



ALLEGHENY
COLLEGE

Pre-Legal Studies HANDBOOK

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I. PRE-LEGAL STUDIES AT ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Year after year, Allegheny graduates distinguish themselves in their law school studies and beyond. The academic rigor, experiential learning opportunities, and in-depth research experiences more than equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in law school.

Like most universities and colleges in the United States, Allegheny College does not offer a major specifically called “pre-law” because law schools do not require any specific major for admission. Instead, law schools value skills over a specific major and recommend completing precisely the kind of broad-based curriculum featured at Allegheny. Prospective law students should develop skills such as:

- The ability to handle abstract ideas;
- Strong analytical and reasoning skills;
- Writing and speaking ability;
- Appreciation of the values of civilization.

Select courses, a major, internships, and extracurricular activities according to personal interests and strengths. This will help to prepare you effectively for a legal education or engage in other services that call for the use of law-related skills; and be mindful to seek educational, extra-curricular and life experiences that will assist you in developing those attributes.

The following are the key components of any Allegheny academic program that help prepare you for success in legal studies and your future legal career:

- **Highly developed communication skills:** Professional schools always seek evidence of writing, reading and discussion skills (they expect at least one year of English). All Allegheny students take a sequence of three First-year/Sophomore seminars emphasizing written and oral communications skills, two in the first year and one in the sophomore year. Further study in English can be pursued in electives, minors and majors. Throughout the Allegheny years—especially the first year—small classes and an active learning dynamic develop discussion skills.
- **Breadth of study:** Divisional Studies ensure that all students are introduced to the principal divisions of knowledge—the Humanities, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. The major is chosen from one division, the minor from a second division, and at least two courses from the third division. This develops a breadth of understanding that is valued highly by law schools.
- **Depth of study: the major:** All Allegheny majors develop skills for in-depth study that are crucial in professional school—that is, for acquiring, synthesizing,

applying and communicating information. Allegheny students can also double major or design their own majors. While most pre-law students at Allegheny major in political science, history, or English, more and more students outside of these disciplines are applying to law school each year.

- **Law related courses:** Courses pertaining to the law and legal history can be found in all of Allegheny's curricular divisions. Some recent examples:
 - First Seminars: Environmental Politics, U.S. Politics and the Constitution, Controversial Legal Issues
 - Communication Arts: Public Address, Rhetoric and Society
 - Environmental Science: Environmental Regulation and the State, Law and the Environment
 - History: The Western Tradition of Justice and the Law, History of Political Crime and Political Justice, Great Trials in History, English Common Law
 - Philosophy: Ethics and Community
 - Political Science: Law and Society, U.S. Constitution, Civil Rights and Liberties, Women and the Law
 - International Studies: Introduction to International Studies, World Politics

LAW & POLICY PROGRAM

The Law & Policy Program is a concentration that blends students' academic goals and preparation in international and domestic law and policy with on-going opportunities in career education, internships, study away, civic learning, and community programming.

The program provides opportunities for students to explore law and policy from theory to practice. Through integrated courses and collaborative learning experiences including campus and community workshops, lectures, and internship opportunities, students are able to engage public policy and learn how policies emerge, are implemented, evaluated, and changed.

In collaboration with the Political Science Department, the Law & Policy Program integrates students' academic coursework with issues, activities, and opportunities for pre-professional development in areas of great public importance.

To learn more visit www.allegheny.edu/lawandpolicy or contact:

Brain Harward
Robert G. Seddig Chair in Law and Policy;
and Director, Center for Political Participation
bharward@allegheny.edu

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Campus involvement and civic engagement are great ways to enhance your resume and develop skills that law schools find valuable including leadership, time management, and communication. Below is a list of political/activism organizations that pre-law students may find of interest; however, with over 100 active organizations on-campus we encourage you to join an organization that most appeals to you. A full list of active organizations, including contact information, can be found on the Student Leadership & Involvement webpage.

<https://sites.allegheny.edu/studentinvolvement/student-organizations/>

Pre-Law Club

Allegheny College Socialists

Green Students of Color Society

Student Alliance for Prison Reform

Why Not Us?

