New College of Florida

Pre-Law Handbook

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NEW COLLEGE PRE-LAW GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to help you determine if law school is the right choice for you. It offers guidelines and tips that will enable you to better understand law school requirements, the employment outlook, and strategies to help you submit a competitive application.

DECIDING TO GO TO LAW SCHOOL

The decision to go to law school is a highly personal one based on factors that each applicant must weigh individually. It's not a step to be taken as a way to postpone a decision about how to spend your future. Likewise, if your family has always wanted you to be a lawyer but you have no interest in the field, you need to rethink your plans and motivations. Most law work is related to research, reading and writing rather than courtroom work.

Most of what lawyers do is paperwork. They research legal precedents, spending hours or months in law libraries or with online databases. They prepare contracts, briefs, and other documents, assembling boilerplate paragraphs or writing text from scratch. They plan and conduct depositions, which in complicated cases can generate thousands of pages of testimony that must be read, analyzed, and refined into usable information. Sometimes, especially if they are litigation specialists, lawyers actually argue a case before a judge or jury. Typical traits of good lawyers include:

- An affinity for research & writing
- Ability to work with and enjoy people
- Integrity, honest
- Analytical reasoning
- Creativity

How can you know that you won't end up hating the work of a lawyer after spending three costly years in law school? Take advantage of internships, volunteer opportunities and other venues to gain experience in the legal professions.

THE LOVES AND HATES OF PRACTICING ATTORNEYS

In interviews conducted with practicing attorneys by the American Bar Association, they were asked what they love and hate about their jobs. Here are the results of one survey:

Loves

Paycheck
Working in law can be a lucrative profession or it can provide moderate income depending upon the employment sector you choose. Most law students are willing to shoulder three years of expensive law school tuition in hopes of high return upon passage of the bar and employment. The most current data reported in 2012 for median salaries of law school graduates 9 months after graduation is for 2007. Salaries average around $68,000 for all graduates; $108,000 for those in private practice; $69,000 for those in business; $58,000 in government; and $48,000 for clerkships.

Helping People
Lawyers state over and over again how much satisfaction it gives them to serve people by representing them in court or educating them about their legal rights. Many attorneys who move into the non-profit and government sectors say that fighting for social justice is their primary reason for being in law.

Prestige
Law is a well-respected profession. Paradoxically, lawyers also have a bad image in the collective consciousness. Enduring the slings and arrows of bad attorney comes with the territory.

Responsibility
Many entry-level employees in other industries find that they have to pay their dues in clerical work. Law employers will expect you to hit the ground running. Seniors rely heavily on associates for research and preparation, and associates reported that a great deal of their personal satisfaction came from their high level of responsibility and the challenge of seeing a project through from start to finish.

Hates

Deadlines
Deadlines are often set in stone. Some types of law like litigation or corporate law are particularly inflexible. This means that associates must work as long as it takes to finish researching and preparing their work for a meeting with a client or another lawyer.

Tedious Research
Associates spend a lot of time doing the groundwork for their supervisors. This can mean hours of research, writing and proofreading, drafting and re-drafting documents, and waiting for approval. This kind of attention to detail and clarity is an essential skill for lawyers to develop; it will involve hours of concentration and dedication to a single task.

PREPARING FOR LAW SCHOOL

There is no recommended pre-law major, although certain courses such as history, English, political science, philosophy, business or economics are considered traditional pathways to law school. Pathways can range from art to music or biology, almost any area of concentration will meet the qualifications for admissions. A good strategy for increasing chances of admission is to take difficult courses with demanding professors. Your goal is to demonstrate academic acumen and capability of mastering difficult and complex information and ideas.

The Pre-Law Committee of the American Bar Association (ABA) Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar has issued a statement on preparing for legal education. It can be found on the ABA web site http://www.abanet.org/legaled/prelaw/prep.html. Here is a summary of the most important points.

"**Taking difficult courses from demanding instructors is the best preparation for law school."**

The core skills and values that are essential in becoming a competent attorney as outlined by the ABA are:

"The ABA does not recommend any undergraduate majors or group of courses to prepare for a legal education. Students are admitted to law school from almost every academic discipline. You may choose to major in subjects that are considered to be traditional preparation for law school, such as history, English, philosophy, political science, economics or business, or you may focus your undergraduate studies in areas as diverse as art, music, science and mathematics, computer science, engineering, nursing or education. Whatever major you select, you are encouraged to pursue an area of study that interests and challenges you, while taking advantage of opportunities to develop your research and writing skills. ***Taking a broad range of difficult courses from demanding instructors is excellent preparation for legal education*****."**

Core Skills and Values:

- ✓ Analytic / Problem Solving Skills
- ✓ Critical Reading
- ✓ Writing Skills
- ✓ Oral Communication / Listening Abilities
- ✓ General Research Skills
- ✓ Task Organization / Management Skills
- ✓ Public Service and Promotion of Justice

Basic areas of knowledge important to a legal education and the development of a competent lawyer are:

- A broad understanding of history, particularly American history, and the various factors (social, political, economic, and cultural) that have influenced the development of the pluralistic society that presently exists in the United States;
- A fundamental understanding of political thought and theory and of the contemporary American political system;
- A basic understanding of ethical theory and theories of justice;
- A grounding in economics, particularly elementary micro-economic theory, and an understanding of the interaction between economic theory and public policy;
- Some basic mathematical and financial skills, such as an understanding of basic pre-calculus mathematics and an ability to analyze financial data;
- A basic understanding of human behavior and social interaction;
- An understanding of diverse cultures within and beyond the United States, of international institutions and issues, and of the increasing interdependence of the nations and communities within our world.

