

## **Law School Admissions and Financial Aid General Information**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Law school is a wonderful adventure. Legal study will train you to think in unique ways as well as to analyze and solve problems. Earning a law degree will give you the power and privilege to help individuals, organizations, institutions, businesses and government entities. The practice of law is exciting and extremely rewarding. It is intellectually stimulating, as well as personally and professionally fulfilling.

Gaining admission to law school is a competitive process that involves a substantial commitment of time and effort. It is important that you research and investigate different law schools to determine not only to which schools you likely will be able to gain admission, but also to determine which law school will be the best fit for you.

Applying to and attending law school also involves a significant commitment of financial resources. Therefore, you should research and understand the fees that you will be required to pay (fees to LSAC to take the LSAT; fees to LSAC for each application you will submit; individual school application fees) and investigate the possibility of being granted fee waivers. You also should investigate and understand financial aid that may be available to you, namely, scholarships and federal student loans.

When you are in college and as you begin to explore careers in the law and applying to law school, you will have many resources to help you: pre-law counselors at your college, law school admissions officers, private law school admissions counselors, websites, chat rooms, blogs, etc. Parents and friends of parents or other family members who are lawyers can also be great resources. And it is important that you get started early – in your freshman, sophomore or junior year, if possible, especially if you hope to begin law school immediately after you complete college.

### **TIMING – BE READY TO APPLY IN THE FALL**

Most law schools review complete applications and make admissions decisions on a rolling basis, beginning in September. For this reason, it is beneficial to submit applications as early as possible, in the fall preceding the fall in which you wish to begin law school.

It is never too early to begin making your law school plan. If you hope to begin law school immediately after completing college, you should work on your plan during sophomore and junior year and be ready to submit applications in the fall of senior year. Toward that end --

- Prepare for the LSAT during your junior year and take the LSAT during the summer following junior year
- Register with LSAC's Credential Assembly Service and request letters of recommendation in the first few weeks of your senior year

- Confirm that there will be no delays getting your transcript(s) submitted to LSAC, during the first few weeks of senior year (e.g., be sure you do not have any outstanding financial obligations at colleges/universities you attended or at which you currently are enrolled)
- Gather information related to any character & fitness issues that you may be required to disclose in your law school applications no later than the summer following your junior year
- Work on drafting and finalizing your personal statement and any other essays during the summer following junior year

## INVESTIGATE PRE-LAW AND PIPELINE PROGRAMS

Many institutions and organizations offer pre-law programs and scholarships to participate in those programs. They also provide very valuable resources for students who are considering law school. During your sophomore and junior years of college, it would be wise for you to spend some time investigating these organizations and resources, several of which are listed below:

American Bar Association Pipeline Initiatives -

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/diversity\\_pipeline/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/diversity/diversity_pipeline/)

Accesslex - [accesslex.org](https://www.accesslex.org)

Council on Legal Education Opportunity - [cleo.org](https://www.cleo.org)

University of Houston Pre-Law Pipeline Program - <https://www.law.uh.edu/pipeline/>

LSAC's Discover Law - <https://www.lsac.org/discover-law/diversity-law-school/raciallyethnically-diverse-applicants/helpful-resources>

NAACP Legal Defense Fund - <https://www.naacpldf.org/about-us/naacp-scholarships>

LDF Marshall-Motley Scholars Program - <https://marshallmotleyscholars.org/>

## INVESTIGATING LAW SCHOOLS AND DEVELOPING LAW SCHOOL LIST

There are more than 200 law schools in the United States. Individuals typically come up with a list of 6 to 10 of those schools to which they apply. There are a number of factors to consider as you develop your list.

- **Where Are You Likely to be Accepted?** Two of the main factors that law schools consider in the admissions process are academic performance in college and score on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), a standardized test that all applicants must take. Every law school reports the median undergraduate cumulative GPA and LSAT score among the applicants admitted each year. A good starting point as you work to develop your list is to come up with a number of schools where your undergraduate cumulative GPA and LSAT score are in line with each of the school's reported medians.
- **Which Schools Have Strong Programs In Areas Of The Law In Which You Are Interested?** Although it is not absolutely necessary to know exactly what you want to do in the practice of law, it is important that you enter law school thoughtfully and with some idea of why you are pursuing a law degree and what you think you want to do with your law degree. There are many different practice areas that you may consider – ranging from criminal to employment to civil rights to corporate to environmental to intellectual property to immigration to real estate and on and on. Not all law schools offer robust course offerings in all areas. So, if you are interested in

a particular area of the law, then you should be sure to include on your list schools that offer a number of courses in that area and/or have special programs or concentrations in that area.