Student Government Association

College Democrats

College Republicans

Students for Environmental Action

ADVISING SERVICES

Pre-law advising services complement the academic advising received in the department of your major. Services provided by the pre-law advisor include one-on-one advising appointments, LSAT preparation materials, regional law school tours, on-campus presentations from law school admissions representatives, summer internship search assistance, and law-school application support.

For an advising appointment, contact:

Kristin Black

Associate Director of Career Education and Pre-Law Advisor

kblack@allegheny.edu

814-332-2381

II. LEGAL CAREERS

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A LAWYER?

A lawyer serves as an advocate for their client within the realm of the law. The daily work of a lawyer may include legal research, client meetings, and preparation of legal correspondence. The bulk of a lawyer's work involves research and writing; being adept at both is critical to this job. In addition, there is a substantial amount of reading and digestion of information involved with the role. In order to practice law in the U.S., (for those individuals who attend law school in the U.S.) a J.D. degree is required as well as passing the Bar examination in the state in which an individual plans to practice.

WHAT ARE THE VALUED SKILLS OF LAWYERS?

According to the Law School Admission Council, the valued skills lawyers should possess include:

- **Reading and Listening**- Lawyers must be able to take in a great deal of information, often on topics about which they are unfamiliar.
- **Analyzing**- Lawyers must be able to determine the fundamental elements of problems and spend much time discerning the nature and significance of the many issues in a particular problem.
- **Synthesizing**- Lawyers must have the ability to organize large amounts of material in a meaningful, focused, and cogent manner.
- **Advocating**- As an advocate, the lawyer's role is to represent his or her client's particular point of view and interests as vigorously as possible.
- **Counseling**- Lawyers also spend a good deal of their time giving clients legal advice.
- **Writing and Speaking**- Whether in the courtroom or the law office, lawyers must be effective communicators with the ability to translate thoughts and opinions into clear and precise English.
- **Negotiating**- One of a lawyer's primary roles is reconciling divergent interests and opinions. When the parties to a proposed transaction disagree, the lawyer, acting as a facilitator, may be able to help them negotiate to a common ground.

LITIGATION vs TRANSACTIONAL LEGAL WORK

Within the profession, there are numerous practice areas as well as different types of law offices. Similar to science where one can choose a clinical or research path, within law, there are two primary categories of practices: litigation (trial work) and transactional.

A litigator's work is to settle a dispute which may be civil or criminal. The lawyer manages all phases of the trial process which includes: investigation, pleadings and discovery to pre-trial, trial, settlement and appeal. The work may involve researching legal questions, drafting

swaying arguments, preparing for and taking deposition, organizing for trial and negotiating settlements. A litigator may have more of an opportunity to present their case in the courtroom than a transactional lawyer; however, this is not always the case. The vast majority of cases are settled outside the courtroom.

Transactional practice involves researching, coordinating and reviewing documents that may join individuals and companies such as a contract for a corporate merger, establishing a business or the closing documents needed to purchase a condominium.

Litigators and transactional attorneys work across speciality areas and in a variety of settings – law firms, private business, government, public interest organizations, the judiciary, academia, or as a solo practitioner.

LAW PRACTICE SETTINGS

Private Practice

Includes all positions with a law firm, including solo practitioner, associate, law clerk, paralegal and administrative or support staff. The work of a firm may include: Appellate Law, Bankruptcy Law, Civil Rights Law, Criminal Law, Family Law, Environmental Law, Labor and Employment, Intellectual Property Law, Products Liability, Securities Law, Tax Law, to name just a few.

Public Interest

Includes positions funded by legal services, pro-bono work and other civil, legal and indigent services, as well as positions with non-profit advocacy or cause-related organizations. The cases and causes are significant to the general public. Lawyer services in this sector may include working with disadvantaged populations, or public policy that may affect the population at large.

Government

Includes all levels and branches of government. This encompasses public defender, prosecutor positions, positions with the military state or local transit authorities, congressional committees, law enforcement and divisions of social service.

