tool. The general outline below should be adapted to your campus needs and priorities:

Narrative Summary: the summary is an opportunity to present the previous year's law admission experience and significant pre-law advising activities, in the context of regional and national trends in admissions, employment, and education, and the previous admissions experience.

Pre-Law Program Activities: this section describes pre-law services for students and graduates, pre-law campus events (such as law school fairs and law alumni events), relevant activities of student pre-law organizations, publications, professional activities of the pre-law advisor (such as attendance at NAPLA or PLANC conferences and visits to law schools), orientation and recruitment activities of the pre-law advisor, and other relevant activities. This section is your chance to tell others on campus what you do, and how important your function is to the campus community.

Student Information Section: using information in the LSAC Pre-law Advisor Action Reports, campus-generated data, and information submitted to your office by students and graduates, this section provides the reader with a narrative reflecting the "hard data" on the pre-law population you work with. Some of the data can be organized into handouts, which can be used for other purposes throughout the year. Database software makes it possible to create charts to depict data and trends. Consider using the following data:

- Number of senior and alumni (non-senior) applicants to law school
- Number of senior and alumni applicants who used the pre-law office
- Number of applicants sorted by college or school, and as a percentage of total applicants
- Breakdown of applicants by gender and ethnic group, and as a percentage of total applicants
- Distribution of majors of the applicants
- LSAT and GPA information of senior and alumni applicants
- Number of applications per applicant
- Number of acceptances per applicant
- Number of pre-law files opened in the office
- Number of students/alumni seen for pre-law advising appointments
- Number of students/alumni seen for pre-law walk-ins or group advising
- Number of letters (Dean's Letters, Letters of Recommendation, etc.) written
- Number of bar certifications processed by your office, if you handle these
- Law schools to which your candidates regularly apply
- Attendance at campus law-related events

Appendix: throughout the year, collect information in an "annual report file" about the legal profession, trends in legal employment, law admissions, and significant campus events or activities. Include links to these as background for the interested reader, along with summary charts on law admissions, a "favorite schools" handout listing law schools matriculating 4 or more applicants in the last admission year, and other relevant information.

Distribution List: If pre-law advising is to receive proper recognition on your campus, the list of people who receive the report deserves special attention. Be sure to include top campus administrators, as well as deans of all colleges and schools. Academic departments like to know how many of their majors go to law school, and what their prospects are for both admission and legal employment. Because law school placement statistics can be a powerful recruitment and publicity tool, admissions, alumni, development and placement offices should be on the list. Don't forget your

campus public relations office, and the editors of campus publications such as the student newspaper, staff newsletter, etc.

*This description of the annual report was written originally by **Gail Yaus**, my predecessor as Pre-law Advisor at Binghamton University, and former president of NAPLA. I have adapted it over the years, with minor changes and additions.*

Workshop for Seniors-An Example

Beginning with the first day of classes for the fall semester, five workshops on the application process are offered over a two- week period. Senior applicants are expected to attend one of these before they can schedule an individual appointment with the pre-law advisor. They also sign up and are placed on our senior pre law email list. Approximately 180-200 applicants attend one of these workshops each year. Each workshop is schedule for an hour and a half, and each assumes a character of its own. For example, the really up-tight, high achievers will almost always attend the first workshop. The laid back, “oh-I’ll-get-in- somewhere” types almost always come to the final workshops.

Materials Distributed

Each attendee is given the following items if he or she has not already obtained them from the Pre-Law Advising Center. All items, except the Duke Pre-Law Handbook are available on line at www.duke.prelaw.edu

- The latest edition of the Duke Pre-Law Handbook for Seniors and Alums.
- Student Information Sheet (must be filled out before an individual appointment can be made).
- “Basic Information for Senior Pre-Law Students” (handout)
- “Summary of Application Procedures” (handout)
- “Reporting Study Abroad Grades to Law Services” (handout)
- Calendar and Check sheet (handout)
- Sample Resume (handout)
- Pre-Law Survey Results- self reported by those Duke students who entered law school in the current fall.
- “The Boston College Law School Range Finder” (reprinted with permission)

Topics Covered In Workshop

1. Overview of the application process;role of LSAT and GPA in admissions decisions.
2. Application Process-Options available for completing applications.
3. LSDAS-Transcripts/ study abroad transcript, senior year grades
4. Resume-(sample distributed)
5. Essays-(a) Personal statement (see article “The “Private I” in Duke Pre-Law Handbook),(b) examples of good and bad essays,(c) academic essay,(d) diversity essay (if appropriate), (e) school specific essays.
6. Recommendations-Faculty, employer or other recommenders, who to ask and not to ask what information to give them, Deans’ forms, college questionnaires
7. Deadlines-Early decision/regular applications.
8. Financial Aid-Forms to be filed out- FAFSA, sources for further information about financial material.
9. Taking time off-Pros and Cons
10. Applying and Deferring
11. Joint Degree Programs (see “Book of Lists”)-Reasons for, alternatives and options.
12. Visits to Law Schools- What to look for-(a) read bulletin boards, (b) note location of faculty offices, (c) when attending classes, note interplay between faculty and students and note the type of questions asked by students.
13. Visits by Recruiters- (a) how to prepare, (b) what questions to ask, (c) what questions to be prepared to answer, (d) and, yes, what to wear!
14. Services provided by Pre-Law Advising Center
15. Responses to specific questions. Basic rule: One or two questions (after meeting with the Pre-Law Advisor) should be emailed questions to the Pre-Law Advisor. Twenty questions or one question that would take 20 minutes to answer should not be emailed. An appointment should be made.

Gerald L. Wilson
Senior Associate Dean
Pre-Law Advisor
Duke University

Guidelines for Planning a Law Fair
Nancy Paul, Binghamton University
Mary Alice Tetro, North Carolina State University

The purpose of a law fair is to provide a forum for students, alumni, and other prospective applicants to meet with law school admission representatives. In a technological age, these events present an excellent opportunity for personal interaction and conversation on the important topic of a prospective applicant's future career. Many campuses also schedule companion events on topics such as the law school admission process, mock admissions, and financial aid for law school.

Law schools welcome invitations to attend law fairs on undergraduate campuses, however limited staffing and budget constraints make it difficult for law schools to attend multiple events in different regions on the same days. LSAC has convened a Recruitment Calendar Committee, composed of pre-law advisor and law school representatives from each regional pre-law advisor organization (APLA), to consider ways in which the scheduling of law recruitment events on undergraduate campuses can be streamlined.

Our common goal is to facilitate maximum participation by law schools in campus law fairs. If you are involved in planning a law fair, consider these basic event planning guidelines:

Coordinate events in your region with other undergraduate institutions in your area and with the LSAC Forum schedule, so that law school representatives can attend **one or two events each day in a multi-day sequence**. Examples of effective coordination include the MAPLA, SWAPLA, and WAPLA "caravans", as well as regional initiatives in Upstate New York, North Carolina, and Philadelphia.

Use the LSAC Recruitment Calendar

(<http://www.lsac.org/Choosing/recruitment-calendar.asp>) to register your campus event and to learn more about other events in your region.

Encourage strong attendance: open your law fair to students, alumni, community members, and pre-law advisors and students from nearby schools. Many law schools invite prospective applicants in the LSAC database to attend law fairs listed on the LSAC Recruitment Calendar.

Coordinate on your own campus; a single campus event, publicized by many offices and departments, is preferable to multiple events in different venues on the same campus.

Set reasonable fees. High registration fees discourage law school participation. Set a fee that reflects your costs in hosting the event; law schools also incur significant costs for travel and lodging. Typical reasonable fees range from \$75 – \$125.

Assign tables randomly, after placing "popular" law schools throughout the venue including the rear, to encourage attendees to "work the room" and learn about many law schools. Provide a seating chart.

Schedule informational panels or workshops before or after (not during) the law fair, to ensure full participation in the law fair. Rotate panelists among the various law schools attending the fair.

Provide clear information about logistics, including :

- o **Directions to campus:** provide driving directions to help law school representatives navigate to and from the various stops on the schedule; suggest the best airports and public transportation options if there are choices; post signage on campus road.

- o **Lodging:** list lodging options and suggest lodging venues if planning a multi-day sequence.

- o **Parking:** provide map or link with parking information; include free parking in the registration fee.

The following are ideas for questions to ask the law school representatives. If print materials are provided, there may be no need to ask representatives for standard information (LSAT, GPA, tuition and fees, etc.).

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS

How does your law school review applications?

What percentage of applicants was admitted in recent years?

Is there an advantage in applying early? Does your school have "early action" or "early decision"?

When do you typically let applicants know about admissions decisions?

How do you evaluate multiple LSAT scores in the admission process?

How important is it for students to have a law-related internship or job before law school?

How important is the personal statement in your admissions process?

What kinds of recommendations are most helpful? Do you require use of LSAC's Letter of Recommendation Service?

How many transfer students have been accepted in recent years? What criteria are used?

What percentage of matriculating students have taken time off after college graduation?

CURRICULUM/FACULTY

How is the first year program organized?

What clinical opportunities are offered at your school?

Do you offer a part-time option? Can first year students start other than in the fall?

Does your school offer a pre-entry or conditional summer program for applicants whose GPA/LSAT credentials are below the norm? If so, what admission criteria are used?

Do you offer law school study abroad programs?

Describe areas of specialization in course offerings. What joint degree programs are offered?

How are students selected for law journals or law review? How many participate?

What is your faculty-student ratio? How would you describe faculty-student relationships?

EMPLOYMENT OF GRADUATES

What career services are offered to students and graduates?

What percentage of graduating students find jobs? How many find jobs through on-campus recruiting?

What percentage of graduates practice in the region around your school?

How do you help students and graduates find jobs outside the region around your school?

What kinds of jobs do your graduates take after law school?

How many students find summer or part-time employment through the law school?

How much does class rank determine the job search success of your graduates?

What are the bar passage rates in the state(s) in which most of your graduates take the bar exam?

CHARACTER/AMBIANCE

What is special about the character and ambiance of your school?

Describe the physical location of the school.

Describe the on and off campus housing opportunities for students.

What do students like most about your school? Least?

COSTS/FINANCIAL AID

Do you offer merit or need-based scholarships or grants? If so, what criteria do you use?

Is continuation of a merit scholarship contingent upon academic performance in law school?

How do most of your students pay for law school?

What is the cost of attendance at your school? Do you anticipate a tuition increase?

Do you have a loan repayment assistance program for graduates who go into public interest law?

What are the criteria and procedures for obtaining state residency status while in law school (state supported schools)?

Many thanks to Nancy Paul at Binghamton University, State University of New York and Mary Alice Tetro at North Carolina State University for sharing their lists of sample questions, upon which this list is based

REPORTING OF STUDY ABROAD GRADES

by Gerald Wilson, Duke University; Heather Struck, Cornell University; Mary Alice Tetro, NC State;
Laura Pugliese, Law School Admission Council

STUDY ABROAD SPONSORED BY YOUR HOME INSTITUTION:

If you enrolled in a study abroad program sponsored by your home institution, and the courses along with the grades and credits using your home institution's grading system are recorded on your official academic transcript or a separate or parallel transcript maintained by your home institution, then you do NOT need to send an additional transcript to Law School Admission Council (LSAC).

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM SPONSORED BY ANOTHER US (INCLUDING US TERRITORIES) OR CANADIAN COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY:

If you enrolled in a study abroad program sponsored by another US (including US territories) or Canadian college or university then, in addition to your home institution's transcript, you must have the college or university sponsoring the study abroad program send a transcript directly to Law School Admission Council. When you register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), identify the US or Canadian institution sponsoring the study abroad program under "Other Institutions."

OTHER FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS WHICH REQUIRE ADDITIONAL STEPS ON THE PART OF THE CANDIDATE:

(1) If you were directly enrolled in one or more international institutions, but the total amount of work is **the equivalent of one year or less**, do NOT list the international institution when you register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), and do not have a transcript forwarded to LSAC. International work that is the equivalent of one US or Canadian academic year or less is not required for Credential Assembly Service (CAS) purposes. You may, however, be required to list your attendance at such institutions on your application to law school.

OR

(2) If you are applying to a law school that requires the use of the authentication and evaluation feature of the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), *and* you were directly enrolled in one or more international institutions, *and* the total amount of work you completed at all international institutions is the equivalent of **more than one US or Canadian academic year**, *then* in addition to your home institution's transcript, you must have a transcript forwarded to Law School Admission Council from the international institution(s). When you register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), identify the international institution(s) under "International Institutions." Note: A transcript from a non-degree granting agency reflecting work completed through direct enrollment is not acceptable for LSAC purposes; you must have a transcript forwarded from the institution itself.

- (3) Please note that international transcripts meeting the "**more than one year**" criteria are required from all
- undergraduate and graduate schools;
 - law/medical/professional schools; and
 - schools attended even though a degree was never awarded.

All required international transcripts must be sent directly to LSAC by the issuing institution, and will be processed through the authentication and evaluation feature of the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) as described on LSAC's website, www.LSAC.org.

*Intake Form-A Sample***Duke University • Trinity College of Arts and Sciences**Pre-Law Advising Center ▪ 04 Allen Building ▪ email: prelaw@duke.edu

This information is for the use of the Pre-Law Advisor's Office for the purpose of advising only. It will be kept

strictly confidential

email the form as an attachment to
prelaw@duke.edu

Name:		Date:
Local Address:		Major: (s)
Phone Number: Please indicate cell _____ or local _____ with an (X).		Over-all Average:
Street: Permanent Address and Zip		LSAT Score (s):
City/State/Zip: Permanent Address and Zip		Date (s) Taken:
Home Phone:		Duke Matriculation Date:
State of Legal Residency:		Duke Graduation Date:
Social Security Number (last four digits):		Anticipated Year of Law School Entrance:
		Email Address:

Is there anything about your academic record (upward trend, a bad semester, etc.) which should be highlighted in a recommendation?

Is there anything about your performance on standardized tests that should be mentioned?

List any part-time jobs held during the *academic year* while an undergraduate student. What Percentage of your yearly expenses did you earn through these jobs?

Are you receiving financial aid? _____ Approximately what percentage of your college expenses are covered by financial aid? _____

List activities, offices, honors at Duke:

What does your choice of extra-curricular activities tell about you? Why should a law school take these into account when evaluating your application? How would you evaluate your leadership skills?

If you were enrolled in Dean Wilson's *Leadership* or *American Dreams* as a Seminar, please indicate which semester and the title of your class presentation/ paper. If you were in "the *American Dreams*" lecture course, indicate which semester you were enrolled

Will you/did take some time off before entering law school?

No _____ Possibly _____ Likely _____ Definitely _____

At this point, what do you think you will do during the time off? Or what have you been doing? How has this contributed to your decision to go to law school?

What factors (experiences, people, etc.) have contributed significantly to your consideration of law as a field of study/profession?

What are your long-range career plans?

Where do you, at this point, think you will most likely practice law?

What three words best describe you?

If you were writing a recommendation for yourself, in terms of personal characteristics, what would you point out as your greatest strengths and most important weaknesses? Why should your first choice law school accept you? Can you tell me one unique fact about yourself?

Dean Wilson's Office should be given all forms labeled "College Questionnaire", etc. Please provide envelopes and stamps for each of these.

FACULTY

NON-FACULTY

(Optional, indicate connection, ie: employer, etc.)

1.	1.
2.	2.

Have you ever been the subject of Disciplinary Action at Duke? This would include disciplinary probation, suspension or any action where subsequent amnesty has been granted.

YES _____ NO _____

If yes, please explain in detail on a separate paper.

Have you ever been the subject of any academic action at Duke, including academic warning, probation or suspension?

YES _____ NO _____

If yes, please explain in detail on a separate paper.

I give permission to the Pre-Law Advising Office share my acceptance results anonymously with future Duke pre-law students.

TO: PRE-LAW STUDENTS APPLYING FOR ADMISSION TO LAW SCHOOL

FROM: GERALD L. WILSON, Ph.D., PRE-LAW ADVISOR, 04 ALLEN BUILDING
Phone: 684-2865, Fax: 684-3414, e-mail: gerald.wilson@duke.edu

RE: CALENDAR AND CHECKSHEET

If you are applying for admission to law school for you will find the whole process much easier if you organize your efforts, keep accurate records, and monitor your files. Below is a timetable of application procedures and on the reverse side is your "check sheet."

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

1. Get latest law school information from Pre-Law Advising Center, 04 Allen and attend one of the workshops on the application process for applicants.
2. Sign up for September LSAT. Check www.LSAC.org for deadline information.
3. Sign up for Law Service Credential Assembly Service as per the instructions found online at www.LSAC.org.
4. Make an appointment to talk with the Pre-Law Advisor, Dean Wilson. Before seeing him, please
 - (a) fill out the Pre-Law Information Sheet (<http://www.aas.duke.edu/trinity/prelaw/prelawform.rtf>)
 - (b) prepare a tentative list of law schools you are considering.
 - (c) attend on of the workshops on the application process.
5. Secure application materials (including financial aid applications if necessary). Please visit: www.LSAC.org for information about electronic applications.
6. Take the LSAT if you have not already done so.
7. Make appointments to see law school recruiters as appropriate. Check your email, and the Pre-Law Bulletin Board outside of 04 Allen for recruiting dates and BUZZ. Appointments may be scheduled in 04 Allen Building.
8. After receiving your application forms, write your basic essay or essays. If you wish, Dean Wilson will read these essays and make suggestions. You do not need to make an appointment. Leave the essays with Terry. Dean Wilson will read these overnight and you can pick it up the next day.

OCTOBER-NOVEMBER

1. Give out recommendation forms to professors. You are will use the Law School Credential Assembly Service (CAS) for all recommendations.
2. Get applications in.
3. After you receive your LSAT score (if taken in the fall) check briefly with Dean Wilson for additional suggestions, if necessary.

DECEMBER

1. Finish up applications.
2. If you are applying for financial aid, obtain the federal FAFSA form from the Financial Aid Office or online, www.fafsa.ed.gov fill it out, and mail it in. Keep a photocopy of this form as filled out or a printed copy if online.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY

1. Monitor your files on-line making sure all items, CAS reports, recommendations, etc. are in or your file is complete. If any item is not in, contact the appropriate agency/person.

MARCH

1. Wait
2. When you have been accepted to a school that you wish to attend, notify other schools that have accepted you that you will not be attending.
3. If there are problems or questions, or if you are waitlisted at your first choice school, see Dean Wilson.

APRIL

1. Pay deposit to school you will be attending, or if you are on the wait list at your first choice school, make sure you have placed a deposit to hold your seat at your “second choice” school.
2. Order a final transcript from the Registrar's Office (showing graduation date) to be sent to the law school you will attend.

MAY-JUNE

1. Please, fill out and return the survey form emailed to you from the Pre-Law Advising Office.
2. Dean’s Certification/college questionnaire should be sent to Dean Wilson

CHAPTER II

SPECIAL TOPICS IN PRE-LAW ADVISING: MORE THAN YOU PROBABLY WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS

INTRODUCTION

The articles in this chapter deal with special topics that represent the myriad of things a pre-law advisor is expected to know about and to do. In some cases there are several articles dealing with the same topic. They are included because each offers a different perspective or insight into the topic.

In a dual sense this chapter can be labeled an "Accordion" chapter in that different keys are played (though in harmony) and the chapter is expandable. Recipients of this SAPLA Handbook are especially invited to suggest and/or submit articles appropriate for this section that may be included in subsequent editions.

LSAT PREPARATION

By Richard Poland, J.D.
Flagler College

One of the more common questions asked by our pre-law students concerns preparing for the Law School Admissions Test. The LSAT consists of four graded parts ranging from 24 to 28 questions. Those four sections are Reading Comprehension, Analytical Reasoning, Logical Reasoning I, and Logical Reasoning II. There is also an experimental section and a writing section which do not affect the student's score.

I believe, and experience has confirmed this, that a student can not *study* for this exam; students can only *prepare* to the best of their ability. The best way to prepare for the LSAT is to take several actual exams under test conditions. Never take more than the allotted time for a practice exam. The student should sit down during the time of day which he or she will be taking the LSAT exam and complete all the questions, including guessing, in order to measure progress.

I recommend beginning this preparing process with *The Official Triple PrepTest With Explanations*, which can be ordered from Law Services at www.lsac.org for less than \$20.00. Completing this book allows the student to get inside the mind of the test maker. It allows the student to understand why one answer is better than the others. Students need to take whatever time is necessary to thoroughly understand the contents of this book. Begin this process at the Christmas break of the junior year.

After completing this booklet, the student is ready to order the six most recent LSATs from Law Services. I advise my students to take three of the exams during three consecutive weeks. After taking each test, use the knowledge gained about how the test maker thinks to analyze that test during the week. Figure out why each right answer was the right answer and why each wrong answer was wrong. This part of the process is intense, but crucial for maximizing the score.

At this point, most students have discovered that the Logic games are their biggest weakness. The good news is that is the one area in which all students can make significant progress. There are several approaches to improve in the logic game area. I prefer two tried and proven methods. First of all, many students will purchase logic game booklets from a bookstore or a supermarket. These games are different from and more difficult than the LSAT games. Nevertheless, many of my students have improved their scores markedly with this booklet process. Secondly, students who have taken a Logic I course prefer meeting with their logic professor to work on weaknesses. Diagramming rules and then making and incorporating one immediate inference will always benefit the student who is seriously preparing for the LSAT. Taking a Logic course as an elective is very valuable to this process.

The student is now ready to complete the other three LSAT exams in the same manner as discussed above for the first three exams. If necessary, purchase additional exams so that one is being taken each week prior to the student's date to sit for the LSAT.

Finally, let me offer a few test-taking tips to students. Every question should be answered because there is no penalty for a wrong guess. Use a watch to make certain that you use the last 45 seconds of each testing period to answer all questions. Visit the site prior to examination day and, if possible, take a practice exam there. If you are not a morning person, register for the June exam. Besides a watch, take a little candy for extra energy. Expect distractions and preordain that you will block them out. Be confident. The

thoroughly prepared student will do the best that she or he is capable of doing. After all, that all that any one should expect.

Preparing for the Law School Admission Test

Preparation Tips

Plan Insights

Resources

The Michigan State University College of Law
 By Dean Charles W. Roboski
Assistant Dean for Admission and Financial Aid
Reprinted with permission

Law School Admission Test

PREPARATION TIPS

The Michigan State University College of Law Office of Admissions staff solicited LSAT preparation tips through a survey of students who achieved a score of 161 or higher on the test. Select responses are included below.

General Advice

Take the test in June, especially if you are still in undergrad. That way, you'll still be in the mindset of studying and doing academic work. Also, you won't have to try to schedule time to study for the test and your other courses as you might with the October test. Lastly, it'll give you plenty of time to retake the test without having to wait for the October or December test scores.

Put the time in—acceptance to law school and many scholarships rely heavily on the LSAT and undergraduate GPA. If you spent four years building a GPA, it would make sense to put equally proportionate effort in preparing for the LSAT. (If your undergrad GPA isn't as high as you would like, a high LSAT score may be your chance to overcome this weakness.)

Don't assume that an expensive commercial prep course is a requirement for doing well on the LSAT. If you have the self-discipline to study on your own, you can create your own individual prep plan for the LSAT.

General Suggestions for Preparation

Start by learning about the test itself. Learn the structure, different sections, and the amount of time you will have.

Take seriously the task of learning how to take the test. You cannot do your best without serious, deliberate preparation.

Take as many full-length, timed practice tests as you can!

Take every practice test you can, several times a week until the test. Hopefully your score will improve from the time you begin studying (WELL IN ADVANCE) to the time you take the test.

Take results of practice tests (especially self-administered ones) with a grain of salt. Don't assume you're prepared enough just because you have a great practice test—do it consistently.

Take a practice test at least twice when you are preparing—once before you begin, to know where you need the most help, and once in the middle, to track your progress so you don't continuously study the same things.

Study in similar environments to how you will take the test. I usually studied with background noise, but the absence of noise on my first test ended up being detrimental. After that I only studied in silence in preparation for the second test.

Make sure that every type of argument is understood. The logic questions are hard when you don't know what is being asked.

Treat it like a game, or a puzzle to be solved—try to have fun with it!

If you can, take upper-level Philosophy or English classes. The logic and writing will really help on all aspects of the LSAT.

Practice arguments and games more than reading comprehension, as I found the most improvements to be in those sections.

Don't let a low score on a practice test deflate you: use it as an opportunity to see specific problems you're having and spend your time correcting them.

Don't get discouraged—improvement is a very slow process with the LSAT, but with continuous preparation, things begin to “click.”

Practice, practice, practice!

Time Management

Practicing for a relatively short amount of time on a regular basis always beats spending large amounts of time studying every month or so.

Long tests are like marathons. It takes time to build stamina.

Working smart is more important than working fast; the speed will come later.

Just Before the Exam

Make sure you understand the policies for actually taking the exam. The second time I took the exam, they enforced the rule of not being able to wear anything with a hood, and I was freezing the whole time, which proved to be very distracting. Small things can end up being important, so pay attention.

Make sure to take care of all administrative work well before the test date. Worrying about where to find the test site, what classroom the test is given in, or if your ticket is printed are all things that add unnecessary stress on test day.

Go to bed early the night before. There is nothing quite as frustrating on a big exam as not being able to think clearly because you are tired.

Relax the night before the exam: take a hot bath, watch a movie, leave the study guides behind, give your brain a break.

On the Day of the Exam

Do a logic game the morning of the test—it really helps to wake up your brain and get your mind into thinking mode.

Don't pay attention to the people next to you. They have a different exam than you. It doesn't matter how far others are in comparison to you. Pace yourself. How you are doing is the only thing that matters, not anyone else. (Also, if a friend is taking the LSAT, sitting next to him or her may prove even more distracting. At least, I know it was for me.)

Read everything on the exam very carefully. Details are incredibly important.

Bring a snack to the testing center (my test went through lunch).

Be confident in your own preparation and don't get distracted during the test. There will always be that person tapping their pencil and the proctors moving about the room. It is important to stay focused on the task at hand and to not waste any time on distractions during the test.

CALM DOWN. Life will go on after the LSAT. My first LSAT score reflected how nervous I was going into the exam. Take a deep breath before you go into the examining room and remind yourself that there are much more important things in life than the LSAT!

Law School Admission Test

PREPARATION RESOURCES

An effective plan can include self-study using free or low-cost materials, a commercial preparation course, or a combination of both methods. The following list of resources may serve as a helpful guide for prospective law school applicants as they develop an effective LSAT study plan. An item's inclusion on this list does not constitute an endorsement by the Michigan State University College of Law Office of Admissions.

LSAT Preparation Materials Available from the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC)

Free LSAT Prep materials are available at www.lsac.org/JD/LSAT/lSAT-prep-materials.asp.

The following materials and others may be purchased at <https://os.lsac.org/Release/Shop/Publications.aspx>: *The Official LSAT Handbook™*

The Official LSAT SuperPrep®

10 Actual, Official LSAT PrepTests™

10 More Actual, Official LSAT PrepTests™

LSAT ItemWise™—Online LSAT familiarization tool

Additional LSAT Print Preparation Materials

Barron's *How to Prepare for the LSAT* (Jerry Bobrow, Ph.D.): Features six full-length model LSAT tests with explanations, and includes best analysis techniques and an overview of study tips

Examcrackers *LSAT Complete Study Package* (David Lynch): Contains full coverage of all sections of the LSAT, as well as 25 short practice exams in the LSAT format

Kaplan *LSAT Premier 2014* (Kaplan): Includes six practice tests, a book, DVD, and mobile resources

LSAT Logical Reasoning Bible (David M. Killoran): Focuses on the logical reasoning portions of the LSAT, and provides clues into every currently tested question type

Master the LSAT (Prep Course Series) (Jeff Kolby): Includes LSAT problems with solutions, as well as a free online course and two official LSAT tests

LSAT Logic Games Bible (David M. Killoran): Features a detailed methodology focusing on the logic games portion of the LSAT, and covers diagramming and inferring correct answers in length

Cracking the LSAT with 3 Practice Tests, 2014 Edition (Princeton Review): Includes detailed answer explanations, drills for each area, and expert content reviews

LSAT Clarity: The First Complete LSAT Self-Study Guide (Outside LSAT): Effective self-study methods, 326 practice questions, and supplemental audio resources

Cheating the LSAT (Nathan Fox): Thorough explanation of how to break down the LSAT, along with the author's personal contact information for LSAT and law school questions

Manhattan LSAT Set of 3 Strategy Guides: Essential strategies, class recordings, online learning labs, and a downloadable study guide

SUCCESSFUL LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Andy Cornblatt
Georgetown University Law Center

The most misunderstood and underutilized part of a law school application is the letter of recommendation. Most people, applicants and professors alike, assume that since all of the letters say nice things, their value must be minimal. The assumption is just plain wrong. While it is true that 98% of the letters are positive, the important thing is how positive the particular letter is. Also, letters of recommendation can contain some very important information for Admissions Committees and, if written properly, can greatly affect an applicant's chances for acceptance.

It is important at this stage to draw the distinction between the two types of letters to which I will be referring. First, there is the "Dean's Letter" with which all of you are familiar. This is filled out by you, the pre-law advisors, or by one of the Deans of the College. Second, there is the basic recommendation filled out by a professor. While there is, of course, much overlap between the two, there are some things which apply to only one or the other and therefore I will discuss each separately.

Dean's Letter

You are well aware of these forms. By the time February rolls around you are probably seeing them in your sleep. I want to assure you that these letters are read carefully and are very important to us. Your time is well-spent. I do have some suggestions which may be helpful to you.

For the most part, these letters are very honest, and that is very much appreciated. If you don't know the applicant well, or at all, you should say so. I would estimate that over half of the Dean's Letters that we receive contain little or no information and that's fine. These forms are primarily for record-keeping anyway.

However, when you do know the applicant, these letters can be very, very helpful. Unlike most professors, you as a pre-law advisor have the advantage of an overview of the pool of law school applicants from your school. How the particular applicant ranks within that group (i.e. I would place her in the top 2% of this year's group and top 8% in the last ten years) is extremely valuable to us.

Please don't feel as though we would rather you not go out on a limb. That couldn't be further from the truth. Most recommendations while good, don't say very much because they are just too guarded and safe. If you feel someone is terrific, say so. If you feel someone is a risk, say so. The honest, open recommendations are the ones we pay attention to and that will pay off for you when you have an applicant about whom you feel strongly and whose numbers may not indicate acceptance.

Your evaluations are important, of course. Unfortunately, the other vital component of these letters - the informational component - is often overlooked. Applicants all believe that their particular major is the most difficult, or that they are the most involved person on campus. Your view on the applicant's course of study or extra-curricular involvement can be critical in our evaluation. In addition, we would weigh very heavily your comments on applicants as regards their hours working while in school, any serious problems (physical or emotional) which have had an impact on the GPA or any history of doing poorly on standardized tests. Your view of what the applicant asserts as facts are more important than you realize.

Finally, it is helpful to us to have your comments on the applicant's background, especially if there is evidence of disadvantage. I realize that commenting on ethnic status or physical handicap may be delicate, but we need this information from you because the applicant may mistakenly believe he or she should not mention it.

Professor's Letter

A great deal of what was mentioned above certainly pertains to a professor's letter of recommendation. What is different here is that the professor can provide the admissions committee with an academic analysis which the Dean or pre-law advisor cannot. Comments on writing ability, research skills, and oral presentation are valuable to us.

But what is more valuable is the overall academic evaluation. Here, comparisons with other students, especially other law school applicants present and past, is highly valued. Again, let me emphasize the high premium admissions committee put on honesty and willingness to go out on a limb. "I recommend Jane with enthusiasm" tells us nothing. But, "in my twenty years here, I would place Jane in the top 3%" shines like a neon sign.

The informational component is important in these letters also. Very often, the professor has the perspective from which to comment on the applicant's curriculum. In addition, professors often know the student well enough to comment on other aspects besides classroom performance. These comments are welcome.

This brings us to the last point. Who should the applicant approach to write letters? First, although the law school may only request one letter (as we do at Georgetown), most schools expect to receive two or three from the applicant. That is fine. However, more than three letters approaches the point of diminishing returns. The axiom, "the thicker the file, the thicker the student" is not always true, but there is some truth in it. Every aunt or uncle telling us what a fine person his or her nephew or niece is couldn't matter less.

Secondly, in choosing professors, it is always better to ask the ones who know the applicant well rather than someone in the applicant's major, for example. As mentioned earlier, three recommendations are usually the norm. I would recommend one or two academic recommendations and one from an employer. Applicants shouldn't agonize over which people to choose. If there is any indecision, send them both. It probably will not hurt, and it could help.

Use of Recommendation forms

Often law schools will send a form questionnaire to be filled out, on which students are to be rated or specific questions answered. If you feel comfortable with the form and have time to address its idiosyncrasies, by all means fill it out. Such forms are generally used by selection committees to suggest their ideal kind of response-but they certainly will take less, and will make good use of less. If you do not use the form, but write a letter instead, you may want to write on it "see attached letter"; you can sign the otherwise blank form and staple your letter to it.

Letters of Recommendation
Howell Smith
Wake Forest University

Attached is a file gathered in 2001 for a presentation at Pre-Law meetings. Distilled, its lessons are these. There are different types of letters of reference and you have much control over what they say. For starters, you can add to their credibility by waiving your right to see the letters, though many admission officers will assume you have seen them.

Dean's Letters are sometime requested in order to have an official record from a Dean saying you are in good standing and not under significant disciplinary action at the school. The Dean does not need to know you. Pre-Law Advisors have asked law schools not to request such letters because of the unfair unevenness of the available records on which they are often based. Be sure that your disclosures for transgressions in your application are as thorough as the Dean's record. "Disclose, disclose, disclose," as one admissions officer said. If an application asks for a Dean's letter, get it. It does not take the place of any of the three letters that LSDAS will store for you.

LSDAS will store four letters of recommendation and send them to the law schools. Often two are from teachers who can demonstrate that they know you will succeed in the classroom. The third is often from a work supervisor or someone who knows how you behave with responsibility.

Shape the letters that enter you file as well as you shape the personal statement you write. Make your own information form to give recommenders similar to what is in the packet. Do not put the writing responsibility into the hands of anyone who has not said they can write good things about you. Provide a full resume in your application that will explain allusions in the letters.

Pre-Law Advisor letters are sometimes good as a recommendation if the PLA has learned more about you than others know. You might request a PLA to make a direct contact with the law school if your application is unusual. Advisors who are known by the admission officers can be a great help.

Celebrity letters from prominent folks who do not know your work personally are not very persuasive, though Admissions Officers like to make celebrities happy. A letter that says, in effect, "I really have not dealt with this person, but I know and respect his parents," or "They vote in my district," imply "Since I do not know whether he is worth admitting on his own credentials, please let him in on my credit line." These will not be much help. Such a letter from someone who really does not know you personally is weak.

"Blah common phrase" letters can be harmful even if from a prominent person. Consider this letter that says most by what it omits:

"She is attractive and intelligent. She always does the best she can. I have seldom had a student like her. She took three of my courses and earned B in all of them. I trust that you will admit her to her law school because it will be so good for her. And I think she will make it through law school."

Letters from people who know you as student, worker, and human are most helpful. With help from you, these writers can make points about your strengths and back them with hard specific evidence. There are some damning clichés as indicated in the article in this packet. It is your responsibility to give the writers information the information to refresh their memories about you and to avoid the clichés that writers use when they are not sure what to say. Know what profile you want your application to reflect. Coach the letter writer to reinforce that profile. Recommenders can say things about you that you cannot say with credibility. If you are providing them a sentence or two about why you want to do what you want to do, be sure it is different from that in your Personal Statement.

Also, it is your responsibility to give them exactly what they need to get the letters to the right spot on time. LSDAS will support three letters and send them to all law schools. Realize that they will be generic letters. If a recommender has direct experience with a law school, you may want that letter customized and sent directly to the school.

If you are delaying law school application, you may want to get the letters while professors are fresh and store them. Check what facility your campus has for keeping letters.

You cannot know what will happen with your letters. Some admissions officers respect them greatly; some distrust them greatly. No one is likely to put negatives in recommendation letters; why risk the liability? They know most letters make judgments only ranging from “very good” to “excellently superior

With these thoughts, I hope you can cause your letters of recommendation to add the depth of knowledge that will enable an Admissions Officer to make a judgment in your favor with confidence.

Howell Smith
Pre-Law Advisor
Wake Forest University

PRE-LAW LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION GUIDELINES

Jerry Polinard
Pan American University

A. To The Student

1. It is very important to choose references who know your academic work. Law Schools want to know how well you read and write and if you will be able to successfully adjust to the rigors of law school.
 - A. Some private schools with religious affiliations (e.g., Baylor, SMU) might want a letter attesting to your personal character. Still, be sure to include academic references.
 - B. A letter from an attorney who knows you well is not going to hurt, especially if the attorney graduated from the law school to which you are applying. If the attorney is a casual acquaintance, however, the letter will have little impact.
 - C. Unless you know the public official well, do not ask public officials to write on your behalf; admissions officers tend to ignore letters written by public officials. If you do have a public official write, be sure and indicate that you have known him/her for some time (and have the reference do the same).
2. Provide your reference with the following:
 - A. An unofficial transcript
 - B. A personal resume, including a clear statement of your intent to go to law school.
 - C. A list of courses you have taken with the reference. Indicate what grades you made and any outstanding work you did for the class (copies of term papers, essays, tests, etc. are helpful).
 - D. Reference forms provided by the law schools. If the law school provides such a form, there will be a place on the form for you to indicate whether you waive your right to have access to your file. Some admissions officers say they tend to discount letters of reference where the student has not signed the waiver.
 - E. A stamped envelope addressed to the law school. While I recommend the reference send the recommendation on official letterhead stationery, you should provide the envelope as a courtesy.

B. To The Reference

1. The law school admissions process is very competitive. Please write as specific a letter as possible, bearing in mind that the law school admissions committee primarily wants to know how well the student reads, writes and thinks; if the student is capable of adapting to the discipline of law school; and will the student reflect credit on their law school.
2. Be specific about the student's coursework. Was the course a demanding one? How well did the student perform both oral and written assignments? Did the student do anything in particular to stand out in your mind; e.g., did the student write a term paper or essay which you considered superior? If so, indicate the topic and why it was superior work. Note the student's potential for intellectual development. Letters which simply observe that the student was above-average and performed very well in your class are of little help to admissions committees.
3. Indicate how long and in what capacity you have known the student. If you are familiar with the student's non-academic achievements (e.g., extra-curricular activities), please note these. Also note other background characteristics which may be useful in separating the student from other applicants (e.g., work experiences). Is the student bi-lingual? Is the student the first in their family to graduate from college?
4. Please forward your letter directly to the law school or to Law Services if the applicant is using the Letter of Recommendation Service, using your letterhead stationary. I recommend using a letterhead envelope instead of a stamped envelope provided by the student. Please do not give the original letter to the student to send to the law school; the Pre-Law Advisors' National Council is trying to persuade the law schools to quit asking students to collect their letters of reference and mail them as a package. It is important, in other words, to eliminate any question of confidentiality.

C. To The Student And Reference

If I can help in any way, please do not hesitate to call. I am in (office address), phone extension. (xxxx)

LSAC – Law School Admission Council

Letters of Recommendation

Suggested qualities to consider when writing Letters of Recommendation

Review your knowledge of the candidate and where possible respond to the following prompts within your letter of recommendation. Advisers and applicants should check on the LSAC site under the “Letters of Recommendation” to review which of these the law schools will accept.

Intellectual Skill

- Is a critical thinker and problem solver
- Is an analytical thinker
- Can synthesize information
- Is intellectually curious
- Constructs logical, cogent arguments

Personal Qualities

- Is highly motivated
- Shows empathy/compassion
- Has surmounted difficulties and obstacles
- Possesses practical judgment
- Shows initiative
- Demonstrates professionalism

Integrity and Honesty

- Behaves in accord with high ethical standards
- Is reliable
- Is trustworthy
- Is honest

Communication

- Communicates effectively in writing
- Writes persuasively
- Communicates well orally
- Is a thoughtful attentive listener
- Asks appropriate questions for information gathering

Task Management

- Prioritizes well
- Has realistic objectives
- Fulfills commitments
- Manages work and time efficiently

Working with Others

- Respects other points of view
- Works well with people from different backgrounds
- Motivates others toward a common goal
- Is able to lead groups of people from different backgrounds
- Organizes and manages others well
- Demonstrates good judgment in leadership decisions

From LSAC Website, www.lsac.org / <http://www.lsac.org/JD/apply/evaluations.asp>

Credential Assembly Services 2010 – Suggested criteria for Evaluations and Recommendations.

Mary A. Tetro, University Coordinator of Pre-Law Services, NC State University

***Letters of Recommendation for a Student Planning to
Apply to Law School a Year or More After Graduation***

***Gerald L. Wilson
Duke University***

***DUKE UNIVERSITY
TRINITY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES***

***PRE-LAW ADVISING CENTER
04 ALLEN BUILDING - BOX 90048
DURHAM, NC 27708-0048
919-684-2865***

TO: Members of the Faculty

FROM: Gerald L. Wilson
Senior Associate Dean, Pre-Law Advisor

RE: Letter of Evaluation/Recommendation for a student planning to apply for admission to law school a year or more after graduation.

The student who presents this to you is establishing a file in our office. We are not equipped to handle composite recommendations or to keep letters of recommendation on file for all students; however, if a student is planning to apply to law school a year or more after graduation, we do provide this service.*

We suggest that the following procedure be used:

- (1) Have the student sign the waiver of right of access (or the statement declining to waive this right) on the enclosed form.
- (2) Sign the statement authorizing our office to reproduce this letter and forward as directed by the student.
- (3) Write on Departmental letterhead stationery a letter of evaluation/recommendation which may include the following:
 - (a) Your connection with the student (e.g., "He or she was a student in my History seminar.")
 - (b) A statement of the quality of the student's performance in the course, citing specific examples, if possible.
 - (c) An estimate of the student's potential performance in law school.

- (d) An estimate of the student's potential for success as a practicing attorney.

Of course, this is only suggestive. Any approach you wish to take is certainly acceptable.

If you have any questions about this procedure please contact me at 684-2865 or fax: 684-3414.

*This service is also made available in instances where the faculty member will be away from the University during the applicant's year of application.

**DUKE UNIVERSITY
TRINITY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**PRE-LAW ADVISING CENTER
04 ALLEN BUILDING - BOX 90048
DURHAM, NC 27708-0048
919-684-2865**

Faculty Evaluation/Recommendation for:

Student's Name

STUDENT

I waive my right of access to this statement.

I decline to waive my right of access to this statement.

Date

Student's Signature

FACULTY

I give permission to the Pre-Law Advising Center to reproduce and send as directed by the student this statement of Evaluation/Recommendation.

Date

Faculty Signature

Please attach this form to your letter written on departmental/office letterhead.

Dean's Certifications and Student "Confessions": Where the Future Meets the Past

Gerald L. Wilson, Duke University

At a past NAPLA Conference, Deb Coquillon, The Pre-Law Advisor at Syracuse University, organized and moderated a panel both cleverly and accurately entitled, "Dean's Certification: Where the Future Meets the Past". The panelists were John Deliso, Associate Dean, Suffolk University Law School, Richard Geiger, Associate Dean, Cornell Law School and Gerald Wilson, Senior Associate Dean and Prelaw Advisor, Duke University.

In the panel discussions, one phrase was repeated over and over again so as to become the real theme of the panel: "full disclosure." That is, both applicants and those completing certification forms alike should answer questions about disciplinary action asked as fully as needed to respond accurately without playing with words. For example, an older applicant had been suspended from his school over a decade before for academic dishonesty. When this applicant contacted his undergraduate school about the matter, he found out that since all disciplinary records at that school are destroyed after 10 years there was no record of the incident. This applicant argued that since there was no record, he was not obliged to report the disciplinary action. Yet, it is clear that the question was, "have you ever been convicted of any academic offense which resulted in suspension from school?" Not, "Is there any record" of your having had such action.

Again, full disclosure is the bottom line. As one admission officer pointed out, most of the time full disclosure or the part of the applicant is followed by "forgiveness" on the part of the law school. Admission officers believe in "redemption," especially in the case of youthful indiscretions. However, as both law school officers on the panel agreed, there are some offenses which in many cases, may exclude an applicant from admission: serious plagiarism, cheating, forgery (if this occurs during the application process, then the matter is referred to the LSAC Misconduct Committee), repeated alcohol offenses, drug problems and any pattern of conduct which calls into question an applicant's character. As one admission officer said, "too much is enough."

What specific advice then do we give applicants who have a disciplinary record beyond the urging of "full disclosure." The student should write up a statement to be sent to the law schools who request information on any disciplinary action. Then the prelaw advisor may review the statement if the student requests that he or she do so. The following guidelines may be suggested to students who have disciplinary action to report.

- (1) Describe the incident fully, but cogently. Be specific and do not play with words.
- (2) State clearly the charge and the sanction issued by the appropriate authority. Be very specific.
- (3) Take responsibility for the incident, do not try to place the blame on others or on "circumstances."
- (4) Indicate that a lesson was learned and state clearly what that lesson is.

- (5) Conclude (hopefully!) with the statement that no further incidents have occurred and that the citizenship record has been clear since that incident.

The Prelaw Advisor should keep a copy of the statement, and the person responsible for filling out the “Deans Form” or equivalent should also have a copy of the statement, if that person is someone other than the prelaw advisor.

The person responsible for completing the “Deans Form” or “College Questionnaire” should, acting within the guidelines established by his or her institution, provide a cogent and factual report of the incident. In those instances where possible, it may be helpful to indicate that there have been no further incidents.

In the end, the real question is not so much “incidents” as “character”. State Bar examiners, in many cases, have a great deal of freedom in the kind of questions asked. Like Watergate, the real problem arises not so much from the incident as the attempt to “cover up”. Again, the best advice is “full disclosure.”

In a discussion of this matter at another NAPLA Conference in Washington, DC Ben Rogers, Assistant Dean for Admissions at William and Mary Law School, indicated that when reviewing a disciplinary statement his committee asks two questions:

- (1) Will the student be an honor or disciplinary problem at our law school?
- (2) Will the particular disciplinary violation preclude the applicant from admission to the state bar? (Alternately, will the disciplinary issue be red flagged by the state bar)?