SELECTING LAW SCHOOLS

Follow these guidelines to enhance your decision making:

Geographic considerations
Consider the extent the importance of quality of life issues such as size of the city, weather, crime rates, cultural events and the like. If living in a large city and access to its events are at the top of your list, then scratch Small Town Law School off your list.

Statistically speaking, many lawyers practice fairly close to their law school. The reasons are because most law schools conduct on-campus recruiting by local employers. It's also easier to conduct your own job search locally. Most law schools teach some of the substantive law of the state in which they are located. Thus, it is likely that you will take the bar exam in the state in which you went to school and will be better prepared to practice law in that state.

School reputation and ranking
There are a variety of groupings and rankings of law schools; opinions on validity and importance of rankings vary widely. You should judge rankings carefully, with some amount of skepticism. Remember that rankings reflect a particular set of assumptions and subjective criteria. Pay careful attention to the ranking criteria and decide whether those criteria matter to you.

According to the *U.S. News & World Report* 2012 edition of *America's Best Graduate Schools*, the top eleven law schools in the U.S. are: (Note: the numbering is intentional and mirrors that of *U.S. News & World Report).*

1. Yale University
2. Harvard University
3. Stanford University
4. Columbia University
5. University of Chicago
6. New York University
7. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
8. University of Pennsylvania
9. Northwestern University
10. University of Virginia

You will receive a quality legal education from any law school that is ABA accredited. There are many opinions on choosing the best local school you can choose as compared to choosing a lesser-tiered school. The most important question is not "what is the best law school?" but rather "what is the best law school for me?" The ABA takes this position on rankings*:*

> *"No rating of law schools beyond the simple statement of their accreditation status is attempted or advocated by the official organizations in legal education. Qualities that make one kind of school good for one student may not be as important to another. The American Bar Association and its Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar have issued disclaimers of any law school rating system. Prospective law students should consider a variety of factors in making their choice among schools."*

Size of school
Remember that potentially smaller classes and the more intimate environment of a smaller school is balanced by the advantage that a larger school might offer in terms of diversity, faculty, and students. Larger schools generally offer a broader selection of upper-division courses. Also, think about the desirability of the law school being part of a larger university setting.

Student/faculty ratio
ABA standards for law schools suggest that a favorable student-to-faculty ratio is one not greater than 30 to 1 for full-time students and full-time faculty. Find out how many students are in a typical class. Much of the learning in law school depends on the quality of class discussion. Small classes encourage more interaction. Large classes usually provide a better mix of viewpoints.

Quality of the faculty
A school's faculty has a profound impact on the level of intellectual stimulation you will receive. Consider the following characteristics:

- Educational background
- Professional experience outside the classroom
- Academic diversity
- Accessibility (Is teaching a priority?)
- Reputation (Are they considered authorities in their field?)
- Professional and public service activities
- Is the faculty diverse with respect to race, ethnic background, and gender?

Quality of the student body
Schools recruit candidates to bring in a mixture of persons and personalities that represent an array of life experiences, points of view, and outlooks. They want diversity in every shape and form. From the New College perspective, graduating from a small liberal arts college with narrative evaluations means that you, as a candidate, bring a unique point of view. You can promote this aspect of diversity as part of your admissions profile if you so choose.

Curriculum
The range and quality of academic programs is one of the most important factors to consider when choosing a law school. Almost all schools follow the traditional first-year core curriculum of civil procedure, criminal law, contracts, legal research and writing, torts, and property. If you have a specific interest, make sure that the school offers courses in the topic. Look for a program with a wide range of electives. Don't worry too much about overemphasizing specialty areas of law. Most law students graduate with a thorough grounding in basic legal theory and according to the ABA, don't begin to find specialties until the second to fifth years of practice.

Clinical programs
Clinics allow law students to try out their legal skills representing clients in a variety of settings. Students often cite their clinical experiences as the most challenging and satisfying part of their education. All clinical programs are not alike. Law schools offer many different settings such as family law, immigration law, criminal law, civil rights law, employment law, environmental law, mediation, and child advocacy. The best clinical programs involve students in actual legal situations, simulations of such situations, or a combination of both.

Facilities
Spend some time researching the facilities and resources available at each school you are considering. All ABA approved law schools must maintain a library that has the research materials essential for the study of law. Find out if the school has any special collections, subscribes to computerized research services, and provides adequate access to technology.