Judicial Clerkships

Recent law school graduates may choose to pursue a one or two year appointment clerking for a judge on the federal, state or local level. In some cases at the state and local level, clerkships may be a permanent positions. Judicial clerkships are quite prestigious and competitive, allowing candidates to make direct contributions in the judicial decision-making process.

Business & Industry

Includes positions in companies and organizations such as accounting firms, insurance companies, banking/ finance institutions, Fortune 500 corporations, private hospitals, retail establishments, consulting and public realty firms, political campaigns, trade associations and labor unions, to name a few. Lawyers within this environment are referred to as 'in house' counsel. The business or organization is the primary client and the work is done on behalf of this employer. Typically these positions are available to attorneys with 3-5 years of prior experience in a private or public setting.

Academia

Includes work as a law professor, law librarian, administrator or faculty member in higher education or other academic settings. Within an academic setting there are positions directly related to legal work such as teaching law or being part of a university's legal staff within a Risk Management department or General Counsel office. Additionally, administrative positions may include admissions work, career services, financial aid, and student affairs/services, as well as serving as a dean or other university leadership position.

LEGAL SPECIALTIES *(not a comprehensive list)*

Administrative Law	Personal Injury Law
Family Law	Criminal Law
Health Care Law	Property Law
Appellate Law	Cyberspace Law
Immigration Law	Real Estate Law
Arbitration & Mediation Insurance Law	Disability Law
Banking & Commercial Finance Law	Regulatory Law
Intellectual Property Law	Elder Law
Business Law International Law	Entertainment, Arts & Sports Law
Child Advocacy Labor & Employment Law	Securities Law
Civil Litigation Medical Malpractice Civil Rights Law	Tax Law
Military Law	Environmental Law
Corporate Practice Law	Telecommunications Law
Privacy Law	E-commerce Law
Constitutional Law	Trusts and Estates Law

WORK SETTINGS WITHIN THE LAW

- Law Firms (varying sizes)
- Businesses & Corporations
- Academic Institutions
- Associations (professional & trade)
- Non-profit Organizations
- Public Interest Organizations
- Courts
- Bar Associations
- Government (municipal, county, state, and federal within various government branches)
- Lobbying Firms

NON-TRADITIONAL WORK SETTINGS

While working as a “practicing” attorney tends to be a common career path for law school graduates, there are also a variety of non-traditional ways to use a law degree. Some attorneys decide not to practice law in the traditional sense either from the onset of their career or at some point thereafter. “Nontraditional” legal jobs can be found in nearly any industry.

Academia	Insurance & Risk Management
Alternative Dispute Resolution	International Affairs
Bar Associations	Law Firm Recruiting
Banks	Legal & Non-Legal Search Firms
Business (including Executive Positions in many fields)	Legal/Professional Consulting
Courts	Legislative/Government Affairs
Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement Litigation	Management/Support
Entrepreneurship	Media, Arts and Entertainment
Foundations and Nonprofit Organizations	Politics
Healthcare	Trade and Investment
Human Resources	Writing and Editing

JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL (JAG) CORPS

The U.S. Judge Advocate General's Corps is a government organization that operates like a court system. Its practitioners, referred to as Judge Advocates, are licensed attorneys concerned with military justice and military law. Only the chief attorney within each branch of the military is referred to as the Judge Advocate General; however, individual JAG Corps officers are colloquially known as JAGs.

Advocates are often tasked with representing Soldiers during courts-martial, but the JAG Corps actually encompasses a wide range of legal disciplines, including civil litigation, tort claims, labor law, and international law. The areas of practice available to Judge Advocates rivals what most civilian law schools and firms provide, which makes the JAG Corps an excellent venue for young attorneys to gain experience in a competitive legal field. Judge Advocates have the option of serving as full-time legal practitioners on active duty, or as members of the U.S. Army Reserve. Being a part of the JAG Corps offers you the opportunity to serve the United States as a member of the Judicial Branch and a champion of justice.

Commissioned officers generally enter the Military with a four-year college degree or greater. In certain cases, enlisted service members can advance and transition to officers during the course of their military career as well. Officers are generally employed in management roles or highly specialized fields that require professional degrees (e.g., doctors, lawyers and chaplains).