If the answer is no to both questions, then the disciplinary problems likely will not be an issue.

Information for Pre-law Advisors: Dean's Certifications

Heather C. Struck
Assistant Dean and Pre-law Advisor
College of Arts and Sciences
Cornell University

The primary purpose of a law school dean's certification (also known as Dean's Letter, Dean's Recommendation, or College Questionnaire) is to obtain academic and/or disciplinary misconduct information (or lack thereof). Some law school forms also include questions about an applicant's academic performance, leadership, motivation and character. The number of law schools requiring dean's certification is small, and there are many variations in how and when this information is sought. Completed dean's certifications are returned directly to the law schools and are not a part of the Law School Admission Council (LSAC)'s services.

Undergraduate institutions vary in how they assign responsibility for completing dean's certifications. Some institutions handle this function within the dean's office; others delegate the responsibility to the pre-law advisor, registrar, other university official, or to various offices. At some schools, a personal letter is written for each applicant, providing the required disciplinary information and additional support for the candidate; at others, the dean's form is completed as a clerical function, after checking university judicial and disciplinary records.

Most law schools also require the applicant to provide information about prior disciplinary, judicial, or academic history, whether or not a dean's certification is required. The question is often phrased "have you ever been subject to disciplinary action for scholastic or other reasons...?" This question is broader than the questions answered by college officials, who typically complete a dean's letter based upon records, not upon personal experience or knowledge. Applicants should be advised to answer such questions truthfully and completely, disclosing information even when records have been expunged or sealed. Failure to disclose can trigger severe consequences in the law school admission process and later in the bar admission process. A law school application is a "continuing" application; it must be updated if the initial response becomes inaccurate or incomplete. Pre-law advisors can be very helpful to applicants who seek advice in responding to law school application questions relating to character and fitness by reviewing and advising them a draft addendum regarding disciplinary history.

Many law schools require a dean's certification from the undergraduate institutions and law schools attended by transfer applicants.

Tips for Pre-law Advisors responsible for completion of Dean's Certifications:

- Identify the campus offices that maintain disciplinary and academic records necessary to provide information required in the dean's forms. These records should include academic disciplinary records, code of conduct or other disciplinary violations, and academic integrity violations. If campus police records are maintained separately from code of conduct violation records, it may be necessary to check the campus police records as well. At many schools, academic integrity records are maintained separately from disciplinary records. At undergraduate institutions with more than one college or school, separate

records may be kept within each unit. Some law schools specifically request a certification from each degree program in which the student has been enrolled, which may include transfers within the same university. If bar certifications and/or security clearances are handled by a different office, check with this office to coordinate clearance procedures.

- Obtain a copy of the standard student record release form for your campus. To ensure compliance with Federal and state confidentiality requirements, it is best to require applicants to sign your campus form, in addition to any waiver/release included in the dean's form. Electronic signatures are permissible under Federal FERPA Rules.
- After determining prior practice, make a decision as to how you will handle dean's certifications. The decision to prepare a personal dean's letter can benefit the applicant, however it will require significant resources (i.e. your time) in the busy fall and winter admission season. Also, it is difficult to know all applicants, since most law school candidates apply after graduation. If you choose to prepare individual letters, consider the use of a template. Keep track of the volume of paperwork and staff time required for dean's letters, to include in your annual report.
- Provide applicants with clear directions on office procedures, allowing your office sufficient time (minimum two weeks) to check records, complete the form or letter, and mail it to the law school. Many schools require applicants to furnish a stamped envelope addressed to each law school.

***Note: A number of law schools are requiring that applicants who answer "yes" to disciplinary question also submit copies of official documentation, which could trigger the applicant's request for a letter from the undergraduate institution to document the disciplinary action.

Your Criminal History

What You Should Know about Law Schools, What Law Schools Should Know About You
*by Lewis Hutchison

(The following statement was written by Lewis Hutchinson and is directed to law school applicants. Prelaw Advisors may wish to provide this statement to their students in a handout or on-line. Permission is granted to do so with proper accreditation.)

It is a familiar scenario. You were on your way to Atlanta for a big step show when you were pulled over for speeding, and you were charged a \$250 fine. You thought the worst was over after explaining to your parents why their insurance rates were going up. But now, you have to report it on your law school application because it asks for information regarding any criminal offense, “including traffic violations over \$200.”

Your first thought is not to report the ticket. “In the end,” you reason, “the schools I’m applying to will not check my record.” You may be right, but eventually what you try to hide may catch up with you. Law schools evaluate an applicant’s character and fitness, and so do state bar associations. Law schools may not always investigate whether you have misrepresented yourself on your applications, but the bar association evaluating you for admission and licensing will. When you apply for membership to your state bar association, the association will perform a comprehensive review of all dealings you have had with the law. If they find a criminal infraction that you have failed to mention to them or your law school, the privilege to practice law may be denied to you.

Why are schools concerned with your criminal history? Law schools are not going to take the chance that a new recruit is going to give their law school a bad name, regardless of the applicant’s LSAT score or undergraduate GPA. Law schools do not want to jeopardize their reputation or that of the legal profession.

Law schools also attempt to determine whether problems are stress-related. Will you suffer a lapse of judgment when the pressure is on? Law is a high-pressure profession, and law schools want to recruit people who can handle stress without turning to illegal methods, including alcohol and drug use, financial malfeasance, or needless endangerment of the public. A criminal incident will not necessarily keep you out of the legal profession as long as you disclose the matter properly. Here are a few key points to keep in mind:

Disclose all criminal matters. Most criminal offenses are minor in nature and thus will not affect your admission potential. The first matter admissions officers consider when reviewing a criminal incident is the nature of the offense: Was it major or minor? Grand theft auto is definitely more significant than running a red light.

Other important factors are the number of offenses on an applicant’s record and the time of their occurrence. A charge of speeding in excess of 20 miles per hour and an unrelated charge of possession of alcohol will cause more alarm than a single charge, especially if the offenses have been committed within a short period of time. When law schools notice multiple offenses on an applicant’s record, they may believe that the candidate either has unresolved psychological

problems or has no respect for the law. An apparent lack of respect for the field you are proposing to enter will be a detriment to your application.

Additionally, criminal offenses are like wine: the older they are, the better. An incident that happened five years ago carries much less weight than one that happened five months ago.

In the event that you have a criminal record, most law school admissions ask for two things. First, they want your explanation of the events that occurred. Second, they want the official court documents pertaining to the matter. When you begin the disclosure process, *always* be open and honest—you would be surprised how official court documents record what you said about the situation at the time. The applicant should always be the one to explain any discrepancies between court documents and his or her account of an event.

Be enlightened. What did you learn, if anything, from the situation? The degree to which you have accepted responsibility for your mistakes will help admissions officers determine your level of maturity.

Be contrite. Let admissions officers know that you regret what you have done and that you will not commit further criminal offenses.

Finally, remember that you are attempting to enter a profession of rules. Lawyers live by them, work by them, and serve by them. If you appear to have trouble following them, you may need to question whether this is the right field for you.

*Lewis Hutchison was formerly the Assistant Dean for Admissions and Financial Aid at the University of South Carolina

Character and Fitness Inquiries–

Dean Monica Ingram, Cornell Law School

- I. Things to consider – checklist/decision-tree (?)
 - A. Juvenile Record
 1. Some law schools ask for disclosure of juvenile offenses and others do not. If a law school asks, applicant must disclose.
 2. Expunged juvenile records – again, some schools ask and others do not. If requested, though expunged, applicant must disclose.
 3. Exclude submission of expunged records – no need to disclose, BUT, should confirm record(s) actually expunged. Attorney/Judge assertion that record *will be* expunged is insufficient. Questions to ask:
 - a. Do you have an order confirming the record has been expunged? If not, request a copy of the order from the court or your attorney of record.
 - b. Do you have written confirmation from your attorney that the record has been expunged? If not, request written confirmation.
 - c. Making an assumption that an offense has been expunged from a student’s record, but in reality has not, can have significant ramifications. The Bar will do a criminal history check, If the offense is found, it will be in conflict with the disclosures on the law school application and will have to be explained.
 - B. Minor traffic violations
 1. Parking tickets are generally considered minor parking violations and usually excluded from disclosure.
 2. A warrant for arrest or suspension of an applicant’s driving license as a result of unpaid parking tickets would not be considered a minor traffic violation.
 3. Jumping the train turnstile or being cited for illegally moving between subway cars is not a minor traffic violation.
 - C. University offenses can be tricky for disclosure - Many universities employ police, some employ police-like security. When in doubt as to whether the offense/citation should be disclosed, DISCLOSE!

- II. Consequences for failing to disclose – Sanctions! The punishment may not fit the crime. It may not be the underlying offense that triggers the severity of the sanction but the failure to disclose the offense whether motivated by oversight, gamesmanship or fraud. Ramifications vary from school to school but the most common are:
 - A. Rescission of admission offer pre/post matriculation.
 - B. Loss of scholarship – Federal aid cannot be withdrawn if student is in good academic standing but institutional funds can be withdrawn. Pay close attention to scholarship offers, affirmative commitment documents to the law school, e.g., *Letter of Intent*, Student Handbook, etc.
 - C. Suspension for a semester or year.
 - D. Expulsion.
 - E. Honor Code Violation
 - F. Qualified certification of character and fitness to the bar.

- III. Rule of thumb-When in doubt, applicant should always DISCLOSE.

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Andy Cornblatt
Georgetown University Law Center

Perhaps the single most often asked question by law school applicants is "what do law schools look for in a personal statement?" The short answer, of course, is that there is no short answer. There are, however, some guidelines and suggestions that I would like to offer which hopefully can give you, the advisors, some framework from which to work.

One word of caution should be noted here. I have been on law school panels with other admissions people who I have observed, at times, cringing when hearing my recommendations. Therefore, it is important to point out that I am one admissions person from one law school with a particular point of view. However, I think that it is fair to say that I am not too far out of the mainstream, if there is such a thing in this business.

I realize that the law schools ask for different things in their "essay question". I will be proceeding on the assumption that the question will be similar to the one we use at Georgetown; that is, discuss your strengths and weaknesses.

In any discussion of the personal statement, I begin with two general principles. First, since most law schools do not have formal interviews as part of the admissions process, consider your personal statement to be your interview. Second, when you fill out your application surely you must, at some point, say to yourself, I have filled in the blank but I have so much more to say in this area. I would like to elaborate and emphasize certain things but the application itself just does not allow me the opportunity. That, in my view, is precisely the use to which the personal statement should be put.

Enough generalities. As to more specifically what the personal statement should contain, I subscribe to the theory that an applicant's essay should be about himself/herself. This is as opposed to an essay about theories of law and society and God and how they are all interrelated. It is possible that candidates may have something interesting to say on this topic but the personal statement is not the place for it. I am more eager to read what they have to say about themselves as candidates for admission.

What should they write about themselves? The key, in my view, is to stress their strengths without being obnoxious and deal with their weaknesses without being defensive. I know fully well that this is a lot easier to say than do. However, this is a large part of what we consider when looking at applicants. That is, how persuasive are they in discussing their own candidacy. It has been said that the law school application is the candidate's first case and I would agree with that.

The personal statement gives the applicant the opportunity to take the Admissions Committee by the hand and guide them through his/her application. The big advantage here is that it can be done solely on the applicant's term. Consequently, if there is some activity, work, or life experience that he/she is very proud of, that should be stressed and expanded on in the personal statement. I realize that the particular activity etc. may be listed somewhere else in the application. However, it is the applicant's responsibility (and advantage) to highlight the strongest parts of the application. One of the names of this game is to separate yourself from the pack. By stressing the strong points, whether it be in the academic area or the "subjective area", the applicant maximizes his/her chances.

A note of caution. Be careful in how this is done. Confidence is a fine quality for a future law student and lawyer. From an admissions point of view however, arrogance is something else. The line between the two is fine, but it is crucial that the applicant understand the difference.

As for the weaknesses part of the formula, I am well aware that there are some people who would say that you should not discuss your weaknesses in a personal statement. They argue that to deal with your weaknesses only draws attention to them. There is merit in that, of course. The problem with that argument is that it supposes that attention would not be drawn to the weaknesses anyway.

Part of our job is to examine closely both the strong points and the weak points. The issue is not whether the weaker parts of the application will be examined. The issue is on whose terms will they be examined. If the applicant deals with the weaknesses (i.e. low LSAT, low GPA, poor semester), he/she can frame the discussion on his/her terms and offer reasonable and informative explanations. (i.e. history of poor performance on standardized tests, highly rigorous course load, lots of hours spent working or involved in activities, change of major from premed, personal or family tragedy etc.)

The theory on which this proposal is founded is the same as that learned by students in a first year evidence class. If the other side has damaging information to your case, you introduce it first to defuse it on your terms. It is hard to look at a personal statement in terms of "damage control". But the fact of the matter is that unless applicants deal with their good and bad points up front in their way, we will deal with them in our way.

Finally, I have noticed that some applicants are reluctant to discuss certain aspects of their background, such as history of disadvantage, ethnic status etc. This is a mistake, plain and simple. No one is asking for lengthy stories of heroism in overcoming enormous obstacles. Information of this kind, however, is very valuable to Admissions Committees and in every instance it can only work to the applicant's advantage.

Some closing thoughts. First, applicants should be brief. They should say what they have to say and no more. There is no need to ramble on about how they wanted to be a lawyer since age four. There are, no page restriction, of course. But my experience tells me that two pages is usually sufficient.

Secondly, a large percentage of law school applicants subscribe to the theory that admissions is strictly a numbers game and that most personal statements are never read. Speaking for Georgetown and, I assume, most law schools, this is simply not the case. Of course, the numbers are very important in any decision. But we read every personal statement. Applicants should be advised to write their statements with great care. In many cases, they will be the determining factor.

***Personal Statements
In Law School Applications
“The Icing on the Cake”***

***Howell Smith
Wake Forest University***

Your personal statement in law school applications is the confirmation of the profile that you have created by your whole application. It is the icing on the cake.

The admission officers will have looked at your UGPA and your LSAT score to understand how well you meet the commonly held quantitative standards.

They will have looked at your resume to see how you have gotten to where you are. The resume should have one page that shows the facts of your education, honors, and employment. It should continue with other pages that track your experiences, evidence of leadership, and skills. It is not the one page resume requested by businesses for their initial screening processes; it is more like the information someone might want if they were prepping an obituary for you. If you list campus activities, it will explain what they are to readers who are not from your campus. (At Wake Forest Project Pumpkin is a major service activity. A reference by you or your letter writers to your role in Project Pumpkin will have no meaning in New York without explanation in your resume) The resume is your factual reference sheet on your application file.

They will have looked at your letters of recommendation with mixed confidence.

NOW they look at your statement. What do they learn from it? First, they learn what sample of the work you judge to be the best that you can produce. It should be grammatically perfect with no misspellings no matter what Spell Check says. It should follow the given guidelines as to length. It is answering the questions, “So this is what you think is excellent work?” It is now considered acceptable to have friends read and critique your statement, but the ideas should come through your mind.

Second, it should reflect what is special about you. It should show what the law school will be missing if they do not accept you. What experience, attitude, or approach to life will be missing from their classrooms?

Third, it should show how you use critical thinking to understand the story you are telling.

Fourth, it should reflect a growth in you that makes your life story, as you have presented it in your whole application, have almost inevitably your acquiring education in the law as your next step.

Fifth, it should reveal the experience(s) that has most shaped you. BUT, it is not the place to show that you have had a bad time unless it also shows that you have overcome that bad time and are ready to handle law school without its being a diversion or handicap to your legal learning.

If you have a handicap, or a trauma disrupted your education, or a situation makes your academic record or LSAT an inaccurate reflector of your true capabilities and potential, it may be better to put that into an addenda to your application rather than making it the heart of you personal statement.

Sixth, it should be a convincing statement of why you will be able to begin thinking like a lawyer and will enjoy law. Recognize the salient points in your information and organize them well.

Do not write a personal statement that you could just as well use to apply for social work, nursing, or teaching training. For those of us who want to make the world better, it is easy to respond to the interest law schools have in volunteerism, etc., with a “do-gooder” story. Some of those who are judging your application will also be interested in your succeeding as a lawyer first and then your using your training and skills to do good. Give them reason to think you agree with them. They do not want to anticipate having to tell you cannot skip a law course final exam to ring a bell for the Salvation Army. Project the sophistication of your “do goodism.”

Also, do not provide a stream of consciousness literary essay even if it would have won you an A+ in creative writing. Make your impression in other ways. Variations in style are fine, but the underlying strong thinking is vital.

Thus, the admissions officers should read your statement and say that this is the quality that they would expect from that kind of applicant. One admissions officer said that you should think of a situation in which she had five seats left and thirty applicants standing in line. She collects the statements and from them picks who will most make her faculty and dean happy.

A last note is that some schools ask for more directed essays. Think what they want to learn and respond to their challenge. If they want to know what you will contribute to diversity, do not assume that they are only thinking racially. You are unique! Recognize why and tell them. If they ask for an essay and provide structured questions, write your essay for them in a way that the conclusion of your essay answers the question they asked.

Different law schools may seek different things in their applicants. If you want to read an elaboration of what some of the “top” school may want, you might read the chapters in Montauk, *How to Get into the Top Law Schools*. He says nothing new that pre-law advisors have not known for years, but he does elaborate on the points.

Good luck, and I hope that writing our personal statement helps you understand what you are doing at this hinge point in your life.

The Private I-The Personal Statement

Gerald L. Wilson, Duke University

Many, if not most, law schools require applicants to write what is generically referred to as a personal statement. Students often find this to be the most difficult part of the application process and seek guidance from prelaw advisors (and hopefully not from one of these A Successful Personal Statements books!) Because many law school admission officers indicate that the personal statement is the second most important item in the application (after LSAC score and UGPA), prelaw advisors can be especially helpful at this point.

First of all, the personal statement should be just what it says, personal, in the sense that it should be something that only that individual student himself/herself could write. Though opinions vary, in general, the statement should seek to connect the writer with the law school application. This is not to suggest that it should be a “I want to go to law school because”.... piece but it probably will be more useful to an admissions committee if they can gain a sense of why the student is applying to law school. In brief, the statement may well be an intellectual/experiential autobiography that makes clear as to why the writer is applying to law school.

The essay, unless otherwise specified, and to make sure that it will be more than skimmed, in most cases should be no longer than two pages, double-spaced. It should, above all, be interesting. I cannot forget what one law school admission officer said about personal statements: “When I read a personal statement, I have one question in the back of my mind: Would I like to have a beer with this person?” (Or lunch if you prefer!) Think about what is being said there. Will the applicant be someone we want to get to know, someone who will add to the classroom experience and to the atmosphere of the law school?

Note carefully that the essay should attract the reader’s attention (without being gimmicky) and should focus on the student, not the law. Below are opening paragraphs from two of the worst personal statements I have ever read. Would you want to get to know these students?

“The best preparation for the study of law is a broad-based undergraduate education. Studying a variety of subjects in both the natural and social sciences develops both reasoning and communication skills. Students must learn to apply logic to mathematical and social problems and to communicate using both words and numbers. In addition, extra-curricular activities and work experience improve a person’s problem solving abilities and communication skills. My diversity of academic and extra-curricular experience is my strongest attribute as a law school candidate.”

Or, “As an undergraduate, I have taken particular interest in the structural frameworks within which society’s institutions confront recurring moral and ethical problems. Academically, I have focused on political institutions’ reflection of the society’s ethical sophistication, with special emphasis on the legal and judicial system in the United States. Additionally, my extracurricular activities have presented several opportunities to confront the ethical dilemmas of leadership in the unique circumstances indigenous to a university community. Together, my academic and extra-academic work have prepared and focused my interest in continued study of the law and legal institutions.”

Conversely, without resorting to gimmicks the opening paragraphs of the following three statements immediately attract the reader and make the reader want to read on to get to know the applicant.

“As a little girl with olive skin, long black hair and large, dark but definitively non-western eyes, I was constantly subjected to the fascinated stars and inquiries of people curious about my nationality. Hurt by the subtle implication that I might be different from the other kids, I would smile and give the elusive response *I’m an ethnic mutt*. In this age of political correctness, those words would probably never leave

my mouth today, but an amalgamation of unusual and distinctive elements is actually still the best way to describe myself.”

Or, “Until my mid-teens, I had believed that my father died when I was four years old. As a teenager I was told that the man I thought was my father was not my natural father. In order to conceive, my mother opted for a process known as Artificial Insemination by an Anonymous Donor, or AID. This revelatory information prompted me to research the AID phenomenon and the ramifications it posed to me as a child fathered in this unusual manner.”

Or, “Two summers ago I worked as a black foreman of an all-white construction crew in rural Georgia. It proved to be an extraordinary experience which taught me a lot about myself and which sparked my interest in becoming a lawyer.”

However, any good and exciting essay can be spoiled if not carefully proofread to eliminate misspellings, poor use of grammar, or awkward use of the language. **Proof Read** the document, and have at least one friend do it, too. Do not rely on spell-check on the computer. Sue and use, leaned and learned, for and fro, lust and must are all correct words but spell check may not help to discover problems with usage. A typo such as to for two suggests you do not pay attention to detail. Your documents are being read to evaluate your future performance as a good lawyer. Also, the personal statement may not be the place to discuss a bad semester or a personal matter that needs further explanation. This may best be handled by writing a separate statement. In the end, there is no formula for a successful personal statement, but there is one successful guideline: Be yourself!

SUMMARY OF NO NO’S FOR THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

1. Do not give the essay a title
2. Do not use quotations
3. Do not use dialogue
4. Do not write in the third person
5. Do not use the passive voice
6. Do not make the essay a narrative version of your resume
7. Do not use footnotes
8. Do not tell them about the law, talk about you
9. Do not be repetitive
10. Do not read one of those “Winning Essays That Got Me Into Law School” books
11. Do not compare yourself to other people, i.e. “I may not be as smart as many of your applicants, but I study hard.” or “While my classmates are out partying, I am in the library working hard!”

SUMMARY OF DO’S

1-10 Be yourself! Make the members of the Admissions Committee want to get to know you and have you in class.

A Collection of Thoughts on the Personal Statement
 PLANC – Pre Law Advisers National Conference, Boston, Massachusetts

<i>Panelists</i>	
Michelle Allison Davis	Loyola University New Orleans School of Law, Dean of Admissions and Minority Affairs
Melanie Nutt	Wake Forest School of Law, Director of Admission and Financial Aid
Michelle Rahman	University of Richmond School of Law, Associate Dean of Admissions
Mary A. Tetro	University Coordinator of Pre law Services, North Carolina State University, Division of Undergraduate Academic Programs, Academic Adviser First Year College and panel coordinator.

The process of developing a Personal Statement is a unique endeavor. Each student needs to properly evaluate the required components provided by the law schools to which they are applying and follow each instruction exactly as written. Then begin to develop the statement to match the requirements.

The candidate should think of the document as an interview with the law school. This may be the only opportunity the interviewer has to learn about you as a complete candidate. What is it you wish the reader to know about you? No part of the application is taken on its' own merit. This can be the piece where you are can provide substance and details about yourself. It is your chance to open a door, for the law school, into who you are. If well done, it will provide insight into how well you know yourself, how you think, what you value, how you write, how well-rounded you are or have become over time, and what you have been able to learn from the experience of living.

In my experience over the past eleven years, as an academic adviser and instructor, in the First Year College of new students, freshmen, I encourage them to begin the development of these thoughts from the day they arrive on campus. Too often, in my experience with juniors and seniors, who come to me as the Pre Law adviser, I find this group has not been encouraged to begin this process earlier.

Many students have not spent any time, or personal energy, in the efforts which lead to an understanding of who they are, what they have learned about life in addition to their course work/transcript, or what these experiences have meant to them, in the larger scheme of their world view. Our discussion then must begin with that dialogue, before we can get to the next part, the construction of the Personal Statement.

One of my goals as an adviser, with both audiences I serve, is to encourage the students to begin “paying attention” to their life. This may be a new concept for some, but is a profoundly useful pursuit if it begins early in their academic career. They are encouraged to become involved in things that matter to them, to reflect on their experiences as these occur, not as “resume builders to impress the law school” but because they are committed to and passionate about the activity.

Each of the Panelists evaluated and discussed the following points regarding the Personal Statement.

Informal Interview

- Consider this a professional, yet informal interview with the law school
- Tailor the response to the exact guidelines of each school. Read each applications' requirements carefully and follow these directions
- What has the reader learned about you as a person, and do they now care

- Creating a personality around which the remainder of the application will be read

Time, Process and Structure

- Introduction, body or detailed supporting paragraphs, and conclusion
- Edit, edit, edit and then read aloud both to yourself and to another person
- Take time, draft, work with others to evaluate your statement
- Have someone else read statement. Most schools have a Writing Center, check to see if tutorial support might be available in the proof
- Answer the question/s that is/are being asked (cannot be overstated, follow directions precisely)
- Efficient, concise but brief within two pages if at all possible (remember Law Schools Admissions' Officers will be reading hundreds, in some cases, thousands of these statements)
- Reasonable margins, font size and length. Essentially 1", 10-12 depending on font (Arial works well at 11) and at least single spacing that is legible to the normal eye
- Some schools may ask for specific guidelines, follow these exactly

Topics and Content

- Read and follow all directions included in the application from the individual schools
- Unique nature of your experience – life experiences: talent, skill athlete – commitments personal experiences, career ambitions, or diversity of life experience
- Unique nature of who you are for the many reasons that have developed/created these characteristics
- A particular life experience that has created an interest in law
- Incorporate that which was exceptional, worthwhile, and activities that mattered
- What makes the person a special /unique candidate
- Grade trends should be explained in an addendum, not here, unless this information is relevant and critical to the statement
- Avoid duplication, do not include information that is found in another part of the application (resume, transcript, application form)
- Leadership, student government, community Service can be included, again, only if these are pertinent to the statement, otherwise these will appear on the resume

Qualities

- Passion, sincerity, depth, authenticity, perseverance, and character.
- Thoughtfulness in writing. Determination vs. "I'm a hard worker" – how, why, growth development.
- Personalized information that can support both strengths and weaknesses without being arrogant on the one hand or defensive on the other.

What does not impress and a caution with the style

- "I've always wanted to go to law school since I was 3"
- Carelessness – Careless errors/Language
- Sent left arm, "I'd give my left arm"
- Whole life history. Single Space. Too much!
- Be very careful with poetry and humor
- A caution especially with humor, must be well used and creative, if used at all
- Don't send a shoebox with a note that says "I'd like to get my foot in the door"
- Back to the future, looking back.
- Do not be too anything: self-effacing, proud, self-absorbed
- Lack of humility
- No whine zone!

A portion of this information was collected at the "Personal Statement Session", SAPLA, fall 2002 & 2003 Conferences. Also from the Handbook articles by Gerald Wilson and Andy Cornblatt, and from Writing Tutorial Services, Indiana University, & Bloomington, IN.

Paper developed by Mary A. Tetro, NC State University, University Pre Law Adviser, SAPLA President

Visits to Law Schools

Gerald L. Wilson, Duke University

When students ask about visits to law schools, it is important, first of all, to find out what question they are REALLY asking. If the “visit” is for the purpose of deciding whether or not to apply/enroll in that particular law school, then such visits should be encouraged. If the “visit” question is really, “Will it help me get in if I go and interview at the school?” then, in most cases, unless the law school clearly indicates otherwise, the answer is “no”.

In instances where students plan visits for informational/decision-making purposes, then they should be advised not to just “show up” at the school but to call ahead so that the school may have the opportunity, if it wishes, to arrange a tour for students and perhaps arrange for the students to attend a class.

Students often ask their prelaw advisor, “What should I look for?” and/or “What questions should I ask?” Tours of facilities and attending classes are valuable but the whole experience can be more valuable if the student-visitor looks for the following during the visit.

- 1) Wander into the Student Lounge and listen to conversations being held by current students. What are they talking about? Are they excited about what they are doing? What are their complaints? Are they real or are they “generic” law student complaints. (Probably 80% of the complaints voiced by law students can be heard at any law school. What weight should be placed on the remaining 20%?) The student should not be shy about introducing himself/herself as a perspective applicant/student and asking questions.
- 2) Read the bulletin boards. What organizations exist at the law school and what is the level of their activity? Do they seem to be an integral part of the law school or do they just seem to be there?
- 3) Note the location of faculty offices. This should give you a good idea of how serious the school is about accessibility of faculty. If the faculty offices are on the third and fourth floors of the library and accessible only by a special elevator key, then certainly there is a message being conveyed. If, on the other hand, the faculty offices are on the main corridor between the library and the student lounge, then the school obviously means it when it advertises faculty accessibility.
- 4) When schools arrange for a perspective applicant/visitor to attend a class, the school will, of course, choose the class of one of the best professors. However, since all law school faculties are good, the student should observe both professors and students. What is the level of students’ questions? Are they simply requests for further information or are they thought-provoking, sophisticated questions which show an understanding of the material? Also, note the interplay between the professor and the students. Does the faculty member really care about his/her students? Does the professor seem to know something about them personally? Is there an atmosphere of genuine respect and perhaps even affection between the professor and the students?
- 5) Student visitors have their own questions, of course, but the whole experience can be made more profitable if some of these observations are a main part of the visit. In the end, whatever the advantages and ranking of a particular school, the student must feel that the “fit” is good.

LAW SCHOOL INTERVIEWS

Andy Cornblatt
Georgetown University Law Center

"The law school admissions process is so impersonal - I send in my application and answer all the questions, but pieces of paper just can't represent who I am. Why can't law schools have evaluative interviews like colleges do?"

Law school admissions officers have heard this criticism time and again, and I think that most of us are sympathetic to the concern voiced above. In an ideal world, we would love the opportunity to interview everybody and have the results of that interview play an important role in the decision making process.

Unfortunately, we live in the world of the practical not the ideal. Law school representatives simply cannot afford to travel around the country to interview each applicant individually. Most undergraduate schools that have the same number of applicants as law schools do have admissions staffs that are five or six times larger. While it might be possible to interview those applicants who live near a particular law school, it is not equitable to give those people an advantage that people thousands of miles away do not have.

Having said all of this, I do recommend that applicants visit their top choice schools if they can afford the time and money to do so. Law schools do not have evaluative interviews, but they will schedule appointments for informational meetings. While these meetings may not give people the optimal opportunity, they do give them the chance to raise and discuss aspects of their application that might otherwise go unnoticed. In addition, visits to law schools allow you to look at the school, talk to the students, and generally get a sense of whether you would be happy spending the next three years there.

These meetings can be arranged by a phone call to Admissions Offices to set up an appointment. Do not simply drop by and expect to be able to see somebody. These are professional offices and should be treated as such. There is no particular strategy to follow when preparing for these meetings. Have questions ready about the school and be prepared to speak briefly on your behalf. This is particularly true for anyone on a waiting list who visits a school to find out information about her/his chances. There is a fine line between being very interested in attending a particular school and going overboard in your enthusiasm, just as there is a fine line between confidence and arrogance. Be careful.

Finally, I strongly recommend that you visit schools in which you are interested and where you have been accepted. While others may envy your alternatives, the choice can be a very difficult one. Talk to people at the school with what is now a more critical point of view. You are now in the delicious position of interviewing the school rather than vice versa.

Personal, Telephone, and Skype Interviews

Dean Gerald L. Wilson, Duke University

Increasingly law school admissions offices are contacting applicants and offering them an opportunity for a phone or Skype interview. The purpose of these interviews is two-fold. First, the law school is seeking more information about the applicant and second, the law school is attempting to determine the applicant's interest in the law school. Since the Pre-Law Advising Office has received a number of questions from applicants about these interviews we have spoken with a number of you who have taken part in these interviews and what follows is based on these conversations. This statement is divided into two parts. First, general comments and, second, a sample of specific questions asked by interviewers.

General Guidelines:

- 1) Be yourself! Do not try to present yourself as what you might think the school is looking for. Be authentic.
- 2) Read over your application material carefully. Many interviewers ask follow-up questions on various statements you have made in your application materials.
- 3) Have a good cogent response to the question, "Why are you going to law school?" You do not need to indicate a specific area of the law if you do not have one in mind, but you do need to express good, solid reasons for choosing law school and not just drifting into law school.
- 4) Have a good cogent reason for applying to their law school. Show that you are knowledgeable about that law school and you can state specific reasons for applying.
- 5) Be prepared for a "thoughtful" question as opposed to a fact question. For example, if asked "What is the greatest obstacle you have had to overcome?" then answer it in a meaningful way. But if you have been fortunate enough not to have a great obstacle? Then your response should indicate a process by which you would seek to overcome the obstacle. For example your answer might be something like, "I have been very fortunate not to have had an obstacle to overcome in my life, but if I did, I would turn to my parents for advice. We are a close family and I would value their insights. Also, my roommate freshman year had to deal with a major obstacle. I would talk to her about the way she overcame this obstacle." The point is, have a process in mind for dealing the issue when a question has not clear response.
- 6) Have some good questions ready. Almost all interviewers conclude the interview with, "Do you have any questions?" Remember these questions should grow out of your reading about the law school in place of not reading about the law school. For example, questions may be asked about certain internships, clinics, journals, etc... How competitive are they? What is the process for gaining acceptance? Have several questions ready.
- 7) Since most of these interviews are casual and informal, an applicant does not need to "dress up" for a Skype interview, but should be neat and, for example, might consider a collared shirt. The applicant might also consider having an appropriate background. At a Pre-Law Conference last year a Pre-law Advisor told the story of a young woman who had a Skype interview early in the morning. She appeared in pajamas and was obviously drunk. She was not admitted to that school.

Samples of Specific Questions:

- 1) Tell me about yourself.
- 2) Why did you choose Duke?
- 3) Where do you see yourself in five years? (Both geographically and in terms of a career path.)
- 4) If you have taken a gap year or so, interviewer may well want to hear more about why you chose to take the time off, why you did what you did, and what impact it has had on your desire to enroll in law school.
- 5) Tell me in three sentences something about you that I can take back to the admissions committee.

- 6) What is your biggest achievement?
- 7) What is your biggest regret?
- 8) Your resume indicates that you did “so and so,” tell me more about this experience.
- 9) What do you think would be your biggest challenge at our law school?
- 10) Why did you choose your major? Do you think it will help in law school?
- 11) If there is one thing you could go back and re-do in your life, what would it be?
- 12) If your co-workers could use one word to describe you, what would it be?
- 13) Know how to explain the weakness of your application.
- 14) What is your preferred work style?
- 15) If you were a fly on the wall in the admissions office, what do you think they would be saying about your application?
- 16) Is there anything you were hoping I would ask? In other words, is there anything not on your application that you'd like us to know about you?
- 17) If you could not go to law school, where do you see your career going?
- 18) Is there an academic experience that has left a lasting impact that you can think of?
- 19) If I were to ask your friends and colleagues about you, how would they describe you?
- 20) Are there any individuals who have motivated you to study law?

These 20 questions may be exhausting but they are not exhaustive. They are meant to represent a sample of questions an applicant might expect. Please go back to the most important part of this memo: Be yourself!

Effective Techniques in Advising Minority Students (The 5 "E's")

Kimberly L. Hutson, Esquire
Assistant Professor/Prelaw Advisor
Norfolk State University
SAPLA Diversity Outreach Coordinator

Prelaw advisors work to fortify and reinforce the potential, importance and academic excellence of each student they have the opportunity to work with. Increasing the number of minority lawyers has become a priority in an attempt to reflect the populous as a whole. In order to lay a solid foundation for advising minority students, I find the following techniques effective (the 5 "E's")

Empower students to recognize and overcome real or perceived barriers to successfully obtain a law degree. Cultural bias in advising can be described as advisors and administrators holding the belief that the dominant or cultural ways of learning and knowing are superior to ways of learning and knowing that do not reflect such a culture. One of the major factors emphasized in achieving a culturally responsive advisee is that advisors and administrators examine their own biases regarding what is and is not appropriate classroom behavior. Prior to acknowledging and using the cultural values and belief systems of ethnically and culturally diverse students, advisors may profitably engage in self-reflection in order to gain understanding of their own cultural biases in teaching (APA, 2003). An advisor who is a warm demander maintains a classroom environment in which students feels respected and are respectful of the instructor's directions and rules. That is, the advisor cares about the students and does so in a manner that maintains the teacher's position in the classroom as the authority figure (Ware, 2006). Warm demander characteristics displayed in the classroom have been shown to enhance the social and academic experiences of ethnically and culturally diverse students, particularly low-income African American students (Gay, 2000). These characteristics also reflect the typical caretaker-child dynamic many ethnically and culturally diverse students are exposed to during their out-of-school socialization (Brown, 2004). Regarding African American students, promoting warm demander pedagogy has been shown to enhance their schooling experiences, particularly by reducing their exposure to classroom-based cultural discontinuity practices (Ware, 2006).

Emphasize the importance of preparing for the LSAT. (Polland, Richard) I recommend beginning this preparing process with the official Triple Prep-Test with explanations, which can be ordered from Law Service at LSAT.org for less than \$20. Completing this book allows you to get inside the mind of the test maker. It allows students to understand why certain answers are better than others. Students should take whatever time is necessary to understand the contents of this book. Most law school applicants familiarize themselves with test directions and question types, practice on sample tests, and study the information available on test-taking techniques and strategies. Although it is difficult to say when examinees are sufficiently prepared, very few people achieve their full potential without some preparation. Students should become so familiar with the instructions and question types that nothing they see on the test can delay or distract from thinking about how to answer a question. At a minimum, students should review the descriptions of the question types and simulate the day of the test by taking a practice test that includes a writing sample under actual time constraints. Taking a practice test under timed conditions helps to estimate the amount of time to spend on each question in a section and to determine the question types for which more understanding is needed.

Educate students on pipelines and resources available to succeed in the legal profession. Although students have numerous online and institutional resources to help and aid in their success, students also should remember that people are their greatest resource. Human interaction is a resource that has undeniable unlimited access to opportunity as well as other traditional resources.

Encourage students to think more critically, as well as emphasizing the importance of this art in the profession of law. (Polland, Richard) Law should be taught to college students as a means of enhancing their liberal arts education. The Socratic case method is an excellent way to teach students the art of critical thinking analytically and critically and the process of synthesizing. The American Bar Association has advised us that we should encourage pre-law students to select a broad array of courses to prepare for law school. We insist that pre-law students enroll in classes that will teach them to think critically, which will improve their ability to write and speak with clarity and style. This component will also allow them to become better problem solvers.

Establish networks and create opportunities for leadership. The saying, “It’s not just what you know, it’s who you know,” is a phrase that rings true no matter if you’re deep into your career or still in law school. Whether you’re thinking about law school or are a law student already, a new associate or even if you’ve made partner, the network you build is a key factor in your success. You may be thinking, “I don’t know anyone,” but the fact is you do. Your peers, family, friends and professors should form the base for your network, but you need to develop those relationships for them to be meaningful. Networking is simply meeting people, gathering information, and developing a relationship. As law students, you are entering a new profession. In order to know which aspect of the profession you might want to pursue, you will need to meet lawyers who can give you advice, perspective, mentoring, introductions to people and sometimes job leads that will help you throughout your career. Networking is not so much about who you currently know, although that helps it is about whom you meet and with whom you develop a relationship. The act of networking can have a bad connotation because there are people in the world who do not network correctly. Taking advantage of the bar association’s student membership in the geographic area in which you wish to practice will provide you access to networking events and seminars and will connect you with individual attorneys practicing throughout the city. Schmoozing, pressing the flesh and working a room are not networking. Asking for a job is not networking. Never, ever ask for a job when you are networking. It is the fastest way to end a conversation because most people you meet will not have a job to give you. What they will have are their expertise, time, ideas and information, which may lead to a relationship and to the possibility of a job somewhere sometime in the future.

In conclusion, our advisor-advisee relationship can have a profound, deep, and enduring impact. Great advising should lead student to self-awareness, assist in forming connections, connect with the proper academic support systems and support students’ active engagement in the pursuit of a legal education.

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THE MATURE (i.e., OLDER) STUDENT
Cindy Polinard

I am a silver-haired, 47 year old grandmother who graduated from the University of Texas Law School in 1994. Upon learning of my mid-life decision to attend law school, people variously express admiration, shock, polite disapproval, and unvarnished incredulity, not necessarily in that order. When further inquiry reveals that I left a rewarding and successful career, a comfortable home, and a good family life to live alone in a small apartment 300 miles from my husband, all pretense evaporates. Invariably, the next question is, “But, why?” “Why did you (at your age!) go to law school?”

Since this is a complex question that I have asked myself on numerous occasions (a disproportionate number of which were shortly before finals each semester), and which I am still unable to answer satisfactorily, I usually opt for a simple, convenient answer. I say something vague about seeking “a challenge,” and note that with my children grown and living away from home, I was, for the first time in decades, free of “obligations.” While I may have foolishly and mistakenly actually believed this at one time, the sheer folly of it, in hindsight, is embarrassing. The nature of one’s obligations, of course, changes over time, but they do not cease to exist. This turned out to be only one of many inaccurate expectations I had prior to entering law school. Each person’s circumstances are unique, of course, but perhaps sharing my observations about the “mature” student’s experiences can benefit others who are considering the same course.

As a general observation, the concerns that preoccupied me the most prior to going to law school never materialized, while at the same time, I experienced many things that I simply never anticipated. In short, I was wrong about almost everything.

Although not particularly self-conscious about my age, I was keenly aware that when people referred to “older” students, they were typically describing students in their late twenties. As I was 44 my first year, I could only guess how my classmates might be describing me. I worried that my age would operate to isolate me, that I would have nothing in common with other students, and, consequently, would find it difficult to make friends. I worried that the gulf in interests and life experiences would be too great, and that I would be very lonely for three years.

Within the first few months, these fears largely evaporated. I joined a study group with four other students, all of whom were in their mid-20's. These four people, three of whom were women, remained my closest friends throughout law school (and we continue to stay in close contact). The shared experience of law school, in general, forges strong ties, and the effect is intensified by the intimate dynamics of a study group. It is literally a support group—a place where you can safely share your anxieties, fears, doubts, and nightmares. The experience you share in common is so totally absorbing that the absence of any other common experience is simply tangential and unnoticed. One’s ability to conquer and assimilate the subject matter is the only yardstick that counts; age, like appearance, social class, family prominence, and other status-markers, seems an irrelevant detail.

I also feared that I was too many years removed from the student experience. I worried that my rusty study skills would be quickly eclipsed by those of my fellow students, most of whom had been students for all their short lives, and all of whom were top-notch students. This concern, too, turned out to be unwarranted. Like riding a bicycle, you never really forget how to study. Effective study habits have more to do with self-discipline and commitment, rather than any specific skills. As self-discipline is acquired largely through experience, my age was an advantage rather than a handicap. Another reason this fear disappeared was the sheer volume of the work and the relentless schedule. After the first few days, you are so busy studying that you have no time to spend worrying about studying.

The concerns about my age and study skills receded to be replaced by concerns I had not anticipated. I was unprepared for the physical demands of law school, and here age is a distinct disadvantage. I grew accustomed to a routine which included only five or six hours of sleep a night. The majority of every day is spent reading and studying, at the library or home. A typical class day requires carrying around a backpack containing three or four law textbooks (each weighing an average of about five pounds), plus assorted notepads, outlines notes, hornbooks, etc. My back hurt continuously. Physical fitness is a real asset, and little time is available to devote to it. Whenever possible, I indulged in walking, which provided exercise, stress relief, and the simple pleasure of being outdoors. And, I might note, the grueling pace doesn't end with graduation. As an associate practicing law, you likely will be expected to work ten to twelve hour stress-filled days. Such a pace is easily accommodated by a twenty-four-year-old, less so if you are forty-seven.

I also had not anticipated how completely encompassing the law school experience would be. It is like an insatiable monster that gobbles up all of your time, leaving nothing to devote to other pursuits. Even if you live alone, as I did, and face no other demands on your time, the consequences of denying other aspects of your self for long periods of time are unhealthy. Law school is devoted to (as they never tire of reminding you) teaching you to “think like a lawyer.” The building blocks of this process are critical thinking, analysis, logic, syntheses---a highly refined version of the skill prompted early in life by the Sesame Street song, “one of these things is not like the others.” In short, it is all about developing that part of your brain that specializes in these areas.

But even people who operate mostly in this analytical realm need to stimulate and nurture the affective, non-linear parts of the brain. As an older student, I had cultivated these needs over the years. Occasionally, indeed frequently, during law school, I was overwhelmed by a need to read poetry, visit an art gallery, listen to music—to feel, instead of think, to experience that equally valid and important “way of knowing” that doesn't rely on words and logical progressions. When studying at school, I often took my books outside and sat under the trees, just to be in closer proximity to the squirrels and blue jays.

By definition, the law school experience is skewed in the direction of developing analytical skills, but completely ignoring other aspects of your identity is unwise and unhealthy. I recall a conversation with an attorney friend prior to law school, in which he gently and obliquely was trying to discourage me from pursuing such a career choice. When I asked, “okay, so what is the worst thing about law school?” He responded, “They steal your brain.” That's a bit of an exaggeration,--- but not by much,—“they” will if you let them.

I faced law school fully aware of the conventional wisdom regarding the intensely competitive atmosphere, the emphasis on performance and grades, and the devastating effect that type of environment can have on one's ego. I felt comfortable with my identity, confident of my self-worth, and certain that I would not fall into the trap of confusing either with success or failure at law school. I was wrong.

Upon reflection, I am embarrassed by the sheer hubris of my belief that my maturity and experience would insulate me from this need to compete. I grossly underestimated the consequences of being immersed in an environment in which other measures of success do not matter. I came to law school, like my classmates, accustomed to success. I believed that if I just worked hard, I would succeed. Consequently, to work as hard as possible and still not receive all A's (the sole measure of success) was a shock. The Assistant Dean, in his orientation speech to our class, noted that all of us expected to be in the top ten percent of our class—and that, of course, nine out of ten of us would fail to achieve that aspiration. The full impact of that point, naturally, was lost on us at the time, but every “B+” was tangible evidence of its brutal truth.

