

Preparing For Law School

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(Former UCSD Prelaw Advisor for 23 yrs.)

Appointments with Sue on Tues. & Wed.

Call **619-644-7215** to make appt., or
drop by the Transfer Center

Today's Agenda

- Why go to Law School?
- What is taught there?
- Requirements for Admission
- How Law Schools select students
- Careers using your law degree

Why Will You Go to Law School?

- Intellectual stimulation?
- To help those in legal trouble?
- To become a change agent in society?
- To become a respected professional?
- To be your own boss?
- To work in Washington, D.C.?
- For the financial rewards?
- For the prestige?

What is your reason??

Poor Reasons to go

- No career goals
- Don't have a job after graduation
- For your parents or others
- Have not explored other career options
- To escape a dead-end job
- Can't decide what else to do
- To make lots of money
- Lots of free time

Law School Curriculum

- 3 yrs. day program; 4 yrs. pt-time evening
- 1st yr: incl., civil procedure, const. law, contracts, criminal law & procedure, legal writing & research, property law, torts
 - Same 1st yr. curriculum at all U.S. schools
 - Same law books used
- 2nd, 3rd yrs: prof. responsibility, tax, dispute resolution, law clinics, internships, summer law jobs, course electives, courses “to pass the bar exam,” moot court & “Law Review” & other journal options

More on curriculum

- “Case method” approach to courses
- Students are called on in class
- Fixed curriculum in 1st year
- Study groups essential
- Lots of law library research common
- Options to study abroad or at another law school for one semester
- Myth about “specializing” in law school
 - Can take many electives in one area of law
 - Specialize on the job, or with L.L.M. (1 yr.)

Before you apply, do you have?

- Strong reading & writing skills
- Strong logical reasoning skills
- Public speaking experience or skill
- Computer skills helpful
- Understanding of human behavior
- Understanding of federal government
- Leadership, teamwork helpful
- Bachelor's degree from 4 yr. College

Areas of Law Practice

- Family, business, tax, immigration, contract
- Labor, criminal, constitutional, real estate
- Sports, entertainment, intellectual property
- Environmental, international, health
- Education, transportation, employment
- Civil & human rights, personal liability
- Securities & finance, banking, estate planning
- Litigation, dispute resolution, technology
- Military, child advocacy
- Sustainable international development

“Legal” Careers

- Law firms, “solo” practice, corporations
- Non-profits, public interest orgs
- Teaching, consulting, politics, journalism
- FBI, CIA, NSA, U.S. Attorney’s office
- District attorney, public defender
- State and local agencies & gov’t
- All federal depts. and agencies
- Aides to elected officials, legislative aides

Requirements for Admission

- Bachelor's degree from 4 yr college
- LSAT score (Law School Admission Test)
- Acceptable college GPA (3.0 or higher)
- 2 – 3 reference letters (faculty & others)
- Interviews not required
- Personal essay
 - Who are you? What makes you unique?
 - Your life experiences, personality, character
 - Problems with your transcripts
 - Testing history or other issues
 - Why law? What are your goals for future?

More on Admission

- Any college major is acceptable
- All college grades count, even repeats
- Grossmont grades count too
- Also, college courses taken in high school
- Upward GPA trend helpful
- Underrepresented applicants encouraged
- Re-entry applicants encouraged
- Increasing # of women apply & are accepted
- Don't accept an "F" just so you can repeat it

The “LSAT”

- Req. by all “American Bar Assoc.” schools
- Test of logical & analytical reasoning, &
- Reading comprehension & writing
- 3 hr. timed test, scores 120 to 180
- National mean is 150
- Score used in formula to rank applicants
 - each law school uses their own formula
- Multiple LSAT scores may be averaged
 - The harder the school, the more they average scores
- Only take LSAT when fully prepared

How Law Schools Select Students

- LSAT, GPA + other factors = applicant ranking
- Your personal essay is read by law faculty
- Reference letter importance varies by school
 - 2 to 3 letters are common
- Other factors:
 - GPA improvement, extracurricular experiences
 - Work experience, community service
 - Past accomplishments, leadership, team exp.
 - Writing skills, other unique skills or knowledge
 - Diverse ethnic background or life experiences
 - Obstacles you have overcome
 - Under-representation within the legal profession

When you apply

Most deadlines are Feb. 1 for following Fall

Applying early can make the difference

Quality of written personal essay should be high

Apply to “enough” law schools

Pick schools carefully (GPA, LSAT score, etc.)