If you're interested in serving as an officer, you have five options:

- Attend a senior military college or service academy
- Enroll at a traditional college or university with a Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program
 - ROTC programs provide officer training for students during college in exchange for scholarship money. In return, the students commit to serving for a set period of time after graduation.
 - Allegheny students interested in JAG should consider joining the ROTC club, in conjunction with Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, to start building the credentials necessary to enter Officer Candidate School after graduation and before entering law school. Contact the ROTC club faculty advisor for more information:

Professor Alexis Hart
Associate Professor and Director of Writing
ahart@allegheny.edu

- Attend Officer Candidate School (OCS) after graduating from college
 - After completing a four-year degree, graduates may enroll in OCS. This is also known as Officer Training School (OTS) in the Air Force. OCS/OTS varies in length between Services, but generally lasts 9 to 17 weeks.
 - The Marine Corps Platoon Leaders Course (PLC) is another alternative. It offers college students the opportunity to become commissioned officers in the United States Marine Corps.
 - In each program, students can expect courses that focus on military subjects, physical training and leadership skills.
- Receive a direct commission after earning a professional degree.
 - Direct Commission Officers (DCOs) are civilians who have special skills needed for military operations. These are usually individuals who have earned professional degrees in fields such as medicine, law, religious studies, engineering or intelligence. Groups such as the JAG Corps, Chaplain Corps and Medical Corps frequently employ DCOs.
- Advance through the enlisted ranks and then complete officer training.

Review the qualifications and requirements for entrance into JAG Corps by military branch:

- Marines: <https://www.marines.com/becoming-a-marine/officer/marine-corps-law-program.html>
- Army: <https://www.goarmy.com/jag.html>
- Air Force: <https://bit.ly/2UCyCLj>
- Navy: <https://www.navy.com/careers/attorney-legal-support>
- Coast Guard: <https://www.uscg.mil/resources/legal/>

III. DIVERSITY IN LAW SCHOOL

LAW SCHOOL ADMISSION COUNCIL RESOURCES

“Access to justice is essential for a democratic society, and diversity in the legal profession increases the likelihood of access for people from an increasingly diverse population. Law school diversity enables individuals from a wide range of backgrounds to add their perspectives to the greater legal community. The profession needs lawyers who look just like you, and who share your life experiences. Race or ethnicity, LGBTQ status, and disability are just some of the backgrounds that contribute to the diversity important in law school and the legal profession. Diversity of age, geographic region, socioeconomic status, and nationality also add to a richer experience in the law school classroom for all students.” Law School Admission Council

- **Diversity in Law School main page:**
<https://www.lzac.org/discover-law/diversity-law-school>
- **Accommodations for Test Takers with Disabilities**
<https://www.lzac.org/lzat/lzac-policy-accommodations-test-takers-disabilities>
- **Fee Waivers for the LSAT & Credential Assembly Service**
<https://www.lzac.org/lzat/lzat-dates-deadlines-score-release-dates/lzat-cas-fees-and-refunds/fee-waivers-lsat-credential>

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Racial/Ethnic Diversity

- **National Black Pre-Law Conference**
<https://blackprelawconference.org/#home>
- **Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)**
<https://cleoinc.org/>
- **National Black Law Student Association**
<https://www.nblsa.org/>
- **Hispanic National Bar Association**
<https://hnba.com/>
- **Latino Justice PRLDEF: LAWbound** is a program to help Latino students prep for law school (offered winter and summer)
<https://www.latinojustice.org/en/lawbound>
- **National Native American Bar Association:**
<https://www.nativeamericanbar.org/>
- **American Indian Law Center:** Offers a Pre-Law Summer Institute for American Indians and Alaska Natives
<https://www.aile-inc.org/>
- **National Asian Pacific American Bar Association**

<https://www.napaba.org/>

- **Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO):** a non-profit organization that serves low-income and minority pre-law students

<https://www.seo-usa.org/our-programs/>

- **AccessLex:** Lex Scholars are a diversity pipeline initiative aimed at learning more about effective methods for increasing law school diversity by providing more than 1,200 aspiring lawyers with resources and guidance to pursue their goal of attending law school.