Costs and financial aid
About 80% of law school students rely on educational loans as their largest source of financial aid. When looking at overall costs, remember to factor in housing, food, books, transportation, and personal expenses. According to the Law School Admission Council, costs run upwards of $150,000 for the three years required to attend law school.

The maxim "live like a student now or you will live like one later" is a good one to remember. If possible, pay off any outstanding consumer debt before entering law school. Work now to establish and preserve good credit and avoid accumulating unwarranted debt. Your projected income post law school is an important factor in determining what constitutes manageable payment on educational loans. In weighing the cost- to- benefits ratio of schooling, ask these questions of each school:

- What is the average indebtedness of your students who have graduated recently?
- What percentage of your graduates has legal employment at graduation? How many have legal employment within six months of graduation?
- What is the most common type of legal employment your graduates obtain right after law school?
- What is the average starting salary of your graduates?
- Does your school have a loan repayment assistance program to assist graduates in low-paying and/or public interest jobs?
- What is the bar passage rate? (Stats on bar passage are posted in the *ABA Official Guide to Law Schools* available as a reference in Career Services, Bldg. PME).

Career Services
You should learn as much as you can in your research about each school's placement office, the types of jobs graduates are obtaining, the location of job placements, the on-campus recruiting program, and the support services of the career placement office. Find out what percentage of gradates pass bar exams.

After researching law schools and thinking about personal preferences, you'll be prepared to narrow your choices. A final list should include three categories of schools:

- Safe schools—schools where you will likely be admitted
- In your range schools—schools where you will be competitive for admission
- Reach schools—schools where you will be a long shot for admission

Avoid applying to schools that you would not consider attending, even if you're certain of acceptance. It's a waste of your time and money and you may be taking the seat of someone who really *wants* to attend that school.

THE ADMISSIONS PROCESSES

The admissions and applications processes follows the order outlined below. Each item is discussed in greater detail in the narrative that follows.

1) Register with the Law School Admission Council to set up your registration account. The entire application process will proceed through your LSAC account. Set up the account near to the time you plan to take the LSAT; LSAT scores are forwarded to the LSAC for distribution to

the schools to which you apply. All of your credentials will centrally managed by the LSAC and their Credential Assembly Service.

2) Take the LSAT at the earliest administration. The earlier you take the test, the better. Via your LSAC account you will automatically receive your LSAT score by email approximately three weeks after you take the test.

3) After you've received your LSAT score, ask your letter writers (letters of recommendation) to upload letters to your LSAC account.

4) Request that all of your college and high school transcripts be sent to the LSAC and added to your file.

5) Make electronic applications to your schools of choice through your LSAC portal.

Considerations for Admission

Schools consider a variety of factors in admitting students and no single qualification will guarantee acceptance or rejection. Factors that carry great weight are 1) prior academic performance, 2) personal statement, and 3) the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score and 4) letters of recommendation. Other items on the radar may include:

- Undergraduate course of study
- Graduate work (if any)
- College attended
- Curricular and co-curricular activities
- Ethnic/racial background
- Individual character
- Writing skills
- Work or internship experience
- Community activities
- Accomplishments and leadership
- Difficulties overcome

Most schools use a rolling admission process. The school evaluates applications and informs candidates of admission decisions on a continuous basis during the course of several months, usually beginning in the fall and extending to mid-summer for wait-listed candidates. For all schools, apply early when slots are readily available. The more decisions you receive from law schools early on in the process, the greater your ability to winnow through choices and acceptances.

The LSAT

All ABA approved law schools require applicants to take the LSAT or Law School Admissions Test. The test takes half a day or up to 7 hours and is administered four times a year (June, October, December, and February). It consists of five 35-minute sections of multiple-choice questions. Four of the five sections contribute to the test taker's score. The unscored section is typically used to try out new test questions or to pre-equate new test forms. The placement of this section will vary. A 35-minute writing sample is administered at the end of the test. LSAC does not score the writing sample, but copies of the writing sample are sent to all law schools to which you apply.

What the Test Measures

The LSAT is designed to measure skills that are considered essential for success in law school: the reading and comprehension of complex texts with accuracy and insight; the organization

and management of information and the ability to draw reasonable inferences from it; the ability to think critically; and the analysis and evaluation of the reasoning and arguments of others. The three multiple-choice question types in the LSAT are:

- **Reading Comprehension Questions**—These questions measure the ability to read, with understanding and insight, examples of lengthy and complex materials similar to those commonly encountered in law school. The Reading Comprehension section contains four sets of reading questions, each consisting of a selection of reading material, followed by five to eight questions that test reading and reasoning abilities.

- **Analytical Reasoning Questions**—These questions measure the ability to understand a structure of relationships and to draw logical conclusions about that structure. You are asked to reason deductively from a set of statements and rules or principles that describe relationships among persons, things, or events. Analytical Reasoning questions reflect the kinds of complex analyses that a law student performs in the course of legal problem solving.