To be reminded (frequently by my patient, supportive husband) that an average or above-average grade at a top law school should not occasion despair and self-loathing had little effect. It is difficult to

overestimate the impact of being so completely absorbed in an environment in which grades are the only recognized measure of success. My classmates included people with a dizzying array of talents and accomplishments: musicians, athletes, accountants, bankers, teachers, career business people, M.D.'s, and Ph.D.'s; yet, I knew no one who was able to completely resist the seduction of defining personal success in terms of grades.

At the beginning of this essay, I alluded to my belief that approaching law school in mid-life meant that I would not be burdened by the demands associated with a young family. Our children were grown and away from home. My husband's professional obligations prevented him from joining me at law school, but we had discussed this decision fully and both were confident that we would be able to handle the separation. So I seemed well-situated to focus my energies and attention on school. And, compared to classmates who lived with spouses or lovers, and the few who had young children, for the most part this was true. But life takes unexpected turns. During the three years I was in school, three of our daughters married, our first grandchild was born, and my father became seriously ill. I missed my grandson's first Easter egg hunt, and cried myself to sleep that night, consumed with regret, guilt, and self-reproach. Very few people have lives that can be "put on hold" for three years without incurring some costs. It is important to recognize that up front.

The strains placed on a marriage or long-term relationship by one partner being in law school are considerable. I was fortunate in having optimum circumstances: a supportive, sensitive, independent husband who, having experienced the rigors of graduate school, was well aware of the demands and pressures on me. We were also lucky to have sufficient resources that, although living apart, we could talk by phone daily and see each other frequently. Still, it was hard for both of us. Absent these ideal conditions, I believe the odds are against a relationship surviving.

Age and experience generally contribute to a greater awareness of one's strengths and weaknesses. The knowledge that you have the strength and character to survive failure lends stability and perspective to the often overwhelming experience of law school. Self-knowledge is a critical asset in most human pursuits, but is absolutely essential in a highly charged atmosphere where living near the boundaries of endurance is routine.

A final tip: When packing to go to law school, be sure to take with you your most cherished possessions—music, art, books, photographs, mementos---those things that give your life its resonance and identity. You will, at times, need such personal amulets to remind you of your "real life." Everything else you need for your law school life is waiting there for you.

I am often asked, "Would you make the same decision had you known what was ahead?" My answer is an unqualified, unhesitating "Absolutely." Although selective memory (much like the experience of recalling childbirth) has softened the edges, it was, on balance, a very positive experience. I enjoyed the unparalleled opportunity to exchange ideas with a select group of exceedingly bright people. I was able to pursue subjects that interest me with professors who are among the leading experts in their respective fields. I established life-long friendships. Would I make the same decision? You bet I would.

POSTSCRIPT

Eight years have passed since I graduated from law school. At fifty-five, many of my friends and colleagues are checking their 401k balances and calculating the months to retirement. Retirement doesn't hold much attraction for me, however, because I love my job. It's interesting, intellectually challenging, and rewarding. How could gardening, yoga classes, or "Oprah" compete? How did I get so lucky?

People are especially surprised to learn that I love my job and that I am a *lawyer*. It's not a secret that the legal profession has one of the highest job-dissatisfaction rates around. A close friend (my age) who also became a lawyer in her forties and is now a partner in a prestigious Houston firm, told me that when she began her career, she felt a bit smug listening to her twenty-something colleagues comment, "I just don't know if I can do this for thirty or forty years," because she knew she didn't *have* to do it for thirty or forty years. So, how have I avoided the all-too-common fate of feeling "trapped" in a high-stress unrewarding job?

During my final year of law school, I (gratefully!) accepted a position following graduation at a medium-sized (ten- lawyer) firm where I had worked as a summer clerk. I was fortunate to have as a supervisor and mentor one of the firm's senior partners---an experienced, painstakingly thorough, board-certified employment lawyer with a well-deserved reputation for honesty, integrity, and hard work. I learned much about being a good lawyer by following his example.

I enjoyed the work, too. Much of the employment litigation involved claims of ethnic discrimination, gender discrimination, and sexual harassment. (We often joked that we couldn't possibly make up facts this weird). I particularly enjoyed interaction with clients (well, most of them anyway)--getting to know people in the community and occasionally, actually helping them. The thing I enjoyed least was the omnipresent pressure to convert one's time spent at work into billable hours. (By the way, the ability to measure out one's day in tiny tenths-of-an-hour increments is a finely-honed skill that "spills over" and adversely affects the quality of one's life generally. Is it really a good thing to have a razor-sharp awareness of exactly how many minutes one has been waiting in line at the grocery store?)

Near the end of my fourth year, the firm unexpectedly dissolved; partners went in various directions. After pondering several options, I accepted a position as a staff attorney working for a justice on the court of appeals. I knew right away that I had found the right job for me. Intermediate appellate courts in Texas hear both civil and criminal cases, so the cases and issues before the court are varied. My work consists mostly of legal research and writing, exactly the part of law school I enjoyed the most. The work is varied and very challenging. The judge I work for is intelligent, hard-working, and dedicated to public service. I influence the jurisprudence of the state and I actually get paid for it. And best of all, I never, ever, have to take phone calls from other lawyers (all questions about pending cases are handled by the court's clerks and lawyers are prohibited from discussing any matter pending before the court with the staff attorneys). I have been with the court four years and I still wake up every day looking forward to the challenge of my work.

Law students typically think of a court clerkship as a one or two-year stepping stone to a career in private practice, and it can serve as a valuable experience in such a capacity. Some are surprised to learn, however, that like me, many of my colleagues at the court have put in time in the private-sector before joining the court. Such career choices are, I suspect, a function of realizing that (1) liking your work is really important and (2) having a BMW isn't.

My law school friends and classmates have pursued various paths. Two of my closest friends are women who chose to forego a partnership track in favor of "part-time" (about eighty hours a week) employment that facilitates maintaining a family; several have changed jobs at least once; several have their own successful practices; one is an in-house counsel to a state medical school; at least one quit his lucrative job at a prestigious firm to travel around the world.

I'm fortunate to have a rewarding and challenging job that is a "good fit" for my interests, skills, and abilities. As you consider the wide range of opportunities offered by a career in law, I wish you luck as well.

Advising Alumni Applicants to Law School

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For many years on a national level, alumni applicants have outnumbered college seniors applying to law school. Many pre-law advisors have developed their programs to assist both current students and alumni, recognizing the value of serving the entire law school applicant pool and the institutional benefit of strengthening links to the alumni.

What does LSAC data* tell us about the nationwide applicant pool in recent years?

- One third of candidates apply to law school while in college
- More than one third of candidates apply to law school within 1-3 years of college graduation
- More than two thirds of candidates apply to law school by age 26
- 14-15% of candidates apply within 6-25 years of college graduation

**See Date of Graduation and Applicants Age Profiles for: All Applicants, below*

Alumni applicants are less successful in gaining admission to law school than college seniors. LSAC National Decision Profiles show a significant gap between the percentage of current student and alumni applicants who are accepted to one or more law schools (see below). Why are alumni law school applicants less successful than current students? Average credentials (LSAT/GPA) of alumni applicants decline as the years increase between graduation and application to law school. However, even when credentials are very similar, as in the case of those applying within 1-3 years of graduation, alumni applicants lag behind current students in gaining acceptance to one or more schools. Older applicants follow a long-term trend of applying to law school later in the admission year. LSAC also reports that the credentials of applicants decline as the admission year progresses – the “early bird” applicants are better qualified than those who apply later. LSAC Research: “National Applicant Trends,” www.lsacnet.org

At NAPLA conferences, pre-law advisors have observed that alumni applicants, even those who recently graduated, are often unrealistic about their admission prospects and may not allow for sufficient “safety” in their list of law schools. Alumni applicants may be tied to a specific geographic area, due to family or employment obligations, limiting their law school options. Alumni applicants may think of themselves as “non-traditional” candidates, even though they have been out of school for only a few years. They may not have secured academic letters of recommendation while in college, relying primarily on employment-related letters of recommendation for their law school applications. As noted previously, LSAC data shows that alumni applicants apply later in the admission cycle, which may adversely affect outcomes.

Access to pre-law advising resources could be another key factor in the decline in admission success after candidates graduate from college. College seniors are more likely to make use of pre-law meetings, web resources, and individual pre-law advising on their campus, and they gain helpful tips and support from the “grapevine” of other students who are applying to law school. Current students are better informed about the admission process, the importance of applying early in the admission year, and how to research schools within a range of admissibility. They are able to obtain academic letters of recommendation for their law school applications. They take advantage of on-campus services such as the review of their personal statements and resumé by faculty, professional advisors or career counselors.

Pre-law advisors are well advised to develop a program to address the need of all law school applicants, and to make campus administrators aware of the distribution of current students and alumni in

the law school applicant pool. There are many institutional benefits to serving the needs of alumni applicants.

Tips on Advising Alumni Law School Applicants

- ❑ Expect that students will apply to law school after graduation: discuss this during meetings and appointments, in pre-law handouts, and on the pre-law web site
- ❑ Encourage students to establish a relationship with the pre-law advisor during college even if they plan to apply to law school after graduation. Inform them of the availability (or limits) of assistance after graduation
- ❑ Encourage students to request academic letters of recommendation from faculty before they graduate. Letters can be stored at LSAC or in a campus credentials file until needed
 - ❑ Publicize your availability to alumni applicants! Set aside blocks of time for alumni who call without an appointment during the busiest part of the admission season
- ❑ Inform your campus administration that most law school candidates apply after graduation, providing campus-specific data from your Pre-law Advisor Action Reports.
- ❑ Use a pre-law web site to inform students and alumni of available services, and to provide information on the law school admission process
- ❑ Build relationships with alumni and development offices to connect current students to alumni lawyers
- ❑ Consider shared funding arrangements with alumni and development offices to cover the costs of serving alumni applicants, based upon the premise that the institution benefits from strong relationships with alumni as they are entering professional careers
- ❑ Authorize LSAC to provide pre-law advisor contact information to candidates from your school who register for LSAC services; include the URL for your pre-law web site.

Advising Alumni Applicants

Gerald L. Wilson, Ph.D., Duke University

The past several years have seen a tremendous growth in the number of Duke Alums seeking to use the services of the Pre-Law Advising Center. In fact, 60% of those advised in our office are Alums. Generally they fall into two categories:

- (1) Recent grads that have established a file in our office and were seen prior to graduation. This accounts for the bulk of the alumni applicants.
- (2) Alums who have been out for a while and had no inclination toward law school during their undergraduate years. When they decided to apply to law school and contacted Law Services, they were informed by Law Services that there is a Pre-Law Advisor at their undergraduate institution whom they then contacted.

Duke is committed to offering the full services of the Pre-law Advising Center to all of its alums.

Procedures

- (1) When contacted by alumni by phone or increasingly by email, the file is checked to see if the alum had placed an information sheet on file in our office. If so, a phone appointment is made. If not, an information sheet is forwarded electronically. When it has been returned, a phone appointment is made.
- (2) Alumni applicants are then sent our “Senior Application Packet” which contains the following; (all of these items except the Duke Pre- Law Handbook are available on line at www.duke.prelaw.edu)
 - The latest edition of the Duke Pre-Law Handbook
 - “Basic Information for Senior/ Alumni Pre-Law Applicants” (Handbook)
 - “Summary of Application Procedures” (Handout)
 - Calendar and Check Sheet (Handout)
 - Sample Resume (Handout)
- (3) Phone appointments are scheduled as necessary. The advisor needs to be aware for all applicants, but perhaps especially for alums, of special needs and challenges. Advising alums often presents special challenges in at least three areas: (a) somewhat poor undergraduate GPAs because of a lack of motivation and career goals, (b) geographic or other restrictions because of family situations, spouse’s job, finances, (c) law school reactions to applicants who have been out of school for period of time.
- (4) There is continuous contact between the Pre-Law Advisor and the Alum applicant with the same services being provided as those offered to undergraduate applicants. The basic contact rule given to undergraduates is given to alumni: If any applicant has one or two questions (after the initial phone conference), email the questions. Do not email 20 questions or one question which takes 20 minutes to answer! Make a phone appointment.

Gerald L. Wilson
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Prepared for NAPLA
Session “Clueless in Alumni Land
Strategies for Advising Alumni Applicants”

Advising Pre-Law Students with Disabilities
Revised and updated by Joan E. Van Tol
General Counsel, LSAC (2015)

Julia A. Yaffee
Assistant Dean for Student Services
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The number of pre-law students who have a disability has continued to grow over recent years. Approximately 9% of all law students have some type of disability according to data gathered by the Association of American Law Schools in 2004. Advisors should also be aware of the special issues students with disabilities may face in the law school admission process. To serve this population, advisors should be aware of the civil protection granted to these students. Applying to law school can be daunting for all students, but it can be particularly daunting for students with disabilities. Advice from an informed pre-law adviser can ease the process and allay a lot of worries.

The LSAT

Timing is everything. Students with disabilities who need accommodations on the LSAT should review information provided by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) at <http://www.lsac.org/docs/default-source/jd-docs/accommodatebrochure.pdf> well in advance. LSAC has established guidelines regarding the types of documentation students must submit to qualify for accommodations. These accommodations most frequently include being given additional time to complete the test, but may include a variety of accommodations such as a private room, additional breaks, a scribe, large font text and so on.

Students who take the LSAT with accommodations receive a test score on the same score scale as all other test-takers, and their scores are reported just the same as all other scores.

The Application Process - Where to apply

Students with disabilities should give careful thought to where they should apply. With a little research, students can determine which schools have experience in providing the types of accommodations they will need. For instance, some schools have a better physical layout for students who have problems with mobility. The school may be housed in a single building rather than spread out across the campus. Students in wheelchairs have obvious concerns about the accessibility of facilities, but a number of other students may have concerns regarding the distance of parking to classrooms, the availability of book lockers and their location. (Many students have difficulty managing the weighty law casebooks.)

Some schools have central university resources to draw upon in serving students with disabilities. They may have a Disability Resource Office with a professional staff available to counsel and assist students. This is especially true of law schools on large university campuses. One possible benefit of attending such an institution is that there may be greater access to the latest in assistive technology such as real time captioning, voice to text software programs, and WYNN work stations that allow students to enlarge text, have text read aloud, create notes, and even refer to a dictionary on one system. Students with physical disabilities should research the availability of the accommodations they specifically need.

Students with disabilities should also directly contact the schools in which they are interested. They should seek out the administrators who actually provide the accommodations to learn what is readily available and if their needs can be met. They should also try to talk to students who receive accommodations to see how satisfied they are with the services provided.

Students should be aware that not all schools use the same criteria regarding providing accommodations. The documentation that students are required to submit can vary and may not be the same as that required by LSAC or by their undergraduate school. Each institution may have its own guidelines about how old learning disability testing can be, the qualifications needed by the professional evaluating the test results, and so on. Generally, universities use the AHEAD (Association of Higher Education and Disability) guidelines. Students who have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may have additional conditions to meet to document their disability. This may include submitting a complete childhood history including comments on report cards, evidence of tutoring, and other evidence that documents the existence of the disorder in childhood even if it was not diagnosed at the time. The burden of gathering this evidence is on the student.

The Application – To Disclose or Not Disclose

It is illegal for schools to make a pre-admission inquiry regarding disabilities. The real question is when students should disclose their disability. Many applicants agonize that their application will be treated differently if the school to which they are applying is aware of their disability. There is no right or wrong answer to this question. Each student should consider what their academic performance and LSAT score indicate about them. For some students with disabilities, their accommodated LSAT score demonstrates how well they can perform when given the accommodation they need. Some other students may have a relatively weak LSAT because they did not ask for accommodations, but they present a strong academic record that demonstrates how well they can perform when they receive accommodations. Some students may have an uneven academic record because they were not diagnosed as having a disability until part way through their college career. If they disclose that information, an admission committee can judge their ability more accurately. Students should remember that the percentage of law students with disabilities is about the same as the percentage of undergraduates with disabilities (in 2004). Law schools really do admit them!

Enrollment – Plan Ahead for Success

From my own experience, undergraduate schools are offering more assistance than ever to students with disabilities. Students are arriving as first year law students expecting disability resource staff to be in place to advocate for them and even anticipate their needs. Because of the nature of law school, these new students often have a period of adjustment where they need to learn to advocate for themselves regarding accommodations.

This can be particularly challenging for students with learning disabilities. Students who simply picked up class notes from the University's note-taking service will find that special arrangements have to be made to get law class notes. Students may also find that they need more substantial accommodations than they needed as undergraduates because of the nature of the material being read and analyzed.

Here again, timing is very important. As soon as the student decides which school they plan to attend, they should contact the disabilities resource office or the person responsible for providing accommodations. Many law schools provide this contact information with their acceptance materials or shortly thereafter. Students need to be sure that their documentation meets the school's guidelines and that they have time to arrange any additional testing that may be required. Students who need note-takers should keep everyone informed of their needs and their class schedule so that there won't be a delay in receiving notes. This planning is even more important for students who need books-on-tape or special equipment.

Career Planning – The Bar Exam and Beyond

From the first week of classes most law students start to focus on the Bar Exam. This may be a form of obsession but for students with disabilities it is also good sense. They need to do some of the same research they did when they were learning about the documentation requirements at various schools. Many state bar associations have developed their own guidelines regarding the documentation necessary to receive accommodations on the bar exam. Students need to pay particular attention to standards for how old their testing can be. Many students were tested prior to receiving accommodations in undergraduate school and may be caught off guard if the bar requires testing to be no more than three or four years old. State bars may also require additional documentation for ADD and ADHD. State bars also have firm deadlines for requesting testing accommodations.

Frequently those of us that provide services to students move quickly to the requirements that have to be satisfied, deadlines to be met, and assistance to be provided and give too little attention to general counseling of students. Students with disabilities who choose to go to law school should be encouraged to go through a complete career assessment process to identify their strengths and abilities and to explore career options. Pre-law advisors have a real role to play in helping students learn more about what lawyers do, what skills they need, what challenges they face. Students with disabilities can be directed to some special resources such as the ABA Commission on Mental and Physical Disability Law, Subcommittee on Lawyers with Disabilities. The Subcommittee's mission is "to explore, report, and recommend policies and programs to promote full and equal entry and participation in the legal profession for people with disabilities"

Students with disabilities should be well aware of their rights as students and as employees under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Title I of this act prohibits private employers, state and local governments, employment agencies, and labor unions from discriminating against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms and conditions of employment. A particularly helpful brochure is "Interviewing Tips for Law Students with Disabilities and Employers Who Recruit Them" published by the National Association for Law Placement. The brochure outlines the basic of the ADA and includes helpful advice on dealing with disabilities in the employment arena.

The number of pre-law students with disabilities seeking advice will continue to grow. Fortunately, the resources available to assist them – and the pre-law advisor – will also continue to grow.

Resources:

ABA Commission On Mental and Physical Disability Laws Subcommittee on Lawyers with Disabilities

740 15th Street, NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 662-1570 (voice)
(202) 662- 1012 (TTY)
<http://www.abanet.org/disability/>

Association of Higher Education & Disability (AHEAD)

P.O. Box 21192
Columbus, OH 43221-0192
(614) 488-4972 (V/TDD)
<http://www.AHEAD.org>

AHEAD publishes a wide array of valuable publications on disabilities.

CAREERS & the disABLED

1160 East Jericho Turnpike, Suite 200

Huntington, NY 11743

(516) 421-9421

www.eop.com/cd.html

Career Guidance and recruitment magazine for people with disabilities at undergraduate, graduate, and professional levels. Each issue includes a special Braille section.

Law School Admission Council

P.O. Box 2000

Newtown, PA 18940

(215) 968-1001

www.LSAC.org

Information about LSAT accommodations for people with disabilities. Web site has links to all the ABA law schools.

Advising International Students Interested in Attending a U.S. Law School
SAPLA Conference Presentation, Wake Forest Law, March 14, 2019
Maya Russell, Pre-Law Advisor, Furman University
Amber Featherstone, Director of Graduate & International Programs, Wake Forest Law

Advising international F-1 students interested in attending a U.S. law school may present additional challenges to pre-law advisors. It is important to note that all law degrees in the U.S. are post-graduate and an applicant must have the equivalent of a Bachelor's Degree to qualify for admission. This is distinct from most countries where the first degree in law is a Bachelor's Degree (LL.B.). Some countries have pathways to practice law without having a law degree. Students who complete an undergraduate degree in the U.S. only have one true pathway to law school in the U.S.—the Juris Doctor (J.D.).

Advisors may want to adopt a proactive advising model and work with their international students to plan an educational track carefully and early. It is important to ask advisees where they would like to live and practice law. The response may determine whether it is prudent to pursue a law degree in the U.S. Advisors should recommend that their international students maintain close contact with their international student services (ISS) office and students should communicate their intentions to pursue graduate school in the U.S. well before graduation. Timing is critical because there is no way to extend a student visa unless there is a degree-related compelling academic purpose.

A. F-1 Visa Classification

F-1 visa classification is a nonimmigrant visa category available to full-time, enrolled students working toward a degree at a U.S. institution of higher education. F-1 is the most common immigration status for degree seeking international students. The F-1 status is valid as long as the student remains at the University sponsoring the F-1 status and the student carries a full course load. The rules for maintaining a full course of study for immigration purposes are complicated. Advisors should recommend that students seek advice from the ISS office at their institution before dropping a course or attempting to enroll in an online course because there are restrictions related to course load and online courses.

B. Financing Law School

International students often face challenges in financing their legal education. Early financial planning is essential for F-1 J.D. students. International students must present an affidavit of financial support demonstrating sufficient financial resources for the first year of study. Typically, students present a bank statement showing sufficient funds to cover tuition, books, and living expenses for 1L year. If an individual student does not have personal funds available, the student may be able to present documentation showing family sponsorship, agency/government sponsorship, or a fellowship.

Students are encouraged to explore all loan and scholarship options available to them. Most law schools do not offer fully funded fellowships to international students; however, students should contact the schools individually to inquire whether merit aid and needs-based scholarships are available.

International students are not eligible for federal financial aid (Direct Stafford and Direct Graduate PLUS Loans, or Work-Study). Most private educational loans cannot be obtained without a co-signer who is a U.S. citizen. International students should contact law schools directly to inquire whether the school is aware of lenders that may offer loans to international students without the need for a co-signer and students should carefully examine the qualifications, terms, and maximum amounts of those loans.

C. Employment Restrictions

The U.S. immigration regulations, under certain circumstances, allow international students to pursue part-time or full-time employment, but advisors should be familiar with the limitations placed on employment.

On-Campus Employment

International students are eligible to work on campus; however, that employment is limited to twenty (20) hours per week. Also, student employment is not taken into consideration for evidence of financial support because there are no guarantees that students will have a job once they are on campus.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a work authorization benefit for F-1 students that must be approved by a school's ISS office. Students are eligible for CPT if they are on F-1 status and have been studying full-time for at least one academic year. CPT is temporary authorization for practical training—paid or unpaid—directly related to a student's major field of study. "Practical training" may include: employment, internships, cooperative education experiences, or practicum participation. Student must have a CPT offer in writing. A student's department adviser is responsible for completing the "Advisor Section" of the CPT application and the adviser should be familiar with the student's degree program and job/internship offer.

A school's ISS office may authorize CPT for an activity that is "integral to" a student's "established curriculum." Institutional interpretation has created a gray area here. For example, some schools require that a course be taken for credit if CPT is a required part of a course, and others schools do not require that a course be taken for credit.

CPT may be issued for part or full-time employment. Twelve-months full-time CPT eliminates the Optional Practical Training (OPT) benefit outlined below.

Optional Practical Training (OPT)

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a work authorization benefit available to students who have been studying full-time in the U.S. for at least one academic year. International students receive one twelve (12) month work authorization for each higher education level. OPT requires United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) approval! The employment, and any changes to that employment, must be reported to USCIS. The employment must be related to a student's field of study; however, students do not need an offer letter prior to applying to USCIS for OPT.

Students must complete OPT within fourteen (14) months of graduation. Students must be employed at least twenty (20) hours per week. Unpaid employment may violate the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and students cannot volunteer for normally paid positions. OPT completed before graduation is named "pre-completion OPT" versus OPT completed after graduation, which is named, "post-completion OPT." Students must apply for post-completion OPT ninety (90) days prior to the end of their academic program.

D. Travel Restrictions

Travel in and out of the country may prove risky for some international students. For example, students taking leave from the U.S. for more than five (5) months and reentering with a new I-20 must be enrolled full-time for one academic year to requalify for OPT. Furthermore, students may need to be careful traveling abroad after graduating and during their OPT period because students will be required to present paperwork—Employment Authorization Document (EAD), job offer letter, F-1 visa, and I-20 Form endorsed for travel—to reenter the U.S.

After OPT is complete, students must exit the U.S., or they may transfer to another degree program or visa status. Failure to maintain lawful status and the accompanying paperwork may result in the inability to return to the U.S. in the future.

- E. **Summary** Pre-Law Advisors should adopt a proactive advising model and it is important to work with international students closely to plan a career track carefully and early. Students should investigate where they want to live and work and which degree is necessary to secure employment in their desired country. Students should be encouraged to maintain close contact with a school's ISS office and students should communicate their intentions for graduate school to the ISS office well before graduation. Again, timing is critical because there is no way to extend a visa unless there is a degree-related compelling academic purpose.

International Law Students and Legal Employment
Brian D. Lewis, University of North Carolina School of Law

International students attending American law schools on student visas often face limited employment opportunities, both during school (e.g., summer internships) and after graduation. Due to federal regulations, the only summer work opportunities generally available to them are under the rubric of externships – jobs for which the law school grants academic credit – or a position as a research assistant for a law school professor. For permanent employment, federal regulations require employers to jump through hoops to sponsor a non-citizen, which in part requires them to demonstrate to the Department of Labor that no willing and qualified U.S. workers applied for the job opportunity. This may work in some of the STEM fields, but documenting that U.S. citizens with JDs are a scarce commodity is likely to be difficult.

International students also need to think realistically about their prospects for even short-term employment in the U.S. For years, the federal government has allowed students with F-1 visas to remain here after graduation to get [Optional Practical Training](#) for up to 12 months. Law students with these visas generally know about OPT and are nearly universally interested in staying to get it. However, being eligible is one thing – actually *obtaining* that employment in the legal industry is another.

Although not completely out of the question, very few legal employers are interested in hiring someone who can only work for them for a year and then must leave the country. The timing is problematic as well, as the 12-month OPT clock starts running within 60 days of graduation. While international students with JDs from U.S. law schools are allowed to sit for the bar exam in most (if not all) states, bar exams are given in late July, and the time between graduation and the bar exam is usually (and should be) devoted to full-time bar study. After the exam, bar results in most states are not available until late October or early November. In New York, character and fitness checks do not begin until after bar results come out, and bar licensure could take another month or two. For any graduate with an F-1 visa who wants a job that requires bar passage and licensure, the timetable is, therefore, pretty much incompatible with OPT rules. If a student/graduate does not intend to take and pass a bar exam, getting a “JD-Advantage” job that starts within 60 days of graduation is possible, but employers are still less interested in hiring a person who must leave in a year.

One caveat: As with any set of regulations, the current rules regarding OPT are subject to change. Given the current administration’s views on non-U.S. citizens in general, if any changes happen, one might expect the rules to become more restrictive, not less so.

Advising Students Interested in Intellectual Property Law and from STEM Fields

Chad F. Slieper, J.D.

**Director, Law, Science, and Technology Program and Pre-Law Director and Advisor
Georgia Institute of Technology – School of Public Policy**

Intellectual Property Law, an area of law that deals with human creative output and the legal mechanisms we use to protect and regulate that output (trademarks, copyright, patents, trade secrets, etc.), sometimes attracts students with an intellectual curiosity about this particular area of law who aren't necessarily the usual suspects, so to speak, for pursuing law school and a career in law. Students studying the arts often come to pre-law advisors with an interest in copyright or trademark issues, and students with a science or engineering focus often show an interest or aptitude for patent law. This can present a challenge for pre-law advisors, who may not be used to dealing with the particular questions and concerns that this group of students often have. Pre-law advisors should also be prepared with general knowledge of the intellectual property field in order to connect science and engineering students, students of the arts, and others with related interests and aptitudes to a possible career path within the law with which they may not be familiar.

When it comes to trademark and copyright law, it's important to remember that students from any background can successfully pursue careers as intellectual property attorneys who deal with trademark and copyright issues. There are no barriers to entry to this practice requiring a specific major or preparation, other than the study and on-the-job training that comes with specializing in any particular area of law. Some students with an interest and aptitude for trademark and copyright will be students of the arts, but others will be liberal arts, business, or even science and engineering students. This area of intellectual property law, like the general practice of law, does not require a specific undergraduate major. To the extent students in the arts come to a pre-law advisor with an interest in copyright or trademark issues, or with an interest in law school more generally, encouraging them to supplement their course load with courses that emphasize logical reasoning and analysis is important in helping them prepare for the logical rigor of law school and lawyering.

Patent law is a slightly different animal within intellectual property, and within law practice more broadly. Patent attorneys (and patent agents – discussed more below) must be registered to practice before the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), and in order to register there is a separate registration exam that must be passed (often called the patent bar), as well as a requirement that the candidate have a "bachelor's degree in a recognized technical subject," or otherwise show evidence to the PTO of adequate course preparation in scientific and technical fields.⁷ It's important for students interested in a career in patent law to begin thinking

⁷ See the *General Requirements Bulletin for Admission to the Examination for Registration to Practice in Patent Cases before the United State Patent and Trademark Office*, published by the USPTO's Office of Enrollment and Discipline (OED) and available electronically at:

https://www.uspto.gov/sites/default/files/documents/OED_GRB.pdf (accessed on July 15, 2019).

about this preparation, even at the undergraduate level, and it's important that pre-law advisors are aware of the requirements.

Pre-law advisors should also be aware that it is possible to take the same registration exam (the patent bar) without a law degree and become registered to prosecute patent applications before the USPTO as a patent agent without going to law school or becoming an attorney. This is often a career path that is overlooked, and some students with an interest in patent law may find that they are able to achieve their career goals without the additional time and expense of attending law school, or a student may decide to become a patent agent in order to gain experience and decide if law school is the right choice for them. Patent agents are not licensed to litigate or to practice law, but are limited to helping with patent applications. They may work for law firms or for the USPTO itself.

Students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields sometimes sell themselves short when it comes to their aptitude for a career in law. The challenge of upper level science, engineering, and math course work may lead to undergraduate GPAs that are a bit lower for students in these fields, and this often causes them anxiety about their chances for law school admissions. Helping students understand that many law schools recognize the rigor of their undergraduate degree programs, and also that this may be a situation where supplementing their law school applications with an addendum explaining the course work taken, how it has prepared them for law school, and how the lower GPA that may have resulted from taking upper level STEM courses, may help assuage some of their fears and prepare them for a more competitive application process.

Pre-law advisors should encourage STEM students with an interest in law school, and help them appreciate the value that their logical reasoning and analytical skills will bring to the study and practice of law, as well as their technical expertise, as technology has come to permeate all areas of law. Their experience disaggregating problems into their component parts, addressing those various parts, and synthesizing these components into a cohesive solution, or menu of possible solutions, is the same process that law students and lawyers undertake on a daily basis. In order to supplement their attractiveness to law schools, and more importantly, their readiness for it, we should also be advising STEM students to add as many courses in the liberal arts and humanities as possible to their course of study. Adding these courses helps students develop communication skills, both oral and written, that are not always emphasized in STEM courses and will serve them well as law students and lawyers, as well as with preparing for the reading load of law school. With a STEM background, and preparation in the liberal arts and humanities, students can begin to assemble a toolkit that will enable them to be an intermediary between technical and non-technical constituencies, regardless of their ultimate area of practice as a lawyer. In sum, many exciting career opportunities exist for STEM students with an interest in law, and many exciting career opportunities exist in intellectual property for a variety of students with a variety of career goals. Pre-law advisors can help students navigate the opportunities that are best for them.

For students who want to explore more about intellectual property law online, the following sites may be useful:

AIPLA (American Intellectual Property Law Association) – <https://www.aipla.org/>
IPO (Intellectual Property Owners Association) - <https://www.ipo.org/>

Federal Circuit Bar Association - <http://fedcirbar.org/> (appellate patent cases are heard by the Federal Circuit in lieu of the local Circuit Courts of Appeals, so the Federal Circuit Bar Association often hosts events dealing with patent law)

United States Patent and Trademark Office - <https://www.uspto.gov/>

Additionally, as a pre-law advisor, it is worth reaching out to the intellectual property section of your State Bar Association to see if there may be local organizations, potential mentors, and possible guest speakers with which you and your students could connect.

TAKING TIME OFF BEFORE LAW SCHOOL*- A Dean's Perspective

Andy Cornblatt
Georgetown University Law Center

The four years went by so quickly. It is hard to believe that you are at those "crossroads" that everyone has been talking about, but here you are. Should you take some time off between college and law school? Should you apply now and request a deferral if you get accepted? Does work experience, travel etc. strengthen your application? What if you're not sure what you want to do right now? Will all law schools permit deferrals?

These are difficult and important questions. What makes them even more difficult to answer is that each situation and each individual is unique and sweeping generalizations should be resisted at all costs. There are some general principles which are applicable however and should be kept in mind as you wrestle with your future plans.

If you are asking yourself if you are ready to begin law school right away, then chances are you should explore other alternatives. Talk to the people at your Career Placement Office. Anything that you do that separates you from all the college Seniors applying to law school will enhance your chances of acceptance. Responsible and meaningful work experience, further academic pursuits and public service work are all things upon which law school admissions people look favorably.

There are dangers here however. Work experience, law related or otherwise, very rarely plays a decisive role in an admissions decision. If you want to take time off and explore other things, go ahead and do it. But do not do it because you think it will help you get into law school. Everything you do need not be a means to some end. What you should not do, in my opinion, is to go find a job as a paralegal because you think law schools like that. If you genuinely want to find out what a law firm is all about, that's great. But do it for the right reasons.

My inclination is to recommend that most people take some time between college and law school. Once you begin your first year at law school, certain things are set in motion and your opportunities to explore and experiment are severely restricted. On the other hand, do not simply take a year off to tread water. Some people are anxious and ready to begin law school right away and that is exactly what they should do.

As far as deferrals are concerned, the policies of law schools vary greatly. You should contact the school to find out what their policy is. A number of schools will grant a deferral for one year only. These schools require a written request from the applicant indicating the reasons for the deferral. Some schools do not allow any deferral at all. It is up to you to find out the policy of the particular school in which you are interested.

What if November arrives and you just aren't sure whether you want to go to law school the following year? Should you apply and then maybe defer or should you wait a year to apply? My rule of thumb is this: if you are 100% certain you want to wait, don't apply. Wait until the following year since any meaningful experience in the intervening time will help your application, though in most cases only marginally. However, if you are not certain, apply during your senior year of college. There is no need

to cut off any of your options. People's minds have a way of changing and your outlook may be very different in April from November. While you may have thought you needed a year off, you may come to realize that you only needed a weekend off.

Deferred Admissions

Most law schools admit a person for a specific entry time. If you choose not to enter that year, you must reapply for a subsequent year. However, the policy is changing some now. A few schools will defer admission for one year, for good cause (see listing under Additional Useful Information section in this book). If you are certain you will not be going in a given year, do not apply until you are ready. Never, but never, ask for a deferral until after you have been admitted.

TAKING TIME OFF BEFORE LAW SCHOOL:

A Personal Perspective

Michael Gorman

Duke '88, Harvard JD/MBA '95

Introduction

My purpose in this brief essay is to recommend strongly that students considering law school take time to work for at least a year before making a final decision. Whether you choose a position in the public or private sector, work experience will broaden your understanding of the legal profession and help you to make a more informed and focused decision regarding law school. The costs of making the wrong decision are quite high. Consider the experience of one of my law school classmates:

In his senior year in college Doug was trying to decide what he wanted to do. As a Government major with strong grades, Doug knew that he could gain admission to a competitive law school. Although he didn't really believe he wanted to be a lawyer the law school option prevented him from taking his job search seriously. With the arrival of spring, Doug was faced with a decision; continue the job search or accept a position at a top law program. Doug decided to attend law school.

After completing the tough first year curriculum, Doug secured a summer position in a law firm. In the midst of his first real glimpse of legal practice, Doug's worst fears were realized - he had no interest in being a lawyer. What was he going to do? His family would be crushed if he became a law school "drop out". It was almost impossible to imagine having that year of time and money amount to nothing. Besides, he had already endured the toughest year of the degree. Doug decided to stay in law school.

Part of Doug's decision to stay in law school was guided by the mantra he had heard time and again: "you can do anything with a law degree". Unfortunately for Doug, who had no previous full-time work experience inside or outside of the legal profession, the vaunted versatility of the law degree did not materialize. Looking outside of the legal profession Doug found little interest from industry recruiters who could choose among more experienced candidates. As a recent graduate, Doug's law degree really only qualified him to be an attorney.

Doug now recognizes that he should not have gone straight to law school. Rather than explore the range of interesting job opportunities available to him coming out of college, he took the path of least resistance. Three years of time and tuition later, Doug plans to practice law only as long as it takes to find an attractive position outside the law. He estimates it will take at least two years working as an attorney before he can pursue the career he really wants.

In addition to Doug, I can think of many other acquaintances who have concluded at some point during law school or as active attorneys that the nature of the work is unsatisfying to them; several are currently investigating other career options. My observation has been that many of these people went to law school for a combination of three reasons:

Because they could

Because they only vaguely understood the realities of legal practice

Because they believed a law degree would qualify them for anything else they wanted to do outside legal practice.

There are many strong reasons to go to law school. These three are not among them.

The Benefits of Full-Time Experience

Almost any full-time position you choose will afford a broader view of lawyers and their work than you can receive while in college. First, taking the time to work allows you to learn from the experience of friends who went straight to law school and from attorneys you will meet along the way. In addition, the job itself may provide a view of the nature and role of legal practice. As a management consultant, I was indirectly exposed to the legal issues facing our clients, particularly those which related to business strategy. Through my work and friends, I learned that the overwhelming majority of legal work consists of paying attention to the nuts and bolts details of friendly transactions between businesses and individuals. Almost all junior attorneys spend the bulk of their time researching, drafting, and editing documents. The majority of lawyers never set foot in a courtroom. Even those who specialize in litigation usually settle the dispute out of court.

An even more powerful insight for me was understanding the impact of the legal system on those it touches. The cost of lawsuits in terms of time and resources is truly staggering. Whether between businesses or individuals, lawsuits are taxing affairs on all involved. As Judge Learned Hand once said, "I must say that as a litigant, I should dread a lawsuit beyond almost anything else short of sickness and death." Developing a personal perspective on the legal system has been an important component of my legal "education" -a component that I would have missed had I opted to enter the academic world of law school straight out of college.

An additional benefit of work experience is an understanding of your strengths and weaknesses outside of grade point averages and LSAT scores. The unfortunate reality is that, for most law schools, admission to the program and success in the law school environment is highly dependent upon grades. In addition, the movement from college to law school is similar to the move from secondary school to college: the caliber of the average student improves dramatically. While being surrounded by talented classmates can be a very rewarding component of law school, for a student who is accustomed to getting top marks, this can be a rude awakening.

Full-time work experience gives an individual another foundation upon which to assess personal skills and performance. In your work you may find something new that you enjoy -and at which you excel - that can supplement your personal sense of accomplishment. In my experience, those with full-time work experience handled the first-year transition more effectively than those straight out of college.

Work experience can also sharpen the analytical, communications, and interpersonal skills necessary for success in law school and beyond. For example, as a management consultant, I was responsible for analyzing business problems, formulating recommendations and communicating my analyses to a wide range of client personnel. I found this experience enhanced my ability to speak clearly

and comfortably in front of my classmates. Further, the time management skills I gained in my full-time position were extremely helpful in managing a demanding law school schedule. I also found that my comfort level in a professional setting were definite assets when it came time for summer internships (which are the primary source of job offers).

What Sort Of Jobs Are Out There?

Like many pre-law students, I didn't invest much time or attention in the placement office because I had always assumed I'd just go to graduate school. When I finally began my job search, it was quite an eye opening experience to discover the diversity of jobs available. Like the idea of solving business problems? Try management consulting. Enjoy marketing and creative work? Talk to advertising firms. Interested in public policy? Explore Capitol Hill and the Non-Profits. Find Wall Street fascinating? Investment Banking may be for you.

Many organizations offer analyst positions built around extensive training programs. A history or political science degree does not preclude you from consideration for most jobs, even in fields like finance, because company training puts all undergraduate hires on an equal footing. You can learn more about job opportunities when the companies travel to campus to make presentations during the recruiting season. These meetings usually involve a short slide presentation, followed by an opportunity to talk with company representatives. Usually, recent graduates will be a part of the company's recruiting team, and you can ask them questions about what it is really like to work there. Pick some presentations. Go and talk to the people who work at the company. Understand your options.

Potential Concerns With Delaying Law School

Admissions

As you already know, admissions are primarily determined by grades and LSAT scores. Working for a year or two will not change this formula. Thus, the first thing to note is that working will not harm your chances for admission in any way. The degree to which work experience will help you is less certain. Although I am not an admissions expert, I doubt that the committees pay particular attention to the specific work experience an applicant brings to bear. In my own case, I believe the perspective I gained working enabled me to put together a more concise personal essay.

Age

Some students express a concern that working will take them out of the "normal" age group within law school, the law firm, etc. At my school, a slight majority of students came directly to law school from college. I think that is quite typical. While social habits vary over time, I did not find age to be a significant determinant of the friends I made at law school.

Within the firm environment, personal age is less important than one's "class" of associates. While one might expect firms to be reluctant to hire across a wide age spectrum, I have seen the same firm hire first year associates ranging in age from 25 to 35 (with three kids!). Working for a year or two will not present a significant issue.

Conclusion

My experience suggests that a full-time work experience can offer a perspective on the legal profession that is difficult to acquire as an undergraduate. Given the importance of your decision, and the wealth of attractive job opportunities many students enjoy, I urge you to consider working before committing yourself to a legal education. At a minimum, take the time to understand and compare your options. Law school may ultimately be the right choice for you. But isn't it worth taking the time to be sure?

CHAPTER III

FINANCIAL AID: **“Cracking the Mystery of Financial Aid”**

Eileen Crane of Brigham Young University has developed a presentation entitled: “Cracking the Mystery of Financial Aid.” Indeed for many students and pre-law advisors, the whole process is a mystery. The articles in this section seek to unravel the mystery of both the process and the product. Such matters as budget, sources for financial aid and the implications of borrowing for future job options are considered. Some caveats, like the necessity of good credit, are also given. Students should be reminded of what someone has so perceptively said, “If you live like a lawyer when you are a student, you’ll live like a student when you are a lawyer.”

Financing your Legal Education, By Stephen G. Brown Assistant Dean Fordham Law School

Financing your legal education is often seen as a complex and mysterious thing. It need not be! There are resources available and this short article should cover some of the basics. The best sources for information are the law schools themselves. The US Department of Education is also an excellent source for general information – www.studentaid.gov- or for detailed information about loans and loan repayment including IBR, PAYE, REPAYE and FPSLFP – studentloans.gov. The LSAC has information online – www.LSAC.org. The world of student aid is changing rapidly and you should encourage your students to check these sites frequently – especially as they get closer to making a decision.

What is financial aid for law school? Quite simply any type of funding used to pay for law school. Aid can be in the form of free money or loans. It can come from family and friends, schools, the federal government, banks, Veterans' Administration, or other sources.

Aid awarded directly by the Law Schools or Universities often consists of grants or scholarships awarded on a need or merit basis – or both, on campus work, teaching or research assistants, residence assistants, fellowships or stipends, LRAPs or loan forgiveness. Federal aid includes Federal loans and Federal Work Study, Federal Consolidation loans, repayment plans like IBR, ICR, PAYE and the Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program(FPSLF). There are also income tax benefits available to students and federal loan borrowers. In addition private loans, home equity loans and lines of credit, work, gifts and more are used to pay for law school.

Law School as an investment

The past decade has seen a dramatic shift in perceptions about law schools. Tuition and costs have increased dramatically, borrowing has increased at an even faster rate (due in part to the GradPLUS lack of loan limits), and law school is being seen more as an investment – a long term investment. Like all investments, expectations of returns are truly individualized. A great investment for some might be a poor one for others. The crystal ball is cloudy and looking into the future, whether it be three years, ten years, or a lifetime is not precise. Interests, ideas, expectations and life all change over time.

Law School Aid

Ah the free money, the funds most students desire, and with greater frequency, expect and feel entitled to. Law schools have moved over the past few decades from awarding money primarily on a need basis to awarding primarily on a merit basis. The change is significant and follows changes at the undergraduate level. It also recognizes the role of rankings and maximizing tuition revenue – which may be opposites.

Law schools have different enrollment goals, budgets, policies, application and award procedures and policies. Students are strongly urged to consult individual schools for details.

Need based awards almost always include students completing the federal FAFSA. Some schools may also require completion of a separate form. That form may be institutional or *Need Access* or *Profiles* or some other need analysis service. Though students are independent for federal aid, schools that award need based grants often require parental information on these forms. Students should be cautioned to pay attention to the deadlines established by the schools and complete the forms carefully. Copies of tax forms or other documentation may be required.

Merit based awards are awards made on a basis other than need. “Merit” may be defined on the basis of LSAT scores, undergraduate GPAs, geography, age, ethnicity, fields of interest, e.g. public service, or some combination of any or all of these. The definitions will vary by school and a student may receive “merit” aid at some schools and not others. Some schools require an application, some

interviews, others award as part of the admission process. Students need to be aware of different schools' policies. With growing frequency, students may find themselves having to decide among schools with disparate aid offers, perhaps a very high scholarship at one school and no school based aid at another. These can be very difficult decisions, requiring long looks into the future and real judgment. Consider not only the costs, but the opportunities. Some students have forgone opportunities – type of practice, geography, etc. for a deeper discount. A very tough decision, but a choice for your students.

Schools may also offer resident assistantships, research or teaching assistantships, on campus jobs, employee benefits or other types of aid for students with specific skills.

Some schools will offer Loan Repayment Assistance Programs (LRAP) for graduates pursuing public interest and/or government or other types of work. These programs vary tremendously in benefits, qualifying income, qualifying work, and other details. Consult the individual schools for the details. These programs (often in conjunction with the FPSLF program *infra*) may help graduates with real career choice beyond law school. The details are important, though, as the programs vary in their benefits.