<https://www.accesslex.org/tools-and-resources/lexscholars-accesslex>

LGBTQ+

- **LGBT Bar Association**

<https://lgbtbar.org/>

- **Minority Corporate Counsel Association**

<https://www.mcca.com/>

- **National Association for Law Placement, LGBTQ Resources**

<https://www.nalp.org/lgbtqresources>

- **LGBT Bar's State & Local Affiliate Organizations**

<https://lgbtbar.org/programs/bar-affiliates/>

Individuals with Disabilities

- **American Bar Association, Commission on Disability Rights**

<https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/disabilityrights/>

- **The Disability Rights Bar Association**

<http://disabilityrights-law.org/>

- **The National Disabled Law Students Association**

<https://ndlsa.org/>

- **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Bar Association**

<http://www.deafbar.org/>

- **National Association of Blind Lawyers**

<http://www.blindlawyers.net/>

- **Washington Attorneys with Disabilities Association**

<https://wadaweb.org/>

IV. APPLYING TO LAW SCHOOL

The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) facilitates the law school admissions process and is made up of American Bar Association (ABA) accredited law schools. Everything you need to know about law school admissions and access to online applications is available on the LSAC website.

Credential Assembly Service (CAS) evaluates, organizes, analyzes and summarizes your academic information and reports this information along with your school specific application, undergraduate transcripts, LSAT score(s), and letters of recommendation to the law schools you are applying to.

- CAS Registration Fee: \$195
- Law School Report: \$45/per report

The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) is a standardized test designed to evaluate the academic ability of applicants. LSAC member schools require the LSAT and use it as part of their evaluation process. It is advisable to take the test the summer before your senior year and/or the beginning of your senior year. This will enable you to submit your applications well in advance of deadlines, which will receive a more favorable reading at most law schools and may affect scholarship funds available to you. Thorough preparation for the LSAT is essential. Although your highest score is important, all schools see all scores.

- LSAT registration fee (includes LSAT writing): \$200
- Single-Report Package:
LSAT (includes LSAT Writing), CAS, 1 Law School Report: \$430
- Six-Report Package:
LSAT (includes LSAT Writing), CAS, 6 Law School Reports: \$650
- Standalone LSAT Writing: \$15

For detailed LSAT information including fees (and the fee waiver program), locations, and exam preparation information consult www.lsac.org.

Testing accommodations are available for the LSAT and are reviewed under a case-by-case basis. Be sure to have all necessary documentation and leave ample time for the committee to review the request prior to the exam date.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE

The following checklist, prepared by LSAC, broadly illustrates the sequence of events in the law school application process. Applicants are responsible for monitoring their own files.

First and Sophomore Years:

- Select a major in a field that both interests you and allows you to excel academically.
- Begin to form relationships with professors so they will know your work well enough to serve as recommenders in the future.
- Introduce yourself to the pre-law advisor.
- Explore your career interests by seeking a summer job or internship.
- Attend information sessions sponsored by the pre-law club, Law & Policy program, or your pre-law advisor.

Junior Year:

- Meet with the pre-law advisor to assess your academic, extracurricular activities, and work experiences and to discuss the law school application process.
- Create your secure LSAC.org account.
- Register with the Candidate Referral Service (CRS) so law schools can recruit you.
- Prepare for the LSAT.
 - Download a free sample test or purchase official LSAT prep books.
 - Free official LSAT test prep is available through Khan Academy.
 - If you are ready, register for the June test.
- Use LSAC's searchable database to research law schools, their admission requirements, and application deadlines.
- Sign up for a Law School Forum, where you can meet face-to-face with more than 170 law school recruiters.