- **Logical Reasoning Questions**—These questions assess the ability to analyze, critically evaluate, and complete arguments as they occur in ordinary language. Each Logical Reasoning question requires the test taker to read and comprehend a short passage, then answer a question about it. The questions are designed to assess a wide range of skills involved in thinking critically, with an emphasis on skills that are central to legal reasoning. These skills include drawing well-supported conclusions, reasoning by analogy, determining how additional evidence affects an argument, applying principles or rules, and identifying argument flaws.

You may take the LSAT more than once, but no more than three times in two years. The best advice is to prepare seriously and take the LSAT *only once.* All LSAT scores are reported to the law schools to which you apply. Many law schools average multiple scores. You may cancel your score at the end of the test. Your cancellation of the score will be noted on a roster that is available to all law schools after the test is administered. Likewise, if you fail to show up for a test that you registered for, a similar roster is compiled and available to schools.

When to take the LSAT

Ideally, take LSAT one year before you plan to start law school. Thus you would register for the June LSAT in the spring before your last year at New College if you plan to attend law school the fall after graduation. This provides an opportunity to use the summer months to gather information about law schools and the option of retaking the test in the fall if necessary. Register online to take the test at www.lsac.org.

The best preparation for the LSAT is an undergraduate course of study with emphasis on reading and reasoning skills. New College clearly requires and develops skills of the same. In addition, you should familiarize yourself with the test mechanics and question types and practice on sample tests. Become so familiar with the instructions and question types that nothing you see on the test can delay you or distract you from thinking about how to answer the question. Taking practice tests under timed conditions helps you estimate the amount of time you can afford to spend on each question and to determine the question types for which you may need additional practice. Taken in combination, all of these allay anxiety and boost confidence, preparing you to test well on the exam.

Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS)

Almost all ABA-accredited schools require students to use LSDAS. You must register online and purchase a 12-month subscription to the service, which includes sending a candidate report to one law school. LSDAS is the organization that assembles, manages, and sends your LSAT scores, letters of recommendation, transcripts, and writing samples to all schools to which you apply. In total and taken as a whole, these items constitute what is known as the LSDAS Law School Report. You must send transcripts from every school you have ever attended.

LSDAS also offers a letter of recommendation service as part of its regular subscription. Some schools require that you use the recommendation service, others do not. Pay attention to the instructions outlined for letters of recommendation on the lsac.org web page. The LSDAS will forward four general letters to any given law school and an unlimited number of letters targeted to specific schools.

Law schools require complete files before making admissions decisions.

A file is complete when it contains your LSDAS Law School Report, letters of recommendation, any requirements unique to that particular school, and the application fee.

Applications
Read applications carefully. Meet all deadlines, complete all of the forms, answer all objective questions (if the questions doesn't apply put, NA rather than leave it blank), and repeat information rather than referring the reader back and forth.

Personal Statements
A personal statement is designed to help admissions officers get a sense of who you are as a person. It's a very important document. If a candidate is otherwise qualified, the personal statement can be the deciding factor in the admissions decision.

Admissions officers read hundreds of personal statements each year. Try to find a way to make your statement stand out in a positive way. The personal statement has two functions. The first, and least important, is that it shows the admissions committee what kind of a writer you are. The second, and most important, is that it gives the admissions committee a window through which to see you as a human being and not as a statistic. Given that law schools don't interview, it is their only opportunity to gain a better understanding of you, and it is your only opportunity to show them what's *unique* about you.

Although a personal statement should reflect something about your personality and character, it need not be an in-depth psychological profile baring your innermost soul. Your essay should not repeat information supplied elsewhere, but should interpret or add detail to your application in a way that explains why you are a good candidate for law school.

Writing a personal statement can be a time consuming and difficult process. Perhaps because self-analysis is a demanding task and modesty a prized virtue, the personal statement is often the cause of great anxiety for law school applicants. A strong personal statement usually requires several drafts. Repeat: a strong personal statement usually requires more than one draft. After you have completed the first or second draft, ask several people to read and critique it. If certain criticisms are made consistently, then they're probably legitimate.

Two strategies for crafting an excellent personal statement are 1) Concentrate on your opening paragraph. Does it draw the reader in and make them want to learn more about you? Is it different somehow from the hundred others that have been submitted? 2) Find an angle and tell a personal story. Provide a slice-of- life, bird's-eye view into a personal aspect or experience that distinguishes you as a candidate.

Recommendations

Most law schools ask applicants to submit one to four recommendations. The best recommenders are faculty with whom you have worked closely. Law schools are interested in one main thing: **the kind of law student you'll be and the probability of your success**. They want to hear about your academic ability, and professors are the most qualified people to speak to that. If you have work experience that is relevant to your potential as a law student, a letter from an employer could be of interest to law schools. Recommendations can play an important role in the admissions process if they help define you as a person and a student in a positive way. Likewise, if you ask a professor for a letter of recommendation and they appear lukewarm to the prospect, consider seeking other recommenders.