Federal Aid

The federal government is the largest provider of aid to law students. It is almost entirely in the form of loans. All federal loans are now made directly through the federal government – the “Direct Loan” program. Students have to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually through the Department of Education. The website is www.fafsa.gov. The form is FREE and students should not have to pay to complete a FAFSA. All graduate and professional students (including JD and LLM students) are considered independent for federal aid purposes. Parental information is not required on the FAFSA. The Direct Loan Program offers two loans to law students, the Direct Stafford Loan and the Direct GradPLUS Loan.

Until 2012, the Direct Stafford Loan was partially subsidized and interest did not accrue while the student was in school at least half time. This is no longer true. The maximum Direct Stafford Loan is \$20,500 annually. Interest accrues (for loans disbursed in 2017-2018) at 6.0% annually and is capitalized at repayment. There is a 1.068% fee deducted from each disbursement. Repayment begins six months after ceasing at least half time enrollment. The standard repayment term is 10 years. There are various repayment plans, deferment, forbearance and forgiveness options for these loans.

The Direct GradPLUS loan is supplemental to the Direct Stafford Loan. Students may borrow up to the school designated “Cost of Attendance” less any other aid received. Only students with an absence of bad credit will be approved for a GradPLUS loan, though there may be an option for an endorser. Bad credit includes any accounts 90 days or more past due at the time of the application or any major credit issues (write offs, bankruptcy, uncollectable debt, etc.) within the past 5 years. Interest accrues from disbursement at 7.0% (2017-18) and is capitalized at repayment. There is a 4.272% fee deducted from each disbursement. The standard repayment term is 10 years. There are various repayment plans, deferment, forbearance and forgiveness options for these loans.

The Direct Loan Program offers Federal Consolidation of federal loans so that students who may have prior loans may bring them together with their law school loans under one lender or servicer. The federal loan programs also offer graduated repayment options, Income Based Repayment, Income Contingent Repayment, Pay as You Earn (PAYE), REPAYE, and extended repayment options.

The Federal Government also offers the Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (FPSLF). This program requires the borrower work for 120 months in government, nonprofit or other eligible work while repaying their federal loans under the standard 10 year plan, IBR, PAYE, REPAYE, or ICR. Any balance remaining after 10 years is forgiven. Details on IBR are available at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/understand/plans/income-driven> (6/22/2017). Details on the FPSLF are available at <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service>

Private Educational Loans

Loans to students and/or their families may also be available, though private funding has become more of a challenge as access to markets has dried up. These loans often have variable rates and require a demonstrated ability to repay and a good credit score.

Your students can finance law school through a combination of their and their family's resources, grants, scholarships and loans. Remember, law school is an investment. All law school applicants should learn about the schools, the financing options and the details. The Department of Education websites and the individual law school websites are the best starting resources. They should not be afraid to contact the law schools' financial aid offices as well. They can be great sources of information.

There is a real possibility that the Higher Education Act of 1965 will be Reauthorized in 2017-18. It expired in 2013 but resolutions and other laws have essentially continued many programs. The Reauthorization should be a more comprehensive consideration of higher education funding. The Senate and House HELP Committee (Health, Education, Labor and Pensions) is the point committee for legislation.

AccessLex Institute

A Valuable Resource for Pre-Law Advisors and Students

Who is AccessLex Institute?

Since 1983, AccessLex Institute has continually evolved to meet the ever-changing challenges and needs of the law students and institutions that we serve. We are steadfast in our commitment to inform students of the economic realities of law school without limiting their aspirations. We conduct and commission research to illuminate the latest data and evidence on the most critical issues facing legal education today. And we are resolute in our appeal to policymakers and influencers to take actions that make legal education work better for both students and society at large. As a nonprofit organization underpinned by nearly 200 American Bar Association-approved nonprofit and state-affiliated law schools, we are intently dedicated to the betterment of legal education. AccessLex Institute has more than 80 employees in our offices in West Chester, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C., and in field offices throughout the United States.

The AccessLex Center for Legal Education Excellence is committed to understanding the barriers that impede access to law school for historically underrepresented groups and improving access to law school for all; identifying actionable strategies and public policies to increase law school affordability; and strengthening the value of legal education.

The AccessLex Center for Education and Financial Capability offers on-campus and online loan repayment and financial education programming and resources to help students and graduates confidently manage their finances on their way to achieving personal and professional success.

Services for Pre-Law Advisors

Financial Education

AccessLex Institute knows firsthand how important it is for students to understand the realities of their student loans and finances. They believe giving students the tools to establish good financial habits and the information to manage their financial responsibilities will help them stay on the right path.

The AccessLex Center for Education and Financial Capability produces and distributes a full range of resources and publications that examine, explain and provide a deeper context on the topics most relevant to students at various stages of their law school journey—financing a legal education, borrowing wisely, budgeting, spending plans, loan repayment options and strategies and more.

Our Education Services team members are Accredited Financial Counselors (AFC®) who deliver expert financial education programming as well as one-on-one counseling for students. Whether students are just starting their education journey or have already graduated, AccessLex Institute can help.

Campus Workshops and Webinars

Our Education Services team offers on-campus workshops and webinar sessions to students on a variety of financial education topics including Financing a Legal Education, A Strategic Approach to Law School Selection, and more – all at no cost to schools or students.

Publications

AccessLex Institute offers both printed and electronic publications to help students learn more about paying for school, scholarships and grants, Federal student loans, loan repayment strategies, and more. Our premier pre-law publication is *Financing Your Legal Education* and can be ordered to share with your students. As we update existing guides and develop new ones, you can access and order them for free at accesslex.org.

Law School Comparison Tool

Data-informed decision-making is increasingly important for pre-law advisors and the students they serve. And it is more important than ever to make legal education data actionable and easy to use.

Analytix by AccessLexSM puts law school data into clear and accessible formats, allowing the legal education community to readily analyze, research and compare law school-specific information. Analytix puts the power to benchmark various schools, display trends, gain crucial insights and fuel independent research right into the hands of those who need it.

- Side-By-Side Comparison – Create a downloadable report comparing up to five law schools, side-by-side, across a customized set of figures for the most recent report year.
- Peer Group Comparison – Produce a downloadable report comparing a law school of your choice to a customizable group of institutions.
- Trend Report – Generate downloadable graphs and charts to display trends for select figures of your choice.
- Downloadable Dataset – Select and download a set of variables for multiple years in CSV and Microsoft Excel formats to create your own dataset with information for all law schools.

You can access Analytix by AccessLex at accesslex.org/analytix-by-accesslex.

Services for Pre-Law Students

AccessLex.org

AccessLex Institute's website is designed to help prospective and current students, as well as recent graduates, make informed decisions about budgeting, borrowing and repaying student loans. Specifically, prospective law students can gain a better understanding of the cost of education, financing their education, deciding how much to borrow and applying for financial aid.

AccessLex Student Loan Calculator

To better help students estimate the cost of their legal education, our Student Loan Calculator:

- Prepopulates Cost of Attendance
- Itemizes cost of living components so students can adjust the figures to fit their lifestyles
- Factors in any outstanding undergraduate loans, scholarships and grants, income, savings goals and other personal expenses
- Demonstrates the positive effect that prepayment can have on loan repayment

And of course, the Calculator includes repayment options to help students choose the plan that best fits their budget and repayment goals. Students can access the Student Loan Calculator at accesslex.org/calculator.

AccessConnex

The first service of its kind to provide on-demand, one-on-one loan repayment and other financial education information to graduate and professional students, AccessConnex is a free helpline that delivers personal, accurate counseling by phone, live chat or email. Our Education Services team members, all Accredited Financial Counselors (AFC®), work closely with students to offer clear, unbiased information to set them on a sound financial path. Students can contact AccessConnex by calling 844-755-4357, by email at AccessConnex@accesslex.org or through our Live Chat feature accessible on our website at accesslex.org/AccessConnex.

How to Contact AccessLex Institute

To order materials or schedule a campus workshop or webinar, contact Kim Siwarski, Manager of Pre-Law Services at prelaw@accesslex.org or 484-653-3340. We look forward to partnering with you to provide services and support for your pre-law students.

MAX Pre-Law, a new tool from AccessLex Institute, offers online programs that include financial aid and admissions information, strategy, and tools for aspiring law students.

MAX Pre-Law by AccessLexSM has four interactive lessons:

- Your Law School Investment
- Understanding Law School Admissions and Financial Aid
- Getting In To Law School
- Paying for Law School

The program also offers a number of carefully developed worksheets, guides, tools, and links meant to help applicants do their research and use their time wisely. **MAX Pre-Law** can be found at <https://www.accesslex.org/MAX-prelaw>



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A FEW THINGS TO THINK ABOUT CONCERNING FINANCIAL AID

Gerald L. Wilson
Duke University

Going to law school is expensive. In weighing whether or not to go, when to go, and where to go, think about some of these things.

1. Fill out the FAFSA and other forms as required, when they become available and apply for every kind of financial aid appropriate.
2. Consider how much you may already owe if you have been on financial aid as an undergraduate. Can you really afford law school next year? If you do go on to law school, make sure you ask, in writing, for deferrals for your undergraduate loan payments.
3. Find out if a particular law school handles its own financial aid or if this is done through a main office at the University. You may be better off if the law school itself handles this.
4. Think about a bank loan from your parents.
5. Inquire about jobs on campus, perhaps as a Resident Adviser.
6. Keep track of all of your financial aid forms as carefully as you keep track of your application forms.
7. Remember since schools encourage you not to work for pay, or undertake only a minimum amount of such work during your first year of law school, you should have adequate funds available prior to entry into your first year.
8. Finally, in choosing which law school to attend, ask if school X is really worth it. The amount of debt you incur may have a great deal to do with your job options once you are out of school. For example, if you are heavily in debt, you may not be able to take a social service or public defender's job. Is this important to you?

Merit Scholarships: Making Sure That All That Glitters is Really Gold

Gerald L. Wilson, Duke University

Many applicants are receiving merit scholarship offers at this time and are to be congratulated. However, in evaluating and comparing these offers there are several matters that should be considered.

First, if students are trying to choose between two scholarship offers, they should not forget to take into account the cost of living factor in addition to tuition and scholarship. For example, it is less expensive to live in Nashville, Durham or Charlottesville than Boston, New York or Washington, DC. The “net cost” -tuition plus cost of living minus scholarship-may matter more than the amount of the scholarship.

Second, read carefully the terms of the scholarship. If it is for three years with the only condition being that the student remains in good standing, that is great. However, if there are other requirements, then applicants should make sure that they understand them fully. For example, if there is a GPA requirement for renewal, then the student should understand what percent of the class achieves this GPA. Again, for example, one must maintain a 3.0 average, does that place one in the top 10% of the class or the top 25% or where? Also if the renewal of the scholarship requires the student to be in the top 30% of the class, or another stated percentage, it is also important to know what percentage of the class was awarded merit scholarships, and to think about where the applicant fits in the entering class. If 50% of the class was given merit scholarships but one must be in the top 30% of the class for renewal, then 40% of the scholarships, will not be renewed, and those not renewed are more likely to be among those further from the top of the entering class profile. The ABA is now requiring law schools to post “conditional scholarship retention” information on their websites and to provide this with the scholarship award letter. The applicant should read both the big print and the fine print.

Third, leveraging scholarship money is possible in many cases. How an applicant handles this is very important. A student might say to law school Y: “Law school X has offered me X amount of money but you have only offered me Y amount so, if you really want me, you need to up your offer.” If the applicant approaches it that way, law school Y likely will tell the applicant to take X’s offer. Alternatively, an applicant might approach the question of increased scholarship assistance honestly and courteously as follows, “I really want to come to your law school and I appreciate your generous offer, but law school X has offered me a large merit scholarship. Is there any way you could increase my scholarship to make attending your school more feasible financially?” Using this approach, an applicant may be more likely to get a favorable response to his/her request to increase the amount of the merit scholarship. Please note, an applicant should do this only at a school that he/she will attend if they up the merit money to make it possible and feasible for the applicant to attend. Don’t play money games with law schools!

Fourth, if an applicant has accepted and awarded a scholarship at a school with the understanding that he/she will withdraw the applications from other schools and will definitely attend the school offering him/her the scholarship, then the applicant must honor this commitment.

(Part of this article, especially items one and two, is based on some thoughts of Professor Jerry Organ, St. Thomas School of Law, Minneapolis. Professor Organ also offered clarifying suggestions on other parts of this article.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAW AND THE PROFITS: CAREER OPTIONS, PLACEMENT AND SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE JOB MARKET

INTRODUCTION

A pre-law advisor did a survey of some of his former students now in law school. One of the questions posed was, “What did your pre-law advisor not tell you that you wish he had?” Surprisingly, a number of enrolled law students responded, “I wish he had pressed me harder on my reasons for going to law school.” Three articles in the first section of this chapter, *THE IDEA*, suggest questions that students considering law as a career might ask themselves and ways of thinking about their choice.

Part two of this chapter, deals with the realities of the legal profession. Dean Andrew Cornblatt, Georgetown Law, has said that, “Given the wide variety of opportunities available to those with a law degree, a decision to go to law school is merely a decision to go to law school and not necessarily a career decision.” Three articles seek to point out some of these options and opportunities.

Why Law School?

Gerald Lee Wilson, Ph.D.-Duke University

From: Michigan State University College of Law's *Exploring and Planning for law School*
50 Tips from 29 Experts

How often do we as pre-law advisors get the declarative question "I don't know whether I should go to law school or not?" My response to the student always is, "Given your interests and abilities, what are the possible career paths you could follow and would a legal education/law degree be worth three years of your life and a lot of money?" I go on to say, "Let's sweep out the underbrush. Do you want to be a master chef? Do you want to be a forest ranger? Do you want to be a sportscaster?" (Apologies to my former pre-law advisee, sweep out the underbrush. Do you want to be a master chef? Do you want to be a forest ranger? Do you want to be a sportscaster?" (Apologies to my former pre-law advisee, Jay Bi las!) If these are your career choices, then a legal education/law degree is not really needed.

Think of the things you want to do with your life - things you are passionate about! Knowledge of the law gives you a powerful instrument in today's society. So the only real question is, "Will obtaining this instrument be of enough value in helping you achieve your goals to justify the time and expense involved in obtaining a legal education/law degree?"

Several years ago at a pre-law advisors' conference, after the sessions, of course, a couple of pre-law advisors and some law school admissions officers -a total of five -were seated together at a table at a bar. In the conversation it turned out at all five of us had PhDs in history and none of us had a legal education/law degree. We all sort of wished we had the legal education/law degree, but I think I captured the basic feelings of all of us when I said, "I wish I had a legal education/law degree not because I have any desire to practice law, but because I would be a better American historian.

But, you know, that simply was never worth three years of my life and a considerable amount of money."

WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO TO LAW SCHOOL?

Andrea Swanner Redding, J.D.
Assistant Dean for Career Services
Northwestern School of Law of Lewis & Clark College

"If you don't know where you're going, when you get there you'll be lost." Yogi Berra

"Why do you want to go to law school?" Or, "what do you want to do with your law degree?" Ask a prospective law student either of these questions and you may learn more from what they don't say than from what they do. Some want to save or change the world. Some want the power, prestige and money they believe comes with a law degree. Some have no idea what they want to do and find themselves going to law school by default. And some, the fortunate ones, decide to go to law school after careful analysis of the time, effort and money involved, with a realistic expectation of what life as a lawyer will be like and the career options a law degree will offer them. These are the prospective students we want to encourage to go to law school, the ones who will find practicing law an exciting, challenging and rewarding career.

The decision to go to law school is, in itself, not a career choice. Instead, law is a field of study that offers the recipient a wide range of career options, each requiring different skills but also possessing common characteristics. The options are endless in terms of practice areas and work environments. Lawyers might find themselves arresting a ship or zoning a playground, working independently in their home or with others in a high rise corporate office. Lawyers can practice law by helping clients plan to avoid problems, by solving problems once they develop, by representing and counseling businesses in a particular industry, by representing individuals sharing a common status or problem and by appearing (or not appearing) in court.

I am not suggesting all prospective law students must have decided, before entering law school, the specific career path they intend to follow. In reality, most who think they do know will change their mind many times before graduation. But I am suggesting that prospective law students need to recognize that a wide variety of career options are available. And, as a result, that they must accept responsibility for a proactive, not reactive, role in their own career planning. Students must avoid making career decisions based on the same reasons underlying their decision to enter law school--for money or prestige or by default. Instead, students must use the same critical and analytical thinking skills they demonstrated to get into law school, the same skills that will be necessary to succeed in school and as a lawyer, in making their career choices.

Different types of legal careers require different skills and satisfy different interests. One lawyer may negotiate the terms of an agreement for the sale of a business, another may draft the agreement, and yet another may defend the terms of the agreement in a court action. The abilities and interests necessary to flourish as a tax lawyer for a large law firm are different from those of a juvenile rights lawyer for a legal aid office. Prospective students should understand that in making decisions about what type of practice to pursue they will need to take the time to identify their own skills and interests and match them to the demands of a particular career.

Different legal practices also share in varying degrees some common skills and characteristics. Skills generally required include analytical thinking, creative writing, research, communication, counseling, problem solving, negotiation and the ability to work independently. The life of most lawyers is not full of the glamour, excitement and financial regards popularly portrayed. Lawyers must tolerate, and hopefully thrive on, the adversarial nature of law practice and the hard work, long hours, and stress of

juggling numerous projects and the competing demands of clients. And although all lawyers may not necessarily agree on which features are positive and which are negative, aspiring lawyers must determine if they will enjoy a career where these features are, to a degree, inevitable.

In my experience as a law school career services professional, the students who enter law school understanding the realities of law practice and then explore the career options available to them enjoy their legal career after school. The ones who go to law school with unrealistic expectations, the ones who want to save, run, or buy the world, or who believe that their decision to go to law school is the only career choice they need to make, are the ones most likely to be unhappy and dissatisfied. These are the ones who, after several years of practicing law, will return to my office and ask what else they can do with their law degree.

Fortunately, more prospective students appear to be making informed choices. Law school career services directors report they have talked to more prospective law students in the last several years than in the previous ten years. This "new breed" of prospective students have an increased awareness of the realities of law practice and an increasing desire to know as much as possible about what life as a lawyer will be like and what their options will be upon graduation.

It is crucial that aspiring lawyers be challenged to ask themselves why they want to go to law school and what they want to do with their law degree. Given the investment of time and money, the decision to pursue a career in law deserves careful consideration. Prospective law students should make a decision based on accurate self-analysis, correct perceptions about the life of a lawyer and realistic expectations so they will find an exciting, challenging and rewarding career.

WOULD YOU BE HAPPY AS A LAWYER?

Paul J. Weber
University of Louisville

“Happiness,” says Madeline Reno, a family therapist, “happens between your ears.” That is probably as good a place as any to begin considering whether one could be happy as an attorney. Happiness is a subjective state of mind, a sense of well being that depends on a wide variety of factors: health, personal relationships, sense of meaning, purpose and personal worth, as well as an appropriate sense of accomplishment. The exact proportions of each, the recipe for happiness, varies from individual to individual and situation to situation. There are no magic formulas; no one makes it through life without a good deal of suffering and disappointment to balance and flavor the successes. Achieving happiness depends on how one thinks and feels about one’s life situation. It happens between one’s ears.

It is also true that how one’s career path and work life “fit” with one’s aspirations, values, abilities and needs will have a great deal of impact on one’s overall happiness. With that in mind, it may be well to spend some moments reflecting on whether a life in the law would be a source of satisfaction and joy for you. This may be particularly important at this time in history since numerous recent articles have discussed lawyer dissatisfaction and unhappiness with having chosen to pursue a legal career. Certainly a good amount of dissatisfaction comes from changing conditions in the legal field itself or from personal weaknesses, but it also seems clear that too many students going into law school in the 1980’s had unrealistic expectations when they chose a legal career, and may have lacked a good personal fit between the realities of law practice and their own values.

What can an undergraduate do to “test” whether being an attorney is a good career for him or her? While there are no certainties, there are some books and articles one can read, things one can do, and questions one can ask that will give clues as to whether law is likely to be a satisfying career. A book one might profitably begin with is Susan Bell (ed, *Full Disclosure: Do you Really Want to be a Lawyer?* (Peterson’s Guides, 1998). Not only does it provide thoughtful discussion of a variety of issues and perspectives, but the cartoons are entertaining.

Although far too few pre-law students take the opportunity, just shadowing one’s family attorney for a day can be an eye opening experience. Landing a summer or part-time job as a runner for a law firm while in college gives an even better view of what the nitty gritty, day to day life of an attorney is like. Probably best, if one has the time, is to get a variety of experiences, from observing in a courtroom, to shadowing a corporate in-house attorney, a prosecutor and a general counsel, to interviewing several lawyers. Some colleges and universities will allow credit for internships of experiential learning in a law firm. There are many sub-careers within the field of law and exposure to several will help one make a more informed decision.

Are there questions one can ask one self to clarify a career choice? Of course. Baylor University Law School recently sent out a small pamphlet that includes the following questions:

1. Do I enjoy working closely with people regarding significant events or issues affecting their lives?
2. Can I empathize with a client's situation, yet have the ability to objectively analyze the issues and their consequences in light of the existing law?
3. Do I enjoy educating or teaching a person about a subject about which he or she may be ignorant or have significant misconceptions?
4. Am I able to articulate in a clear and concise manner my analysis of a problem to others, whether it be verbally or in writing?
5. Do I enjoy being an advocate? Can I argue both sides of the question with enthusiasm?
6. Do I like detail work? Do I enjoy searching for the facts of a situation?
7. Do I like to read and study?

The above questions were obviously written by law school admissions people in cahoots with law professors, but they are a good place to start. If one answers "yes" to most of them, law is probably an attractive career option. I would add a few more "realistic" type questions, such as:

8. Can I balance career goals with quality of life goals? (Do I do it now?) Or am I the kind of competitor who will focus my all in the legal arena? Put another way, do I have hobbies, friendships and interests that have little or no relation to my career interests? (The bad news is that a narrow career focus tends to lead to early burnout and enormous unhappiness.)
9. Am I naturally competitive? Do I like competitive activities like card games, board games, sports, etc.?
10. Can I take life's little losses in stride, recognizing that "you can't win *em* all"?
11. Can I "hold my own" in verbal or written disagreements? Can I maintain inner peace in the presence of verbal conflict and angry people? Or does that type of thing really get to me? If I can't, am I willing to learn how?
12. Do deadlines motivate me? Or do they hang over like ever ready guillotines?
13. Am I a decent negotiator with family and friends when differences of opinion or conflicts arise?
14. Am I comfortable working long hours on most work days? Or am I pretty much of a "40 hours and that's it!" type of person?
15. Do I have high status needs? Can I live with the ambiguity and misunderstanding most people have about the roles of lawyers in our society?
16. Do I like taking on responsibilities, seeing them as challengers? Or do they feel more like burdens?

17. Do I like to problem solve ? To puzzle things out, strategies? Explore different solutions to problems? Or do I really like clear rules and unambiguous answers?
18. Do I recognize that the law field is crowded with talented, hard working people, and that I may have difficulty getting an “ideal job or making more than a modest living? Am I willing to take that risk?

These are, of course, unsystematic questions. But if one answers no to very many of the first questions, or an emphatic, nonnegotiable no to even a few, one might want to pause before plunging into a legal career. Dreams and ideals are wonderful even necessary when one considers any career. But ideals and reality cannot be so far removed from one another that they never touch. Only a saint would be happy doing something she detests day in and day out.

Finally, are there any standardized tests or interest inventories that can help one see whether a legal career would be a satisfying option? The jury is still out on this one. Many schools have career planning and placement centers which offer one or another interest/aptitude tests. These can be helpful in highlighting the kinds of work one prefers. They are not intended to pinpoint specific careers. By all means students should take advantage of these services and consider the results as one of many indicators.

Several years ago Anthony Monahan wrote an article, “Are You at Loose Ends? *In Barrister Magazine* (Spring, 1991, p. 22ff.) That goes a step further to discuss several career-evaluation tests used to help young lawyers sort out their suitability for specific kinds of practice. Perhaps some of his insights may be useful to pre-law students as well. A major tool for such evaluations is the Myers-Briggs Indicator. It may be helpful to quote at some length from the Monahan piece, then close with a few observations:

It begins with a questionnaire -- 92 multiple-choice and word-preference questions, for example, on the self-score able measurement. The result is a four-letter indicator of your type: Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I); Sensing (S) or Intuition (N); Thinking (T) or Feeling (F); Judging (J) or Perceiving (P). Sixteen basic personality letter-code types, then, are indicated by the Myers-Briggs system.

The type most frequently found in law say some researchers, is ESTJ. “Extroverts are more energized by the outer world, focusing their attention more on social interaction than inner reflection. Sensors use all their senses to take in information, thus are likely to be no-nonsense, realistic, pragmatic people who look for facts rather than theory. Thinkers are logical in decision-making, more comfortable being detached, objective, sensible. “Judgers” are organized and decisive, keep projects on schedule, want to get to the point. The ESTJ style can be described as the natural manager.”

Other personality types drawn to law are ENTJs (“the ‘take charge’ people in law firms”); ISTJs (“the most meticulous and overly prepared, the classic perfectionists”) and ENTPs (“the legal profession’s entrepreneurs, risk-takers, frequently scattered”)

A person considering a legal career may wish to take the Myers-Briggs Indicator and use the results as one indicator of preference. A word of warning, however. Experts trained in the Myers-Briggs object strongly to any “mechanistic” use of the test. There are too many interviewing variables and sub-specialties in law to make generalizations very useful. If nothing more, the results can trigger interesting conversations and reflections. Monahan and others rightly caution, however, that these are indicators, not predestination!

Can you be happy as an attorney? Ultimately the decision can only be made by an individual contemplating such a career. It is worth some reflection and effort to find out!

Is Law School For You?

By Richard Poland, J.D. - Flagler College

During my final two years of high school, I engaged in arguments with my parents on many different occasions and on a multitude of topics. I remember my father saying to me, “You argue about everything with me. Can’t you ever just do what I say without a discussion? You should become a lawyer?” My response was always the same. “I don’t argue with you at all. I always do everything you say. I don’t want to be a lawyer.” Within a decade, I had graduated from college and law school, passed the bar exam, and opened my private practice. Attending law school is a decision which I have never regretted. It was great training for being a college professor.

My father had a point. I have come to believe that the first assessment for becoming a lawyer - or enjoying law school - is whether or not you have a love for the argument itself. Notice that I did not say that you must love to argue. Rather, you must love the process of framing, developing, and stating an argument. You should embrace the argument process regardless of the side of the argument that you support. If you have a love for the argument, you will find that a legal education is a worthwhile and rewarding experience. You will develop skills which will serve you well throughout your life.

There are a few downsides in the legal profession. The negatives are best portrayed by the myriad of lawyer’s jokes which permeate our society. I remember well that day when I was in law school and heard my first lawyer’s joke. I wondered why future barristers would make fun of their chosen profession. Later as I practiced law, what had at first seemed odd and a little humorous, became very hurtful. After all, I had become a lawyer to help people and I viewed these tacky stories as counterproductive. Having your profession be the butt of distasteful jokes and stories does not build a positive self-image.

Whoever said that Americans love to hate every lawyer except their own was exactly right. My clients were no exception to this maxim in that they liked me even though they disliked all the other attorneys in my small town. Interestingly, most of the lawyers I have known are bright, ethical, and well-intentioned people. However, that is not generally the perception portrayed by television and the film industry. Accordingly, the legal profession has a negative image.

Nevertheless, if you choose to use your legal education to become a lawyer, you will have the opportunity to make a difference and to make money. You will have chances to become a leader in your community and beyond. If you choose not to practice law, you can use your legal education to find a rewarding career in politics, government, business, education, journalism, or a number of other careers. The skills you learn in law school are easily transferable. Who knows? You might find yourself teaching at a small liberal arts college in Northeast Florida.

Alternatives to Law School

Aaron M. Houck, J.D., Ph.D.

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Every pre-law advisor has seen them: the students planning to go to law school primarily because they don't know what else to do. They are nearing the end of their college careers, and, for the first time in their lives, their next step is undefined. They are drawn to the idea of law school because it clearly maps out the next three years, because they see the law as a well-defined profession, and because of the siren-song promise that "you can do anything with a law degree." So now they're in your office asking whether they should take the LSAT in June or September.

Such students risk wasting precious resources—their time, money, and stress; the freedom to try out different places and careers; and even the possibilities and opportunities that come with a seat in a law school class. Going to law school because you can't think of anything better to do is a bad idea. I should know. I went to law school right after my undergraduate experience for exactly that reason. I constantly found myself asking "why am I here?" instead of focusing on making the most of law school. I wish that I, as an undergraduate, had been more aware of the alternatives to law school, and I would urge all pre-law advisors to be prepared to help their students gain such an awareness. This short article is meant to stimulate your own thinking about how to approach such conversations with pre-law students.

Getting in Students' Heads to Understand Why This Happens

Of course, there is no single way to approach conversations about alternatives to law school that works for all students. The most useful information for you as the pre-law advisor is to understand *why* the student has made "law school" their default answer to that persistent question "what are you going to do after graduation?" Understanding the student's motivations can help you work with them to identify attractive alternatives and to speak convincingly about the pros and cons of each. Here are some common reasons why students find themselves considering law school despite little interest in actually practicing law:

- **Risk Aversion.** Like everyone else, students fear uncertainty. And after sixteen-plus years of obvious next steps, some of them are profoundly uncomfortable with the indeterminate nature of life after college graduation. For these students, going to law school offers security in the form of a definite plan for the next three years. Law school (they believe) allows them to postpone big decisions about their careers and where they want to settle down. More than anything, it prevents them from graduating without *something* to do afterward.
- **People Pleasing.** Many successful students are driven by a need for praise—from parents, professors, and friends. Given the law's reputation as a prestigious profession, law schools attract applicants who want to use admission to law school as another achievement for which they'll be celebrated. For such students, going to law school is often more about building their resumes than pursuing training to succeed in the legal profession.
- **Emulating Role Models.** Many famous, successful people (particularly politicians) have JDs. As such, some students pursue law school because they want to follow the paths of their role models. In doing so, such students focus on the outliers and give insufficient thought to what it is that most successful people who go to law school end up doing in their careers.
- **Competition.** Some students are seeking not only *an* answer to the "what-are-you-doing-after-college?" question, but a *better* answer than their peers. They believe that admission to law school (particularly a good law school) sends a signal to others that they are smart(er) and (more) accomplished. That law school and the legal profession more generally are perceived as competitive spaces serves as further inducement to students who seek out opportunities to measure themselves against others.

- **Ignorance of Law School and the Legal Profession.** Some students express an interest in going to law school simply because it sounds good. Others have an interest in making public policy and believe law school is the best way to enter that field. Still others view law school as another three years of general education. It is thus always important to probe pre-law students' understanding of what it is that lawyers do, and explain that law school is principally training for that particular profession. Sometimes a simple conversation, presentation, or panel on the legal profession reveals to students both their ignorance of what the practice of law is and the fact that a legal career is not a good fit with their priorities and goals.

What are Good Alternatives to Law School?

Most students who are tempted to consider law school want a career that involves interesting, fulfilling, or enjoyable work; opportunities to make an impact; or high levels of pay, power, or prestige. Accordingly the law-school alternatives they'll find most attractive are those that score high on the same attributes. Often law school has come to the fore as a possibility primarily because it enjoys a higher level of familiarity. Everyone is at least vaguely aware that attorneys exist and that a job in "the law" is a career possibility. Other jobs that may, in actuality, be a better fit for a given student may be less salient to them (or their parents). As a pre-law advisor, you can help bring some of these alternatives to your students' attention. Simply expressing reservations about a given student's interest in and fit with law school is not enough. It is better to give your students specific suggestions about what alternatives exist, as well as procedural advice regarding how to go about exploring these options. Thus it is imperative that you are plugged into the broader advising ecosystem at your institution, so that you know which individuals, programs, and resources on campus curate lists of career opportunities. You can also—along with those other colleagues on campus—help your students evaluate law-school alternatives in light of their personal values and preferences. Here are some common alternatives that prospective law students also consider:

- **Post-Graduate Fellowships.** Post-graduate fellowships are a fantastic alternative to law school for strong students who are ambivalent about law school. In fact, they are a good option even for students who are certain they want to go to law school. Students find them attractive because they are prestigious, offer unique opportunities and experiences, and are designed to last for a limited time. These fellowships can involve travel, service, or academic research. Some prominent examples include Teach for America, the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and City Year, but there are many other options. The challenge for you and your pre-law students is discovering all of the options out there. Your office of career development can be a good resource for identifying post-graduate fellowships.
- **Government Work.** Students won't get rich working for the government, but government jobs are numerous and can provide excellent hands-on experience. Many undergraduate students tend to focus only on the federal government when considering employment opportunities, so you should encourage them to search out opportunities with state and local governments. Such jobs often give recent graduates more opportunities to take ownership of their projects as well as greater control over the direction and shape they take. Encourage open-mindedness—students should understand that no job will be perfect and that they'll have to work their way up the hierarchy. Typically governments and government agencies have databases advertising job openings—students should be informed that they'll need to check multiple databases and that job opportunities do not necessarily post on a regular, predictable cycle (or at the precise moment they are first looking for a job).
- **Non-Profit Work.** Similar to work within the government, work for a non-profit organization can offer students invaluable opportunities to cultivate mentors and apply their problem-solving skills. Students should approach such jobs with an understanding that this is the beginning of their career. They should thus seek opportunities that allow them to develop universally transferable skills, not

something that is necessarily exactly what they want to do in terms of issue area, geographic location, or pay. Identifying opportunities with non-profit agencies can be challenging, so you may need to work closely with your institution's career development office.

- **Other Graduate and Professional Schools.** Some students are focused on law school because they are determined to get a graduate degree, and a JD is the most obvious choice. Encourage such students to make sure they know about other options, especially MBAs from business schools and MPAs or MPPs from public policy schools. (Students drawn to law school may also be intrigued by PhD programs or urban planning programs, but they should be wary of the job prospects for both.) Many students express that they have a stronger interest in a particular degree other than a law degree, but are concerned that they won't be admitted without post-graduate experience—a sure sign that they are going to law school for the wrong reason. Stress that graduate training is very different from undergraduate education. A student should only pursue a given graduate degree if they want to enter the field its training is designed to prepare them for.
- **Management Consulting.** Management consulting jobs hit on many of the same attributes that attract students to law school. They are seen as prestigious, they pay well, and they do not constrain future career choices. In addition, entry-level positions with consulting firms are, by their nature, temporary—the firms expect most hires to move on after two or three years. Many undergraduate students are not even aware of management consulting as a job category, so encourage them to do research. Some of the big consulting firms include Accenture, Bain, the Boston Consulting Group (better known as “BCG”), Booz Allen Hamilton, Deloitte, and McKinsey. Competition for these jobs is intense, so interested students should expect to invest considerable time and energy in preparing for interviews—much as they would for the LSAT.
- **Embrace Uncertainty.** As we pre-law advisors know, the uncertainty that first confronts undergraduate students upon graduation is not a phase—it's a part of adult, professional life. Students may wish it were otherwise, but they may be comforted to know that the fear and anxiety they feel is not unusual. You can encourage them to lean into this uncertainty and learn strategies for dealing with it. The sooner and the better they learn to manage the pervasive unpredictability of their lives and careers, the better off they'll be regardless of which profession they choose. Leaving college without a well-defined plan will give them the opportunity to work on networking, looking for and applying to jobs, and making the most out of suboptimal choices.
- **Law School . . . Later.** Law schools aren't going anywhere. Undergraduate pre-law students need to understand that there is no pressing need for them to go to law school directly after college. You should explain to them that taking time off between college and law school can be beneficial for their experience in law school (and even for their chances of admission). The best time for students to go to law school is when they are sure they want to enter the legal profession. For many—perhaps most—people, that certainty comes after experience living and working outside of the college environment. Many of my lawyer friends who love the law and always knew they wanted to go to law school nevertheless express the belief that it is a good idea to take a gap between college and law school. Sometimes students will resist the suggestion to postpone law school and say “well, I'm just afraid that if I don't go now I'll never go because something else will come along that I like better.” I usually only have to stare at them silently for a few seconds before they realize the absurdity of that statement.

Making the Case Against Law School

Having the conversation about alternatives to law school can be difficult. Some pre-law students feel like they have invested so much time into preparing for law school that it would be a waste not to go. Some worry that they would be disappointing *you* if they abandoned their law-school plans. It is important to stress to students that law school is a significant investment—one they should make only if they have a

good sense of how they will use their training and degree (and for most, that will be by practicing law). Lest you think them naïve, some students will strategically misrepresent their true career preferences to try to convince you that they are deeply committed to the legal profession. We, as pre-law advisors, do our students a disservice if we do not insist that they be honest with *themselves* about whether they truly want to be a lawyer.

It can be uncomfortable and counterproductive to suggest to students that they aren't being forthright or that they don't know what they want. The conversation will go better if you approach the subject indirectly. Ask the student to rate, on a scale of zero to ten, how certain they are that they want to go to law school. If it's a student whose commitment you have doubts about and they answer anything less than ten, ask them why they didn't choose ten. Gently push the conversation beyond simplistic assertions that "well, you can never know anything for sure," to have the student express their own reservations. Ask questions and listen, don't preach. At the end of the conversation, remind them that law school will always be there, and stress that choosing to go to law school is a major life choice—comparable to marrying someone—and that it should be made because you want to do it, not because you don't want to do the alternatives you are aware of. Assure the student that navigating the uncertainty of post-college life will help them develop their self-reliance, initiative, and independence—all skills that will make them a better law student and lawyer if they eventually choose to take that route.

Ultimately the decision to go to law school belongs to the student, of course. As pre-law advisors we must refrain from pushing our personal opinions about what they should do with their lives. But we do owe our students a candid conversation about the dangers of going to law school for no good reason. Law students who lack a purpose are often not committed to or focused on their studies—they wonder what else is out there for them. Such distraction can interfere with their ability to succeed. And when making an investment that can run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, you want to do everything you can to ensure success. Sometimes the best option for a student, at least for the time being, is something other than law school.

A View from a Law Career Development Office

Susan L. Krinsky, JD, Vice-President, Chief of Staff, Director of Enrollment Management, Law School Admissions Council

For many years, my focus in legal education was the admission and financial aid side of things. Sure, I knew we had a career development office (actually, we had a placement office, then a career services office, then a professional development office, and now a career development office). But I hadn't a clue to what it actually did. Not unlike many aspiring law students, I thought it found jobs for our students and graduates, mainly by arranging interviews with law firms and other legal employers. And if students and graduates weren't getting jobs at the rate at which they wanted to, it was surely the fault of that office. After all, if we didn't enroll enough students, I was fully prepared to take responsibility as the head of the admission office. But a funny thing happened in 2001. Our new Dean asked me to take responsibility for our career services functions. And I started learning very quickly that this is a very different animal. Not surprisingly (and this is something that my undergraduate career services colleagues will laugh about), a career services office has very little direct control over whether students obtain jobs. In classic tort lingo, there's an "intervening cause"—the student's behavior. Now this is hardly meant to say that the law school career office plays no role—to the contrary. And I do think that the law student of 2015 is not the same as the law student of 2001. Our students today are, I believe, much more savvy about the state of the market and about what they must do to find their place in that market.

One of the things I do in my admission capacity is answer questions posed by prospective law students. These students have usually moved beyond the "how do I apply to law school" stage, and they're trying to distinguish between law schools to which they've applied or even to which they've been admitted. They are quite appropriately trying to figure out how the experience at one law school will differ from that at another, so they're asking about curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, about student life, and about placement. I use the word "placement" advisedly, even though it's been out of favor for some years, because that's what prospective students want to know. They want to know the results: how many graduates are practicing international law in San Francisco, how many first-year students have paid summer clerkships in New York City, how many second-year students are splitting their summers between IP boutique firms in Chicago and international firms in Paris. I always need to take a deep breath before answering these questions because the questions naturally reflect a certain naivete about what sorts of opportunities are out there. But even if all the prospective student wants to know is "what percentage of your graduates have legal jobs within nine months after graduation?", I worry that the stated concern is too narrow.

Without a doubt, it's important for prospective students to engage in research to learn whether graduates of the law schools they're considering are getting jobs, and whether these jobs are in the practice settings and geographic locations in which the prospective students are interested. In fact, they barely need to do that research these days, what with Law School Transparency and Above the Law and Law Jobs By the Numbers offering to provide that data to them. But too often, prospective students conclude their research with the "results" questions and answers and fail to ask the "how do I get there" questions. What I hope to do here is to suggest what at least some of those questions might address and to emphasize the significance of the student's personal responsibility in reaching her goals.

Finding a job is not an event, but a process. In some ways, it's surprising that students forget this. After all, getting into law school is clearly a process, and it's a process in which applicants must take a good deal of responsibility. Advisors advise them, but they surely do not call the law schools and arrange for letters of admission to go to certain students. Why, then, are students so surprised that they must take responsibility when it comes time to find a job? Many prospective students ask me if we "have" internships or summer positions for our students. The implication is that they believe that when they're ready, they can come in and either choose one of these mythical internships or jobs, or that we'll simply place them in

the one we think is appropriate. (I should note, here, that I am aware that some law schools DO offer to place students in pre-selected internships. I disagree with this approach because I think it is of critical importance that students go through the process of figuring out what they want to do, applying for positions, interviewing, and accepting a position. Similarly, I think it's important for employers to have the kind of interaction with a prospective employee or intern that leads to a meeting of the minds.) I have had prospective students tell me, after a presentation by our career development staff at an admissions event, "I want to hear what you're going to do for me. It sounds like you'll only help me if I do part of the work." Bingo.

Naturally, this does not apply to all students. Many students have already been out in the work world and understand what they must do in order to find a position. They even understand that part of the process is to figure out what kind of position is the right position for them. Many students come to us from undergraduate institutions that have done a terrific job of preparing students for just this kind of process. Other students seem, intuitively, to know that the right job will not simply appear one day, but that they must engage in continual and productive searching in order to identify a pool of opportunities that might be right for them.

And that brings me to what a law career services office does. We teach students the steps of figuring out (a) what it is they would like to be doing, and (b) how to get there. We might use assessment instruments in some cases. In others, we might simply talk with students to learn what they like and dislike, what areas of law they're interested in, what kinds of activities they most enjoy. We teach them job-search skills: interviewing, writing resumes and cover letters and tailoring those documents to particular employers, networking. Those are the things of real value that we do, because they are the life skills that will also help the student obtain her second, third, or fourth job in the course of her career. Naturally, we also coordinate interview programs and we engage in significant employer development work, but these activities become valuable to a student only if she has first engaged with us in the true work of career development and research. Only after that work has been done will the student be effective in marketing herself during a job interview.

We find that some of our students, even after three years of law school, don't really know what they're getting into when they join a private law firm immediately after graduation. While most have heard that 60- or 70-hour work weeks are more the rule than the exception, many don't realize what that will mean to their own lives. Just as significant, some are surprised to find that they do not in fact enjoy the day-to-day work of private practice. We encourage students to explore these issues as a part of the job-search process, and we help students to identify alternatives to traditional practice. A law degree is extraordinarily versatile, and I continue to be impressed every day by the varied and interesting positions held by law school graduates—in government, a wide variety of industries, public interest environments, academia, and more.

We also try to help our students understand the effect of the economy on the job market in general, and the legal market in particular. When employers are re-trenching and engaging in lay-offs and hiring freezes, it's obviously harder to find a job. When students have done all the "right" things—networking and honing interview skills and researching employers—it's very difficult for them to accept that external forces over which they have no control are influencing their prospects. But understanding these forces—that they are cyclical and that not every sector is affected in the same way—can be enormously helpful to students searching for jobs. It helps them to change their expectations and approach and to look for ways in which they can use and improve their skills in different settings.

What else do students need to understand? That there are many factors that lead an employer to interview a job applicant and/or to make a job offer. One factor is success in law school. Most students entering law school believe that they will perform very well in law school—and if they didn't believe it, they probably shouldn't be in law school. But obviously, only half of the students can be in the top half of

the class. Once a student finds herself in the bottom quarter, third, half, or other segment, she needs to recognize that law school performance is not going to be the factor that gets her in the door for an interview. She needs to know how to communicate her other strengths, whether these are oral advocacy, writing ability, or any of a wide range of talents for which legal employers are looking.

In fact, academic success may not be enough. Employers—particularly private sector employers—need lawyers who will be able to bring clients in and keep them. The qualities that make a lawyer successful at client contact may not be the same qualities that resulted in a successful academic experience. Again, the student who does everything “right” academically may still have difficulty finding a job if she doesn’t learn how to network, interview, and communicate. These skills are important in virtually every practice setting.

Students need to be resilient during a job search—they are likely to encounter more rejection than success, and they need to be able to get back up after a rejection, figure out what they’ve learned from the experience, and move on. They need to engage with the career professionals at their law schools, and they need to treat the process of finding a job seriously and consistently. They can’t save “finding a job” for the final weeks of their legal education. You can’t cram for law school exams, and you can’t cram when it comes to finding a job.

I’ve spent a lot of time talking about what students need to do. But law school career professionals are starting to change their approaches, too. For many years, we’ve educated and counseled and haven’t taken too active a role in “placement.” I’m starting to see a swing from “career development” to “career services” or even “placement.” No, we are not head-hunters, and we are not in a position to hand a student a job. But we are becoming more active in identifying positions and identifying employers who will meet with our students, we are actively encouraging our alumni and others to help our students, and we are becoming more directive in getting students to engage in the job search process and pursue available opportunities. Ultimately, it is the student who gets the job, but law school career professionals know that we can’t sit back—we must be as engaged as we want our students to be.

TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT

From
Georgetown University Law Center Career Book*

Edited By
Abbie Willard, Ph.D.

If you think it is difficult to choose among law school courses, seminars, and clinics wait until you see what is available after law school. A variety of alternatives are open to an individual who seeks to practice law or to combine law with other areas of interest and expertise. Among the more traditional types of practice, the following are most common.

I. ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Teaching

In Law Schools. Qualifications for law teaching positions vary somewhat from school to school. Most institutions, in recruiting for their faculties, prefer graduates who have had at least 3 years practice experience, have clerked for a judge or have pursued post-graduate law study. Other criteria considered in the selection of law school faculty are:

- * Law school attended
- * Academic performance
- * Law review experience
- * Publications
- * Teaching experience

The Association of American Law Schools (AALS) sponsors an annual November recruitment conference in Washington, D.C. Prior to the Conference, AALS compiles a register of applications which is sent to all law schools planning to recruit at the December conference. Individuals interested in pursuing a teaching career are urged to register with AALS and to attend the Washington Conference. Registration involves contacting the AALS for the materials and standardized forms, and paying a registration fee. For the best planned job search, you will want to obtain the materials during the summer or early fall so that

- * you have time to devote to the application. The application form is reproduced, as sent to AALS by the applicant, and mailed to all law school recruitment teams. Your misspellings, typographical errors and cross-outs remain.

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- * your application is included in the first mailing to all recruitment teams. Although there is a second and third mailing, by the time supplementary mailings are received, many schools have contacted registrants and filled their interview schedules.
- * you have time to contact individually the schools in which you have a particular interest.
- * you have the opportunity to discuss your career goals with a law school faculty member or dean who can serve as an important reference for you among his/her network of academic colleagues.

Increasing competition makes it necessary for all candidates to be flexible both in courses they are willing to teach and in geographic preference. Unless an applicant has superior credentials, it is difficult to secure an entry level teaching position without such flexibility indicated directly on the AALS forms.

If you plan to attend the November Conference, check with the Placement Office. A staff member from the office often attends the Conference for the purpose of assisting students and alumni/ae.

During the remainder of the academic year positions are announced in the ALS Placement Bulletin which is on file in the Placement Office. A teaching binder contains announcements from individual law schools who seek to fill available faculty positions. The list of Georgetown alumni/ae who are teaching at law schools throughout the country (available in the Placement Office) is also a valuable resource. Your best resource, however, for information, referrals, and contacts -- will be the faculty members at Georgetown who can advise you about various law schools and serve as your introduction into the halls of academe. Such faculty references are of utmost importance in any academic job search.

In Undergraduate Schools. Various departments, schools, and colleges throughout undergraduate institutions hire individuals with H.D. degrees to teach courses that vary from legal history, political science, and business law to interdisciplinary courses that combine law with such disparate fields as communications, computers, philosophy, medicine, and ethics. In addition to a J.D. degree, most such positions require an advanced degree in a field relevant to the department's domain. Experience in teaching and/or academic research is also a must.

Candidates are advised to apply for teaching positions directly to the deans of the schools that interest them. The Education Directory: Colleges and Universities is a useful guide to colleges within the U.S. The Chronicle of Higher Education, a weekly periodical available in the Placement Office and most libraries, contains "positions available" want ads for the world of higher education.

Administration

Opportunities are available to J.D. graduates in various administrative positions. Law schools employ graduates as Assistant Deans whose duties vary from school to school and range from supervising/teaching legal research and writing to supervising moot court competitions, counseling students, or coordinating continuing legal education programs. Such opportunities are often advertised in either The Chronicle of Higher Education or the AALS Placement Bulletin, published six (6) times a year. In addition, law schools frequently notify the Placement Office of such opportunities, which are then placed in the "Teaching" binder.

University Counsel

The number of in-house counsel at colleges and universities has grown dramatically since the late sixties. In-house staff size is expected to continue growing but at a much slower rate than in the past. The issues today are quite different from those which created the need for such positions, but the challenge remains. University counsels work with the usual legal questions involving contracts, labor relations and tax as well as issues peculiar to educational institutions.

The National Association of College and University Attorneys, located in Washington, D.C., is made up of attorneys who serve as in-house counsel as well as those who work for firms that represent educational institutions. For further information on a career as university counsel, contact this organization at One Dupont Circle, N.W., Suite 620, 202-833-8390.

Law Librarianships

Professional librarians trained in both law and library science have traditionally directed academic law libraries. Today the libraries serving courts, law firms, corporate legal departments, government agencies and local and county bar associations are requiring the services of professionally trained librarians in increasing numbers.

For a professional position in a law library, a master's degree in library science is usually the minimum requirement, with the law degree increasingly sought as an additional requirement. Some schools, such as the University of Denver, offer joint-degree programs in law and library science. Law graduates interested in a career in librarianship could combine work in a law library with pursuit of the library degree without much difficulty. Both Catholic University and the University of Maryland have been amenable to tailoring a master's program for a student enrolled in law school. Students interested in this field should contact the Library Science department in one of these schools.

II. BUSINESS POSITIONS

Corporate Counsel

Corporate legal staffs, like corporations themselves, vary in size from one attorney to a staff the size of AT&T's with approximately 250 lawyers.

The fifty largest corporations, like large law firms, have formalized recruitment programs, interview in the fall and seek students with excellent academic credentials. It is still, however, the exception rather than the rule for corporations to hire new law school graduates. Only the largest corporations have the capability to train new graduates; the others hire attorneys with several years of experience. During recent summers, our office sent questionnaires to over one thousand corporations to determine whether they hire new graduates. Questionnaire responses are filed in a binder available in the Placement Office.

Corporate attorneys are not only lawyers but also members of a business team. An in-house corporate lawyer must know the business of the corporation, the industry and government as well as the law. For the individuals interested in business, a corporate legal department offers excellent opportunities. For the individual interested in international law, the corporate legal department may also provide interesting opportunities. Many corporations, especially those in banking, computers, pharmaceuticals, food, and electronics are engaged in a large amount of international work.

In a law firm, clients seek counsel when they are in trouble or have a problem; lawyers help solve those problems. Corporate attorneys practice preventive law -- anticipating problems before they occur and making judgments as to the proper course of action.

For further information, refer to the pamphlet published by the American Bar Association Committee on Corporate Law Departments entitled "Law Practice in a Corporate Law Department" which is available in the Placement Office. Also check [Survey of Corporate Law Departments](#), Top 200 Corporations in the U.S., and [Directory of Corporate Counsel](#).

The Placement Office, along with other Washington area law schools, coordinates a Corporate Recruitment Day, held during the Fall. Attorneys from the participating corporations interview selected applicants from each of the area law schools on the campus of the George Washington University National Law Center.

Accounting Firms

Over the past decade the work of public accounting firms has increased in both scope and volume. Although the main business of accounting firms involves auditing, tax planning and management services, these organizations are also involved in the same work handled by private tax practitioners. This includes mergers and acquisitions, estate planning, foreign taxation and corporate reorganizations. In addition, many public accounting firms have diversified to provide a broad range of business planning and consulting services to a variety of clients.

Accounting firms prefer candidates with a background in accounting and most require CPA certification for partnership consideration.

Brochures from the "Big Eight" firms are on file in the Placement Office.

Banking

The trust departments of banks employ law graduates to advise on matters of probate, personal trusts, pension and profit sharing trusts and corporate trusts. Opportunities in banks, however, are not limited to the trust department. Other areas which employ attorneys include the consumer lending department, credit departments (commercial loans), and the personnel departments (employment discrimination and civil rights law). For more information, see the [American Bank Directory](#) and [Careers in Banking](#).

Legal Publishing

Companies such as Lawyers Cooperative Publishing Company, West Publishing Company and Shepard's Citations employ law graduates to analyze court decisions and to write about the law. Job descriptions in these organizations include research, writing, editing, textbook preparation, and journalistic reporting. Job candidates should contact these companies directly to inquire about available opportunities.

Associations

Washington, D.C. is an association city; hundreds of trade, professional and recreational associates are headquartered here. These organizations are involved in activities ranging from policy studies to monitoring and influencing legislation.

Some of the larger associations have a small legal staff, others have one lawyer and still others do not maintain in-house legal counsel. Organizations with periodic openings for attorneys include the National Governor's Conference, League of Cities - Conference of Mayors, Inc. and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Inc. Many of these associations employ individuals with legal training to do legislative and regulatory work. Others employ individuals with law degrees to perform administrative, managerial, and communications functions.

The best sources of information on associations are the [National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States](#), [Washington Information Directory](#), [Washington V](#) and [Encyclopedia of Associations](#).

Consulting

Consulting opportunities are available in business, government, and education, as well as the planning and research communities. Most require extensive experience in a relevant field in addition to a degree such as the J. D. Consulting opportunities for law graduates, however, are rarely brought to the attention of the Placement Office. For further information, see [Who's Who in Consulting](#).

III. PRIVATE PRACTICE

Law Firms

More than half of law graduates nationally, and about 60% of Georgetown graduates, have begun their careers as salaried associates in law firms. The large, structured firms recruit annually for law graduates. They have a visible and more predictable hiring pattern than do smaller firms, and they are likely to have a Hiring Committee. Any firm that devotes a substantial amount of partnership time and an extensive travel budget to recruiting is also likely to be very selective. In view of the large number of students in the job market, firms frequently use academic record and publication experience as criteria in selecting students for in house interviews.

These large firms begin interviewing in late summer or early fall and usually make initial offers around Thanksgiving. Most of these employers also have summer clerkship programs for students who have completed two years of law school. These programs enable the firm and the summer associate to assess each other. If the associate is well-received, he or she is likely to receive an offer of permanent employment at the end of summer. Many firms who hire primarily from among their summer clerks recruit only a very few third-year students for permanent positions.

Representatives of approximately seven hundred law firms conduct interviews through the Placement Office with second and third year students during the Fall of each year. Information about the firms who interview on campus or through the Regional Interview Programs is generally available in the form of a firm resume and/or a standardized National Association for Law Placement (NALP) form. Detailed information on the very largest firms is also contained in The American Lawyer's Guide To Leading Law Firms and The National Law Journal's Directory of Law Firms available in the Placement Office.

Medium-sized firms (described by NALP as those with 25-50 attorneys) may or may not have a formal recruitment program. Having such a program is more a matter of firm philosophy, type of practice and geographic location than it is of sheer size. Although there are firms of 10 attorneys that have a structured recruitment program, in general the medium and large firms are the most organized in this area.

Smaller firms and firms with no structured program often hire later in the academic year. They may interview at the school, through one of the off-campus programs or by advising the Placement Office of their interest in receiving resumes from students.

Larger firms have a greater presence on law school campuses, but they hire only a small percentage of law school graduates. Although small firms are generally invisible during the fall at most law schools, they hire the largest number of law school graduates each year.

Solo Practice

Although more than one third of the nation's attorneys are sole practitioners, few graduates begin their legal careers by hanging a shingle. Initial fee income is minimal and yet certain expenses (support staff, telephone, and rent) must be met. Any individual going to into solo practice may need savings or an independent source of income to provide support for a six to twenty-four month period. Several resources in the Placement Office library provide further information on this subject: How To Start and Build A Law Practice, How to Go Directly Into Solo Law Practice (Without Missing A Meal), "I'd Rather Do It Myself: How To Set Up Your Own Law Firm, and How to Start and Build a Law Practice in the District of Columbia.

IV. JUDICIAL CLERKSHIPS

Nationally, about 10-12% of all law graduates accept judicial clerkships each year. Georgetown in recent years has had a larger percentage - 15-16%. Many faculty members believe that a judicial clerkship upon graduation provides an incomparable learning experience. Clerkships are either for one or two years and are highly competitive depending on the level of the court, the location and the judge.

Because some judges notify the Law Center of openings, the Placement office maintains a binder of Judicial Clerkship Opportunities. Most clerkships, however, are not listed in this fashion. Students who have an interest in working for a particular judge or in a particular location should investigate possibilities on their own.

Georgetown University Law Center faculty members are very important in your judicial clerkship application process. Faculty members serve students in several ways. First, many faculty members have been judicial clerks and/or are very familiar with specific courts and judges. Therefore, they are excellent sources of information about those courts and judges with whom they are familiar. (A Georgetown Professor Counseling List is available in the Placement Office.) Faculty members also act as "sponsors" - to advise you on where to apply and to write letters of recommendation. A letter of recommendation from a faculty members is a required part of your application for any judicial clerkship.

Early in the second semester the Clerkship Committee holds a general information meeting for second year and third year evening students interested in clerkships. The Placement Office also arranges a panel program in which present clerks come to the Law Center to share their personal views and strategy suggestions. A tape of this panel programs is available in the Placement Office. Dates and times of these two clerkship programs are announced in the Law Weekly.

Federal Courts

Federal judges are listed in the U. S. Court Directory, The American Bench, and The Almanac of the Federal Judiciary.

The major portion of the law clerk's time is spent in research and writing, particularly for a judge on a U. S. Court of Appeals. When a case comes before the Court of Appeals many of the legal questions have already been resolved in the district court. Therefore, the questions before the appellate court may be narrow in scope. A federal district court clerk's duties include the traditional research and writing of draft opinions as well as exposure to varied pretrial and trial procedures and evidentiary problems. Depending on the judge, a district court clerkship may offer relevant experience for the student interested in litigation.

State Courts

Clerking positions are available for all of the highest level state courts and, depending on the particular state, for many of the intermediate level courts. State judges are listed in The American Bench and in U. S. Lawyer's Reference Dictionary. For further information, check with each state's Court Administrator, available in State Administrative Officials Classified by Function. An NALP-conducted survey of state courts as well as a survey of volunteer judicial internship opportunities are also available in the Placement Office.

V. GOVERNMENT POSITIONS

Federal

The federal government offers career opportunities in a broad range of legal fields; admiralty, trade regulation, taxation and finance, labor law, communications regulation, international law, energy law, antitrust, patent law, public utilities regulation, criminal and constitutional law, to name but a few.

Federal attorneys are involved in: administrative, regulatory, and advisory processes; brief and opinion writing; legislative drafting; research and review of special problems; and trial practice at the administrative, trial court, and appellate levels. The nature of the work and kinds of legal responsibilities vary tremendously.

For specific information on the role of attorneys in a particular agency refer to The Directory and Profile of Federal Legal Offices and Now Hiring: Government Jobs for Lawyers, a guide to legal careers in Government Manual, the Uncle Sam Connection and the Federal Yellow Book.

Because of Georgetown's location in the heart of government activity, only a few agencies recruit on campus. Other agencies advise the Placement Office of their interest in hiring and then conduct interviews in their offices. Most agencies assume that interested Georgetown students will contact them directly.

The procedures for hiring attorneys vary tremendously from agency to agency, and it is difficult therefore to give any general rules. In some agencies, attorney recruitment is handled through the Office of the General Counsel (or its equivalent) and in others, it is handled by Attorney Personnel Specialists. It is advisable to send your application for employment to the General Counsel of an agency, the Personnel Office, and the specific divisions of interest within the Agency.

An application to the federal government usually includes your resume, cover letter and the infamous "Standard Form 171," -- the government's version of your professional biography. Whether or not initial application procedures require an SF-171 and/or a resume varies greatly. Some agencies have their own attorney application forms and many of these are on file in the Placement Office. For help in filling out a 171 form, see the Uncle Sam Connection or talk with one of the Placement Counselors.

Several of the largest agencies have formal recruitment programs, early fall interview dates and make offers by December in order to compete with their law firm counterparts. If you are interested in either a summer clerkship or permanent employment with an agency, check with the Placement Office immediately upon returning to school in the fall. In the past, students have assumed that government agencies hire later and this is often not the case.

Opportunities for summer employment are available to both first and second year students. The best information source regarding these positions is the Summer Federal Legal Employment Report, which is revised annually.

In addition to summer and permanent opportunities, many part-time clerking positions are available in the government during the school year. These positions are valuable not only for the experience they provide, but for the advantage they may give the applicant seeking a summer or permanent position.

The federal bureaucracy may at times seem overwhelming and confusing. Where else but a law school in D.C. and where better but our office to start your exploration of the myriad of career opportunities available in its halls?

Capitol Hill

On rare occasions positions for Legislative Assistants to members of Congress and/or positions with specific committees are advertised in the Placement Office. Typically, however, finding such a position requires development contacts, conducting repeated follow-up, and exhibiting tremendous persistence and tenacity. In addition to pursuing personal contacts, we urge you to apply directly to your own Representative and Senators.

Each year through the Wednesday Forum program a panel of attorneys from the Hill comes to speak to interested students. Additionally, a binder in the Placement Office lists Georgetown alumnae/i working on the Hill. Several other resources you may want to use are - [The Congressional Directory](#), [Congressional Yellow Book](#) and the [Washington Information Directory](#).

Military

The offices of the Judge Advocates General of the three branches of military service recruit 200 to 300 attorneys each year to enter the military as commissioned officers. A small number of openings also occur each year for civilian attorneys, but these almost always require some legal experience after passing the bar. Detailed information is available from the Judge Advocate General Corps of the Army, Air Force, and Navy.

State and Local

Agencies. There are an increasing number of opportunities available to recent law graduates in state and local government, particularly in the areas of energy, environment, criminal justice, health, and education. Uncertain budgets and personnel turnover create a somewhat erratic hiring situation, and in general, openings are very seldom forecast. Yet, information is available from a variety of sources. All states have "State Offices" in D.C. These are listed in [Washington Information Directory](#) under "State and Local Officials." Guides for exploring opportunities in state and local government include: [State Information Book](#) and [State Administrative Officials](#). Information about individual states is also available via a short walk to our neighbor, the, Hall of States, at 440 North Capitol Street.

Prosecuting Attorneys. One of the longest established types of public attorneys is the public prosecutor (also called district attorney, prosecuting attorney, county attorney, state solicitor, and other titles). Each of the more than 3,000 counties in the United States has a district attorney. Their principal responsibility is prosecution of criminal cases. the district attorney's responsibility for enforcement of the criminal law makes him/her a key figure in local politics. In less populated areas of the county he/she generally serves also as corporation counsel for the county government. A corporation counsel provides legal advice on tax and other revenue measures, bond issues, contracts for the purchase of goods and services by public agencies, matters relating to public employees, the regularity and validity of local regulatory measures, and a host of other problems of local government.

The office of the district attorney varies in size according to the population and complexity of the community in which it is located. In rural counties, the district attorney may have no staff and may serve as only a part-time official; in metropolitan areas, the staff may include over a hundred lawyers (handling both criminal and civil matters) and correlative numbers of support staff. (Refer to [The National Directory of Prosecuting Attorneys](#).)

VI. PUBLIC INTEREST OPPORTUNITIES

Public Interest Organizations

The American Bar Association defines public interest law as "wide-range of law-related activities which aim toward bettering our society, for example:

- * defending an important right belonging to a significant segment of the public;
- * enlarging citizen access to the legal mechanisms by which social decisions are made and resources allocated;
- * perfecting the adversary system, and providing for alternative, more efficient methods for dispute settlement when the adversary system is too cumbersome.

Public interest organizations are usually very specialized; they focus on a particular set of issues. These organizations include public interest law center which do federal court law reform litigation; legal services programs and public defender offices; law reform and citizen groups performing policy research and advocacy; private law firms that practice a substantial amounts of public interest law including, consumer rights, juvenile rights, civil rights, employment discrimination, environmental law, labor-side labor law, family law, criminal law, sex-based discrimination, as well as many other areas; and corporate law firms which have pro bono programs. Rather than having a client-oriented practice, these organizations usually direct impact litigation.

The most comprehensive listing of such organizations is the [Harvard Pro Bono Survey](#). Harvard sends questionnaires to approximately 5,000 public interest organizations. The responses are updated regularly and are arranged geographically. In addition, a monthly job listing service is provided by the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLDADA) in its publication, [NLADA Washington Memo](#).

Georgetown, along with other D.C. area law schools, coordinates a Public Interest/Public Service Career Program, usually held in February. The program provides an opportunity for employers and area law students to discuss legal career options in the public sector. The two-day program includes an interviewing session for employers seeking candidates for positions.

Finding a Public Interest Job

Very few public interest organizations, legal services or public defenders interview on law school campuses because of financial restraints. Most of these organizations are not in a position to know their hiring needs a year ahead of time; most begin to consider candidates in the Spring. There are, however, a few organizations that begin early. We recommend that you begin your job search early - even if it means you must resubmit your application.

Persistence and initiative are essential to finding a public interest job. An important criterion for consideration in this area is a demonstrable commitment to public service. If you are interested in this type of job, take courses and become involved in activities that indicate such commitment. Unfortunately, there are very few summer opportunities in the public interest and generally the available positions are non-paying. However, our Equal Justice Foundation does have limited internship funds to supplement the

salaries of students working in the public interest under EJF's Student-Funded Fellowship. Contact Georgetown's chapter of the Equal Justice Foundation for further information. We also recommend that you may want to consider acquiring a volunteer public interest position and supplementing it with a paid part-time position.

If you hope to work for a public interest organization and want to be in a specific geographic location, you are going to have to plan, arrange and pay for an interview trip. Keep this in mind from the beginning so that you might arrange to combine it with a school break, GRIP trip, etc.

Legal Services Information

The federally funded Legal Services Corporation provides legal representation for the poor. There are neighborhood offices located in cities and counties throughout the country, and these centers handle a large volume of cases.

Legal services attorneys only represent clients in civil matters. The largest number of cases usually involve family law, housing, public assistance, consumer lending and employment law.

Although the financial rewards are small and the work load is heavy, Legal Services lawyers have the opportunity from the very beginning to litigate and to manage their own case load.

The Legal Services Corporation publishes twice per month a Position Vacancy Bulletin. Because the Corporation provides an extensive network of legal service positions, and because it coordinates all member office hiring, this bulletin is an excellent resource for individuals interested in this type of practice.

Public Defender

Public Defender offices are different from legal services offices. Public Defenders are locally or state funded offices that provide representation to accused persons in criminal cases. Because the work load is heavy, public defenders get a tremendous amount of litigation experience. It has been said that public defenders get more trial experience in 3 years than most attorneys get in twenty years. For a listing of Public Defenders, see the [National Legal Aid and Public Defender Association Directory](#).

VII. EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

There are many postgraduate fellowships and programs offered by educational institutions and various organizations. The number of available fellowships and postgraduate programs tends to fluctuate depending on funding. A number of schools offer opportunities for postgraduate study usually leading to the LL.M. or S.J.D. degrees, and some of their programs are offered in conjunction with fellowships. Fellowship opportunities are usually awarded after completion of the J.D. degree.

VIII. NON-TRADITIONAL CAREERS

There are innumerable career alternatives for the individual with a law degree who does not want a traditional legal practice. Today many students begin law school with no intent to practice. Others, in the course of their law school studies, decide to combine law with another discipline and accept positions in the more general fields of management and business. Before making such a decision, you will want to analyze carefully the pros and cons, understand your personal motivation and assess long term career goals. The decision should be a positive one and should be made out of enthusiasm for a new area and not made in a moment of frustration with the trials and tribulations of law school.

Because the law touches every aspect of life, legal training is a plus in virtually all careers. There are some careers, however, that deal with legal or quasi-legal issues on a regular basis -- and in those fields the degree is a real plus. What are some of those fields?

- * Labor Relations
- * Affirmative Action
- * Banking, Insurance and other financial fields
- * Real Estate
- * Lobbying
- * Mediation and Arbitration
- * Government Contracts
- * Law Enforcement
- * Government Relations

These positions are available in different settings which may require specific experience. It will be necessary to research each field of interest before making a definite career choice.

The list above is in no way exhaustive; it is a place to begin. Plan to sit down with a counselor and devote time to this important decision.

Once the decision has been made and a field has been selected, job hunting will present some unique challenges. Positions in the areas listed above and others you have considered are not likely to require a J.D. You as an applicant will have to provide evidence that the legal training is a bonus for the position to be filled. This can and is done regularly, but it requires conviction, persuasive oral communication skills and knowledge of the prospective job opportunity.

A valuable resource for anyone considering non-traditional alternative is Non-Legal Careers for Lawyers in the Private Sector, by F. Utley and Gary Munneke.

CHAPTER V

THE PRELAW EXPERIENCE

Educators and pre-law advisors alike disagree on such matters as a “pre-law curriculum” and what courses help prepare students for law school---and the wisdom of taking these courses. Three articles deal with these issues. The latter part of the chapter centers on matters concerning the admission process and the undergraduate experience in general. The concluding pages provide helpful suggestions.

“What? Like, it’s hard?” The Elle Woods Effect and Pre-Law Popular Inspirations

Hannah Berman, The University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa

Author’s Notes

I could not have completed this study without the gracious support of my mentors Tyler Roberts, Wendy McMillian, and Dr. Richard Damms. I also want to thank Dr. Ellen Key, of Appalachian State University, for supporting my use of the data collected from her students, as well as Dr. Amanda Cook of Mississippi State University at Meridian for reviewing my surveys and crediting the phrase, “CSI Effect.”

Abstract: My research provides a case study about pre-law undergraduate inspirations for pursuing a career in the law profession through the filter of popular culture. I discovered that most undergraduates who self-identified as pre-law undergraduates at my university, as well as at another southern university, found the theme of advocacy in popular legal movies and series inspired them to seek out pre-law advising and a legal education. Additionally, I cross-compared survey results from pre-law advisors, who also recognized the importance of advocacy and popular culture as an inspirational influence for pre-law students. I hope my research spurs a larger conversation among pre-law advisors about the state of undergraduate pre-law attitudes and inspirations about law school and the legal profession.

Keywords: Pre-Law, Advocacy, Popular Culture

Introduction

Most of those in our world know the scene in *Legally Blonde* when Elle Woods retorted “What? Like, it’s hard?” to her boyfriend upon her acceptance to Harvard Law. I noticed in my second month as a pre-law advisor at The University of Alabama (UA) how some of my advisees mentioned how moments like that in other popular legal movies and shows inspired their interest to pursue law school. I could relate to that sentiment because that moment in *Legally Blonde* likewise misinformed and influenced me when I wanted to pursue law school. Out of curiosity, I developed a survey using popular films and series to investigate if they similarly influence other current pre-law students. My case study provides an example of how pre-law advisors can understand their students’ inspirations to pursue law school through the window of current popular culture.

Consumers can watch a multitude of law-related movies and television series through mobile devices and streaming services including Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, and more,

anywhere and anytime. Viewers do not necessarily have to wait in front of television screen and hope to catch the episode at the right time, go to the movie theater, or wait for the VHS or the DVD release. Our undergraduates came of age in a time of constant streaming and mobile technology - which makes them prime candidates for my study.

Why does this matter? Advisors should address the incoming generation's exposure to a growing and easily accessible amount of popular, but often flawed depictions that may misguide pre-law students' intentions to pursue the legal profession. Those who have watched *The Firm* and *My Cousin Vinny* can envision how audiences unexposed to the legal field may believe the profession leads to get-rich-quick schemes and how charismatic lawyers win courtroom cases in a single day - without reviewing a mound of legal research. This could make a difference in terms of time and money spent for an expensive education, if these students cannot articulate a clear purpose for pursuing law school over other careers.

I realize that popular culture is only one factor that can influence pre-law students' desire to pursue the legal profession. However, many of our students come from small, rural towns that do not have a local law office or a lawyer in their family. For those students, popular culture serves as the earliest introduction of the law practice in their worldview. While consumption of mainstream news influences society, the average college student likely spends more time watching their favorite Netflix series in their dorm room than consuming news coverage (Matsa, 2018). I do not focus on the extent popular film and television accurately depicts law practice, nor do I analyze the accuracy of popular depictions of the legal profession. Instead, my research provides a case study about pre-law undergraduate inspirations for pursuing a career in the law profession through the filter of popular culture.

Literature Review

Research is scarce on the topic of pre-law undergraduates and popular culture. Alexander Astin's study of pre-law students' motivations to pursue the law profession, however, helped structure my study. Astin analyzed data from a 1981 national survey conducted by the Cooperative Institutional Research program that created a profile of varying characteristics (demographic characteristics, academic preparation and plans, types of institutions attended, political orientation, attitudes, and values) about first-time freshmen. He reviewed the data and specifically looked at students who selected 'lawyer (attorney)' as their preferred occupation or mentioned their intention to pursue a law degree as pre-law students for his study, resulting in a response pool of approximately 8,000 students from the national pool of data. His analysis of the various characteristics in his study suggested pre-law students are a distinct group that responds to national trends (Astin, p. 83). I discuss his survey analysis on pre-law values and "life goals" in my summary findings.

While Astin's study helped structure my methodology, Michael Asimow, Robert Clifford, and Victoria S. Salzmann and Philip T. Dunwoody's studies provided a literary basis for investigating the influence of popular culture on the public and first-year law students. Asimow et al. conducted a transnational study in 2005 about first year law students and their preconceived notions about the law profession as related to popular culture. (Asimow, 2005, p. 408) His team researched how popular law film and television shows might affect public views of actual law practice and lawyers (Asimow, p. 408, 427). The research team distributed surveys across several continents to measure any shared attitudes among first-year law students about depictions of law practice in film and television. In summary, the research team concluded news coverage provided more information and influenced law student attitudes about law practice more than film or television (Asimow, p. 427). Although Asimow's study focused on first-year

law students, his study provided a perspective of students we can potentially consider “pre-law” upon graduation.

Salzmann and Dunwoody found that popular culture limitedly influences the public from their study targeting first-year law students and the public. (Salzmann & Dunwoody, 2005, p. 412) Their survey revealed that most first-year law students’ perceptions of law practice and popular culture mirrored attitudes of current practicing lawyers and actual law practice, regardless of how much television these students consumed. (Salzmann & Dunwoody, p. 414, 449-451) They also pointed out that while the average American gleans information about current events related to law from news coverage, most Americans form their ideas about the courtroom from what they view on television. (Salzmann & Dunwoody, p. 417)

Clifford likewise suggests the public’s misconceptions of law practice results from a “blurring of news and entertainment,” like in the O.J. Simpson case, in addition to insufficient time spent in the courtroom. (Clifford, 2001, p. 2) He analyzed the negative stereotypes of lawyers in movies, television, and the news and stressed the importance of understanding how these negative stereotypes within the different mediums of popular culture might reinforce public bias in the courtroom.

While we can debate how much popular culture influences the public, my study focuses on pre-law undergraduates. Studying pre-law undergraduates’ inspirations through modern popular culture allows advisors to understand a piece of that early and crucial advising puzzle for pre-law students that culminate in the law school application advising process.

Methodology

I started my research with Google searches using the following key phrases: “popular law movies,” “popular television series,” and “law movies every law school students should watch,” and then created a list of films and shows that commonly appeared on those websites, which I included in my surveys. From that list, I reviewed it to make sure the survey also included selections from various genres to make the survey as inclusive for viewers as possible. As the project expanded, I added a similar survey for pre-law advisors. I compared the student responses with the pre-law advisor responses to analyze if these groups shared common observations about legal depictions in popular culture.

I used Qualtrics for the survey designs and used Photoshop to create a reference guide of corresponding movie and television posters. Figures 1 and 2 show the various images included in the compilations for the survey. I anticipated that the images would help respondents recall watching the movies and television series. Appendix A and Appendix B at the end of this text provide a list of titles for the movies and television/Netflix series that I included in the survey. Respondents could move between the pages in the survey to review the images before selecting their choices for the list of watched movies and television/series.



Figure 1 Movies



Figure 2 Television and Netflix Series

I distributed the survey to the undergraduate population (roughly 1700 students) at UA through an established pre-law listserv over the period of a month. Dr. Ellen Key of Appalachian State University (ASU) contacted me through the PLANC (Pre-Law American National Council) listserv offered to distribute the undergraduate version of the survey as an extra-credit assignment for her sophomore level law and politics classes. She mentioned that many of her students discuss an interest in pursuing a legal education, and the theme of her class in that semester centered on the myths of popular depictions of the law profession. I gladly accepted her invitation and included the data from those responses after I completed an additional IRB amendment for my study. I was curious to know if our students' responses would share any commonalities with her students.

I designed a similar survey for pre-law advisors and distributed the survey over the PLANC listserv during the same period. The pre-law advisor survey included an additional question about their attitudes towards the value of popular culture as an inspirational factor for students, whereas the student survey asked about their average visits to the pre-law advising office. The pre-law advisor survey also asked for all educational credentials achieved whereas the student survey asked for classification. The remaining questions stayed the same for both surveys. The surveys did not ask for any personal identifying information and all answers remained anonymous.

I divided the survey into two large sections. The first section asked questions about movies and the second section concentrated on television and/or Netflix series. Respondents could select all movies in the list that they had viewed, as well as for the television series section. The two main questions for each section asked respondents to write about general character qualities and memorable scenes that stood out to them from the movies and the television series. I wanted to know what students and advisors thought about the depiction of lawyers in popular culture, so I could create a clearer picture of why those characters make a career in law appealing to them. Would they view them as ruthless, egomaniacal sharks, or would they view them as the dashing, altruistic white knights? I additionally asked respondents to mention memorable scenes to investigate what characteristics about the law environment appealed to students and advisors in those depictions. Each section also asked respondents to note any other influential popular culture movies or series about the law profession not already listed in the survey.

I received 29 pre-law advisor responses and 177 (104 UA and 73 ASU) responses from pre-law students. After the survey closed, I created the overarching categories based on recurring specific words and phrases I observed throughout the open-ended responses in the student surveys. This led to the six thematic categories and key terms and phrases within those categories that I used to draw comparisons among the different respondents. The thematic categories each encapsulate overarching traits of the lawyer characters or elements of the story lines in the movies and television series.

The six thematic categories include persona, mental sharpness, advocacy, affluence, community perception, and denouement. Each of these categories contains specific key terms that fall within that thematic category. For example, the persona category encompasses the following terms: determination, hard-working, courage, confidence, and strong. Respondents used these terms to describe the persona of the lawyer (sometimes in reference to courtroom scenes.)

Table 1 Key Terms and Thematic Categories

Persona	Mental Sharpness	Advocacy	Affluence	Community Perception	Denouement
Determination	Intelligence	Justice	Wealth	Power	Drama
Hard Working	Wit	Positive Outcomes	Rich	Authority	Excitement
Courage	Persuasive	Overcoming Odds	Money	Expertise	Trial Scenes
Confidence	Smart		Glamor	Influential	Courtroom
Strong				Respect	

I reviewed survey responses for both key terms and phrases that fit into the above categories. Relevant phrases, for example, could include multiple themes within a response: “The ability to be **creative** and **persevere** until you find a way to **defend your client**.” In this phrase, although the respondent did not use any of the specific key terms listed in Table I, I interpreted words used in the response into the categories of (creative) **mental sharpness**, (persevere) **persona**, and (defend your client) **advocacy**.

I analyzed the data in the summary section of this study in two ways: 1. How many times a key term appeared throughout the survey and 2. How many times a thematic phrase appeared in the survey within each section for movies and TV series. I counted thematic phrases only once per response, even if a respondent used the same theme repeatedly, but I counted all times a respondent used a specific key term per response. For example, if a respondent used the word **determination** and **courage** in the same response then I would count each term individually but categorize those key terms as a singular phrase under the **persona** category only once.

Table 2 Occurrence of Key Terms and Themes Within Persona Category

Terms: Persona	Pre- Law	UA	ASU	Phrases: Persona	Pre- Law	UA	ASU
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	Advisors				Advisors		
Determination	0	3	2	General Character Qualities (Movies)	7	51	25
Hard Working	0	4	2	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	1	16	12
Courage	2	2	3	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	7	29	22
Confidence	4	13	5	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	2	16	12
Strong	0	12	7				
Totals	6	34	19	Totals	17	112	71

Table 3 Key Terms and Thematic Phrases Totals

Common Terms	Pre-Law Advisors	UA	ASU	Common Themes Per Section	Pre-Law Advisors	UA	ASU
Determination	0	3	2	General Character Qualities (Movies)	7	51	25
Hard Working	0	4	2	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	1	16	12
Courage	2	2	3	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	7	29	22
Confidence	4	13	5	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	2	16	12
Strong	0	12	7	Totals	17	112	71
Totals	6	34	19	General Character Qualities (Movies)	7	35	29
Intelligence	3	6	3	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	6	22	22
Wit	2	1	5	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	5	16	20
Persuasive	2	1	2	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	1	7	14
Smart	3	5	5	Totals	19	80	85
Totals	10	13	15	General Character Qualities (Movies)	19	34	31
Justice	6	22	19	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	9	28	29
Positive Outcomes	8	0	3	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	7	20	25

Overcoming the Odds	0	2	4	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	5	18	23
Totals	14	24	26	Totals	40	100	108
Wealth	3	1	2	General Character Qualities (Movies)	5	2	5
Rich	0	1	0	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	0	1	0
Money	3	1	4	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	4	1	1
Glamor	7	1	0	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	3	1	4
Totals	13	4	6	Totals	12	5	10
Power	3	9	11	General Character Qualities (Movies)	4	10	8
Authority	0	0	1	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	0	3	1
Expertise	0	0	1	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	2	11	11
Influential	0	1	1	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	2	2	2
Respect	1	7	3	Totals	8	26	22
Totals	4	17	17	General Character Qualities (Movies)	2	13	10
Drama	4	1	5	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	13	28	25
Excitement	6	1	6	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	9	6	20
Trial Scenes	2	2	2	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	9	18	24
Totals	12	4	13	Totals	33	65	79

Results

A table in Astin's study about values or "life goals" of his target pre-law group played a key part in guiding my analysis of my collected survey responses. The three top reported life goals of his data group include "Being an authority in my field," "Keeping up-to-date with political affairs," and "Being very well-off financially." (Astin, p. 82) Surprisingly, he discovered that pre-law students at the time did not rank advocacy or community service as a high factor in pursuing the law profession. Instead, he pointed out that those students reported at a higher rate they primarily wanted to create their own successful practice. (Astin, p. 82) To build upon Astin's findings, I compared responses I received from student respondents with his findings. Second, I compared pre-law advisor responses with undergraduate responses. I predicted the most used key terms students would report as inspirations for pursuing a career in law would include:

1. Money/wealth

2. Power/persuasiveness
3. Excitement/drama

I believed undergraduates would emphasize the importance of money or wealth in the popular culture themes and key terms, given many American families felt the effects of the 2008 recession during their early or late high school years. Certainly, the prospect of wealth or glamor of the legal profession in popular culture could inspire a desire for a profitable career not out of greed, but out of a need for stability in a time of uncertainty. Many of the popular television series and movies depict lawyers as effectively persuasive in their courtroom environment, which I think may attract students to a unique setting in which they can utilize the power of persuasion to influence their community. I also predicted students would find the prospect of winning or achieving victory in the courtroom an appealing aspect in the law profession.

The **advocacy** category appeared as a strong, shared recurring theme throughout all three surveys for key terms used and thematic phrases. The word **justice** appeared as the most commonly used key term for students at both universities out of all key terms. Pre-law advisors, however, did not use the key term **justice** the most but instead used **positive outcomes**, which falls within the same category of **advocacy** as their most frequently used key term. From the data and quotes below, the data shows pre-law advisors share with students an understanding of the importance of **advocacy** as a motivating factor for students in the pursuit of obtaining a legal education and legal career - regardless of the depth to which popular culture influences each student.

Table IV Advocacy Theme and Key Terms Example

Common Terms	Pre-Law Advisors	UA	ASU	Common Themes Per Section	Pre-Law Advisors	UA	ASU
Justice	6	22	19	Memorable Scenes (Movies)	9	28	29
Positive Outcomes	8	0	3	General Character Qualities (TV/Series)	7	20	25
Overcoming the Odds	0	2	4	Memorable Scenes (TV/Series)	5	18	23
Totals	14	24	26	Totals	40	100	108

The following quotes exemplify themes from the **advocacy** category:

“Media and pop culture influences all aspects of society, particularly the minds of this upcoming generation. What they see portrayed on all forms of media greatly affects how they see themselves in their community and what they hope to eventually become in this world. Honestly, now more than ever, media's influence can be seen in the decision-making of today's youth. At least this is my own personal opinion.” -Pre-Law Advisor

"The most countervailing characteristic that interested me was the idea that legal remedies were the means to procuring justice. Through law, there is the potential to restore order and stability in people's lives. This characteristic was consistent in all legal films I watched.” -ASU

"The desire to do what is right and uphold the truth in all matters. At the same time, having the

ability to help others and have compassion upon those affected by certain crimes and events on both sides of the aisle.” -UA

Phrases from the **affluence** and **community perception** categories were the least used among pre-law advisors and undergraduates in their responses. However, the theme of **affluence** appeared less in student responses than among pre-law advisor responses. For students, **community perception** ranked as the second least reoccurring theme, whereas pre-law advisors ranked **affluence** as the second least recurring theme. In other words, pre-law advisors emphasized the wealth and glamor aspect of the legal profession in popular culture more than students did. This indicates a dramatic difference in our current pre-law students’ values on different benefits of a legal education compared with Astin’s study from the 1980s.

I also searched for common trends between these groups in their selections of viewed series and movies to investigate if pre-law advisors shared common popular cultural influences with undergraduates. *Legally Blonde* had the highest percentage among the watched movies list for each group. However, the commonalities of the second most watch movie deviated between pre-law advisors and students. *To Kill a Mockingbird* ranked as the second most watched movie from the movies list for students, whereas pre-law advisors selected *My Cousin Vinny* as their other most watched movie. *To Kill a Mockingbird* ranked as the fourth most watched movie among pre-law advisors - significantly lower than students. Most significantly, only 6.01% of pre-law advisors of the 29 reported watching the *Paper Chase*, whereas a total of only 3.43% students selected it on the list, even though the *Paper Chase* a multitude of websites cite this movie as one of the most significant popular culture depictions of law school and the law profession.

For the television shows and series category, a clear divide appeared between pre-law advisors and pre-law undergraduates. The top three shows for pre-law advisors included: 1. *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* 2. *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* 3. *Law and Order*. Undergraduates from both universities selected the following as their top three most watched series: 1. *Law and Order: SVU* 2. *How to Get Away with Murder* 3. *The People V. O.J. Simpson: American Crime Story*. All three of these shows strongly emphasize the **advocacy** theme or a sense of justice with complex characters, which complements the **advocacy** theme in the most popular movies selected among the undergraduate respondent group, whereas pre-law advisors selected series that put the procedural aspects of the courtroom at the forefront of the storyline.

Undergraduate respondents, however, placed little value on the **community perception** and **affluence** aspects in popular legal movies and series. The **denouement** category, however, played out slightly different than I expected among the three groups. Thematic phrases from the **denouement** category from pre-law advisor responses ranked second behind the **advocacy** category, but ranked third for most keywords used from that category. For ASU students, the thematic phrases from the **denouement** category ranked third in their responses. In UA student responses, thematic phrases from the **denouement** category ranked fourth but also tied for fifth with the **affluence** keyword category. Both UA and ASU students used key terms and themes from that category far less than from the **advocacy** category, in contrast with pre-law advisors.

I interpreted the **denouement** category in two different ways. The UA quote illustrates the common dramatic and exciting environment of the legal profession in popular movies and shows but does not include keywords from this thematic category, whereas the ASU example uses key terms, such as “courtroom,” that fall within this category:

“It is always very interesting the team aspect of work done but also how very lonely it can seem, too.” -UA

“Scenes within the court room are typically the most attractive.” -ASU

I also considered how depictions of successful lawyers in popular culture would inspire pre-law students to pursue the legal profession. During the data analysis, I discovered students made a connection between strong women and successful lawyers in *Legally Blonde*, *The Good Wife*, and *How to Get Away with Murder* and stood out as inspirational characters for those students. Respondents mentioned inspirational female characters in the legal profession and courtroom, including: Elle Woods, Olivia Benson, Annalise Keating, and Alicia Florrick, who successfully **advocate** for **justice** in their stories, which respondents pointed out. To further illustrate this point, *Legally Blonde* ranked as the most watched movie and *Law and Order: SVU* and *How to Get Away With Murder* ranked as the top two most watched shows for respondents - all featuring prominent, modern female characters. Unfortunately, I could not determine if these names popped up due to a gender bias among female respondents, but researchers could explore that area in the future as more women have joined the legal profession:

“Legally Blonde is one of my favorite movies because she joined a profession that put her in the spectrum of an underdog yet she still managed to apply the knowledge that she had gained from her own life experiences to become a success within her career.” -ASU

“Legally blonde attracted me to law because it showed that a woman could be successful in this field. It is intimidating knowing you are choosing to go into a career dominated by men but this movie gave me the idea that things could change.” -ASU

“Elle Woods being successful & proving everyone wrong about her being dumb, her being able to catch someone in a lie because of the different way she thought about something” -ASU

“Main character in the good wife is a successful lawyer after raising her kids, mike in suits is able to wear the white hat and be a corporate lawyer” -UA

“Alicia stands by her husband in the good wife when he is convicted and goes on to become a successful lawyer while he is in jail” -UA

“The tenaciousness and aggressive attitude that Annalise Keating has.” -UA

“When Olivia benson is in her office dedicating hours and researching to find what legal process she can help with. Also when making a murder it is a unique perspective to see how certain functions are similar with these cases.” -UA

The secondary goal of this project was to investigate if pre-law advisors’ beliefs about what inspires students to pursue a law career match with their own, to further offer a check on our ideas about what students today imagine about the practice of law. For context, out of the 29 pre-law advisors who participated in the survey, at least 17 of the respondents earned a J.D. Therefore, more than half attended law school and experienced the rigor of a legal education. The survey also asked how long respondents had worked as pre-law advisors. I received 8 responses from pre-law advisors with 1-3 years experience, 9 pre-law advisors with 4-7 years

experience, 4 pre-law advisors with 8-10 years experience, and 8 pre-law advisors with 11 or more years of experience.

In terms of key phrases and keywords, pre-law advisors used the phrases “positive outcomes” and “excitement and drama” the most in their responses about the appeal of the law profession in popular culture:

“I think TV/movie depictions should be pure entertainment because that is not how the law plays out. Attorneys will say that their job is not as exciting as depicted in film.”

“I think that sometimes if not most of the time they glamorize it. They fail to show the hard work involved and that not all cases have a happy ending.”

“Oversimplification, unrealistic depiction of work type and big law life. Grossly over representing earning capacity and standard of living, especially in places like NYC. No real depiction of the personal cost of partnership or the level of depression and substance abuse.”

“I think that television and movies create the impression that lawyers spend most of their time trying glamorous cases in courtrooms (rather than researching or banging out routine divorce settlements), that lawyers generally make a lot of money (when we know they don't), and that lawyers can "work" the system to do whatever they think is just. This probably makes them more inclined to pursue a career in the law than they sometimes should be.”

Although pre-law advisors worry about the real, negative consequences of popular depictions of the law profession, 55% of pre-law advisor respondents selected “somewhat positive” or “strongly positive” when asked about the value of popular depictions of attorneys:

“I think it makes it look interesting and that you can influence the world and help people.”