Senior Year:

- Begin drafting and revising your personal statement the **summer before or early in your fall semester**.
- Preferably complete all applications by November 15. If unable, submit all materials before winter break.
- Register for the LSAT, print your ticket for test day, take the test, and receive your score by email. Taking the test early is advisable.
- Meet with your pre-law advisor who will help you assess the strength of your application in relation to schools you are considering.
- Sign up for LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS) to easily meet law school requirements for transcripts, recommendations, evaluations, and applications.
 - You do not need to register for CAS at the same time you register for the LSAT, but you should register long before your first law school application deadline.
- Send transcripts from every institution you have attended to the LSAC, unless credits from those institutions are reflected on your Allegheny transcript (i.e. study abroad).
 - Request forms for transcripts are available from your LSAC.org account **but you must also place an order and pay a small fee through WebAdvisor.**

- Allow at least two weeks from the time of receipt to process your U.S. or Canadian transcripts, more if your transcripts are from outside the United States, its territories, or Canada.
- Contact and if possible, meet with your recommenders to request your letters.
 - It is recommended to give your letter writers at least **six to eight weeks to notice** to write the letter before your preferred deadline. Faculty are busy and often field many requests for letters of recommendation; thus, it is recommended you make your request at the very beginning of fall semester senior year.
 - Allow two weeks from the time of receipt to process your letters of recommendation.
- Complete the FAFSA and other need-analysis forms as well as any institutional financial aid applications as soon after January 1 as possible.
- View your Academic Summary Report in your LSAC.org account once all U.S./Canadian undergraduate transcripts have been summarized.
- Use your LSAC.org account to apply online to as many U.S. law schools as you choose.
 - You must pay a \$45 fee for each law school report at the time you apply.
- Keep track of the status of everything related to your law school admission through your LSAC.org account.
- Take appropriate action on acceptances, wait-list status, and financial aid packages.

V. CHOOSING WHERE TO APPLY

FACTORS TO CONSIDER BEFORE APPLYING

In selecting a law school, you should examine your individual priorities and consider the following factors:

- **American Bar Association (ABA) Accreditation.** Choose an ABA accredited law school. Many States require a J.D. from an ABA accredited law school to sit for their bar examination.
- **Undergraduate GPA and LSAT Score.** Although other factors will be considered (personal statement, letters of recommendation), your GPA and LSAT score are heavily evaluated in the admissions process. It is advisable to apply to a range of schools
- **Cost of Attendance.** Attending law school is a serious financial commitment. In the most recent national survey by U.S. News World Reports (2018), the average yearly cost of tuition and fees was \$47,112 at a private law school and \$26,864 at a public law school (with in-state residency).
- **Geographic Location.** In considering where to attend law school, you should think about:
 - Where you plan to live/practice upon graduation
 - Whether or not the law school has a national presence
 - The legal market and community of the city in which the law school is located
- **Faculty:** Research the academic and experiential backgrounds of faculty and determine how accessible they are to you as a student. What is the faculty-student ratio, the number of full-time vs. adjunct faculty, and the number of minority faculty?
- **Student body:** Look for an atmosphere among students that is friendly and not overly competitive. Is there much interaction with fellow students outside the classroom? What is the size of the entering class? What does the admissions profile tell you about the quality of the student body? Is there diversity in interests and personal/cultural backgrounds?
- **Special programs:** Consider what courses are available in specialized areas, what joint degree programs are available, and if there are opportunities for practical experience including clinics, and internships. Does the school have specialized institutes, journals, or organizations exist in your areas of interest?
- **Career services:** Look for institutes that offer advising and resources to help you find a job. How many employers recruit at the law school, and who are they? What percentage of the class has employment lined up at graduation? In what types of positions and geographic areas are they employed? What is the percentage of students holding judicial clerkships? What assistance is given to students not interested in working for law firms? What is the bar passage rate for recent graduates?

- **Student life:** Is housing provided for first-year students? If not, does the school offer assistance in locating off-campus housing? What is the cost of living? What cultural opportunities are there? Does the school provide recreational facilities like clubs and gyms?
- **Academic Support Programs:** If you need assistance with legal analysis and writing before entering law school, support programs are offered by most schools. Students are invited to participate in these programs on the basis of either their entering credentials or their actual law school performance. This assistance may be offered in the summer prior to beginning law school, during the academic year, or both. The aim of the academic support program is to ensure that students have an equal opportunity to compete in law school and graduate school. For further information about academic assistance programs, consult the admissions office at the law school.