The best sources for recommendations are the professors who are familiar with your academic ability. A person who meets as many of the following criteria as possible should write your letters:

- someone with whom you have studied or collaborated in research (e.g., your thesis sponsor, members of your thesis committee)
- someone from whom you have taken one or more upper-level courses
- someone who wrote excellent evaluations of your work
- someone who knows you well academically and perhaps personally.

Once you have chosen potential recommenders, approach each one and ask if he/she would be willing and able to write a **strong** letter in support of your application. If there is any hesitation or if the answer is less than enthusiastic, look elsewhere. A lukewarm letter will not support your admission. Most faculty are busy and writing a good letter takes some thought and time. Give the recommender a minimum of four to six weeks to write and upload letters.

Provide the following information to your recommenders:

- A list of the schools to which you are applying and their deadlines
- The recommendation form and instructions that were supplied by the law school on which you have typed your name and indicated whether you have waived your right to review the form (you should waive your right)
- Your résumé or CV
- A copy of your transcript and standardized test scores
- Stamped envelopes, addressed to each program
- A copy of your personal statement
- A list of relevant research and work experience

Take the time to thank the faculty member for her/his effort on your behalf.

Résumé
Some law schools will ask you to include a resume. Most won't. Include one anyway. There's no harm to you and it's another chance for you to spin things in your favor. Use standard resume format. Lead with academics and academic achievements. Include work experience, activities, skills, and interests. Unless you have been in the work force for a while or have other graduate work, try to stick to one page.

Dean's Letters
Some law schools require submission of a Dean's Letter or College Questionnaire as part of your application. It certifies that you are in good academic standing and that you have no conduct violations. The Provost's Office in Cook Hall will write the letter or complete the questionnaire.

Addendums
There may be something in your application that needs explanation. Sometimes it's something good. More often, it's something you'd like to do some damage control on: your LSAT is abysmal, or you have a year's gap in college where you didn't take any classes. An addendum allows you to explain any extraordinary circumstances, whatever they may be. Put simply, it is a separate sheet attached to your application, labeled "Addendum," where you explain something about your background in more detail. Think clear, concise, articulate, and persuasive. Keep it as brief, but explanatory, as possible. Attach supporting documentation as necessary.

Some students include an addendum about the New College philosophy of education and its role in shaping their candidacy for law school, for example:

> *"New College is an academic community of 850 students and 70 faculty working closely together to create a learning environment virtually unique in our modern age. The academic program consists of a rigorous graduate/professional school preparatory curriculum combined with numerous opportunities for independent research. We receive no grades, but participate in a formalized faculty and self-evaluation process. Incoming students have average SATs of 1305.*
>
> *Education here is a highly individualized and demanding process. The greatest asset New College offers is serious dialogue with faculty and other students passionately committed to learning and a better understanding of themselves and their worlds. The school emphasizes subject mastery and instills a love of learning. To graduate, I've completed seven self-designed learning contracts, three independent study contracts, a senior thesis, and an oral baccalaureate examination. My senior thesis…."*

Informational Interviews
Seek an informational interview with a law school representative if you require some special consideration or if your status as an applicant is unusual. Dress formally. Request an informational interview by calling the law school admissions office for an appointment.

The following steps will help you prepare:

- Review information about the school and the faculty.
- Review your qualifications, interests, and goals. Make note of those that make you a good match for the school.
- Review why you want to attend the law school
- Prepare an outline of the specific issue you wish to address. For instance, explaining New College's philosophy of education or grading system; a less than stellar LSAT score; unusual personal circumstances.
- Formulate questions to ask. A candidate who is not eager to learn more about the program makes a poor impression.

Financing law school

Start with financial aid resources at the LSAC guide to financial aid for law. The next best source of information about financing a legal education is the financial aid office at any ABA-approved law school. Scholarships, grants, and fellowships do exist, but they are rare.

If you are applying for federal aid, **start the financial aid process in January (**before the fall you intend to enroll) to be well in advance of the school's particular filing deadline. You cannot wait until *after* you receive admission offers to begin the planning process.

Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from your college or university financial aid office, from a law school to which you are applying, or at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Admitted students whose financial aid forms and tax records are completed early have the first shot at available money.

Ethical Conduct in Applying for Law School

The legal profession requires its members to behave ethically in the practice of law at all times As an aspiring lawyer, you will be held to the same standards for truth, full disclosure, and accuracy as a practicing attorney. Law school applicants are expected to read, understand, and comply with the LSAC Rules Governing Misconduct and Irregularities publications. If you fail to comply with LSAC's standards, you will be barred from admission to law school. If application misconduct is discovered after you enroll in law school or start to practice law, you will face serious sanctions such as expulsion or disbarment.