“I think most of the shows I have watched here have had lawyers threatened with disbarment for doing something "noble" for a client, and most beat the charges because they did the morally right thing. I think the idea that lawyers get to make their own rules is empowering to students. (Even though it is wrong-headed.)”

“Helping others and doing good in the community. The excitement of trial work.”

“Certainly depending on the student, but I think two camps typically can be identified. First camp is the fortune and fame aspect. We will always have students who think what it is all about. However, I have seen a shift in the last 5 years of students who really are more interested in the public service character of being a lawyer or working in a law related area and the advocacy piece.”

Discussion

Pre-law advisors selected more procedural, transactional shows, whereas the undergraduates selected series that place more emphasis on social justice and the development of the human element in their narratives. To return to the commonly selected movies category, I think although *To Kill Mockingbird* debuted 50 years ago, the same emphasis of social justice and the human element in that movie can be found in modern movies and series and resonate

with current students. Thus, we should acknowledge to some degree that a cultural shift has happened, not just in popular culture, but also more importantly, among undergraduate pre-law students.

The crossover between students and pre-law advisors on the **advocacy** theme reveals that our current perceptions of popular culture and student attitudes align with student perceptions of the law in popular culture. This possibly speaks to the value of the student emphasis on community service and justice that newer shows and movies, like the *Lincoln Lawyer* and *Law and Order: SVU*, write at the forefront of their story lines and characters. It seems that while pre-law advisor respondents observe the themes of heroism and justice that popular culture emphasizes, they also observe in popular depictions the misrepresentation of actual law practice as a fast-paced, glamorous career advisors fear will mislead students towards the law profession. However, the contrast in emphasis on the wealth and glamor aspects from pre-law advisors with student respondents makes me question if a generational gap or if negative experience from law practice prevents some pre-law advisors from acknowledging or avoiding the conversation entirely about the positive themes that undergraduates take away from modern popular culture in depictions of the legal field.

I incorrectly assumed which character traits and themes pre-law undergraduates would find most inspirational in the portrayals of the legal profession in popular culture. However, it was a relief to discover that these students take away the altruistic and positive depictions from these popular depictions more than Astin's self-centric cohort. The pronounced advocacy theme in the student responses, in conjunction with how they selected modern shows and films that share the common theme of advocacy in their narratives, strongly suggests our students' values have changed since the 1980s. Perhaps, this suggests pre-law undergraduates understand the legal profession does not automatically lead to a life of luxury, or that more recent popular shows and movies place less emphasis the wealth aspect in their character developments and story lines comparatively with older popular depictions, like in *The Firm* or *The Devil's Advocate*. More importantly, it seems these students see the value of working with others to create positive change.

Pre-law advisors should discuss with students how they can serve as advocates in different ways, if that reason strongly inspires them to obtain a legal education today. Through that discussion, we can improve how we help guide today's students towards a career that fulfills those aspirations, if students can accomplish those same goals while avoiding a six-figure mountain of debt and unnecessary stress. I additionally hope this study can inspire a larger advising conversation about the evolving motivational trends among pre-law undergraduates interested in a legal education and inspire other institutions to conduct similar studies.

Appendix A, Movies

The Lincoln Lawyer
Legally Blonde
Erin Brokovich
The Devil's Advocate
Liar Liar
Rainmaker
A Time to Kill
The Firm
Philadelphia
My Cousin Vinny
A Few Good Men
The Paper Chase
To Kill A Mockingbird
12 Angry Men

Appendix B, Television and Netflix Series

The People V. O.J. Simpson: An American Crime Story
Better Call Saul
Making a Murderer
How to Get Away with Murder
Suits
Fairly Legal
The Good Wife
Damages
Boston Legal
Law and Order: Criminal Intent
Harvey Birdman, Attorney at Law
Law and Order: Special Victims Unit
The Practice
JAG
Law and Order

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PRE-LEGAL EDUCATION

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(This article, with some modifications, was originally published in Barron's Guide to Law Schools, 1990 edition, the front portion of which is edited by Professor Gary A. Munneke of Pace University School of Law. Professor Munneke is also the author of How To Succeed in Law School, published by Barron's. Professor Munneke has consulted with Barron's and has granted permission for this reprint. We gratefully acknowledge this cooperation.)

Three decades ago, Dean Acheson - former Secretary of State, architect of much of the post - World War II foreign policy of the United States, and a lawyer - wrote an article for a national magazine that was billed in the Table of Contents as "Dean Acheson Tells Why Law Is The Most Sophisticated Profession."^{*}

Acheson began his discourse by using Edmund Burke's words as a foil: "Law sharpens a man's mind by narrowing it." Acheson then took issue with this half-truth of Burke's by writing that law does indeed sharpen the mind, but certainly not by narrowing it. Law, said Acheson, alerts the mind. The study and practice of law "tends strongly to emancipate those who follow it from their natural state of innocence and leads them into worldly knowledge -- and sometimes to worldly wisdom." "Alerting," as defined by Acheson, refers to the process whereby those who study and practice law become aware of the complexity of human life and institutions and of the inherent ambiguities of modern life.

The distance from Acheson's comments to what the reader of this article really wants to know is a very short one indeed. For the basic questions facing those considering the legal profession either at the beginning or somewhere in their undergraduate career are "What courses should I take, and what major should I choose to prepare me for law school?" Shorn of impurities such as "what courses do law school admission committees like to see on a transcript?" or "What courses can I get the best grades in," the questions are legitimate ones which deserve a thoughtful response. Four initial considerations set the boundaries of what is to follow. First, there is no pre-packaged definitive list of courses or set pre-law curriculum recommended either by the Association of American Law Schools, individual law schools, or by the Pre-Law Advisors National Council. Second, undergraduate pre-law students need to keep in mind the real purpose of an undergraduate education and, as best stated by a law school admission officer, "students should not mortgage their undergraduate education for the sake of law school." Third, for any one person to attempt to describe a curriculum for all pre-law students is as futile as it would be for a physician to write one prescription for thousands of patients.

Fourth, preparing for law school, like preparing for any of life's major events such as marriage or the arrival of children, is an inexact science. This pre-law advisor remembers well a letter from a former student during this advisee's first year in law school. Attempting to describe what law school is like, Steve Lawrence, Jr., Duke '72, Chicago Law '75, wrote, "The law student must be ready and willing to meet one of the biggest challenges that he will ever face. Law school is a full-time business. By full-time, I mean a minimum of 10 hours a day, every day of the week. It is quite exhaustive, particularly during the first year. There is a new vocabulary to learn, and a new way of thinking. As the faculty is fond of saying, law students also have to learn to read for the first time in their lives. In law, every word is of crucial importance; you don't read just to get the gist of the material. This point came across to me the first day of law school.

^{*} All references and quotations attributed to Dean Acheson are taken from the article "Dean Acheson Tells Why Law Is The Most Sophisticated Profession," Esquire Magazine. LV1, No. 1, July 1961: 100-103.

I had spent four years in college contemplating such issues as truth, goodness, government, religion. In the first case we had to read in Contracts the issue which Judge Henry Friendly, one of the most distinguished judges in the country, had to face was: "What is chicken?" The case turned on whether the parties to the contract meant 'stewing chicken' or 'fowl.' The movement from considering 'what is truth' to 'what is chicken' symbolizes perfectly for me the movement from college to law school."

With these parameters in mind, how should students who are considering law school and a legal career go about choosing from the large array of courses offered by many undergraduate institutions? Four basic guidelines can be offered. Students should consider enrolling in courses which

- 1) Teach them to think both synthetically and analytically;
- 2) Enhance their ability to communicate clearly and precisely in both oral and written form;
- 3) Develop an understanding of the human experience and human institutions;
and
- 4) Assist in values clarification.

Before attempting to put flesh on these skeletons, two caveats should be entered. First, the specific "best" or "most appropriate" courses in each of these categories will vary from institution to institution both because of the curricula offered and the instructors who teach these courses. Most students have been told at one time or another to choose professors and not courses, and there is certainly enough truth in this statement to make it worthy of consideration both in obtaining the best education possible and in preparing for law school. If a professor who teaches Medieval Antarctic History is noted for the rigorous demands of his or her course, then taking this course may be a more profitable learning experience than taking a course in Constitutional History if the latter is not as intellectually demanding.

The second *caveat* falls under the category of "different strokes for different folks." Individual students must find for themselves the most appropriate major and courses which will enable them to fulfill both their total educational needs as well as to prepare them for law school. One student might find that a major in physics is precisely the correct path for him or her, but the student who ranks calculus among the great mysteries of the universe and can fathom the working principles of nothing more complex than a wheelbarrow would have to be a masochist to enroll in physics courses.

It is time to move beyond the caveats and back to the basic guidelines. First, students should consider courses which teach them to think both synthetically and analytically. Professor Kingsfield's opening remark to one-L's on the first day of class, "Your heads are filled with mush," is, sadly, relevant. Unfortunately, much undergraduate education in the United States is rigidly compartmentalized, aimed at the accumulation of facts and often culminates in giving students the ability to make a few vague generalizations which may serve well at a cocktail party but are found wanting in the law school classroom. Kingsfield's remark is not aimed at unlearning facts but rather at the student's inability to analyze the facts and place them into a meaningful whole; the mind is filled with an unformed mess of "mush" waiting to be formed. Too often undergraduate professors concentrate on problem-solved rather than problem-solving and stay so tightly secure within their own discipline that students are not able to connect the truth of one course with the truth of another, to say nothing of truth in general.

True thinking is distinguished from mere reverie in that it can both synthesize (combine diverse concepts into a coherent whole) and analyze (separate into component parts), thus reaching a higher stage of truth. The law student and the lawyer need to develop the fine art of true thinking. In the end, a good law student and a successful lawyer need to develop what one philosopher has called "an instinct for the jugular."

It is natural and easy to point to logic and quantitative reasoning courses as those most likely to develop a student's ability to think. Though this is certainly often the case, here again, it may be more

helpful to choose professors than courses. If the professor offering a given course has a reputation for encouraging thought and focusing on problem-solving, that course may be extremely valuable for the pre-law student.

Second, students should consider courses which enhance their ability to communicate clearly and precisely in both oral and written form. In our own time, we seem to have perfected the science of communication but neglected the art of communication. We have become victims of what one educator has called "word clutter" in both our written and oral communications. The speeches of one of our former presidents were once described as "an army of pompous phrases moving over the landscape in search of an idea; sometimes these meandering words would actually capture a straggling thought and bear it triumphantly, a prisoner in their midst, until it died of servitude and overwork."**

Today, unfortunately, this description includes many of us. All too often communication has become a private matter and is viewed in the same manner as some modern painters view their work. That is, the significance lies not in what is conveyed to others but what it means to the creator. For law students and for lawyers, the essence of communication lies not in what one means to say, but in what is communicated to others. Communication, both in oral and written form, must be clear and precise. The link between thinking and communicating is obvious. Our failure to think and to communicate with clarity and precision is demonstrated by our affinity for such cop-out words as "like" and "you know."

Communication skills can be sharpened in a number of ways. The student, and rightly so, will naturally turn to English, technical writing and public speaking courses. However, there are at least two other approaches to enhancing communication skills. First, there is the study of one or more foreign languages. The immediate value of competency in a foreign language in today's world community is obvious. What is often overlooked and perhaps is of equal importance, is the value of studying a foreign language in order to learn more about the structure of one's own native tongue. Since sentence diagramming and vocabulary study have gone the way of the prop-jet, students often cannot identify the parts of speech and often fail to distinguish the shades of difference between such words as "famous" and "notorious," the real difference between "perimeters" and "parameters," and when to use correctly "between" and "among."

The study of a foreign language can lead to an understanding of the nuances and finer points of one's own native tongue - a necessity for a lawyer. In law, as pointed out earlier, every word is important. Choosing the precise word and placing it in the exactly correct place in a sentence can sometimes make a difference between success and failure. To overemphasize a point well worth overemphasizing, words form a large part of a lawyer's toolbox and choosing the precise word is analogous to a surgeon's choosing the correct instrument at the right time during surgery.

Not only should students consider English, technical writing, public speaking and foreign language courses as means of enhancing their communications skills, they should also explore other opportunities for this involvement, especially seminars. Seminars in almost any discipline offer the chance to research, write a significant paper and make an oral presentation to the entire class. If the professor is demanding and provides good feedback, then the seminar experience can be well worthwhile and can accomplish as much or more than "communication" courses.

Lawyers and lawyers in-the-making are also keenly aware of the fact that communication is not only for the purpose of clarification and explanation but also for the purpose of persuading. At this point, words become "power tools." Dean Acheson quoted Justice Holmes as saying, "you cannot argue a man into liking a glass of beer." Logic, clarity and precision have their limits! Clarence Darrow in the same vein allegedly said that you do not win a jury's support by laying out the law in a logical manner but rather

** quoted from William E. Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966, p. 90.

you make a jury want to decide in your client's favor and then give them a point of logic or law to hang their hats on. Persuasive communication in both written and oral forms is truly an art which can be learned through the study of literature, history, poetry, the arts and a study of the written and spoken words of masters in any discipline. If only Winston Churchill had conducted seminars in public speaking and persuasive writing!

The third guideline in planning an undergraduate curriculum appropriate for law school preparation recommends that students should consider courses that develop an understanding of the human experience and human institutions. Lawyers deal with ideas and the black letter law to be sure, but these are dealt with in the context of people and their institutions. At this point in this article readers who want more than vague generalizations will find some very concrete suggestions. Though the present writer prefers a definition of the human species that places the species "below the angels, above other species," there is some insight contained in the definition of human beings as "money-making animals." Since the law deals with people and their institutions, and people and their institutions deal with money, it is necessary that lawyers have a thorough grasp of the basic principles of accounting and economics. This does not mean that pre-law students should major in accounting or economics or, for that matter, even take a large number of courses in these areas. But, because so much of law involves financial transactions, the ability to understand a balance sheet is an absolute necessity. Likewise, because law and economic institutions and problems are so inextricably intertwined, a basic understanding of macro and microeconomics is equally necessary. Both accounting and economics are also like words "tools of the trade," and students who lack these tools or possess them only as blunt instruments will be at a great disadvantage both as law students and as lawyers.

Yet, the human experience expands far beyond the economic experience into all realms of human endeavor. Understanding the totality of human life leads naturally to thoughts of courses in the humanities and the social sciences, history, literature, religion, psychology, sociology and, at last, patient reader, political science, to name a few. Because the words "pre-law" and "political science" in popular lore are often mistaken as synonyms, it is worthwhile to dwell on this for a moment. Many students headed toward law school automatically assume that political science is the major they must pursue. Though political science may be a good major for those planning to attend law school, so are chemistry, English, history, physics, zoology and numerous other majors if they assist students in reaching their educational goals. Certainly, a lawyer must have a basic knowledge of governmental structures and systems, but, in addition, a lawyer must have knowledge of many other aspects of the human experience as well. For example knowledge of history gives the context out of which laws and institutions have grown and continue to exist. A knowledge of psychology gives insight into the nature of the human animal who created that history with its laws and institutions; sociology describes the collective experience of communities past and present. This is a two-pronged point here. First, students need as broad as possible knowledge of the human experience, and, second, any major within the humanities and social sciences can serve as the catalyst for bringing together the various aspects of the human experience.

Finally, and increasingly important in preparing to study and to practice law (as well as living life itself), a student should consider courses which assist in values clarification. Once upon a time, before the age of technology and urbanization, common values came as "givens" and were accepted as received knowledge. But as society has become more complex and various diverse elements have combined to infuse strains of many value systems into our society, there has occurred not only a loss of common values but also a confusion of values. If, in the past, lawyers were criticized because they appeared to run rough shod over the prevailing value system, in the future they may be subject to criticism because they failed to establish any value system. In simpler words, in the past lawyers were presented with a choice between right and wrong; in the future they may not be able to distinguish clearly right from wrong. For example, in a kinder, gentler and simpler world, for many people the value pronouncements of the Parable of the Good Samaritan are obvious. In this Parable a Good Samaritan finds a fellow human on the side of the road who has been robbed and beaten. The Samaritan takes him to an inn to recover, paying his expenses in advance. This is simple and beautiful. However, in our complex world the Good Samaritan has to give

primary consideration to himself for he is "at risk" in a number of areas. The poor fellow is bleeding. What is the risk of AIDS? What is the Samaritan's liability if he injures the man on the way to the inn? Suppose the injured man is really the robber and the good guy got away? What is the Good Samaritan's exposure legally? Though no undergraduate courses can give final answers, they can raise the essential questions and suggest possible approaches to finding answers. Ethics, studied in either a philosophic/religious framework or in Public Policy Studies, may prove to be helpful to students in their search for value systems.

At this point the reader may be thinking, I began this chapter on undergraduate preparation for law school looking for a road map and all I got was a compass. This, in fact, is both the intent of this chapter and the only possible honest response. For reaching one's educational goals, pre-law or not, is analogous to an individual's spiritual journey. Each path to the goal is a separate one; each journey is a personal one.

In case the points of the compass have become blurred, it might be helpful to summarize what has been argued in this chapter.

1. There is no such thing as a rigid undergraduate pre-law curriculum. Though some courses in any undergraduate institution's curriculum may be helpful in preparing for law school, the best advice is to seek a broad liberal arts education with specialization in one or more areas.
2. In choosing a major, students should select that one which contains the most inherent interest for them. By choosing on this basis, not only will students perform at a higher level but also they will find a major that can best serve as the organizing catalyst for all knowledge.
3. Thinking and communicative skills can be enhanced not only by taking courses which overtly are directed to that end, but also through rigorous seminars or courses which require papers and oral presentations.
4. Sometimes it is better to select professors than courses.
5. A basic knowledge of accounting procedures and economic principles is a necessity.

Two final comments for consideration, one concerning the journey; the other concerning the goal: First, in talking about preparation for law school, the discussion has focused on courses and professors, but this is not to ignore the learning which takes place outside of the classroom. There is a great deal to be learned from simply reading beyond and outside of that which is assigned. Dean Acheson, who seemed to enjoy citing others as much as the present writer, quoted Justice Frankfurter as saying, "...The best way to prepare for the law is to come to the study of the law as a well-read person." It is a common and often legitimate complaint of students and non-students alike that they simply don't have time to read. All of us have resolved at one time or another to "set aside" some time for reading each day only to have that resolution go the way of our plans to diet. However, much reading can be done if we learn to use our scraps of time for this purpose. Some people keep a book in their cars and read while waiting for a friend or child or spouse. Others carry a book with them to the grocery store and read it instead of the national gossip rag while waiting at the check-out counter. The back of the commode makes a perfect bookshelf! In short, reading, and especially reading the work of skilled writers, can convey knowledge, enhance the development of thought processes and help us become better communicators.

Finally, preparing to be a lawyer is also preparing to be an interesting, capable and thoughtful individual. When Dean Acheson called law "the most sophisticated profession," he was not really talking so much about the profession as the men and women who make up the profession. A friend and mentor of Acheson's mused one day on the question why the men and women he most enjoyed talking to were almost

always lawyers. As Acheson pointed out, "it was not because he wanted to talk shop. God forbid." "The greatest bore in the world," Acheson's friend said, "is a lawyer who tells you about his cases when you want to tell him about yours." "No", said Acheson, "legal shop talk is utterly dull...But it is still true that a high percentage of those whose conversation one finds stimulating and enjoyable, as my partner pointed out, are lawyers. The reason, so he thought -- and I agree - is that the law is not only an intellectual pursuit, one which trains the mind to be quick and perceptive and sinks deep roots in the modes and history of human thought and experience, but it is a sophisticating pursuit."

STUDYING LAW AS AN UNDERGRADUATE

Richard Poland, J.D.
Flager College

Conventional Law has advised us to leave the teaching of the law to the law schools. Nevertheless, having examined this issue from the perspective of a pre-law advisor, I can assure you that conventional wisdom is mistaken.

Understanding that we all view life and its complex issues from the perspective of our igloo, let me share with you the parameters of mine. I teach at a small liberal arts college with 2,000 students and a limited number of majors. The average class size is 20 students. I received a liberal arts education and am a strong advocate of the liberal arts tradition.

When my colleagues assert that law classes, taught Socratically, should remain the sole domain of law schools, I ask why we do not leave the teaching of accounting, economics, art, political science, the natural sciences, or a myriad of other disciplines to the graduate schools? The answers are obvious and the reasons for teaching law to undergraduates are equally clear.

Law should be taught to college students as a means of enhancing their liberal arts education. The Socratic case method is an excellent way to teach students the art of thinking analytically and critically and the process of synthesizing. A few law related courses should be available as electives for undergraduate students who wish to acquire these skills.

Justice Louis Brandeis stated the argument concisely when he said: "The study of law should be introduced as part of a liberal education, to train and enrich the mind...I am convinced that, like history, economics, and metaphysics - and perhaps even to a greater degree than these - the law could be advantageously studied with a view to the general development of the mind."

It is, then, not a novel concept to teach law for the "the general development of the mind." Since this is certainly a goal of undergraduate education, should we not use the teaching of law as one of our tools? I am not advocating an undergraduate legal curriculum nor am I recommending the establishment of a pre-law major; rather, I am arguing for the addition of a few selected law courses to the liberal arts curriculum.

The American Bar Association has advised us that we should encourage pre-law students to select a broad array of courses as the best preparation for law school. We should insist that pre-law students enroll in those classes which will teach them to think critically and analytically, which will improve their ability to write and speak with clarity and style, and which will aid them in becoming better problem-solvers. There are many courses in the liberal arts curriculum which will assist our students in this process. None can do it better than law courses, taught by professors who are skillful at using the Socratic case method.

Are there additional benefits which will inure to pre-law students? Without a doubt, there are. Even though it was more than a quarter century ago, I can still remember the intellectual terror of my few months at law school. What was this Socratic method all about? Why were my answers always wrong and why was I never given the correct answer? Why were my law professors not as kind and gentle as my undergraduate professors had been? Friends were dropping out. The process was unsettling. One or two law courses, properly taught at the undergraduate level, could have helped me to understand what law school was all about. Much of the unpleasantness of those first months could have been avoided.

This is the Real law, Not Television
The Benefits of having a Legal Studies Minor

Wendy Vonnegut, J.D
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 Methodist University

I will never forget my first week at law school. First, I was told that I was taking Tort law and immediately thought, “wow, there is an area of law that deals with pastries.” Like many other people, I was only familiar with certain areas of the law such as criminal and family law. Second, like many other students who have attended law school with certain perceptions of what lawyers do for a living, I was clueless when it came to what law school was really like. Third, like many, part of my perception of the legal profession was based on what I saw on television. It was a rude awakening when that first day of law school arrived, I felt like Alice in Wonderland.

When I was hired as the Director of what was then the Paralegal Program, I recalled my first year experience in law school. I was determined to have a program that would not just prepare students to become paralegals, but to understand the legal profession. In law school, students who had been paralegals were ahead of the learning curve because they already understood the profession they were about to enter. They knew how to read cases without the aid of Black’s Law Dictionary. They understood the concepts that were being discussed in class. I have been to many conferences and have heard panel discussions about the best ways to prepare students for law school.” My point of view is based not only my own law school experience, but also on almost fourteen years of teaching.

Students need to know the reality of the legal profession, not what they have been watching on television or in movies. After being two years as the Director of the Paralegal Program, I decided to change the name of the program to Legal Studies. I did this for several reasons. Legal Studies is a minor and students have to complete 21 hours to earn the minor. The program is designed to help students obtain jobs as legal assistants, to see if law school is for them, and finally, to allow students the ability to gain the knowledge of the law to help them with any major.

All students must take the following classes for the minor:

- Introduction to Law
- Legal Research and Writing
- Law and the Legal System
- Internship

After completing the required classes, students then select three electives, which include, but are not limited to Criminal Evidence and Procedure, Administrative law, Environmental Law, Constitutional law, Tort Law, Employment Law, Business Associations, Negotiations, Labor Law, Family law, Litigation, Contract Law, Wills, Estates and Trusts etc. As you can see, many areas of the law are covered. This gives the student the opportunity to explore the many facets of the legal profession. If the student completes the minor, they have many of the classes that they will later encounter in the first two years of law school. The one class that students will tell you is the hardest is Legal Research and Writing, but it is the one they also use the most. The students who have continued on to law school have told me that the single class that helps them successfully finish their first year of law school is Legal Research and Writing.

The Legal Studies Program also requires that students complete an Internship. This is crucial as it really allows them to decide if the legal profession is really for them. They do not shadow an attorney for a couple of days; it requires 115 hours of work in a legal practice and two papers. Students work in an area of the law that interests them and are placed in the Public Defender’s office, Legal Aid, private law firms, and the Dispute Resolution Center. While interning, students learn first hand what it is like on a daily basis to work in the real legal profession; not what is portrayed on television. Following the completion of their

internship, some of my students have expressed reservations regarding attending law school, while others receive job offers as a result of their job performance.

Every spring, students in the Law and Legal System class prepare and participate in a criminal mock trial. The case that is the subject of the mock trial is a real case. Students must create the crime scene, prepare the evidence, prepare witnesses, prepare the case for trial, and finally, try the case. The mock trial is a large percentage of their class grade. The mock trial is held at the county courthouse and the Senior Superior Court Judge presides. The jury is composed of faculty, staff, students from other classes, and alumni who return to participate. I did not have this type of experience until my last year of law school. Students majoring in Justice Studies serve as law enforcement officers in the trial and this enables them to see what they will face in their chosen profession when testifying under direct or cross-examination. A number of Justice Studies alumni who serve in law enforcement have informed me that this experience really made a difference when they testified at real court proceedings. A number of my students who were attorneys in the trial are now practicing attorneys.

The Legal Studies Program gives students hands on legal experience and a sense of what law school is really like before going through the time and expense of attending law school. It allows a prospective law school student to make a better informed decision as to whether or not law school is something that they really want to pursue. The best moment for me is not when a student decides to attend law school, but discovers that law school is not really for them, as I have saved them the time and money they would have spent attending law school.

When I am asked if the university has a prelaw program, I can answer affirmatively. The legal studies minor provides students with the opportunity to explore the legal profession. Students do not just take law classes, but because it is a minor, they must complete a core curriculum, plus complete the courses required by their major. In my opinion, this makes for a well rounded student.

The Legal Studies program is approved by the American Bar Association (that is a whole article in itself), as well as the North Carolina Bar Association. Over the years, I have asked my students who are law school graduates if the courses they took in college helped them in law school. Without exception, they have all said that the courses they took as part of the Legal Studies Program, without a doubt, played a large part of their success in law school. The exposure to the legal profession that the Legal Studies program provides gives students a sense of what the real legal profession is like, and not the television version of it.

I think that students need to learn how to read cases, understand the court decisions behind those cases, and then to explain them both verbally and in written form. Students have access to Westlaw Next and we have a small legal library for students' use. Not all students who complete the minor go into the legal profession. Many use it to help them with their majors. The knowledge that students gain from the program helps them market themselves when entering the job market. While not every school may be in a position to offer such a program, it is possible to offer law courses and a taste of the law school experience.

DEVELOPING UNDERGRADUATE EXAMS THAT PREPARE STUDENTS FOR LAW SCHOOL EXAMS

**By Richard Poland, J.D.
Flagler College**

I teach three courses to my pre-law students in which I give a Mid-Term Exam and a Final Exam similar to the hypothetical exams given to first year law students. The exams set forth factual situations in which the students must identify and resolve legal issues having to do with the content of the course. I encourage students to use the IRAC method. What follows is a hand-out, without the specific examples, which I use during the class period immediately before the Mid-Term Examination.

1. Read the facts and the question(s) very closely to spot every issue.

Every word on the exam probably has some significance. Certainly every sentence does. Read everything. Make notes in the margin as you spot issues. It never ceases to surprise me that some students write an exam as though they are unfamiliar with the facts. A few students will spend time discussing an issue which is not presented by the fact pattern, while others fail to deal with an issue which is clearly raised by the facts. Careful reading will resolve potential writing problems.

2. Using the law and the facts, argue both sides of an issue in an organized manner.

Most law exam questions are asking you to identify and resolve legal issues raised by the fact patterns. As you identify the issues, make certain that you recognize that almost every argument has a counter-argument. Argue one side applying any rules of law (or any facts) which augment that side of the argument. Then, using a transitional phrase which would make your English Professors proud, develop the counter-argument. Making this argument may involve a different rule of law from another jurisdiction or line of cases, an exception to the rule of law stated in support of the first argument, a more creative way of looking at the facts, or something else which seems reasonable to you at that particular moment in time.

Failing to organize your answer with a simple outline, prior to writing the exam, may cause you to ramble. Tight writing is always rewarded. Rambling is always penalized. Also, when writing your answer, remember the wisdom imparted by the second greatest American jurist, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes. To paraphrase, the young person knows the rule; the wise person knows the exception to the rule. Law exams tend to focus on the exceptions.

3. Answer the question, only the question, and nothing but the question, so help you God.

This should be a simple task, but experience teaches me that it is not. Too many students give me a philosophy of law type answer. The task is to read the question(s) and then answer the question(s). After you make the arguments on both sides of the issue, resolve the issue by reaching a conclusion. Lawyers are hired to solve real problems, not to pontificate about a problem in a generalized manner. Only the professor is allowed to do that. Neither should you restate the facts, nor should you create new facts. I am very familiar with the facts. After all, I made them up.

4. Monitor your time carefully.

If I give you four questions to write during a two hour exam, do the math at the outset. While you take 50 minutes to answer the first questions, you have created a problem for yourself. You may find that the second, third, and fourth questions take less time, but do not depend on that. You may find yourself merely listing the issues on the last question and not analyzing or resolving those issues. For this, I give half credit, which means that the best grade you will receive is a C on this four- question exam. As John Wooden said, "Hurry, but do not rush."

5. Write clearly and legibly.

If I can not read it, you did not write it. If you did not write it, how can I grade it? Several law students have advised me that law school is a writing contest. Certainly, that was my personal experience. At some point in the process, everyone has learned how to think critically. Learn to reduce that thinking to writing. Learn to write in a succinct, articulate, and legible manner. Your exam then will be viewed more positively by those who review it.

LEGAL REASONING

By Judge Poland @ Flagler College

Many pre-law students and others are curious about the differences between legal reasoning and other styles of reasoning. When undergraduates begin law school, law professors will tell these new law students that they need to learn how to “think like a lawyer.” What is legal reasoning and what does it really mean to “think like a lawyer.”

Legal scholars generally agree that legal reasoning is the thinking process by which lawyers argue and judges decide actual cases. According to Brian Porto and others, legal reasoning is a process comprised of three separate components. Those components are Reasoning by Analogy, Linguistic Analysis, and Judicial Discretion.

It has been my experience as a lawyer and a judge that the first component, Reasoning by Analogy, is the most common method of reasoning used by the legal profession. (Eg. The case at bar is like the previously decided case of Smith v. Jones.) It involves finding cases or principles that courts have already decided and arguing that the case under discussion is similar to that prior case (*stare decisis*) or principle.

For example, in Texas v. Johnson the defendant Johnson burned the American flag to protest President Reagan's re-nomination. The question became whether this act of burning the flag was speech protected under the First Amendment. The argument is that this action is political speech just as writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper decrying the President's foreign policy is political speech. Both are examples of speech protected by the First Amendment. The first is a form of speech that is known as expressive conduct, “sufficiently imbued with a communicative element.” The latter is simply written speech. Because both forms of speech send a political message which is readily understandable by others, both are protected from governmental interference under the First Amendment.

Similarly, in Tinker v. Des Moines the Supreme Court stated that wearing a black armband to protest U.S. hostilities in Vietnam is “akin to pure speech” and therefore falls under the protection of the First Amendment just as oral or written protestations of the war are speech which can not be proscribed. So if we reason by analogy, speech can be expressive conduct as well as it can be the spoken or written word.

Also, in Griswold v. Connecticut, the Court inferred an individual Right to Privacy from the penumbra of various provisions in the U.S. Constitution (1st, 3rd, 4th, 9th Amendments, etc.) asserting that the government could not interfere with a married couples right to use contraceptives. Reasoning by analogy, this right to privacy was later extended to unmarried couples in Eisenstadt v. Baird. However, the Court later found in Bowers v. Hardwick that this same right of privacy in the bedroom enjoyed by heterosexual couples did not extend to homosexual couples. Thus, reasoning by analogy has its limitations. Nevertheless, seventeen years later the Court reconsidered Bowers in Lawrence and Garner v. Texas. Bowers was overruled.

Linguistic Analysis is the second component of Legal Reasoning. The question is what do the words used by the legislatures or the judges really mean. The legal community uses often contradictory tools like plain-meaning, context, canons of construction, legislative intent, statutory purpose or spirit of the law in a creative fashion to find the true meaning. The result which you want to obtain may affect which linguistic tool you select.

For example, what does the word “parent” mean in The Federal Kidnapping Act as passed into law by the U.S. Congress. Does it mean just the biological parents or does it include, for example, adoptive parents, grandparents, step-parents, parents whose rights have been terminated, or legal guardians. The Congress may have given us some guidance, but lawyers and judges need to decide what words really mean

when they argue and decide cases.

Judicial Discretion is the last component. This refers to the public policy involved and/or personal views by a judge about the court's role or a legal concept.

For example, in Roe v. Wade the right to privacy was extended to a pregnant woman. It was held that the right to terminate her pregnancy through the 1st trimester (now until the point of viability under Planned Parenthood v. Casey) was a privacy right of a woman with which the government could not interfere.

Do future Supreme Court justices have the judicial discretion to change this? Yes. Will they? Probably not. The Court's role in establishing this right was pre-eminent. The Court would lose a great deal of legitimacy, credibility, and authority with the American people if it eliminated by a 5-4 vote that which has been a fundamental constitutional right of all women for 30 years. This Court will be especially cautious in the future because of its loss of esteem in much of the public eye as a result of the Bush v. Gore decision. Chief Rehnquist will be especially cognizant of the legacy of his Court.

Succinctly, this is what constitutes Legal Reasoning. It is not easily mastered, even by those of us who think that we use this process on a daily basis.

SELECTING A LAW SCHOOL *

Gerald Lee Wilson, Ph.D.

Duke University

Selecting a law school, like most of life's important decisions, is a process which does not lend itself to quantification and is too important to be determined by the flip of a coin. Likewise, there seems to be an "embarrassment of riches" when it comes to the number of people willing to give advice on the matter and the amount of resource material available. So how does a person select the "best" or "right" law school?

The applicant should begin the process by taking advantage of available printed and people resources. Probably the best resource in the former category is the Pre-law Handbook published annually by the American Association of Law Schools and the Law School Admission Council. In many cases the best people resource can be a college or university pre-law adviser. The rise of pre-law advising to the position of a sub-profession in the last decade or so has come as a direct result of the increasingly competitive nature of law school admissions. In many undergraduate institutions the pre-law adviser(s) and members of his or her staff can serve as information sources, coaches, confidants and strategists as well as writers of recommendations.

The next step in the selection process is that of organizing the factors to be considered in making the decision in some sort of logical order with designated priorities. For almost everyone there are at least three major factors as well as a host of other considerations, which may be major to some applicants, minor to others, or possibly can serve as "tie-breakers" in the final stages of the process. The major factors, shorn of sophistication and put in question form are: Where can I get in?; What are the job opportunities when I graduate?; and How much will it cost? Other factors to be examined include location, size, reputation of the law school, offerings and atmosphere, and, legitimately, a person's "gut reaction" to a particular school.

The first question, "Where can I get in?", is one that can best be answered by comparing the credentials of the applicant with the admissions profile of recent entering classes of the law schools in which the applicant has an initial interest. At this point, conventional wisdom would suggest that the applicant follow the same procedure that he or she probably followed in applying to college. That is, the student should set up three categories of schools and apply to an appropriate number of schools in each category. The categories selected are, of course, relative and determined by both the credentials and the particular desires of the individual applicant. The first category, the "long-shot" schools, is the one in which the student lists those schools which he or she would most like to attend, but which seem to be the most difficult in terms of gaining admission. The second category, the "possible schools," is comprised of those schools the applicant would be perfectly happy to attend and on the basis of available information present at least a "fifty-fifty" chance of admission. The third category represents the "safe schools," those which are not the applicant's first or even second choice but are acceptable and do offer the opportunity for an individual to receive a quality legal education.

The implicit assumption throughout this suggested approach is that the "numbers" (Undergraduate Grade Point Average and Law School Admissions Test Score) are the crucial factors in determining admissibility to law schools. This is, in fact, true for virtually all law schools and, indeed, in a number of cases (especially state law schools) the "numbers" seem to be the only factors considered. Before approaching the UGPA in a purely quantitative sense as an admissions factor, it is probably worthwhile to

* Copyright 1984, Society of American Law Teachers. This article is a chapter in the revised edition of Looking at Law School: A Student Guide from the Society of American Law Teachers. The revised fourth edition was published by the New American Library in 1997.

pause and reflect on what the UGPA represents both as achievement and as preparation for law school. The guiding principle here comes from a statement made by a law school admissions officer to a group of undergraduates. He said simply, "a student should not mortgage his or her undergraduate career for the sake of law school." This is true in the dual sense that a UGPA should represent performance in demanding courses as well as selection of a curriculum that provides a good broad background. In general, it does not matter what major a student chooses or what specific courses he or she takes if these courses enhance a student's ability to think critically and communicate effectively both in oral and written form. The student, of course, could benefit from some study of history, political science, English, economics, philosophy and the like, but the only specific course that a prelaw student should consider a "must" is a course in basic accounting procedures.

These comments refer to what the UGPA should mean to the applicant. What does the UGPA mean to the law school admissions committee? If the numbers are right, many admissions committees will attempt to assess the strength of the applicant's total curriculum and the difficulty of individual courses insofar as such an assessment can be made. Many committees seem to be willing to take into account an upward progression in the UGPA. This is especially helpful to that applicant who was miscast as a premed during his or her freshman year or who experienced difficulties adjusting to college.

The LSAT, officially defined as "a half-day objective test designed to measure certain mental capacities important to the study of law....," represents the other half of the "numbers" factor. The words "other half" of the factor were deliberately chosen since this score is generally given equal weight with the UGPA by admissions committees. Students can and should prepare for this test though the specific manner of preparation is very much an individual matter. Some students have found materials published by the LSAC and included in the LSAT/LSDAS packet quite adequate. Others purchase commercial test preparation booklets and, increasingly, it seems students are enrolling in commercial prep courses. Hopefully, with the institution of the new LSAT and the scoring scale of 120 to 180, some of the importance placed on the LSAT as an admissions factor will be diminished.

In sum, the "numbers" are the major factors in the admissions process but fortunately, in most cases, they are not the only factors. To put it another way, the "numbers" get the applicant into the ball game; once in the ball game other factors can help determine whether the applicant makes a winning score. Curiously enough, there seems to be occurring in the law school admissions process a phenomenon somewhat akin to that of economic depression and inflation operating simultaneously. That is, while the numbers increasingly seem to dominate in determining admissions decisions, other non-quantifiable factors seem also to be taking on increasing importance. These factors include essays, recommendations and college activities.

The essays, those torturous creatures centered around the question, "Why do you want to go to law school?", or the request, "Tell us about yourself, are getting more than a casual reading by members of admissions committees at many law schools and in close calls may tip the balance. The schools that request these essays are attempting both to appraise the writing ability of the applicant and to judge his or her motivation for legal studies. Needless to say, these statements should be carefully written with attention given to neatness, use of correct grammar and syntax, and, of course, proper spelling.

What to say depends on the individual writer. It is doubtful that a particularly original "why I want to go to law school" essay can be written by anyone. But the point is not to be original but rather personal. Since this is the applicant's only chance to present something other than objective data, the essay should be one that reveals clearly the individual personality of the applicant. The applicant in preparing the essay should carefully avoid the twin temptations of explaining how through the legal profession he or she hopes to reform Western Civilization and of writing in an artificial style which may be imitative of an eighteenth century novel, or worse yet, a government document. Hopefully the essay will be interesting enough to make the readers want to read all of it. Further, if the writer has a sense of humor, it might be worthwhile

to let a little of that show. In many cases, the length of the essay will be specified. If it is not, then the applicant should set a limit of somewhere around two double-spaced typed pages.

If an autobiographical statement is requested, the applicant should at all costs avoid a mere factual, chronological outline of his or her life such as "I was born on April 22, 1977, at Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem and attended R. J. Reynolds High School where I was a hall monitor." The most effective autobiographical statement is a thoughtful, impressionistic explanation of the crucial events that have shaped the applicant into the person he or she is. Experiences such as foreign study, producing a play, or significant employment should be highlighted. If certain books, events or people have been influential in the applicant's life, comment on these will probably be of more value than a list of high school or college activities. The essay should include at least a paragraph about the applicant's intellectual development, explaining both growth and change. Extensive research projects or other major individual accomplishments such as publication should certainly be included.

Not only is the essay the best place for the applicant to sell himself or herself and emphasize his or her best qualities, it is also often the one place where any explanations concerning the objective credentials can be made. For example, if the applicant presents high grades and low LSAT scores, but has a history of poor performance on standardized tests, this should be discussed at this point. If the applicant's first few semesters in college were weaker ones academically because he or she was miscast as a pre-med, this also should be mentioned. However, when there is something to be explained, it is probably best to give a simple, cogent explanation and let the committee draw the appropriate conclusions.

Perhaps the most misunderstood part of the application is the recommendations. Campus lore seems to run the gamut from "recommendations don't really mean anything" to "if so-and-so recommends you, you'll get in." The truth of the matter may well lie somewhere in between. Remember what was said earlier about things which can help an applicant make a winning score once he or she is already in the ball game and place recommendations in this context. Undoubtedly, the most valuable letters of recommendation are those which come from the academic community and more especially those which come from instructors who have actually taught the applicant. These letters are most helpful if they are both analytical and specific, appraising the applicant's performance in the course, and, on that basis, estimating his or her likely performance as a law student and practicing attorney. Positive, incisive letters are of far more value than glowing, general ones.

Recommendations from the applicant's pre-law adviser can be helpful if the prelaw adviser knows the applicant, has access to the applicant's total record and is familiar with the law school. Oft times the pre-law adviser can point out things on the student's overall academic record of which an individual instructor may not have knowledge. Further, if the undergraduate institution has a track record at a particular law school, the pre-law adviser can compare the applicant with other students who have attended that law school. In brief, if the applicant has worked closely with the pre-law adviser, he or she will be able to do more than just fill out a citizenship clearance form and this "more" can often be helpful to the applicant.

In general, with one notable exception, letters from outside the academic community carry little weight with admissions committees. This exception refers to recommendations from employers in cases where an applicant has had a job that carried considerable responsibility or where something significant was accomplished. The employer recommendation is of special significance for the applicant who has taken some time off prior to entrance into law school. One word of caution: if the applicant has worked for a member of Congress or some well-known figure, he or she may be tempted to have that person write a recommendation on the assumption that the "name" alone will carry a great deal of weight. In fact, admissions committees can be "turned off" by so-called names. In most cases, the applicant would probably be better off if he or she had an administrative assistant or the person who directly supervised the applicant's work write the letter of recommendation.

These comments on recommendations and the mention of "names" provide as good an opportunity as any to mention the matter of "pull." Many applicants know someone who has offered to help and indicated that he or she "knows someone" on the admissions committee. No one can deny that in some cases, probably a very small number, this approach works. However, the best way to regard such offers of help is to remember that definition of "pull" which calls it "what everybody thinks he or she has until he tries to use it." In sum, if someone offers to help, let them, but don't count on its effectiveness.

The final non-quantifiable factor making up the applicant's total credentials is the list of activities in which the student was involved. Here again, mythology abounds. On the one hand, admissions committees like to see that an applicant has done something other than "nerd out" in the library, but, on the other hand, they cannot judge the value of any specific activity or the intensity of the commitment to that activity on the part of the student. Rather than flooding the committee with a long list of activities (which can raise the question of when did the applicant find time to study) it is probably best to list only those which were most important to the individual, reveal something of his or her personality and interests, and help paint a total picture of the applicant. The applicant should, of course, highlight those activities in which he or she assumed major responsibility or had a leadership role. A good list of activities in combination with a high UGPA and good LSAT scores can be impressive, but activities alone cannot substitute for the other two elements.

The applicant should also realize that the actual mailing in of all of the application materials should not complete the process on his or her part. Follow up should take the form of careful monitoring, and if necessary, "gentle pestering." Within a reasonable time after the application materials have been mailed, the applicant should contact each school to which he or she has applied to make sure that the application is complete. Many schools do not automatically notify the applicant of the status of the file. As for the "gentle pestering," this can be effective in those instances where the applicant falls into the marginal category of neither being an automatic accept nor an automatic reject. Obviously this is not needed in the former category and is not effective in the latter. But if the applicant finds himself or herself on a waiting list of in some other purgatorial category, then the act of "gentle pestering" or "friendly persuasion" can sometimes pay dividends. The applicant should not hesitate to enlist the aid of his or her pre-law adviser in this campaign and should, if appropriate, send further grades, additional letters of recommendation and perhaps more essays. Though personal interviews with someone at the law school are, in most cases, not encouraged, the applicant should at least inquire as to whether or not such an interview would be helpful in his or her specific case. In close cases, following this sort of game plan may make the difference.

One last word before leaving the "Where can I get in?" question. Every applicant, no matter how high his or her academic average and LSAT scores and how strong other credentials may be should apply to as many schools as feasible and to a broad range of schools in terms of admissions requirements.

The reverse side of the "Where can I get in?" question is, "What are the job opportunities for me when I get out (with a degree)?" Part of the answer to this question is unknowable in advance, part is uncontrollable, and part depends on the individual's rank in class, which is, for better or worse, a real key in getting a job. The uncontrollable part is the condition of the job market at the time the individual graduates. The individual's own initiative and hustle form that part which is definitely under his or her control. In examining material provided by the law school the applicant should study carefully the information on job placement and should not be hesitant about asking hard questions. Such questions include: Does the law school have a full-time placement officer? What percentage of the class obtains jobs within a reasonable time after receiving their degrees? What types of jobs do they get? Where are these jobs? How many agencies and firms recruit at the law school? Does the law school placement office offer continuing help if job changes are necessary or desired later on? Though a good placement office and officer may exist at a law school, the applicant should remember that no placement office can get a person a job; the office can help, but, in the end, the student is the one who gets the job.