Make copies of the attached checklist for researching law schools to help you find law schools that match your wants and needs.

CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCHING LAW SCHOOLS

	School Name:	School Name:
Name		
Regional/National		
Cost of Attendance		
Geographic Location		
Faculty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic backgrounds • Faculty/student ratio • Accessibility 		
Student body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of entering class • Geographical backgrounds • Diversity • Interaction beyond the classroom 		
Special programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses available in specialized areas • Joint degree programs • Clinics and internships • Specialized institutes/journals/organizations 		
Career services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of career counseling • % of graduating class with law-related employment • Types of positions • Judicial clerkships • Bar passage rate 		
Student life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural or urban location • Cost of living • Cultural opportunities • Recreational facilities on campus 		
Costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition, transportation, housing • Financial aid: need- or merit-based • Expected debt load 		

VI. HOW DO LAW SCHOOLS DECIDE WHO THEY WILL ADMIT?

Law schools look closely at many factors when determining admission; however, the two factors that can be applied objectively to all candidates and are most predictive of success in law school are the **undergraduate GPA (UGPA)** and the **LSAT score**. These two factors are given considerable weight in the law school selection process, each can account for 30–50 percent of the admission decision. Thus, the higher your grades and LSAT score, the better. The college you attended and the undergraduate course of study in which you earned your degree often are taken into consideration when examining your UGPA.

Other Factors the Admission Committee Will Consider are:

- **Personal statement/essay:** This is an opportunity to not only distinguish yourself from your peers, but to articulate your qualifications and interest in law beyond what is revealed by your transcript and test scores. The personal statement is also a demonstration of your writing skills and should be free of error.
- **Letters of recommendation:** Usually two or three are requested and academic references are the most influential. Take the time to develop relationships with your faculty throughout your years so they can write strong, informative letters about you.
- **Activities/work experience:** Demonstrating responsibility and leadership are the most useful for admission purposes. It is better to concentrate on a few activities rather than spreading yourself too thin just so you can list many organizations on your resume.
- **Improvement in grades:** Many law schools will consider your performance trend as well as your UGPA. Thus, they may discount a slow start in your undergraduate career if you performed exceptionally well in later school years.
- **Ethnic/racial background:** The Law School Admission Council states, “We use the term diversity broadly to include all aspects of human differences, including but not limited to socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, language, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, geography, disability, and age.”

VII. PERSONAL STATEMENT

The purpose of the personal statement is to gather information about the applicant outside of the academic performance, LSAT score, and extracurricular activities. A personal statement should not read like a resume. Because many law schools do not interview candidates the most important consideration is the impression the applicant creates through the personal statement. A personal statement is a self-reflective narrative that can address any combination of the following:

- Motivation for a career as a law professional
- Influences of family/early life experiences
- Influences of extracurricular, work or volunteer experiences
- Personal philosophies as related to personal goals
- Mastery of obstacles or disadvantages
- Unique traits and interests
- Growth as a result of a tragedy or success
- A revelatory experience gained from a course, professor, or event in college or post-college
- Hobbies, passions, ideals and how they determined to the decision to attend law school

A personal statements should NOT:

- Be a descriptive résumé
- Be about high school experiences
- Focus on another person, even if he or she is a positive influence
- Only explain why he or she wants to become an attorney
- Discuss controversial issues
- Be humorous
- Have a title

When writing a personal statement, be sure to use an active voice, be positive, and be honest. Brainstorm with peers, parents, faculty, and the pre-law advisor to find an angle that makes your statement interesting. If a prompt is provided, thoroughly answer the questions asked. If no prompt is provided, refer to the list above to determine appropriate content. Tell a story and demonstrate main points through the use of concrete examples.

- Be concise and keep it to a reasonable length. If the length is prescribed, it should be kept within that length; otherwise, a good rule is two to three double-spaced pages.
- Tailor portions to the school in which the applicant is applying.
- Have a strong opening paragraph, state the thesis and grab the reader's attention.

- Show continuity, conclude by referring back to the introductory paragraph and restate your main thesis in a slightly different way.
- Avoid clichés and quotes, do not borrow from others words.
- Find a balance between creative and cautious.
- Avoid “legalese.”