BEST RESOURCES FOR INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOLS

The most comprehensive site is the Law School Admission Council at www.lsac.org. The Law School Admission Council is a nonprofit corporation consisting of more than 200 law schools in the United States and Canada. LSAC administers the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

There you'll find:

- Information about the LSAT
- Information about the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS)—a centralized application service used by almost all law schools
- Links to all ABA-approved law schools
- Details about Law School Forums—Held in various cities (the closest is in Atlanta) each fall over a two-day period, you can meet representatives from about 150 law schools

across the country. In addition, you can attend workshops on the admission and application process, and on financial aid.
- Information about LSACD—a computer based law school application accepted by all ABA-approved schools.

The site also has a free online, searchable version of the ***ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools***. The guide is also available in the Career Center library in HCL4. It is the premiere guide for law school information and contains complete descriptions and admission profiles for ABA-approved law schools.

AFTER YOU APPLY

Call each law school after you have mailed your application materials and before the application deadline to ensure that your file is complete. Unless the school's materials state something to the contrary, there is little value in calling the admissions office to check on your status once you have confirmed the receipt of your completed application. Applicants can receive decision letters as early as November and as late as June (or later for wait-listed applicants).

If a school informs you that you have been "wait-listed," contact the school to find out exactly what that means. Ask the following questions if they are not resolved in the letter informing you of your status:

- How long is the wait list?
- What percentage of students on the wait list are usually ultimately admitted?
- Are wait list students ranked? If so, what is your ranking?
- When are final decisions regarding the wait list made?

If the law school gives you the option of submitting further information for your file, consider submitting:

- updated transcripts
- an additional letter of recommendation, or
- an additional personal statement
- a written summary explaining any new or recent endeavors undertaken since your original application was submitted that will support your interest and intent to study law. Examples might include law-related jobs or internships, or special research in legal matters.
- In general, any reasonable display of continued interest cannot hurt your chances if the school allows you to supplement your application file.

Rejections

If you are not admitted to a law school that you want to attend and you still remain committed to becoming a lawyer, it makes sense to try again. Examine the reasons why you were not competitive. Was it a bad letter? Poor LSAT? Did you apply to too few schools? Don't get discouraged, but try instead to rectify problems or close the loopholes where you possibly went astray. If you're graduating, get a law-related job or internship. It is not unusual to find well-known lawyers who did not get in the first time they applied.

APPENDICES

I. Jump Start Your Application

www.lsac.org Law School Admissions Council
www.nalp.org The Association for Legal Career Professionals
www.abanet.org American Bar Association

II. Best Book for Law School Information

ABA-LSAC Official Guide to American Bar Association Approved Law Schools
This reference book is on file in Career Services, Bldg. PME.

III. Resources

- www.deboraharron.com
  Includes career and job search tips from Deborah Arron, author and career coach.

- www.jobvillage.com
  Jobvillage.com networks the three major internet sources of job postings including (1) the major job boards such as monster.com, hotjobs.com, etc., (2) Fortune 1000 company's plus an additional 150,000 other corporate human resource pages and (3) the job pages of executive search firms and employment agencies into one website.

- www.nalp.org
  Website for the National Association for Law Placement.

- www.lawforum.net/index.html
  The Law Forum is an exclusive directory of law firms, legal support services, legal resources, legal employers and aspiring attorneys with web sites.

- www.lawmatch.com/
  Includes résumé bank and job posting service that matches attorneys and other legal professionals with industry employers and recruiters. Free for Basic Service, fee for expanded services.

- www.emplawyernet.com
  Job opportunities and career development site for the legal community. Law students get free access and alumni can subscribe at a reduced rate. Contact the CDO for details on how to sign up.

- www.uslegaljobs.com
  Legal job opportunities nationwide.

- www.legalemploy.com
  The Legal Employment Search lists various sites that have legal job listings.

- www.jobs.findlaw.com
  Browse the legal jobs database or submit your resume.

- www.hg.org/employment.html
  Part of the Heiros Gamos site, it's an outstanding resource.

- www.internships-usa.com/
  Comprehensive site for internships and positions for students with Firms, Government Agencies, Public Interest, Judiciary, and US Attorney's & Prosecutor's offices.

- www.lawschool.westlaw.com
  Attorney Jobs & Summer Legal Employment Guide available through Westlaw. Call the CDO for password access.

- www.abanet.org/lsd/jobopp.html
  American Bar Association
  ABANET Internship & Career Opportunities for Law Students.
- www.abanet.org/hr/interns/home.html
  Visit this site for info on ABA Internships.
- www.acca.com/
  Database of employment opportunities for in-house counsel.
- www.vault.com
  Claims to have the real scoop on many of the top firms. Take some of it with a grain of salt.
- www.lawguru.legalstaff.com/
  Contains legal classifieds.