Frequently in this chapter such words as "large", "small", "state", "national" and the like will be used when referring to law schools. Perhaps the best way of defining these terms is to point to some specific examples. In terms of size, Harvard, whose total enrollment in a recent year was 1782, with an entering class of 551 is an example of a large school. Duke and Cornell, with total enrollments of around 595 each and entering classes of about 180 are examples of medium size schools. Small schools include Washington and Lee and the University of New Mexico whose total enrollments of 364 and 338 respectively, include entering classes of 133 and 113.

A further distinction that can be of importance to an applicant is that between a "public" and a "private" school especially with reference to admissions standards and tuition costs. Since public schools are subsidized by taxpayers, they generally enroll a higher percentage of state residents and charge them less in tuition than nonresidents. Private institutions, on the other hand, view applications with little reference to geography and charge the same tuition to all students.

A final distinction worth noting is that between "national" and "state" or "local" law schools. In some cases, because of the constituency they serve, state or local schools may, in their academic program, place more emphasis on state or local law and practice. This distinction is also significant in terms of admissions standards and placement possibilities. National law schools actively seek applicants from throughout the nation and generally have broader placement connections. State or local schools draw primarily from their locality and usually concentrate their placement efforts in the area they serve. When any of the above distinctions are important to an applicant, he or she should check on each school since names can be misleading. For example, William and Mary is a state school and New York University is private. Further, many state schools such as the Universities of Virginia and Michigan are also considered to be national schools.

When most applicants wrestle with the questions, "Should I go to my state law school or a school in the state or region in which I intend to practice?", or, "Should I go to a national school?" they are really asking (financial considerations aside for the moment) the job opportunity question. Probably the best rule-of-thumb answer to this question is that a student should go to the best school he or she can get in; if the best is no better or not significantly better than the one in the state or region in which the student intends to practice, then go with the school in that state or region. Having said that, the applicant should remember that all schools, including many of the great national ones, may have better placement connections in the geographical region in which they are located. However, if the school has enough national visibility, getting a job out of the region in which the school is located is not a major problem.

The third major question to be asked by the applicant in selecting a law school, "How much will it cost?", is, unfortunately, increasingly becoming the bottom line for many applicants. No matter how attractive school x may be and how admissible the applicant is, financial considerations have to be faced squarely. In weighing whether or not to choose attractive school x over less desirable school y , several factors have to be considered. First, the applicant needs to assess how much he or she already owes if he or she has been on financial aid as an undergraduate. Second, using information provided by the law schools under consideration, the applicant should set up a budget which includes both law school expenses and personal expenses. Most people don't realize how much they spend in a day or a year. The applicant should examine how much he or she really spends for coffee, books, movies, auto insurance and the like. After establishing a realistic budget, the applicant should add up these expenses and compare them with available resources. To be safe, a ten percent inflation factor should be added to these estimated expenses. Since most law schools discourage work for pay the first year, or encourage only a limited amount, the applicant should have adequate funds available prior to entry into the first year.

In brief, in choosing which law school to attend, the applicant should ask if school x is really worth it. The applicant should also remember that the amount of debt he or she may incur as a result of attending

school \underline{x} may limit job options available after graduation. For example, if a graduate is heavily in debt, he or she may not be able to take a social service or public defender's job, but have to look at higher paying private law firms. Fortunately, some law schools have instituted "Loan Forgiveness Programs" to encourage students to consider low paying public service jobs. Applicants should contact individual law schools for further information. Since law school is expensive, the question, "Can I really afford school \underline{x} ?", is a critical one. Since law school is an investment, the question, "Can I afford not to attend school \underline{x} ?", must be considered also.

Though the questions of admissibility, opportunity and affordability comprise the major factors in selecting a law school, there are a number of other factors to be considered which can take on the role of "tie-breakers" or, *in toto* can have the same impact on the selection process as the major factors. Though these are "soft" factors in that in many cases they are non-quantifiable, they merit careful exploration.

The first category of questions to be asked concerns the program and total atmosphere of the law school. A word of caution is in order for avid catalogue readers. Since most applicants are among the uninitiated in the terminology of the law and the content of the courses listed in the law school's bulletin, he or she should be very careful in reading the curricular and course offerings. This caution should extend to examination of special programs or emphases also. Since a law school education is basically one which focuses on the general practice of law, and specialization most often occurs after graduation from law school, it may be unwise to choose a given law school solely on the basis of a specialized curriculum or program. Oftentimes, such special areas are contingent on the presence of one or a small number of faculty members who might leave the school to go elsewhere or retire. The point is, an applicant, in selecting a law school, should never sacrifice overall quality for a specialized program.

At the core of a law school, and that factor which is the greatest single one in determining its quality, is the faculty. Applicants should find out as much about the faculty as possible. What is the general reputation of the faculty? Are they recognized experts in their fields? What members of the faculty are near retirement? Is the faculty noted for being a teaching faculty? What are their teaching styles? Are they accessible to students outside of class? Do they have extensive outside commitments?

Next in importance to the faculty in determining both the quality of the school and its desirability for the individual applicant is the question of the character of the student body. As one law school professor has put it, "in law school, half of what a student learns comes from other students both in the formal setting of the classroom and informal interchange outside the classroom." Size of the student body can often be important to the applicant. He or she should ask if, in the case of large law schools, the class is sectioned and, if it is, does this sectioning prove to be effective in making the law school experience a more personal one? It is not only important to note the objective credentials of the entering class, but also many applicants will want to find out where and what type of undergraduate institutions the members of the class come from. What are the major feeder schools? In some cases the applicant may feel more at home with students who come from undergraduate institutions similar to his or her own; in other cases, an applicant may welcome a different experience. This is also true in a geographic sense. Some students may prefer to be with law students who come, for the most part, from his or her region of the country; others may prefer geographic diversity. To what extent are women and members of minority groups recruited and enrolled is a question of significance for many applicants. Since the average age of entering classes seems to be going up and law schools generally react favorably to applications from people who are older, many applicants may want to know how many of the students fall into different age groups. Finally the applicant may well want to know how competitive the students are. Though no law school can truly be described as "laid back," some schools are noted as being highly competitive while others seem to be a bit more relaxed and possess more of a cooperative spirit. The individual has to decide which atmosphere will provide him or her with the best educational experience.

The final set of factors under the general rubric of atmosphere are the "books and bricks" questions. Though size of the library is important, the more important question is the adequacy of the library resources. If a law school is part of a university, then questions about the availability and accessibility of the total university library system should be asked. The applicant should also look at the "bricks." Are the physical facilities adequate? What plans are there for expansion if expansion seems necessary? Additional questions in this category would include questions about housing for students, sports and other non-academic facilities.

Another "tie-breaker" factor of concern to many students is the question of the location of the school with reference to things other than job opportunities. Some students prefer schools located in large metropolitan areas; others seek a more bucolic atmosphere. Some students come alive in cold crisp air; others find their minds freeze and their spirits fall when the temperature goes below 70 degrees. Some like the given life-style of a region; others find certain regional life-styles not to be their cup of tea. Some find law school more tolerable if they have ACC basketball available; others feel better if snow-skiing is no more than an hour away. Though location in these terms should never be the major deciding factor, it can be a useful "tie-breaker".

The final two factors to be considered in selecting a law school involve perception and process. The perception factor centers on the perceived reputation and prestige of a law school. Lists of rankings are the easiest and most readily available sources of information, but, alas, in actuality, often reflect the prejudices of those participating in the ranking procedures more than the real quality of the law schools. Yet, such ranking lists can be useful in serving as a starting point in the determination of the reputation and prestige of law schools. The individual applicant should read carefully as much material as possible, talk to a wide variety of people who are familiar with legal education, and then make his or her own judgments. After all, there is no "best" law school in the country in an objective sense. The number one school in the country is that one which best meets the individual applicant's own needs and personal goals.

As a footnote, the applicant to law school is a rational person who probably prides himself or herself on the ability to weigh carefully all the evidence and then make a logical decision bringing the full force of reason to bear on the process of selecting a law school. But on the theory that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts," the applicant should remember that he or she, after a careful reasoning process, has the perfect right to make the final selection on the basis of a "gut reaction." The applicant should trust his or her instincts as well as his or her reason. Before the final decision is made, ask such questions as, "Does the school feel right for me?", and "Will I be proud to hold a degree from that school?" In this connection, if at all possible, an applicant should visit the schools he or she is seriously considering. Selecting a law school sight unseen is a bit like selecting a spouse sight unseen: on paper everything may seem right, but the "chemistry" may not be there. Though many law schools do not encourage visits for admissions purposes, all would agree on the value of a visit before making a final choice.

Though this chapter has suggested a number of factors to be considered in selecting a law school, in the end, both the process and the choice belong to the individual. Even if the same questions are asked by individual applicants and similar answers result, the weight each answer carries as a decision-making factor will vary from applicant to applicant. The only given for all applicants, it seems, is the time and money spent on the process. So the applicant should plan carefully as he or she enters the admissions battle and remember that opportunity most often comes to the prepared.

Myths about the Law School Admissions Process
By Judge Richard Poland
Flagler College

At the 21st SAPLA Conference hosted by Duke University School of Law I organized and moderated the panel entitled “Debunking Law School Myths.” The panelists were the well-respected and experienced Deans of Admission Michelle Rahman of the University of Richmond, Michael Patrick of the University of Florida, and John Benfield of the University of South Carolina. We discovered that there are many myths, most of which have an equal and opposite counter-myth. The following is a list of those myths which we now declare to be officially debunked:

Myth # 1: A Law School Admissions Committee will only look at your GPA for the last 60 academic hours. In fact, the student’s entire collegiate academic record is fully examined and considered. Doing better academically as a junior and senior may give you material for your personal statement because you matured and became focused, but your cumulative and uniform GPA is what the committee will consider.

Myth # 2: If I attend University X as an undergraduate, then I will have a more competitive chance to gain admission into University X Law School. Many students also believe that their chances are diminished if they attend University X as an undergraduate. The truth is that it does not matter. Most law schools do not have the seating capacity to accept every applicant from its own institution, even if the Admission Committee wanted to do that. Each applicant is considered on his or her own merits.

Myth # 3: If you take the LSAT more than once, every law school will average your score. In fact, many law schools will look more closely at your second score. If it is significantly higher and if there’s a reasonable explanation, the second score can carry more weight. Again, you should address the reason for this higher score in your personal statement. Nevertheless, most law schools will average your LSAT score because LSAC and ABA data reflects the averaged score.

Myth # 4: A “WP” on your transcript will always create a negative impression. While a pattern of WPs scattered throughout your transcript might indicate that you are course shopping for an easy A, there may be a reasonable explanation. Four or five WPs during one semester may indicate sickness or a serious emergency. One or two WPS may merely indicate that the course content was not what you had expected. The applicant’s personal statement should state an explanation.

Myth # 5: It is best not to disclose a DUI or a misdemeanor on your application. Answering all questions truthfully is the course of action the student should always pursue. Lying will create a bigger problem than the truth. When given advice to lie on a law school application, you should consider seeking advice elsewhere. A pre-law advisor is always a good place to begin.

Myth # 6: There is a magic undergraduate major that will put me at the head of the admission’s line. While some majors may have a reputation of requiring critical thinking and thoughtful writing, how can an Admissions Committee possibly determine whether one particular major at your institution is more rigorous than another major? Or whether a particular major at your institution is more rigorous than that same major at other institutions? Take courses that encourage you to think and write, knowing that there is no magic major.

Myth # 7: Rolling admissions means apply early and my lesser credentials will gain me admission. If you are a presumptive admittee, you will most likely be admitted whenever you apply. If you are not, you will not. If the law school to which you are applying has an early admission policy, then you should apply early. Remember that applying early is always preferred over applying late. Having your applications mailed by Thanksgiving is a good rule of thumb.

Myth # 8: Strong letters of recommendation from important people will trump my low grades and poor LSAT score. While positive letters of recommendation are a plus, it is ultimately your academic record and your specialness that will gain a seat for you in next year's class.

Myth # 9: Only geniuses should apply. Having practiced law for 20 years and presided as a probate judge for 18, I am living proof that this is, indeed, a mere myth. A solid work ethic and superior people skills are just as important for a successful career in law.

“If I Knew Then What I Know Now”: Law Students Perspectives on Their Undergraduate Experience

Gerald L. Wilson, Duke University

One of the most valuable and informative resources for most prelaw advisors is their own alumnus. Staying in touch with as many as possible (and practical) can assist prelaw advisors who are advising current prelaw students in terms of preparation for law school, which schools to consider and what to expect once in law school. The widespread use of email has facilitated the process of both informal, individual contact and larger scale contact in terms of surveys sent to a number of alums.

Basically, two kinds of surveys prove to be of value. The first, and one used by many prelaw advisors, is the questionnaire aimed at having students comment on their experience at particular law schools. This survey seeks comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the school both inside and outside of the classroom. It requests information on faculty quality, faculty accessibility, peer relationships, social climate, facilities, school’s location, and general ambiance and attitude and success of the placement office or career center. Advisors might contact Jane Levy at Cornell for an example of a well-developed survey.

The other type of survey some advisors have found to be valuable is one in which students’ reflect on their undergraduate experience. The example that follows was used by me as Duke’s Prelaw Advisor in preparing for a panel of NAPLA’s 1999 Conference.

“If I Knew Then What I Know Now”: Law Students Perspectives on Their Undergraduate Experience

Name _____

Year _____

Law School _____

Academic Experience

1. Which undergraduate courses did you find most valuable as preparation for law school? Why?
2. Which undergraduate courses did you think might be of value for law school but turned out not to be? Why?
3. What “type” of undergraduate instructors best prepared you for the law school experience?
4. What undergraduate activities did you find most helpful in preparing you for law school? Why?
5. Did you take a prep course for the LSAT? Which one? To what degree did you find this course helpful?
6. Do you wish you had taken time off before law school? If so, why? If no, why not?
7. What “myths” about the law school experience are more fiction than truth? Which ones are more truth than fiction?
8. What questions you failed to ask, do you wish you had asked your prelaw advisor?
9. What things were not mentioned, do you wish your prelaw advisor had told you?

10. What message(s) would you like to send back to undergraduate prelaws?
11. Have your career plans changed while in law school? If so, how and why?
12. Will you leave law school with a debt load that will limit your options? If so, how will this affect your career planning?

And The Top Ten Are ...
Rick Poland – Flagler College

David Letterman has his top ten lists and I have mine. Analyzing legal film has long been an avid interest of mine. Using some of my favorite films in the classroom as legal text has greatly enhanced the learning experience for my students during the past decade. In fact, I have structured my Justice and the Judicial Process course around film and the controversial legal issues raised in those film. Movies with legal themes which inspire, motivate, inform, and provide realistic courtroom scenes are strongly preferred over those which merely entertain. This, in fact, comprises my personal four-prong test for using any particular film in the classroom. All of the following legal movies should inspire you, inform you, and provide realistic courtroom depictions for you. As Prelaw Advisors, we should encourage our students to view each one of them. Perhaps it will help motivate them to make a difference in this world.

1. **Anatomy Of A Murder:** Nominated for seven Academy Awards in 1959, this classic legal film is not simply the best criminal law movie of all time; it is the best legal movie ever produced. The law is sound, the courtroom scenes are realistic, and the trial tactics are worthy of emulating. Jimmy Stewart plays a small-town defense attorney representing a hot-headed Army Lieutenant who, while allegedly temporarily insane, shot his wife's alleged bartending rapist. Note the clever manner by which Stewart convinces his client to choose the legal excuse of insanity as his defense rather than justification. George C. Scott proves a worthy opponent as the big-time prosecuting attorney from Lansing. The sparring between Scott and Stewart provides riveting courtroom drama. Difficult moral and legal issues surrounding the insanity defense are explored in some depth. You may reexamine your view on the insanity defense as a legal excuse for homicide. Should the M'Naghten right-wrong test apply or should the irresistible impulse test be employed to determine Lieutenant Manion's (Ben Gazzara) criminal culpability? A hint: The Lieutenant knows the difference between right and wrong. Perhaps *People v. Durfee*, 62 Michigan 486, 1886, will be helpful in answering the defense's dilemma. After a very slow beginning, the action moves quickly. You judge whether or not justice was accomplished.
2. **The Rainmaker:** Directed by Francis Ford Coppola, this Grisham film presents a number of legal issues for consideration: civil fraud, breach of warranty, divorce, probate, and even justifiable homicide. The movie begins with recent law school graduate Rudy Baylor, played by Matt Damon, searching for a job – a rite of passage for every rookie lawyer. He ends up working for the sleaziest attorney in Memphis and with side-kick Danny DeVito who has failed the bar exam several times. A very high profile insurance case is given to Rudy as a law student. His client, whose death is imminent without a bone marrow transplant, signs the contingency agreement as his blood drips onto the contract. Despite facing very long odds against a battery of corporate lawyers, Rudy seeks to unveil the truth to the jury. In this film, the reward is truly in the journey. In the end, the rookie gets the girl and hero status; corporate America once again is the villain
3. **12 Angry Men:** Angry doesn't begin to describe it in this 1957 classic. The two fundamental underpinnings of our criminal justice system are the presumption of innocence and reasonable doubt. I have found nothing – in film or otherwise - which better explains the legal concept of reasonable doubt to undergraduate students. Henry Fonda, as the voice of reason, represents Justice; while E.G. Marshall, as a man of logic, represents the Law.

The initial jury vote is 11-1 to convict the son for the crime of murdering his father. But through a gradual reexamination of the testimony and the other evidence, doubt raises its head and the vote becomes 11-1 to acquit. How many reasonable doubts are there? Count them as you watch this movie a second and a third time – and you will.

4. **The Accused:** Based on an actual New Bedford case involving a gang-rape prosecution, this compelling film will strike you at your core. You will never again think that a woman may have provocatively “asked for it.” Gender bias, plea bargaining, criminal solicitation, and rape are the legal themes examined by this film starring Oscar winning Jody Foster, who once said that the seven minute rape scene which took all day to film was the most difficult performance of her career. This movie tests the limits of legal justice and social responsibility. Kelly McGillis plays the prosecutor who plea bargains away the rape case for a charge with a minimal sentence. She then fights a male dominated system to maximize the light sentences of the rapists and to convict those onlookers who cheered and encouraged the barroom rape for the crime of solicitation. This film will impact victims of sexual assault in a manner similar to the way that *Saving Private Ryan* affected World War II veterans and *The Amistad* affected African-Americans.
5. **To Kill A Mockingbird:** Based on Harper Lee’s 1960 Pulitzer Prize novel, this film was not well received in the South when it was first released. But over time, Atticus Finch, played by Best Actor Gregory Peck, has become Hollywood’s movie hero of all time. Atticus capably defends a black man who is wrongfully accused of sexually assaulting a white girl. Set in a racially divided, small rural town in the 1930’s, Mr. Robinson is found guilty for the sole reason that the word of so-called white trash (the alleged victim and her despicable father) must be taken as gospel over the word of a respectable black man in the courtrooms of that era - despite the eloquent closing argument of Atticus Finch who implored the jury, “Do the right thing; in the name of God, do the right thing.” The cross-examination of the prosecution’s witnesses provides valuable tactical lessons.
6. **The Amistad:** Based upon the 1841 United States Supreme Court case, *The Amistad*, 40 U.S. 518, this film focuses on a major turning point in U.S. history. The courtroom scenes confront the foundations of the American justice system and are accurate depictions of the judicial process in Colonial America. The legal question becomes whether the Africans are people or property. Unlike in the *Dred Scott* case, the Supreme Court justices reach the correct decision. Cinque’s personal story and John Quincy Adams’s argument will move you. Contrast this case with a similar case decided by John Marshall, *The Antelope*, 23 U.S. 66.
7. **The Verdict:** If you have lawyers somewhere in your life, Frank Galvin (Paul Newman) may remind you of someone you know. While this film teaches many lessons about professional responsibility and legal ethics, it is, along with *The Rainmaker*, one of the cornerstones of tort cinema. This film also provides a powerful example of how not to practice as an attorney and how not to preside as a judge. Alcoholic Galvin has a very winnable, big judgment medical malpractice suit fall in his lap. He can settle or he can try the case; unwisely, he chooses to try it. Everything goes wrong at the trial including his expert witness not showing and the judge making an erroneous hearsay ruling from the bench. Despite all the negative energy, in his closing argument Galvin begs the jury to “act as if you believe and faith will be given to you.” The jury gets religion and Galvin’s client gets her judgment.

8. **A Time To Kill:** Is there? A time to kill, that is. If you don't think so now, you may rethink your position after viewing this film. If your ten year daughter were brutalized, raped, and left for dead - and it did not appear to you that justice would be done - would you consider taking the law into your own hands? The father, played by Samuel L. Jackson, decides to lay in wait at the county courthouse and shoot the despicable defendants as they slowly walk to their arraignment. This looks like murder in the first degree, doesn't it? That's what the Klan thinks as they terrorize the judicial process. Matthew McConaughey argues otherwise in his compelling closing argument. Jury nullification is one of the key legal concepts explored in this film. This movie is generally the student favorite.
9. **Philadelphia:** This landmark film explores the tort of wrongful termination when homophobic senior law partners fire, for pretextual reasons, rising legal star Andy Beckett (Tom Hanks) who is HIV positive. Denzel Washington, who must overcome his own phobias, ably represents Hanks in captivating court scenes. "Explain to me like I'm a seven year old," is a line which Washington makes famous. Employers who discriminate against the disabled in hiring and promotion practices are examined in some depth.
10. **Paper Chase:** All pre-law students should watch this movie before applying for law school. Contract Professor Kingsley is old school when it comes to using the Socratic method in the classroom. If you do not feel the pain of the 1L's, it's only because you have not yet walked in their shoes. You'll observe how law school study groups work and how law school classes differ from undergraduate classes. The best scene is at the end when grades are given their appropriate due.

Honorable Mention: Judgment at Nuremberg, Inherit The Wind, Runaway Jury, A Civil Action, A Class Action, And Justice For All, Kramer v. Kramer, Presumed Innocent, The Wrong Man, and Witness For The Prosecution.

Now let the debate begin. What are your top ten?

CHAPTER VI

THE LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

After all is said and done and the student is safely ensconced in law school, what is it really like? Three articles, written from the inside, deal with this experience. This editor can't help but include a comment about the law school experience from one of his former advisees, Steve Lawrence, a Duke graduate who received his law degree from the University of Chicago, which really sums it up:

“The law student must be ready and willing to meet one of the biggest challenges that he will ever face. Law school is a full-time business. By full-time, I mean a minimum of 10 hours a day, every day of the week. It is quite exhaustive, particularly during the first year. There is a new vocabulary to learn, and a new way of thinking. As the faculty is fond of saying, law students also have to learn to read for the first time in their lives. In law, every word is of crucial importance; you don't read just to get the gist of the material. This point came across to me the first day of law school. I had spent four years in college contemplating such issues as truth, goodness, government and religion. In the first case we had to read in Contracts the issue which Judge Henry Friendly, one of the most distinguished judges in the country, had to face is: "What is chicken?" The case turned on whether the parties to the contract meant "stewing chicken" or "fowl." The movement from considering "what is truth" to "what is chicken" symbolizes perfectly for me the movement from college to law school.”

LAW SCHOOL

What Is It and How Does It Differ From Undergraduate Education?*

From
Georgetown University Law Center Student's Almanac

Edited By
Abbie Willard, Ph.D.

WHAT IS THIS BEAST? Some might call it a trial by endurance. Other, more idealistic souls might see it as an intellectual challenge embodying classical exercises in reasoning, logic, and persuasive dialogue. Whatever you call it, it may not be the easiest way to spend three or four years of your life. Law school at its most effective and its most grueling -- is an academic means to a practical end. From this you will develop intellectual skills that you may not have imagined yourself having.

Forget Perry Mason

The most useful way to view law school is as the shaping of a lawyer. Louis Schwartz, formerly of the University of Pennsylvania, and now a professor of law at the University of California's Hastings College of Law summarizes the professional ideal of a lawyer:

The lawyer is a planner, a negotiator, a peace-maker. Despite the popular stereotype of the lawyer as contentious adversary, the peaceful ordering of human relations overwhelmingly predominates in his activities. In the drafting of commercial and labor contracts, treaties, wills, constitutions, he or she is concerned with achieving orderly arrangements and with avoiding or settling controversy. This requires imaginative and anticipation of contingencies, changes of fortune, tragedies, betrayals, and social change.

The lawyer is a counselor, advising individuals in their varied and complex relationships with one another and the state. Similarly the lawyer advises groups, corporations, unions, ethnic communities, cities, states, federal departments and agencies, and international organizations. In giving advice he or she brings into play the lawyer's specialized understanding of the formal structure of society and law as an instrument of social control and betterment.

The lawyer is an advocate, representing the views, needs and aspirations of others more effectively than they, un-counseled, could do by themselves.

The lawyer is a defender of the rights of the individuals against the conformist pressures of society.

The lawyer is an architect of social structure, responding creatively to the needs of a rapidly changing society.

The lawyer is a social scientist, drawing upon economics, history, sociology, psychology, political science, and anthropology to deal with the problems of individuals, organizations and communities.

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The lawyer is an educator, especially a self-educator. The process of educating a lawyer never ends. In every controversy he or she must refresh expertise or acquire expertise in a new factual domain.

The lawyer is an humanist. To study law is to look through the greatest window on life. Here one sees the passions, frailties, the aspirations, the baseness and nobility of the human condition.

The lawyer is a leader. All other qualifications converge in thrusting upon the lawyer leadership and responsibility in community life.

You are a lawyer - of sorts - not from the day you graduate or pass the bar (though the importance of these milestones will weigh a lodestone on your back) but from the day you start classes . Not that you should think of yourself as Perry Mason. Television and the press - even Shakespeare - have done us all a disservice with their narrow, stereotyped portrayal of The Lawyer who single-mindedly practices The Law and in so doing serves mankind all while garnering great wealth.

Unlike your media counterpart you will probably become a master of many trades. Law school will prepare you for some of these, but not for others. The skills, the attitudes, the intellect that got you here will have to suffice for the others. So, be realistic about what law school can and cannot do. Another law professor, Michael Josephson, who has taught and lectured widely maintains that law school will not teach you "how to" do what most lawyers do. Instead, you will learn how to defend against the Socratic onslaught (we'll talk more about that later), brief a case, and complete a two-hour exam in one hour. You will learn to think in a different way and to approach facts and problems with a perspective untried in your pre-law school life. That is what makes law school difficult for many students. The skills and behaviors that made you successful in undergraduate school will not necessarily work here. At least not in the same way.

REMEMBRANCES OF COLLEGES PAST

Law school is different from your undergraduate education in almost every way. The teaching methods, the professors themselves, the types of students, even the very goal of the educational process will all require your skills in adaptation.

Pedagogy: How They Teach Me What I Need To Know.

They won't. Law school professors will not lecture and expect you to regurgitate those lectures on regular or frequent exams. You will have only one, perhaps two exams during a course. These exams will test your ability to apply what was discussed in class. The application may not even remotely resemble the fact pattern or hypothetical actually examined in class. The method of teaching will no longer focus on the content of the lecture or the text, though you certainly will want to be able to recall some of this substance. Rather than content, your way of thinking about that content will be the professor's primary concern.

Professors: How Can I Match Their Wits?

You probably can't and shouldn't expect yourself to. In your undergraduate experience, your interchanges with professors were probably questions and answers - you did the asking and they provided the answers. The tables now turn. They ask and you respond. If you ask them a question - and please do - they will probably answer it with another question posed to you. (And why not?) This is part of the process of learning to think like a lawyer.

Most undergraduate educators stand behind a college podium because they A) love to teach, or B) want to do research in their field, or C) both of the above, if you are lucky. Most law school professors were selected for their jobs because of their outstanding performances in law school, their practice or both. They may or may not be experienced teachers and they may or may not write in the subject area they have been selected to teach. They are, however, masters at the very process - thinking like a lawyer - which is so new to you.

Students: What Is My Competition?

No longer are your dorm-mates or teammates. And no longer does the academic performance of those around you vary widely. Everyone who gets into Georgetown is bright, motivated, and skilled intellectually. The undergraduate grade point averages and Law School Admission Test scores place our students in the top ten to fifteen percent of the entire U.S. law school applicant pool. You are among the best of the brightest.

You will encounter competition, of course. But, if you can compete cooperatively (no, not a contradiction in terms) with friendly interchanges, study groups, shared notes, and off time socializing, the pressure will be manageable. You will find your new colleagues to be very interesting and fun people. Remember, you are all in this together.

Educational Goal: Why Are They Doing This To Me?

If you keep in mind that process not product, methodology not substance are the primary focus here, you will have touched (if not felt) your reason for existence over the next three or four years. Undergraduate institutions that seek to make you a well-rounded, educated member of society assume a small task compared to the agenda law school has in mind. Law school aims to train you in several disciplines. It wants you to gain analytical reasoning, an ability to identify legal issues, an understanding of legal process, and a knowledge of substantive law. At the same time it wants to shape you into effectively communicating (orally and in writing) all of the above. And, it wants you to do all of this as a decent, ethical, contributing member of society.

At their worst, these goals contribute to the commonly held belief that law school is an impersonal, anonymous, alienating experience. Do fight the too-smug tendency to write off the experience for its negative possibilities. Instead, try to focus on the enormous opportunities to learn, challenge, be challenged, and respond. You will certainly change because of the experience. Try to enjoy the process of that change.

CLINICAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS - AN OVERVIEW

Robert M. Bloom
Boston College Law School

What is Clinical Education?

Clinical education is a course of study within the law school curriculum for academic credit. Clinical courses are carefully constructed, supervised and/or monitored by members of the law school faculty. The prime objective of clinical programs is education.

There are generally two components to a clinical program: the field work component, in which a student performs lawyering activities in an actual practice setting, under close supervision; and the classroom component, in which the student practice is supplemented by simulation, discussion, and reading. The goal of the classroom component is to analyze and dissect the student's clinical experience.

Courses that offer simulation exercises without the clinical fieldwork component are sometimes characterized as clinical courses. These courses, although worthwhile, do not provide students with the full and rich learning experience to be gained from representing actual clients in the role of lawyer.

Some law schools have classified cooperative work placements as clinical education. Some education benefits will result from this type of experience. However, since with cooperative jobs employers pay students salaries, and expect a certain work product in return, the law school loses control of the student's experience. Without this control, education content cannot be ensured, and the student will not necessarily receive close supervision.

Types of Clinical Programs:

In-House Programs - The fieldwork component in the in-house programs is supervised by persons who are employed by the law school. These programs may be located at the law school or they may be associated with an existing law office such as a legal aid office. Regardless of the physical location, they share the common characteristic of the students' supervisors being paid by the law school.

Most in-house programs involve actual client and representation. There are statutes in most states that allow students to do limited client representation. For example, in Massachusetts the student practice rule allows second year students to represent clients of limited financial means or the government in most civil matters in the lower state courts. Third year students can handle less serious criminal matters, either as prosecutors, or as defense attorneys for indigent clients. Because of the limitations of most student practice rules, most in-house programs have involved civil representation in a legal services and/or government agency setting, and criminal representation through district attorney's offices or public defender programs. These programs often involve students in actual litigation activities.

Externship Programs - These are programs in which the direct supervision of students is provided by individuals not salaried by the law school. The success or failure of these types of programs to a large extent depends on how effectively the law school monitors the supervisors.

Issues to be Considered and Questions to Ask in Analyzing Clinical Education Options:

A) In the in-house programs what is the student-teacher ratio? Clinical education is very expensive. Direct supervision of the student's work is time consuming. Some law schools have sought to increase the student-teacher ratio so as to make clinical programs more cost efficient. Although I am reluctant to suggest an optimum student-teacher ratio, I would be concerned if the ratio was 12 students to one supervisor or higher.

B) Are there enough clinical slots to accommodate student demand? Often the demand for clinical programs far exceeds the number of available clinical slots; consequently some students who desire a clinical education experience may graduate without such an experience. It is important to determine both the overall clinical slots, the number of slots in a particular program and a students' particular preference if any.

C) How closely are the externship programs monitored? Out-of-house programs are sometimes an inexpensive way for a law school to accommodate large numbers of students who desire a clinical experience. Since the out-house program is supervised by individuals who are salaried by employers other than the law school who necessarily have priorities other than education, placements need to be carefully monitored by the law school. It is important to ascertain: Who on the faculty is responsible for monitoring these placements? How many placements does he/she have to monitor? What other responsibilities does the faculty adviser have? How are these placements selected? What structural devices are used to monitor these placements? Examples include weekly meetings with students, classroom components, site visits, reports, training sessions, etc.

D) What types of clinical offerings are there? In this regard you should consider the type of work experience, the subject matters, and the settings of the various clinical programs. Traditionally, clinical programs have involved litigation experience. Many lawyers do not litigate. They are involved in a variety of activities including drafting legislation, policy making, and counseling. Are there clinical offerings which focus on non-litigation activities? The practice of law has also become very specialized over the years. Are there clinical opportunities in particular subject areas such as environmental law, corporate, patent, labor, etc? Historically, most clinical placements have been in legal services and attorney generals or district attorney's offices. Some programs now provide clinical opportunities working with judges, or in law firms, or the legislature, or in non-legal settings.

Clinical Programs and Jobs

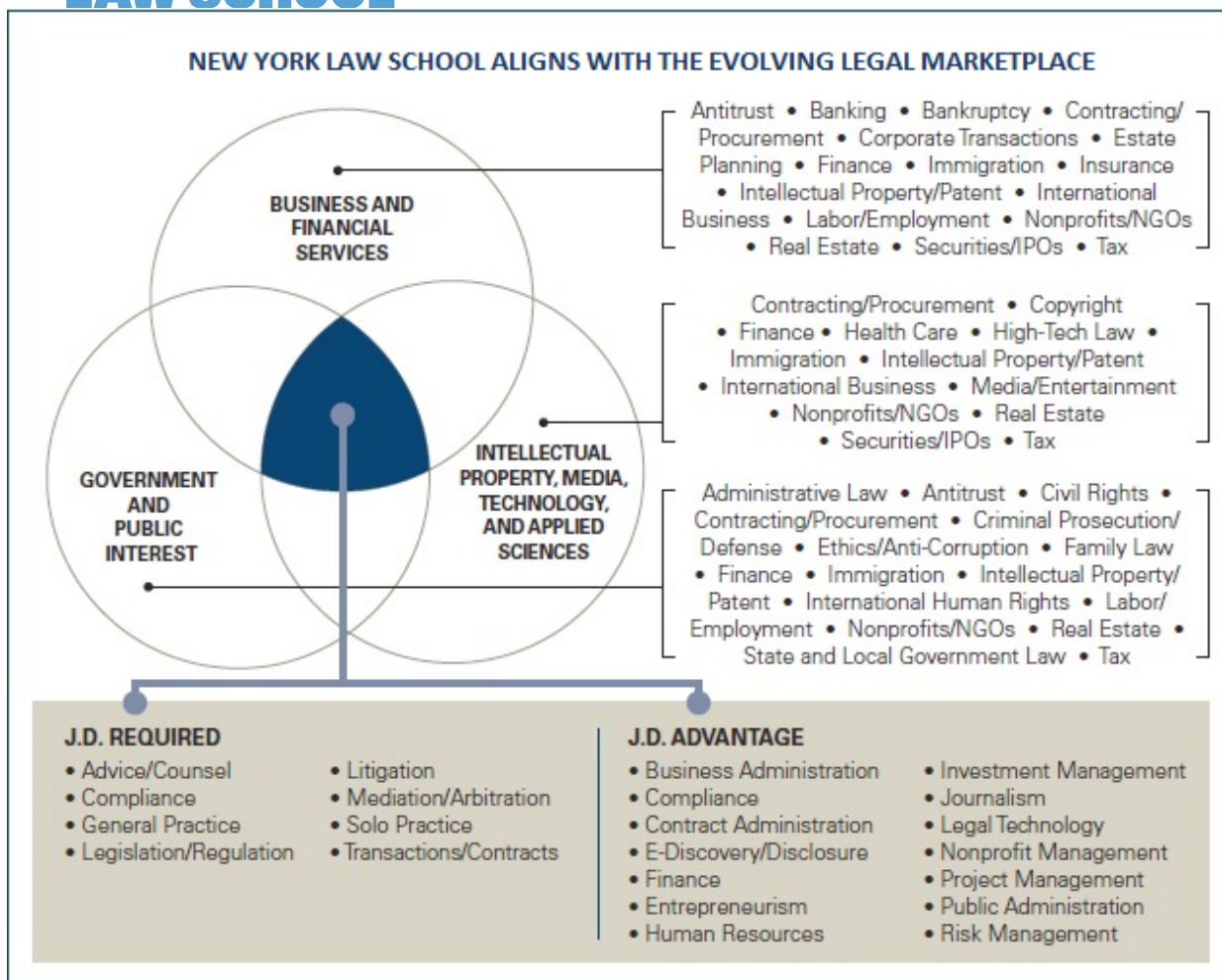
Do clinical programs lead to jobs? Because a clinical supervisor is better able than a classroom teacher to observe and get to know a student he/she can give a more detailed recommendation. This recommendation is especially useful for a student who has not been academically successful. In addition a recommendation from a practicing attorney (extern supervisor) may in some instances carry more weight than a law professor. It is possible that a student will be retained by their placement but this is a rare occurrence.

Do clinical programs lead to a change in career objectives? Absolutely! Over the years I have observed a number of students whose horizons are opened by their clinical experiences. For example it is not unusual for a student working in a criminal program to decide to become a prosecutor or defense attorney.

Summary

Probably the best sources for detailed answers to these questions are the faculty directors of clinical programs and/or the directors of the individual clinical programs at a school, and second and third year law students who have been involved in the programs or have not been able to get into a clinical program.

New York Law School Aligns with the Evolving Legal Marketplace
Anthony Crowell, New York Law School



The First Year

Ryan VanGrack, Duke University 2001, Harvard Law School 2005, Senior Advisor at the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission

“What is assumpsit?” Those were the first words out of the professor’s mouth on my first day of law school. Not “hello,” “good morning,” or an encouraging “welcome to class.” It was down to business right out of the gate. Sound intimidating? I certainly thought so. But if you can tune out the horror stories, law school can be bearable, if not enjoyable.

In this article, I will summarize the typical experience of a first-year law student, dispel some myths, and provide a few tips on how to survive the experience without completely losing your self-confidence or your sanity.

A. Before You Arrive

The law school experience is similar wherever you go. As a first-year student, you likely will read the same books, cover the same cases, register for the same courses, take the same types of exams, and learn the same principles of law.^{[1][2][3]}^{[4][5][6]}

Upon being accepted to law school, undergraduates often wonder what they can do to prepare. Some cross register for a law school course, others take an undergraduate class offering a law-school experience, and still others purchase books highlighting the law school curriculum or giving tips on ways to succeed. Everyone is unique and what may be helpful to some might be useless for others. Most importantly, you do not need to do any of the above before entering law school. You already possess the tools needed to succeed – logic, creative thinking, etc.

B. Teaching Method

Law school classes in your first year are predominantly taught using the “case method.” The majority of your reading assignments will be cases. Although some professors may occasionally include other reading materials to develop a general principle or elaborate on a particular policy, rest assured that you will be reading case, after case, after case, on a daily basis as a first-year law student.^{[1][2][3]}^{[4][5][6]}

The case method involves studying the evolution of law through appellate court decisions. A first-year law student rarely reads a court opinion from the trial level. Instead, the cases studied are those written by appellate court judges who review matters appealed by a party dissatisfied with the result attained at a lower court. Appellate opinions typically review an issue of law and make a holding in support of one particular interpretation.

I wish I could tell you that each case is easy to understand, and that each holding is clear, unambiguous, and universal in application. If that were the case, then being a law student – or a lawyer – would not be very difficult. Instead, first-year law students soon find that there is only one certainty in law school: nothing is certain in law school.

It would be too easy if you could find every answer by reading a case summary or statute on point. Interpretation of any given law is often unique to each individual reader and the law itself isn't static – statutes are passed or amended, holdings are overruled, etc.

When reading class assignments, first-year students typically “brief” the case, which consists of condensing the entire opinion into a short, easily understood summary. A brief often includes the background facts, procedural posture, central holdings of the case, and conclusion. Although many first-year students brief their cases, second-year students are less likely to do so. My recommendation is to brief cases your first semester and re-evaluate during the second semester.

C. Workload

The workload in your first year is substantial, but not unbearable. The material is not impossible to master, but the amount of cases to read and brief, articles to ponder, and outlines to complete can be overwhelming. There are two important points to keep in mind when confronted with this burden. First, nobody is able to learn, process, and remember everything covered. Second, things get easier with each subsequent semester. This is not because the workload diminishes over time. Instead, students learn to handle the material more efficiently, with considerably less effort. What would take two hours as a first-year may only take twenty minutes as a second-year.

D. Classroom Materials and Instruction

Your classroom materials likely will consist of one large book that contains all the cases you will read during the semester. Many professors also will recommend one or more “hornbooks” to accompany the casebook. Hornbooks are narrative outlines of the law in a particular field. Although they typically are voluminous and tedious, hornbooks can prove useful in courses that are notoriously challenging for first-year students (e.g., Civil Procedure).

The dynamics of a law school classroom are unlike anything you witnessed at Duke. Although the format is intimidating to many, the right preparation and perspective can help mitigate much potential anxiety. Most professors conduct their class using some form of the “Socratic method.” Law professors do not

lecture for hours or ask for occasional class participation. Instead, the classroom is conducted as a series of one-on-one discussions. Typically, a professor selects a student to introduce a case – meaning he or she must recite the facts and explain the court’s holding. The professor then asks a series of questions pertaining to the holding. The questions are meant to probe the student’s comprehension of the case. It is not enough to recite the relevant language from the opinion. A student must understand why the court held the way it did and the steps required to get there. Some professors will only ask a student one or two questions, while others may focus on the same student for 10 or 15 minutes. This dynamic can be challenging and stressful, but it prepares students to begin “thinking like a lawyer.”

One of the greatest differences between college and law school is the level of student preparation. At Duke, many students attend class unprepared, confident they can either remain silent or fake their way through the professor’s questions. It is rare in law school, however, for a first-year student to wing it. The professors are too smart, and the material too complicated. Even the most diligent student will find it difficult to answer questions in class.

As bad as the Socratic Method may sound, there is a simple way to take the entire experience in stride. If you remember nothing from this article but the following, you will have a much less stressful first-year experience – there are no consequences to giving a wrong answer. It may sound trite or obvious, but students too often forget that nothing bad can come from classroom participation. Any intimidation is entirely self-imposed. Your entire grade in your first year typically is determined by an exam at the end of the semester. The sooner you realize that no harm can come from your answer, the sooner you can eliminate much of the initial pressure in law school.

Despite some uniformity in the classroom format, there is no such thing as a "typical" law school class. Everything depends on the professor. Some are courteous and considerate, while a rare few delight in making the experience more intense.

E. Exams

With few exceptions, your grade in each first year course depends entirely on one exam given at the end of the semester. In your second and third year, grades also are often based on a single exam, although many courses (particularly smaller seminars) may require or permit a paper instead. Either way, the majority of classes are graded on a single test/paper.

This structure can put a lot of pressure on students. Whereas undergraduate classes

typically feature multiple exams throughout the semester – allowing a student to gauge his/her progress – law school leaves students unsure of their comprehension of the material until the very end. Boiling your entire grade to an end-of-semester exam is particularly nerve-racking for first-year students, who may question whether they firmly grasp the subject.

There are, however, a few things you can do to better prepare yourself for exams and gain a better sense of your standing in the class. Most first-year students find it helpful to join study groups during their first semester. As the name suggests, these involve groups of students getting together to review class concepts. Additionally, students often “outline” (i.e., create a summary) of a course to prepare for the exam.

Many professors save prior tests online or distribute them at the end of the semester. Reviewing a practice test can be a great way to assess your comprehension and get a feel for your professor’s exam idiosyncrasies. Another useful way to measure your progress is through in-class practice exams. Occasionally, professors will conduct an optional practice exam and provide students with feedback on their answers. I strongly recommend that you take advantage of this offer. A practice exam not only forces you to review the material before the end of the semester, but also helps you get accustomed to the professor’s testing format and grading method.

The majority of law school exams are in the form of “issue spotters.” Issue spotters require students to apply the legal principles learned during class to a long hypothetical set of convoluted facts. Some exams also may feature questions that address a particular concept or policy learned in class. Many exams are open book -- you are free to use notes from class, outlines, or even casebooks to assist in answering the questions. Unlike undergraduate tests, law school professors are much less concerned with your ability to memorize. Instead, exams are focused on your ability to analyze and think creatively.

The competitiveness in law school can vary widely between institutions. Some boast a relaxed atmosphere, while others have well-established reputations as a pressure-cooker. Wherever you attend school, remember that you alone decide the intensity of your law school experience. The most intense schools have many laid-back students and the most relaxed schools have their share of cutthroat competitors.

F. Final Thoughts

Many students enjoy law school, while others feel it is a three-year marathon they

cannot wait to finish. Either way, there are steps you can take to improve the experience. I already have mentioned a few tips throughout his article, but here is one more – ^[L]~~[SEP]~~do not doubt yourself. Too often law students question whether they belong. It may occur after giving a wrong answer or witnessing another student make an insightful comment. I assure you that others feel similarly. Keep in mind that law schools have refined and improved their admissions process – if they think you deserve to be in their program, so should you.

As for the meaning of *assumpsit* – the student in class got it wrong and I still don't have a clue.