Explain why you want each school

Not all schools have electives in all legal areas

Look at the school’s job placement info

“Rolling” admissions common

Pre-Law Directory

“ABA – LSAC Official Guide to ABA – Approved Law Schools”

Transfer Center Library has this book

It contains info on:

Law schools & their admission practices & data;
bibliography of books about legal careers & education;
overview of preparing for and applying to law school;
data on job placement, ethnic enrollment, schools'
applicant/admit ratios and other valuable information

<http://www.lsac.org>

- Info & web links for:
 - ABA & non-ABA law school sites
 - Law school admission
 - Financial aid
 - The “LSAT” & LSAT preparation
 - Applicant resources
 - Underrepresented applicants
 - LGBT applicants
 - Law school application service

UCSD Career Center resource

- <http://career.ucsd.edu/sa/PLaw.shtml>
- Good info and web links
- Admission data for UCSD applicants to law
- Some law school rankings
- Advice pages you can print
- Local law school fair info
- GPA & LSAT info on law schools

Can You Get Into Law School?

- 70-80% admit rate from UCSD applicants
- National admit rate typically 50-65%
- Non-ABA law schools req. lower LSAT&GPA
- Apply to more schools to incr. your chances
- Going out of state can incr. your chances
- Talk to law admissions about your chances
- Does law school reputation really matter?
 - Depends on goals & where you will practice
- Some schools have summer *law-prep* programs

For underrepresented applicants

- Attend a law school fair; speak to school reps
 - UCSD's law fair is in November each year
- Contact law schools' "ethnic" student orgs
 - They may have input to admission committee
 - Call or ask to meet with their students
- Separate application essay on diversity
 - Facing challenges, your community involvement
- Dedicated scholarships for URM's
- GPA & LSAT averages
 - Can be different for URM's

Council on Legal Education Opp'ty

- “CLEO” 6-Week Summer Pre-law Institute
- Legal research, methods & writing stressed
 - During summer after college graduation
 - Over 90% of participants enter law school in Fall
 - Thomas Jefferson in SD, June 4 –July 14, 2006, &
 - at other law schools around the country
 - http://www.cleoscholars.com/pre_law_programs/6weeksummerinst.cfm
 - for more info and applications
 - Application deadline is Feb. 15, 2006

California ABA Law Schools

3.7 - 3.8 mean cum. college GPA (168 - 170 LSAT)

Stanford, Berkeley

3.5 - 3.6+ (166 - 168 LSAT)

UCLA, UC Hastings, UC Davis, USC

3.3 - 3.4 (164 - 166 LSAT)

Loyola, Santa Clara, USF, USD, Pepperdine

2.9 - 3.3 (155 – 160 LSAT)

Cal Western, Golden Gate, McGeorge, Thomas Jefferson, Southwestern, Chapman, Whittier

Tuition ranges from \$21,000 to \$36,000 per year

Other California Law Schools

- “CBA” law schools that are non – ABA
– California Bar Association accredited
- Non - CBA law schools
– Not accredited by any organization
- Requirement to take the “Baby Bar” exam
– After 1st year of law school
- Lower GPA & LSAT for admission
- Must practice in CA for some years
– Before taking the “bar” in other states

Can you transfer to another law school?

Some law schools admit transfer students after completion of 1st year of law school.

Rank in class & grades after 1st yr. determines transfer chances.

UCLA typically admits some transfers from other law schools. (e.g., USD to UCLA)

How to Pay for Law School?

- Summer jobs in law firms (high pay)
- Loans (both federal and school based)
- Scholarships and grants
- Some work study jobs
- Loan repayment after graduation for
 - Work in public interest legal jobs
 - Offered by many law schools
- Help from family & your own earnings