(Legal Resources)

- www.lawyersweeklyjobs.com/
  New lawyers' survival guide sponsored by Lawyers Weekly.
- www.careers.msn.com
  Job search assistance and general career search advice.
- www.findlaw.com
  Legal Index with a Career section for employment assistance.
- www.laws.com/
  A compendium of law resources.
- www.hg.org/index.html
  Comprehensive legal and government site.
- www.thelawengine.com/ The Law Engine provides legal research links.
- www.dolanmedia.com/
  Website for national *Lawyers Weekly Publications.*
- www.martindale.com
  Martindale Hubbell.
- www.lawyers.findlaw.com/
  Formerly the West Legal Directory.
- www.law.cornell.edu
  Legal Information Institute.
- www.palidan.com
  Internet Resources for Attorneys.
- www.lawguru.com/
  Legal research meta site accessing over 400 engines and tools. Employment links.
- www.washlaw.edu/
  WashLaw WEB, Washburn University School of Law Legal Site Index.
- www.law.com
  Good resource for national and regional legal news and information.

(Clerkships)

- www.uscourts.gov
  Website for the federal judiciary. Visit the *Employment* section to explore the **"Federal Law Clerk Information System"** ("FLCIS"). The FLCIS is a searchable database of federal clerkship opportunities that are available nationwide.
- www.uscourts.gov/ttb/index.html
  The Third Branch, newsletter with Judicial nominations and confirmations.
- http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/nominations/judicial.cfm Tracks judicial nominations and confirmations and federal links related to the judicial nominating committee.
- www.courts.net
  Provides access to websites maintained by courts nationwide, both state and federal, organized by state.
- www.kentlaw.edu/
  Provides links to federal circuit court pages through a United States map representation.

IV. Alternative Careers for Lawyers

Many of the skills learned in law school (analytical skills, advocacy, communication, research, and the ability to break down a problem into its component parts) are directly transferable to other professions. Some professions, such as human resource management, can be an easy transition from law. A laws degree should be seen as an extra bonus in a potential new employee. You have been trained in a way that no other graduate student has been trained; possessing the ability to assess risk and avoid risk is what business is all about!

Sample Alternative Job Titles

Actuarial Consulting
Admissions Recruiting
Adoption Agency
Alderman
Bailiff
Board of Tax Appeals
Career Services
Child Support Enforcement
City Planning Department
Congressional Staff
Consumer Advocate
Dean of Students
Defense Logistics Agency
Election Board
Employee Benefits
Environmental Consulting
FBI
Federal Reserve Bank
Financial Analyst
Freedom Forum
Health Policy Analyst
Human Resources
Immigrant Rights
Inmate Services
Legal Action Center
Lobbying
Mediator
Minority Affairs Specialist
NAFTA
Nature Conservancy
Police-Barrio Relations
Pre-Trial Services
Press Secretary
Public Works Department
Real Estate Development
Refugee Resettlement
School District Administration
Sports Management
Tax Foreclosures
Tribal Attorney

V. Personal Statement Guidelines

Guidelines for Writing a Personal Statement

by Steven Baron, Associate Professor of Political Science, SUNY, Oswego

The basic idea is that you have to tell the Law School Admissions Committee something that will distinguish you from 2000 or 3000 other applicants. Why are you different or special? This requires letting them know just what kind of person you are, what your strengths are.

Remember, every applicant believes that he/she is capable of doing well in law school. Each also believes that he/she will make an outstanding lawyer, if not the best in the world. You, in other words, will have to do better than that for a convincing line.

Law schools are interested in anything about you, which is distinctive -- travel experience, tragedies in your life (loss of a father, mother or other close relative or friend), or triumphs (awards, medical success in overcoming disease or injury, recognition for outstanding achievement).

How did any of these things change you? How have you grown as a result of them?

Who have been the most significant people in your life: Parents? Grandparents? Siblings? Other relatives? Clergy? Friends?

What was the most important thing to happen to you at college? Why? What course or teacher was most important to you?

How did college change your life? What was the most significant book you ever read? Why?

Was there a summer job that held special significance for you?

Any combination of one or another of these things will probably do. It is better to concentrate in depth than to skim lightly over several things.

Do not, above all, write a statement that reads like a high school essay, "Here's what I did last summer." That would be a disaster.

Most important: be yourself. Show them that you are a thoughtful, sensitive person who can present himself/herself in a convincing and persuasive way. Be sure that whatever you write is believable.

Now set aside the statement for a week, at least, and read it again -- out loud. Let friends read it. Review the essay with an advisor. Don't be discouraged if it takes as many as five revisions. It's important enough to warrant the time and effort.

Personal Statements
From the University of Chicago Pre-Law InfoCenter

Perhaps because self-analysis is a demanding task and modesty a prized virtue, the personal statement is often the cause of great anxiety for law school applicants and engenders a marked appreciation and respect for "writer's block." It need not be so. Unlike other parts of the application that, by the time you decide to apply to law school, are beyond your control such as extracurricular activities, letters of recommendation, LSAT score, and transcript the personal statement gives you the chance to express yourself candidly and set the tone for your application. The personal statement is one of the first items that admissions officers scrutinize because, in the absence of a personal interview, it amounts to the closest thing to a dialogue with you, the applicant. You should view the personal statement, therefore, as a prose interview and embrace it as a welcome opportunity to let law schools know something about you that is not reflected in your academic and extracurricular record or in your letters of recommendation. Of course, as Mies van der Rohe once said, "God is in the details," so your challenge is to choose carefully what you wish to say and let your personality shine through.