Consult with peers, faculty, and the pre-law advisor to provide feedback when revising your personal statement. Be prepared to thoroughly edit and revise the document multiple times through this process and answer the following questions:

- Is the introductory paragraph interesting?
- Is the direction clear from the first paragraph?
- Is there a clear theme? What is the theme and why is it appropriate?
- Is there a relationship with the audience?
- Does the statement have continuity and focus and a successful organizational structure?
- Does the conclusion pull things together and at the same time bow to the future?

VIII. LETTER OF ADDENDUM

The addendum is an additional essay meant to help applicants explain any academic irregularities or disparities that do NOT belong in a personal statement. If there is something on an applicant's record that needs further explanation, he or she should address this in a separate letter or addendum to the application.

Addenda can be written for many reasons, including but not limited to:

- Low grades
- Low LSAT score
- Withdrawal from classes
- Leave of absence in college
- Academic misconduct
- Disciplinary action in college
- Criminal record

It is important to exercise discretion when writing an addendum and only address unforeseen events (personal or family illness, working 40 hours a week to pay for school, etc.) that caused and/or contributed to an issue. If you're not sure whether your issue should be explained, make an appointment to speak with your pre law adviser or contact the admissions office at a law school.

HOW TO WRITE AN ADDENDUM

Avoid writing a persuasive essay and stick with the facts. Let the reader make up his or her own mind about your experience and use phrases "I believe..." and/or "I thought..." when explaining how the event or situation changed you.

- **Introduction:** What happened? Stick with the facts and explain what and when (e.g., fall 2011) the event or incident happened
- **Middle:** What caused it and how did you change? Explain what caused the issue or event and your reaction to it. How has your behavior changed? How has your way of thinking changed? What did you learn?
- **Conclusion:** End on a positive note. Your essay should conclude on an uplifting and optimistic message.

In most cases, the addendum should be **one page or less** with your name, title of your essay (e.g., Transcript Addendum, LSAT Addendum, Character & Fitness Addendum), and LSAC number at the top. If you have two issues that are interrelated, such as two transcript issues: a low grade in one class and a withdrawal from another class, you can place them into one addendum. Being concise is challenging so be sure to utilize your pre-law advisor or faculty to help you revise the essay.

IX. ACCEPTANCES, WAITLISTS, AND DEFERRALS

Acceptances

The timetable for notification varies by school. Applicants may learn as early as December or as late as August (if being removed from a waitlist).

- Consider visiting the school, talk to faculty, students, and ask their career services about summer and post-graduate opportunities.
- Take advantage of the OCS Law School Surveys – a database of evaluations first year alums have submitted about their law school experience. The site is password protected; to gain access please email OCS.
- In comparing schools consider the faculty, financial offers, location, student body, career opportunities, and clinical programs.

Waitlists

If you have been placed on a waitlist, submit a letter to the admissions dean informing them of your continued interest in the school.

- If the school is your first choice, tell them.
- Provide an updated transcript; send an additional letter of recommendation if you have not reached the schools accepted limit.

Deferrals

Deferrals are not granted automatically. It is a privilege offered to you by the law school.

- The policy for applying for deferrals varies greatly from school to school. Please be sure to research this thoroughly if you plan on asking for a deferral.

Information adapted from the following sources:

<https://www.lsac.org/> | <https://www.todaysmilitary.com/joining-eligibility/becoming-military-officer> |
<https://ocs.yale.edu/get-advice/law-school> | <http://admissions.berkeley.edu/pre-law>
<https://media.law.miami.edu/prospective-students/pdf/2015/pre-law-handbook.pdf> |
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/gs/deansnotes/Lawschoolhandbook.pdf>
<https://case.edu/postgrad/sites/case.edu.postgrad/files/2019-05/pre-law-handbook.pdf>
[https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/No-BS-Guide-Law%20School%20Addendum%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.brynmawr.edu/sites/default/files/No-BS-Guide-Law%20School%20Addendum%20(1).pdf)
<https://www.lsac.org/jd/applying-to-law-school/whom-to-admit>