CHAPTER VII

Resources for Pre-Law Advisors

New Pre-Law Advisor Resources

If you want to....	Here is a resource!
Know what makes a strong law school candidate (generally or at a particular law school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Refer to the American Bar Association's Statement on Preparing for Law School at http://www.abanet.org/legaled/prelaw/prep.html ✓ View Standard 509 reports, including GPA and LSAT scores for law schools, at http://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/ ✓ Link to law schools' websites from the Official Guide and click on "ABA Disclosures"
Connect with other Pre-Law Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Join the PLANC listserv http://www.planc.org/listserv-guidelines/ ✓ Attend an APLA regional conference (find all APLA websites at http://www.planc.org/)
Talk about the "Return on Investment" or other financial considerations of law school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Share with students the American Bar Association's "The Value Proposition of Attending Law School" http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/lstd/legaled/value_authcheckdam.pdf ✓ Use websites such as www.accesslex.org (for excellent resources on understanding financial aid at the law school level and to calculate loan payments/payback options) ✓ See each law school's tuition and fees + living expenses (listed in each school's profile) at http://www.abarequireddisclosures.org/ ✓ Use the National Association of Law Placement's salary information for new lawyers www.nalp.org
Understand or explain the law school application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Explore the Law School Admission Council website at www.lsac.org ✓ Use the SAPLA Pre-Law Handbook, or use your own region's. (many APLAs have one) ✓ Call another pre-law advisor or a law school colleague. You can use the searchable Pre-Law directory in your LSAC Pre-Law Advisor account at http://www.lsac.org/prelaw/
Find out about the LSAT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the next LSAT is • Registration for the LSAT • How to apply for a fee waiver 	Visit the Law School Admission Council website: http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/test-dates-deadlines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All test dates and locations can be found by clicking on "The LSAT" ✓ Students can apply for testing accommodations http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/accommodated-testing and fee waivers http://www.lsac.org/jd/lsat/fee-waivers on this website. Encourage students to apply early for these; it can take time for a response.
Find employment data from each law school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Visit http://employmentsummary.abaquestionnaire.org ✓ Use a tool such as Law School Transparency to directly compare schools' employment outcomes. http://www.lstscoreports.com/
Connect with law school colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Check out blogs and follow social media (Facebook and Twitter) of law schools your students like ✓ Invite law schools to visit; request a visit to law schools where you send lots of students
Know how your students scored on the LSAT; and Know where your students are applying to/attending law school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ You can run reports within your LSAC Pre-Law account that will show you: where your students (who allowed their data to be used) have applied to law school, where they were accepted, how they performed on the LSAT, and where they matriculated to law school ✓ In order to access these, you must register yourself as a Pre-Law Advisor with the LSAC. The Primary Pre-Law Advisor for your institution must add you or approve you.
Find information about specialized law school clinics and programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use the NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists www.lawschoollists.com ✓ Use the "Keyword search" option in the Official Guide https://officialguide.lsac.org

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Key Questions regarding Law Schools

Prepared By

Elisabeth Steele Hutchison

Director of Admissions

University of Hawai'i at Manoa | [William S. Richardson School of Law](#)

Application Fee Waivers: <http://ow.ly/6OuFM>

Which law schools offer application fee waivers?

Deadlines & Dean's Letter Requirements: <http://ow.ly/7jZdY>

When is my application due? Does this school require a dean's letter from my undergraduate institution?

Decisions, Decisions: <http://ow.ly/7uvsY>

When and how will I learn if I have been admitted to law school?

Establishing Residency: <http://ow.ly/a9gC30bWVGc>

I am a non-resident. May I establish residency in your state while/by attending your state law school?

Summer Pre-Law Programs: <http://ow.ly/ceEjy>

I am undergraduate student who is interested in exploring a career in law. What summer programs are available to me?

Accelerated Admissions & Accelerated Degree Programs: <http://ow.ly/cq90E>

Which law schools offer accelerated admissions to prospective college students (ex., 3+3 programs) and accelerated degree programs to prospective law students (ex., 2-year JD programs, 3-year JD/MBA programs)?

Suggested Websites for Prospective Law Students

compiled by Pamela Bloomquist, Loyola Chicago School of Law, September 2015

The Basics

<http://www.aals.org/prospective-law-students>

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education.html

<http://www.aals.org/prospective-law-students/law-jobs-information/>

Financial Aid

www.FAFSA.gov

- 1) Every school will require students complete the FAFSA for loan eligibility
- 2) Some schools may require this form for consideration for institutional aid.

<https://www.accessgroup.org/>

- 1) great resource for both students and prelaw advisors
- 2) Has sections on understanding your education costs; financing your education; deciding how much to borrow; deciding between multiple offers

<https://www.accessgroup.org/applying-financial-aid>

Scholarships

http://www.admissionsdean.com/paying_for_law_school/law-school-scholarship-finder

http://www.luc.edu/law/admission/financial_aid/outside_scholarships.html

Loans

o <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans/federal-vs-private>

o <http://www.finaid.org/loans/loantradeoffs.phtml>

o <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/askcfpb/545/what-are-main-differences-between-federal-student-loans-and-private-student-loans.html>

o <https://www.salliemae.com/plan-for-college/types-of-student-loans/federal-vs-private-loans/>

Debt Management

o <http://www.equaljusticeworks.org/ed-debt/webinars>

Repayment Options

o Federal Government

o <http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/DirectLoan/RepayCalc/dlindex2.html>

The BEST Books, Websites, Blogs, & Twitter Handles: A Map to Finding the Best Pre-Law Resources

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(NAPLA), 2014-2015 President, Graziano Career Works, LLC

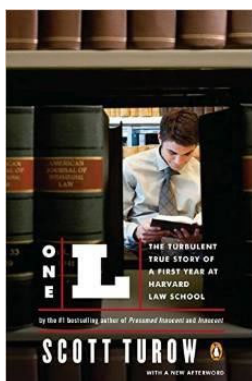
Adjunct English Faculty, Villanova University & Adjunct Business Faculty, Neumann University

Sign on to your Twitter feed or your favorite news website, and you'll experience one of the following sensations: excitement or overload. While browsing through your Twitter or news feed might satisfy you while waiting in line, taking a break, or just procrastinating on a new project, when you're actually looking for reliable, on-point information, the vast array of sources of information can make it feel like a Sisyphean task to find useful, helpful information *quickly*. This is compounded by the frequent questions from pre-law advisees: *What do you recommend? And what do you recommend reading?* Being up to date with resources has become more time-consuming. While adding books—which I recommend fully—to your existing library is important, frequenting law-related websites and communicating with colleagues on Twitter are equally as important for your own professional development as well as your advisees' knowledge.

“Today knowledge has power. It controls access to opportunity and advancement,” Peter Drucker stated. We recognize this, but as we have become more overloaded with information, finding the gems that provide information you would use and recommend has become more difficult. Having those go-to resources—those books, websites, blogs, and Twitter handles—can allow you to focus on the work you need to do advising students and working with colleagues. I've curated a list of the “BEST” resources to help you answer questions and connect with colleagues—with the goal to use and share your knowledge.

Top Student Picks to Understand Law School

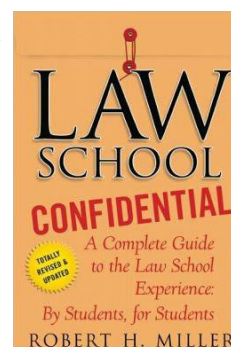
Since I began teaching the *Legal Analysis & Writing* course at Villanova University in 2007, I have assigned One L: The Turbulent True Story of a First Year at Harvard Law School by Scott Turow. A classic, One L still delivers the one aspect of teaching students about law school that can't be accomplished in an undergraduate classroom: creating the “feel” of a competitive law school classroom environment driven by an unforgiving grading curve. Segmenting the book into chapters based on the months, Scott Turow demonstrated the all-too-well-known feel of a timer clicking down to finals. My favorite sentence in the book is Scott Turow's ascertain that even though he had taught writing at Stanford University and had conducted legal research, reading his first legal case for a law school class was like “stirring concrete with my eyelashes.” For law school graduates, I recommend reading it again so you can revisit the “feel” of Socratic method courses; for those who never



experienced law school, it's a must read. For your students, I highly recommend it as an easy way to teach students how to distinguish between the comfortable feel of college that our seniors have become accustomed to and the law school environment, which will become their new normal. The Chapter titles “Meeting My Enemy,” “Learning to Love the Law,” and “Disgrace” summarize the ups and downs of

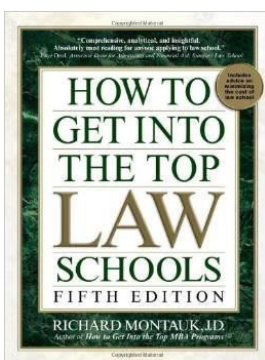
a typical law school experience.

After my *Legal Analysis & Writing* course, students continue reading and researching the law school experience and profession. The Top Pick by students has been a book written “By Students, for Students”: Law School Confidential: A Complete Guide to the Law School Experience By Students, for Students. It’s written in the tradition of “I wish I knew then what I know now.” Covering the application, LSAT, and law school curriculum, it talks to students in their own language, asking questions like “What is a tort anyway?” Advisors will greatly appreciate the “law school etiquette” and “summer before 1L” sections. A section devoted to developing their plan semester by semester is highly informative as are the basics about recruiting, journals, and clerkships.



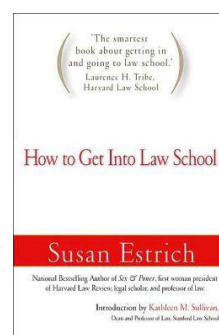
Top Picks for Pre-Law Advisors

When I founded Villanova University’s Law Advising Program for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 2004, I relied on a series of books to help me understand the profession more fully. One of these was Richard Montauk’s How to Get Into the Top Law Schools. Now in its 5th edition, this book provides advisors with a stellar series of interviews with law school admission deans and directors. The

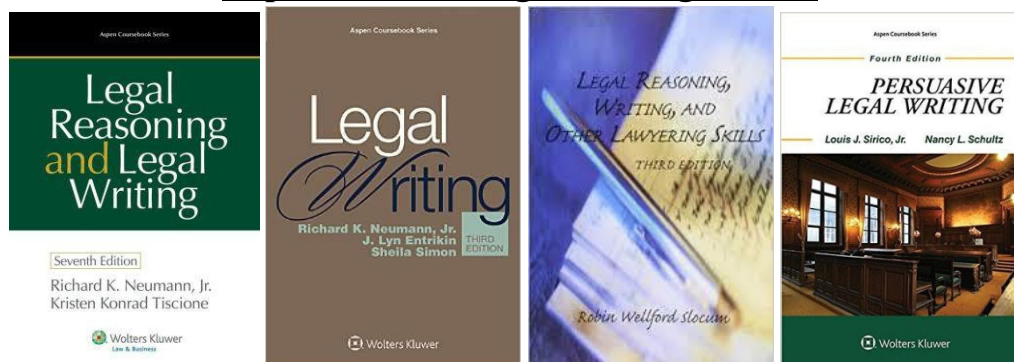


comments and insight provided are priceless for understanding the process and the way that different admission offices view the process. Montauk covers topics such as marketing yourself in the process and the value a top law school offers. Notable are the

chapters that assist with the transition to law school, focusing on time management, note taking, synthesis, and exam preparation, even including example exam questions. Another helpful resource is Susan Estrich’s How to Get into Law School. Written by a former Harvard Law professor and now college professor, the sections on applications, essays, and scholarships provide a foundation for understanding the process.



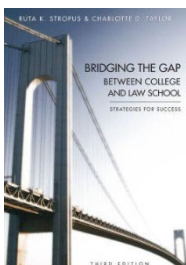
Top Picks for a Legal Writing Course



For colleagues considering teaching a *Legal Analysis & Writing* course for undergraduates, I recommend starting with these books: Legal Reasoning and Legal Writing by Richard K. Neumann

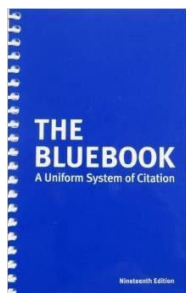
and Kristen Konrad Tiscione; Legal Writing by Richard K. Neumann, J. Lyn Entrikin, and Sheila Simon; Legal Reasoning, Writing and Other Lawyering Skills by Robin Wellford Slocum; and Persuasive Legal Writing by Louis J Sirico and Nancy L. Schultz. I have used Robin Wellford Slocum’s book in my *Legal Analysis and Writing* course because it breaks down every aspect of legal analysis—and is a book that will help my writing students when they matriculate to law school.

Top Pick for a Legal Profession Course



For colleagues planning to create a *Legal Profession* course, I selected Ruta K. Stropus and Charlotte D. Taylor’s Bridging the Gap Between College and Law School: Strategies for Success for the 1-credit course introducing students to law school and the legal profession. The explanations about how to read and brief cases, synthesize cases, and create flowcharts were easy for undergraduate students to follow and employ. The IRAC and exam explanations will be helpful to students as they learn how to process information and think like a law school.

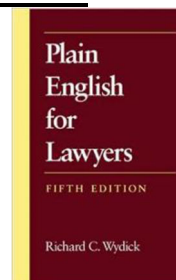
Top “You’re So Far Ahead” & “You Have to Learn Them” Pick



While it has served initially as a shock for college students who have become accustomed to MLA and APA citations, The Bluebook is a great choice to include in courses and to recommend to faculty members for use in their courses. Having used The Bluebook since 2007 in *Legal Analysis and Writing*, every September I hear the same comments from 1-L students: “I’m so far ahead of my classmates” and “I’m so glad I learned how to use this book.” Incorporating legal research in a course that then requires use of The Bluebook is one of the best things you can do to help your undergraduate students learn and appreciate research and evidence and prepare for law school.

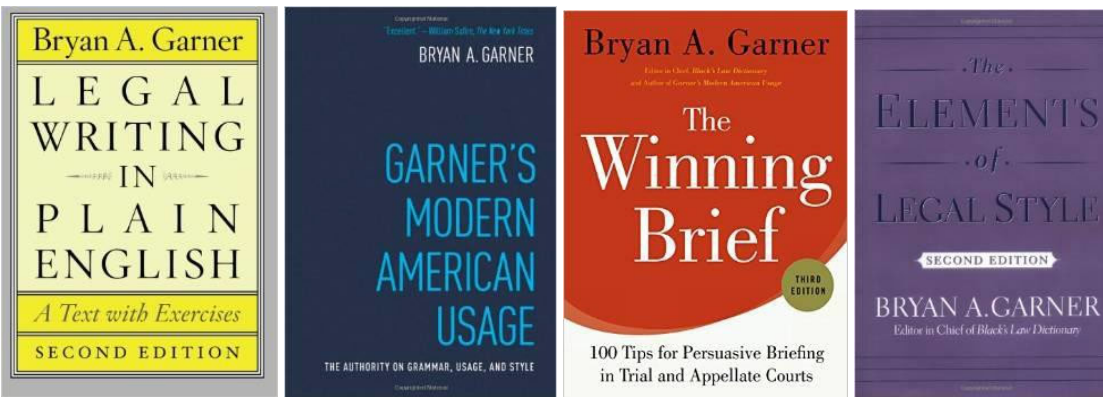
Top Pick for Reading the Summer Before Law School

Think legalese, run-ons, and word choice. Basically, think like a writing professor, and you’ll understand the value of this choice: Plain English for Lawyers by Robert C. Wydick. In January 2005, the Legal Writing Institute (LWI) gave Wydick its Golden Pen Award for this book. That award was well deserved.



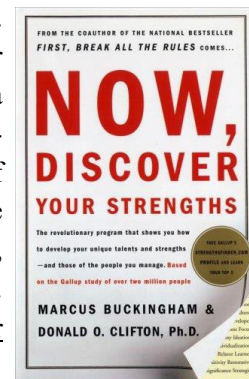
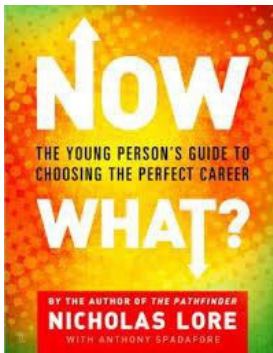
Top Pick of a Writer to Read Before, During & After Law School

Law is a writing profession so let’s encourage our advisees to use Brian Garner’s extensive set of books.



Top Personal & Professional Development Books

Using a professional development approach to law advising, I recommend incorporating Nicholas Lore's Now What?: The Young Person's Guide to Choosing the Perfect Career and Mark Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton's Now, Discover Your Strengths into your advising. In 2010, I adopted Now What? as a foundational book for the *Professional Development* 1-credit course in Villanova University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. In that course, students have used the book to help consider and formulate their paths, based on their individual strengths, values, and interests. I highly recommended the use of Now, Discover your Strengths in all courses and



conversations involving strengths. This book identifies the top 34 themes, enabling students to understand themselves better so they can make more well-thought-out and reasoned decisions about their future in the legal or other professions.

Top Websites to Get Started

The top websites to get started in law advising include the following:

- Law School Admission Council (LSAC) – <http://www.lsac.org/>
- American Association of Law Schools – <http://www.aals.org/prospective-law-students/law-jobs-information>
- American Bar Association – <http://www.americanbar.org/aba.html>
- Each Law School's website – ABA employment 509 Reports

- Boston Law School Locator – known as the **Top Pick for Information in One Chart!**
It shows students where they rank in terms of LSAT and GPA compared to admitted students
<http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/research/lawlocator.html>

Top Picks for Legal News

It reports on regulations, Supreme Court briefs, legal education, and includes surveys and lists. <http://www.nationallawjournal.com/>

THE NATIONAL
LAW JOURNAL

Top News Pick for Academics, Professionals & Students

This is a go-to site to learn about everyday news in the legal field.

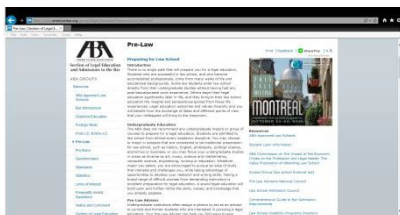
<http://jurist.org/student/>



Top Pick for Descriptions of Areas of Law

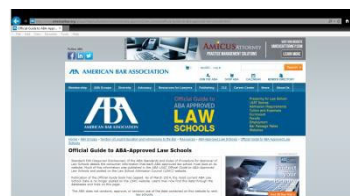
This is the top pick for finding out anything about the legal profession. I refer students to this website to learn the basics about areas of law.

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/pre_law.html



Top Pick for 1-Stop Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools

- American Bar Association –
http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/aba_approved_law_schools/official-guide-to-aba-approved-law-schools.html



Top Pick to Understand Law School Numbers



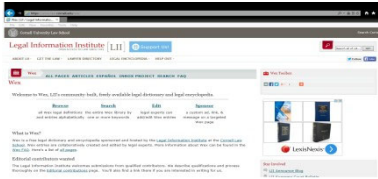
- This is one of the best resources for understanding law schools' employment statistics.



- [http://www.lawschooltransparency.com/who we are](http://www.lawschooltransparency.com/who-we-are)



Top Pick for Free Legal Research on the Web



- Cornell University Law School Legal Information Institute WEX is one of the best sources, outside of Academic Lexis, for students to use to conduct legal research. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex>

Top Pick for Blogs by Law Professors

- Lawyer Blog Network with 40 Legal Blogs
- Edited by over 100 law professors, deans, and lawyers
- Education, Environmental, Legal Writing, and more
- <http://www.lawprofessorblogs.com/>
- And <http://prawfsblawg.blogs.com/>



PrawfsBlawg

Top Picks for Best Practices in Legal Education

- Best Practices Blogs – <http://bestpracticeslegaled.albanylawblogs.org/>
- Touro Law Center's Journal of Experiential Learning - <http://www.tourolaw.edu/JEL/?pageid=938>

Top Pick for Blogs on Legal Careers and for Women

- Ms. JD's: "Women of the legal profession standing together, rising together"
- 100s of Blog articles and counting on careers and law school
- Featuring networking events around the country
- Connecting women in law like no other resource on the web
- <http://ms-jd.org/>



- Great ideas for pre-law advising
- <http://thegirlsguidetolawschool.com/>



Twitter

In addition to following law schools on Twitter, I recommend following individuals who work in law-related positions and law-related news organizations and nonprofits. Here are some of the top law-related Twitter handles to follow:

- @msjdorg – Ms. JD

- *@MichaelYelonsky – Dean and Professor of Law, Roger Williams University School of Law*
- *@JusticeWillett – Justice of the Texas Supreme Court*
- *@DanLinna – Daniel W. Linna, Jr. – Dean of Career Development & MSU Law Prof–tech enthusiast*
- *@sbyeager – Steve Yeager – Assistant Dean for Student Affairs @SMULawSchool – Inside Counsel – Corporate Counsel Externship Program*
- *@LukeBierman – Dean of Elon Law*
- *@LawSchoolFacts – feed of law-related news*
- *@NationalJurist – news & advice for pre-law and law students*
- *@thehill – policy and political news from The Hill*
- *@LoyolaLaw – Loyola Law Chicago – inside look at a law school*
- *@NatLawReview – National Law Review – news & analysis hourly*
- *@nwlrc – National Women’s Law Center*
- *@Lawyer_News_ - Curated feed of news for lawyers, attorneys, and legal professions*
- *@ABAesq – American Bar*
- *@AUwclENVLaw – WCL Environmental Law*
- *@NewLawyersPost – New Lawyers Post – News and tips for a new lawyer or solo practitioner to help build a career*
- *@YouTern - Internships*
- *@NALPorg – National Association of Legal Professionals*
- *@LawSchoolTools – Tools for Law School Success*

Next Steps: Use, Test, and Don’t Forget to Retweet

Information is best when used and tested. After reading the books, articles, and news items, follow author Clarence Day’s advice: “Information’s pretty thin stuff unless mixed with experience.” Have conversations on Twitter, respond to colleagues, retweet, and engage. *I look forward to connecting at @KarenMGraziano and on the #PreLawChat where I tweet about professional development.*

***The list above was presented as part of The Digital World presentation at the NAPLA Conference, June 2015.*

RESOURCES FOR PRE-LAW ADVISORS
Compiled by Scott Lucas, Professor of English & Pre-Law Advisor
The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES:

- 1) **Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) website: www.lsac.org.** A massive storehouse of information for pre-law advisors and law-school applicants. For candidates, it is the portal to registering for the LSAT, the CAS, and for accessing the flex app. For pre-law advisors and law-school candidates alike, it offers information about financial aid, law-school programs, data pertaining to law-school applications, and many resources and links. Designated pre-law advisors of colleges and universities should register with the site in order to gain access to data specific to their own institutions.
- 2) **SAPLA website: www.saplaonline.org.** The official website of the Southern Association of Pre-law Advisors, SAPLA Online offers information about SAPLA, its member schools, and its pre-law advising conferences. It also provides a page of links to resources useful to pre-law advisors.
- 3) **Pre-Law Advisors National Council website: www.planc.org.** PLANC is the leadership organization for all regional APLAs. Its resource page contains valuable links.
- 4) **American Bar Association (ABA) website: www.americanbar.org.** The ABA is the organization of legal professionals that sets standards for law schools and those employed in the legal community. The site supplies information about ABA policies and publications, and it also offers up-to-date news about the legal profession.
- 5) **National Association of Law Placement website: www.nalp.org.** This website offers detailed information about current employment and salary trends in the legal field.
- 6) **Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO) website: www.cleoscholars.com.** CLEO's website supplies a wealth of resources for assisting minority and low-income law-school applicants.
- 7) **Access Group website: www.accessgroup.org.** A website run by the non-profit Access Group that offers information and advice about financing a law-school education. Students and advisors alike will find this website useful.
- 8) **FastWeb website: www.fastweb.com.** A helpful scholarship search website that applicants can use to locate sources of free money for law school.
- 9) **Southern Association of Pre-law Advisors (SAPLA) Facebook page:**
www.facebook.com/SaplaOnline. Don't forget to check into the SAPLA Facebook page for the latest pre-law-advising news and information!
- 10) **The PLANC-managed Google Group (National Pre-Law Advisor listserv):**
 To join the group, send an email to planc-pre-law-advisors+subscribe@googlegroups.com. If you have any problems accessing the group, email directly at rholmes-leopold@cornellcollege.edu.
- 11) **The NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists.** Developed jointly by SAPLA's Gerald Wilson (Duke Univ.) and NAPLA's Edward Stern (Boston Univ.), this work provides comprehensive information about law-school academic and clinical programs, scholarships, and many, many other pieces of useful information. SAPLA members often find it the best tool for matching candidates with specialized interests in legal study with law schools specializing in those fields. This resource is provided by Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions and is distributed on a flash drive which is available for pick-up at annual advising conferences.

12) **Guide to LSAC Admission Services and Policies.** A comprehensive introduction to LSAC, its rules and policies, and its many recruitment, data, candidate, and educational services. This resource is accessible in the password-protected area of the LSAC website for pre-law advisors.

13) **ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools:** <http://officialguide.lsac.org>. An indispensable tool for pre-law advising. The *ABA-LSAC Official Guide* supplies information to students about the legal profession and the law-school application process. For both advisors and students, it provides key pieces of information for each ABA-approved school, including, for most schools, graphs showing the previous year's admissions decisions based on various combinations of GPA and LSAT scores.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

1) Law-school admissions officials: If you have a question specific to a single law school, don't hesitate to contact someone in that school's admissions office. He/she will be happy to help!

2) Your fellow members of SAPLA: Many of your fellow SAPLA members have extensive experience with the sort of unexpected issues, questions, and circumstances that you might encounter when advising pre-law students. Consider contacting some of the veteran advisors you have met at the SAPLA conference for practical advice and suggestions.

3) Law School Admissions Council Directory (LSAC, 2013). A handy listing of law-school deans, admissions officers, financial aid administrators, career-placement contacts, minority-affairs contacts, and LSAC staff. The directory covers the USA, Canada, and the University of Melbourne's law school in Australia. The Directory is sent each year to pre-law advisors who are registered as sole/coordinating pre-law advisors with LSAC.

Just Google: “Law schools that accept the GRE”

EPILOGUE

Since its founding in 1982, a number of people have worked hard to make SAPLA the strong organization that it is today. This epilogue attempts to recognize some of the leaders and cover some of the history of SAPLA. There are others, many others, who have made real contributions to SAPLA and their work should be acknowledged as well. It is the hope of the editor of this Handbook that readers of this section will communicate to him in the next year their comments and memories so that we might have a more complete history of SAPLA.

SAPLA PRESIDENTS***1982-2019***

JERRY PUBANTZ (SALEM COLLEGE) 1982-1983
GERALD WILSON (DUKE UNIVERSITY) 1983-1984
EUGENE RASOR (EMORY & HENRY) 1984-1985
RODNEY GRUNES (CENTENARY COLLEGE) 1985-1986
SAM MCKINSTRY (EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY) 1986-1987
HELEN S. RIDLEY (KENNESAW COLLEGE) 1987-1988
PAUL J. WEBER (UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE) 1988-1989
JANE ELZA (VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY) 1989-1990
MILTON READY (UNC ASHEVILLE) 1990-1991
ALEX STOESEN (GUILFORD COLLEGE) 1991-1993
THEODORE R. MOSCH (UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE-MARTIN) 1993-1994
DAVID G. MANN (COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON) 1994-1995
JOE G. CHANEY (MURRAY STATE UNIVERSITY) 1995-1997
ERWIN F. ERHARDT, III (THOMAS MORE COLLEGE, KY) 1997-1998
NIM BATCHELOR (ELON UNIVERSITY) 1998-1999
JOYCE HICKS (CENTRAL CAROLINA TECHNICAL COLLEGE) 1999-2000
RICHARD C. POLAND (FLAGLER COLLEGE) 2000-2002
J. HOWELL SMITH (WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY) 2002-2003
SHARON "NYOTA" TUCKER (ALBANY STATE UNIVERSITY) 2003-2005
MARY ALICE TETRO (NC STATE UNIVERSITY) 2006-2010
TYRA R. MASON (FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY) 2010
WENDY VONNEGUT (METHODIST UNIVERSITY) 2011-2013
RODIA VANCE (EMORY UNIVERSITY) 2013-2015
WENDY BOLTON MCMILLIAN (THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA) 2015-2017
SARAH MOCK (UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA) 2017-2019

HISTORICAL FRAGMENTS

(EDITOR'S NOTE)

Former Presidents of SAPLA have been contacted and asked to contribute to a brief historical article on SAPLA. The response was underwhelming. In the belief that SAPLA, as any worthwhile organization, should have a recorded history, I am now soliciting from any member of SAPLA recollections of the organization's past. What is printed below is truly "fragments" of our history, with some lost years, based on responses received. Special thanks to the leading founding parent, Jerry Pubantz, Salem College for his contributions on the origins of SAPLA.

Gerald Lee Wilson, Duke University

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ORIGINS

SAPLA was long in coming, both in terms of other pre-law organizations and in its own gestation. The history of pre-law associations had its origins in the Northeast and Midwest and spread to other parts of the nation. Yet, by the late 1970s no similar effort had been undertaken in the Southeast. Perhaps distance and the extraordinary variety of institutions in which pre-law advising was done in the South explained much about the delay. Additionally, there had been little opportunity for Southern pre-law advisers to work together and, consequently, to see the benefits of an organization dedicated to professional development in their increasingly complex field.

A relatively informal workshop in Atlanta hosted by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) for pre-law advisers during the fall of 1979 served as the launching pad for SAPLA's creation. Beyond the purposes of the session, the LSAC gathering provided the opportunity for many pre-law advisers who had been working in isolation to meet, to share concerns, and to talk about collective efforts that could be made toward continuing cooperation and professional learning. Rather soon after the workshop a network of corresponding pre-law advisers became the nucleus of an Organizing Committee for the Southeastern Association of Pre-Law Advisors.

An early letter to all southeastern pre-law advisers shortly after that LSAC conference demonstrated the clear need among those working in colleges and universities for an association which could provide vital information and insight into the developing discipline of pre-law advising. The letter requested from those interested a dues payment of \$10 for the formational work of an association. In staggering numbers checks flowed in to an organization that did not yet exist, had no officers, had no constitution, and could guarantee little in the way of services.

In spite of this overwhelming early interest in what was then called "SAPLA", there were many issues and questions to be resolved before the organization could be guaranteed a successful beginning. Where to meet? How to overcome the problem of distances? What to include in the work of the association? How to develop an appropriate relationship with regional law schools and LSAC? How to finance annual meetings and other activities? All of these had to be tackled. An effort to move forward with a summer meeting of the full membership at Salem College in 1980 came to naught because few of these matters had been meaningfully addressed. It seemed that, even with the demonstrated interest, little would come of the effort unless a coordinated planning process was put in place.

In the wake of the Salem College Project failure an Organizing Committee was established under the leadership of Jerry Pubantz to address the apparent obstacles to SAPLA's formation. If ever proof was needed that the success of an organization largely depends on the hard work of talented people, the Organizing Committee membership would be sufficient to make the point. Several future SAPLA Presidents, Newsletter Editors, Program Chairs, and the first Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC)

Chair came out of that original group. The initial members were George Fouke (St. Andrews), Gerald Wilson (Duke), Jerry Pubantz (Salem), Sam McKinstry (East Tennessee State), Eugene Rasor (Emory and Henry), and Dorothy Harrell (Lambuth). The membership was soon augmented with the addition of skilled pre-law advisers such as Helen Ridley (Kennesaw State), Rodney Grunes (Rhodes), and Jane Elza (Valdosta State).

Two immediate decisions were made by the Committee. The first was to initiate a newsletter, the first issue of which was published in January 1981. Second, the Committee cajoled the Law School Admission Council into convening another Atlanta workshop in the fall of that year at which the organizational issues could be put before a large body of pre-law advisers. Strong support was forthcoming at that meeting to go forward with the formal creation of SAPLA.

In spite of the difficulties it would raise for travel, meetings, and communication, the Organizing Committee decided to define "Southeastern" as broadly as geography would allow. In later years SAPLA would reaffirm this decision by changing its name to the "Southern" Association. Pre-law advisers and law schools representatives from Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana were eligible for membership. The geographic breadth of the organization would necessitate planning conference sites with great care, and grappling with issues of diversity far greater than could be found in other parts of the country. This decision also provided SAPLA with a membership based and a broad collective perspective which could energize the organization for years to come.

SAPLA was the first pre-law association to welcome membership by Law School Admissions Representatives, to meet on law school campuses, and to encourage active Board and Committee participation by its law school members. It also welcomed LSAC assistance in programming, meeting preparation, and on-going professional activities. The organization also encouraged participation by LSAT Preparation representatives and other individuals with a professional interest in pre-law advising. Inclusion was to be the watchword for SAPLA on matters of membership and participation.

Cooperation throughout the pre-law community, geographic breadth and diversity, and professional development were the hallmarks of the early formation of SAPLA. They infused the early thinking and activities of the organization. They guided initial policy decisions and gave SAPLA its unique character for years to come.

Jerry Pubantz (Salem College) 1982-83

Usually the first year of an organization is given over to bold initiatives which are the material manifestation of the underlying motivations for its existence. SAPLA was the exception to this rule. Three year's of prior work by the Organizing Committee, the already-existing publication record of the Newsletter, and the happy coordination with the Law School Admission Council for the Association's first official meeting in Fall 1982 meant that SAPLA was a strong, on-going organization from its beginning. The inaugural meeting was held November 12-13 at the Sheraton Airport Hotel in Atlanta. It would be the last time SAPLA would meet some other place than on a Law School campus. The Constitution was approved with its novel incorporation of Law School representatives among the organization's members. Having brought together the last region of the country formally to organize pre-law pre-law advisers, SAPLA directed a vigorous membership drive during its first year. It also sought increased collaboration among all of the pre-law advisers associations. With SAPLA's active encouragement, LSAC invited the officers of the regional associations to Newtown, Pennsylvania for a discussion of national cooperation in pre-law advising. Those discussions ultimately led to the formation of the Pre-Law Association National Council (PLANC). Finally, SAPLA prepared for its first meeting in collaboration with a distinguished southeastern law school, in this case Emory University.

Gerald Wilson (Duke University) 1983-84

Building on the success of the first year, three initiatives were undertaken. First, a la Mondale, (this was an election year), dues were raised. Second, SAPLA, committed to the idea of more cooperation among the APLA's, played a leading role in the founding of PLANC, and Gerald Wilson was elected as the first PLANC Chair, a position he held from 1985-1989. Third, the initial version of the SAPLA Handbook, in cooperation with NAPLA was published. The October Conference held in Atlanta, with Georgia State University College of Law, was highlighted by a welcoming address by then-Mayor, Andrew Young. Mayor Young spent over an hour responding to our questions, mostly about the upcoming national election.

Paul J. Weber (University of Louisville) 1988-1989

One of the major developments of the 1989 year was that the annual conference of SAPLA was held jointly with SWAPLA in New Orleans. The success of this joint venture led to further cooperation among the APLAs and potentially to a pattern of meetings once every four years with SWAPLA.

Alex Stoesen (Guilford College) 1991-93

By 1991 SAPLA had changed its name to Southern from Southeastern in order to describe its territory more accurately. In addition, SAPLA continued to be the most democratic of all the APLAs with its demonstrated ability to change officers on a yearly basis, to cooperate fully with the law schools, and to make continuing efforts to reach out to every possible advisor we could find. We have always worked hard to find and include advisors from historically black colleges. All of this assured continuity and a membership interested in the future of SAPLA. The only variation in the succession pattern came when the 1992 national meeting in New Orleans required me to serve two years as president. I worried about the effect of the national meeting on SAPLA, but things turned out well, except for a few financial problems that were soon resolved. At the national meeting I made a presentation about SAPLA and made a point of advertising our outstanding publications which are prepared by Gerald Wilson. The supply we brought to New Orleans quickly sold out. I took that opportunity to point out that without Gerald's efforts there would have been no national conference. Among the problems I faced was the need to rewrite our by-laws. A committee made up of David Mann, Giles Kennedy and Bob Gibson worked on this for a year. The revisions were approved at the Louisville meeting. Thanks to the generosity of the law schools and prep organizations, and especially the work of Melanie Nutt, our finances continue to be on a sound basis. I rediscovered the generosity of the law schools and others when, as president, it fell to me for a second time in 1992, to raise money for our annual meeting after the second vice president resigned. By 1991 we had a clear pattern for our meetings, which enabled new advisors to find the sessions they could use, and for "seasoned" advisors to attend sessions in line with their needs. The programs I helped to develop were supported by William and Mary and the University of Louisville. Faye Shealy and Mary Jo White were the key figures in making these a success. When I think about pre-law advising 29 years ago when I first became an advisor, and the situation today, I feel especially fortunate to have been a part of making the process easier for those who assume this important work now.

Theodore R. Mosch (University of Tennessee-Martin) 1993-94

The annual meeting was held 1-2 October at the Wake Forest School of Law, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Some of the issues prominent during this period include: 1. membership enhancement. How can the organization get more members, especially from the smaller schools? Volunteers in the past had contacted all schools in their respective states; however, this did not bring a heavy response. 2. The tight job market in law and the need to advise pre-law students about alternative career field. This is a continuing issue. 3. The role of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). The weight placed by some schools on this instrument is a matter of continuing concern. And also the issue of test preparation. More and more students are taking the professional prep courses, which costs a considerable amount of money. 4. The role of the pre-law advisor on a campus, and the need for adequate support from one's department and administration. 5. Law School Forums and the possible role of pre-law advisers of these forums. The advisers would assist students. This was tried previously and proved very successful.

Erwin Erhardt (Thomas More College) 1997-98

Dr. Erhardt became a member of SAPLA in 1990. From 1995-1996 he served as Treasurer. During his year as Treasurer, he raised more money for the SAPLA's annual conference than previously been attained. As Vice-President, from 1996-1996, Dr. Erhardt felt he made his most valuable contribution. As program chair for that year's conference, he worked diligently with Mitzi Davis and her staff at Samford University to put together a very successful program. That year featured a visit to Birmingham's Civil Rights Institute and a luncheon visit and presentation by Judge Ivan R. L. Lemelle, then U.S. Magistrate of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. From 1997-98, Dr. Erhardt served as President of SAPLA. During his term as President, he helped coordinate the SAPLA/SWAPLA joint conference in New Orleans in October of 1998. Following his Presidency, Dr. Erhardt remained a member of the SAPLA Board until 2004. After serving as a Board member for a decade, he felt it was time to step aside and allow others to offer their service to SAPLA. Dr. Erhardt has many fond memories of his years in SAPLA—from the professional knowledge gained—to the many friendships developed over the years. Today he serves as an Associate Professor—Educator in the Department of Economics and as the Faculty Pre-Law Liaison at the University of Cincinnati.

Richard Poland (Flagler College) 2000-2002

Judge Poland was elected SAPLA President during a period where the SAPLA board was attempting to rebuild its membership base. On November 14-16, 2000 PLANC held the 3rd National Conference for Pre-Law Advisors in San Diego, California. Fifty-four SAPLA pre-law advisors attended this conference. On June 13-16, 2001, the first SAPLA/NAPLA joint conference was held in Williamsburg, Virginia, hosted by William and Mary College. Thirty-three SAPLA and 66 NAPLA pre-law advisors attended this conference. On November 14-16, 2002, SAPLA held its 20th Anniversary Conference in Atlanta Georgia, hosted by Emory University and Georgia State University. Again, more than forty SAPLA pre-law advisors attended this conference. The goal of membership enhancement had been clearly achieved by the SAPLA Board and Officers.

Mary Alice Tetro, (North Carolina State University) 2006-2010

Editor's note: (Because of a change in the SAPLA constitution and a National Conference in 2008, SAPLA was privileged to have Mary as its President for four years.)

To review what has happened over the now almost eight years our organization has coordinated or participated in conferences annually, at the local and national level. In Atlanta with if I recall Emory (2002), Duke Law in Durham (2003), Boston (2004), the tragedy of Katrina altered our plans with SWAPLA for a joint conference in New Orleans (2005), but we were able to coordinate with St. Thomas in Miami, Florida

(2006), Chapel Hill and Durham with the two North Carolina public institutions one a Historically Black Institution (HBCU) a first for SAPLA, The University of North Carolina and North Carolina Central, Schools of Law (2007), Law Vegas (2008), and this summer a joint conference with NAPLA in Durham with Duke Law as our sponsor. Each of these opportunities has afforded me even more chances to “stretch” what I knew, and develop new sets of skills that are useful in all that I do. The organization invested in web support and a new website was created, by Matthew Rust from NC State.

Additionally, to strengthen the organization, and better develop the leadership team it was decided that term limits needed to run from a one year term to two years. There were many reasons for this plan the most practical were to allow each officer to get a stronger sense of the required duties, to become involved with the PLANC board, develop relationships with each other and those in the profession, and create a stronger sense of continuity. We created the by-law change and this was passed in 2006 while we were in Miami.

The Executive Committee had always worked closely to coordinate our conferences, but had not scheduled annual meetings consistently during a year we were not hosting a conference. This past fall the board elected to develop a more strategic pattern of annual meetings in order to stay better connected and we now have held board meetings twice a year, once in Durham to plan with NAPLA for the joint conference and the other in Philadelphia when the PLANC Board met in March. We also have included within this structure an additional law school representative, to enhance our perspectives and to create a broader support network.

Due to the work of my father in the Foreign Service I had to move often in the first 20 years of my life, but even with all that travelling I never enjoyed the part where we had to say “Goodbye”, so I don’t do it very well. It is easier this time because I am changing roles and not leaving. For those who know me well they would say “she’s crazy for things Italian!” having been fortunate to spend almost 8 years in that country over my life, so will use the Italian phrase, “*Auguri, ciao, e ci vediamo*” translation, “Best Wishes, goodbye and we will see one another.”

Wendy Vonnegut (Methodist University) 2011-2013

One word could describe my time as President of SAPLA “incredible.” I have served on the Board for SAPLA for the past seven years as Second Vice President, First Vice President and as President. I enjoyed every moment. I worked with the best board members you could ask for. The SAPLA Board is truly a team that supports each other. The diversity of the board is what keeps the organization growing and all opinions are valued. During my time as President I served as Program Chair for the PLANC Conference and the SAPLA Board provided me with the support that made the conference such a success. As a Pre-law advisor, being President provided me with the opportunity to meet other advisors and Law School Admissions personnel that I otherwise would not have met. Being President was an honor and a privilege. I am glad that I have been a part of the history of SAPLA.

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The question is, of course whither SAPLA? Though, on the one hand, the existence of organizations for pre-law advisors has enhanced their skills, still pre-law advising remains a step-child or non-existent in many academic institutions. This fact, along with tighter budgets in many education institutions, has led to declining attendance at annual conferences. Perhaps SAPLA can again engage in a massive effort to inform college administrators about the need for capable pre-law advising.

SAPLA continues to be an active force in PLANC as evidenced by the fact Wendy Vonnegut (Methodist University) is now serving as chair-elect and reaches out in a cooperative spirit to the other APLA's. The 2010 join conference with NAPLA at Duke University is an example of this cooperation and

further joint conferences with other APLAs are under consideration. It is our hope that continued cooperation and the search for new initiatives will bear fruit in the coming decade.

Rodia Vance (Emory University) 2013-2015

Rodia Vance's presidency began with the 2013 SAPLA Conference, which was held in Atlanta, GA. Rodia was the Conference Co-Chair for the meeting, and began her term at its conclusion on Friday, November 1, 2013. Spending her first day as President in her first PLANC Board meeting, which was held in Atlanta in conjunction with the SAPLA conference, Rodia began to line up certain priorities for her term. The 2013 conference has proven to be successful in re-engaging the organization membership and reasserting its foundation as a cohesive organization. With a solidified membership base, Rodia decided on three focus areas for her term: (1) Improved communications between members and the Board, (2) Improved outreach to HBCU/HACU/TCU advisors in the SAPLA region, and (3) Member development and law school partnerships. These goals were ambitious, to say the least. But, with the support of an active Board, SAPLA was able to make inroads on all three of these areas during Rodia's presidency. Tangible results of Rodia's term include the following:

1. *Creation of the first-ever SAPLA email listserv* – This listserv allowed SAPLA members to communicate with each other in a way not previously possible by real-time sharing of information and questions. The Board was also able to use the listserv to do marketing for conferences, beginning in 2015.
2. *Preliminary development of an HBCU/HACU/TCU Advisor Directory* – While not completed at the conclusion of Rodia's term, this resource was in development for future use by SAPLA's board. It was designed to be a tool for better outreach to and tracking of HBCU/HACU/TCU advisors, due to high levels of turnover at these institutions.
3. *Overhaul of SAPLA's Constitution and Bylaws* – Recognizing that SAPLA's Constitution had not been reviewed in nearly a decade, Rodia led the initiative to review the Constitution and make changes as needed to clarify points of confusion and address new arising issues in the field of pre-law advising, such as the proliferation of commercial pre-law advisors. The review was completed in the summer of 2015, and the membership voted on the changes at the fall 2015 SAPLA Conference, which was held in Richmond, VA.

A couple of initiatives that were not achieved during Rodia's presidency include development of a comprehensive webinar series for professional development of advisors and redesign of the SAPLA website. Both of these ideas will drive added value to the organization and its membership as a whole. Hopefully, they will be taken up by SAPLA's next President.

Wendy Bolton McMillian (The University of Alabama) 2015-2017

I have had the privilege of being SAPLA President at an exciting time in the pre-law advising profession. As pre-law advisors in the changing environment of law school admissions, our students' reasons for attending law school for the most part are changing, too. The focus has shifted to helping students who want to serve look at strong law schools that better fit them and their goals. In this changing landscape, pre-law advisors have embraced building lasting relationships with our colleagues in law school admissions.

While developing good rapport has always been important, relationships have become more the foundation of pre-law advising programs. I have co-chaired three back-to-back SAPLA conferences as well as serving on the PLANC Board during the 2016 PLANC Conference in Chicago, IL. In each of these conferences, the themes have centered around developing relationships. The information sharing is still vitally important, but it is the interaction and

networking opportunities that have really been the driving force at these conferences; the opportunities to strengthen relationships.

We have increased outreach to pre-law advisors in the SAPLA region, inviting new pre-law advisors to join as well as encouraging members to be more engaged. We have continued to share ideas and best practices through our conferences and listserv. Coming off of the success and energy of our 2013 Atlanta conference and our 2014 New Orleans Joint Conference with SWAPLA, the SAPLA Board decided to continue that momentum having a third back-to-back SAPLA Conference in 2015 in Richmond, VA during a PLANC Conference year. With the success of the Richmond conference, SAPLA can expect to continue assembling every year with a focus on supporting all of our members.

Serving on the SAPLA Board and as SAPLA President has been one of the most important things I have done in my career. The connections built through SAPLA and with the SAPLA Board members have been invaluable and very special to me, relationships I will cherish always. Thank you for allowing me to be part of this community with you.