- **Where Do You Want To Be Geographically?** You also should consider location – where do you think you want to begin your legal career once you have earned your law degree? If you ultimately hope to live and work in a small town in Idaho, the University of Idaho probably should be on your list. If you hope to work in a large corporate law firm in New York City, you should investigate the law schools in New York. If you think you want to work as a lawyer in the federal government, you should look at the law schools in DC, Virginia and Maryland.
- **In What Type Of Setting Will You Be Most Likely To Thrive?** The setting, atmosphere and spirit differs at different law schools. Do you think a large law school in a big city will suit you best? Or do you think being at a smaller law school and in a more rural setting will be better for you? Try to visit law schools in which you think you are interested to try to get a sense of the community, the surrounding region and the atmosphere.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR ADMISSION/THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

When applying to law schools, you must pay careful attention to the specific application requirements and deadlines of each school. The following are general requirements:

**Bachelor's Degree.** You must have earned a bachelor's degree before you can begin law school.

Although you may apply to law school once you have finished your junior year of college, admission to law school will be conditional upon your successfully earning your undergraduate degree. It also is important that you be a strong student in college to demonstrate that you have what it takes to excel in a rigorous law school course of study. While in college, take challenging courses and earn as many A grades as you possibly can.

**The LSAT.** You must take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), a standardized test that measures critical, logical and analytical reasoning skills, as well as reading comprehension. Most law applicants take the LSAT in the summer following junior year of college or in the fall of senior year. The LSAT is administered by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and is scored on a scale of 120-180. It is crucial that you prepare for the LSAT – by taking a prep course, working with an individual tutor or working through a disciplined self-prep/study program. Your goal should be to get the highest score that you possibly can on the LSAT. For more information on the LSAT, please go to **lsac.org**.

**LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS).** All applicants to law school must register with LSAC's Credential Assembly Service, known as CAS. It is to this service that you will have all college/university transcripts sent, as well as letters of recommendation. CAS will prepare a detailed report analyzing your college transcript(s) that it will send to all the law schools to which you apply. You also will have your letters of recommendation sent to CAS and CAS will send those to all your law schools as well. For more information on CAS, please go to **lsac.org**.

### **Application Forms/Resume/Essays/Letters of Recommendation/Character and Fitness Questions.**

It is through LSAC (lsac.org) that you will access and submit applications, online, to each law school. You will be required to submit demographic and other general information (name, address, schools attended, extracurricular activities, internship and work experiences), as well as answers to character and fitness questions. You also will be required to submit a resume, essays and letters of recommendation.

**Resume.** The resume should list and describe, in summary fashion, all of your honors, awards, extracurricular activities and internship/work experience, post-high school. For this reason, you should begin building your resume as soon as you graduate from high school. Law school admissions committees seek to bring into their law school communities students who, in addition to being strong academically, are: well-rounded; passionate about service to others; leaders among their peers; and of

strong moral character. Therefore, it is important that, during college, you become involved in extracurricular and community service activities, and also take on leadership roles.

**Personal Statement.** Law schools typically require that applicants provide personal statements of 2-3 pages that are essays on any topic. The personal statement is your chance to tell your story - discuss what excites passion in you, challenges you have overcome, an experience that has helped shape you into who you are, etc.

**Letters of Recommendation.** Most law schools require two letters of recommendation and letters from college professors are the most valuable. Therefore, you should try to develop close relationships with at least one or two professors while in college so that they will be in a position to write strong letters of recommendation to support your law school applications.

**Character and Fitness.** The legal profession is governed by a strict code of ethics. For this reason, there are character and fitness questions on every law school application that request information about past conduct – specifically, disciplinary actions at any school attended or place of employment, criminal charges and convictions, traffic infractions, etc. It is important that you always exercise good judgment, and conduct yourself maturely, professionally, and with respect for the law (i.e., stay out of trouble!).

### **PAYING FOR LAW SCHOOL**

Just as college is expensive, law school is expensive. Law school tuition and fees can range from \$10,000.00 a year to more than \$70,000.00 a year, depending upon the school. And, in addition to paying tuition, you have to be able to pay living expenses (housing, food, medical, etc.) during the three years of law school, which usually range in amount from \$20,000.00 to \$28,000.00 a year, depending upon where the law school is located.

**Scholarships:** Many law schools offer merit scholarships to the strongest candidates in their applicant pools. These scholarships can range from several thousand dollars a year to amounts sufficient to cover annual tuition and fees. If you want to be competitive for large merit scholarship awards, it is important that you work hard in college, get good grades, build your resume, and perform well on the LSAT (and stay out of trouble!).

**Federal Student Loans:** Very few law students have the financial resources to cover the cost of attending law school without borrowing some amount in federal student loans. Fortunately, the federal student loan programs allow law students to borrow the amounts they need to cover tuition and fees, as well as living expenses. That said, all law students should try to minimize the amount of student loan debt they will have to take on. For very helpful information about the federal student loans available to law students, please go to **[studentloans.gov](http://studentloans.gov)**.