Before we discuss some approaches that you might consider as you prepare to write your personal statement, you should note the following:

The personal statement is not a statement of purpose, such as you would write if you were applying to graduate school. Law schools assume that you would like to attend law school (otherwise you would not be applying) and often are not interested in what you plan to do with

your law school education. Admissions officers, however, are experienced professionals who always seek to provide their faculties and current students with a new crop of interesting and talented law students, so you can be sure that they wish to learn more about you and what it is that would make you a significant addition to their law school.

The personal statement is a crucial part of your application. It is certainly true that grades and LSAT scores matter a great deal, enough so that if you do not make it into the "zone of consideration," your personal statement may not be sufficient to pull you into contention. Once you are in "the pool," however, your statement's importance increases exponentially. By the same token, if your grades and LSAT score are superb, a sloppy essay may give an admissions committee cause for concern, and may delay or jeopardize your admission into law school.

Never forget the dominant melody that runs through the application process: make the readers' job as easy as possible because they could be reading your essay early in the morning or late at night. Cosmetics are important: follow instructions carefully, write clearly and succinctly (grammar and punctuation do count), try to keep your essay to two pages (unless the application instructs you differently), double-spaced, with regular margins, and an easy-to-read font. Admissions officers are looking for information to support your admission and they want to look good if they have to argue on your behalf, so make their job as pleasant as you possibly can.

Stay away from "gimmicky essays" (the kind that make readers groan with despair), such as essays that set up an imaginary "trial" of an application and conclude with a "wise" jury deciding in the applicant's favor. Also, remember that the personal statement is not a prose résumé (you will include a résumé with your application), a synopsis of your B.A. essay (they will ask you for it if they wish to see it), or a forum for explaining a blemish on an otherwise sterling transcript (the place for that is in a brief addendum to your application).

The personal statement is always about <u>you</u>. If you have a great story to tell, you should tell it. Nothing is more compelling than an essay that relates elegantly and passionately a story about your life, such as your experiences overcoming a particular hardship or as an immigrant. Of course, not everyone has been touched by history or life to the same degree, so you may consider writing a personal statement that focuses on one or two experiences, events, or beliefs that have affected the way you think about the world and your place in it. These might be your unabating love of baseball and the Chicago Cubs, an enduring memory from your travels abroad, your continuous growth as a musician, or your decision to train for a marathon. You may also find it more comfortable to write an essay about your preparations for law school, which makes it apparent to admissions officers that you are sophisticated enough to know and possess what it takes to be a successful law student. If you choose to write about why it is that you wish to attend law school and become an attorney, be sure that your record supports your assertions: for example, if your concern for human rights fuels your interest in the law, your activities and courses should reflect an understanding of that field.

As you may have surmised, there is no specific formula for writing a successful personal statement. The best essays tend to be very honest and quite personal and focus on specific issues or events. And never lose sight of the fact that there is a reader with a specific agenda for whom this statement is being written.

VI. Letters of Recommendation
From the USC Pre-Law Guide

Most law schools require letters of recommendation. Most ask for two; some ask for one; a few ask for three. Get three if you can. The more praise you have in your file for your academic abilities, the better off you'll be. LSDAS will process three letters and they'll send all three to each law school regardless of the number the law school requires. Law schools know that. Therefore, extra letters are passed off as LSDAS policy and not attributed to you ignoring the rules.

Although they appear to be the place where you have the least amount of control, students actually have much more control over the quality of the recommendations than they think they do. Why? 1) You choose the recommenders. 2) You give the recommenders the information from which to write the recommendations. 3) You can educate the recommenders as to what law schools want.

How do I go about choosing the recommenders? You start choosing recommenders in your first year of college by taking your coursework seriously, doing quality work, getting good grades, speaking up in class, and building relationships with professors outside the classroom. Professors have office hours. Go. Professors give talks on and near campus. Go. Professors write books and articles. Read them (or at least the book reviews). Even if law school feels years away, speak to the professor at the end of the course and ask him or her if it's okay for you to come back at application time and get a letter. Then your actual request will be reminder of a previous agreement and not a surprise request from a forgotten student.

Best bets: full professors; professors for whom you've performed well; professors from whom you've taken more than one course; professors who can attest to your ability to do the things law schools value most - think critically, reason logically, read and understand complex text, write well, analyze, and research. Courses in which you have done a lot of reading and writing are best, especially if you have produced a written document or documents of particular quality or significance.

The best students may go so far as to pick and choose recommenders according to the skills required in the professors' classes or according to the professors' disciplines. For example, a student might pair a professor from a large general education course which involved lots of reading across disciplines and a series of essay exams with a professor of an intimate senior seminar focused on a single theme and which required a term-length research project, term paper, and oral presentation. Or a literature major might seek out recommendations from a biology professor and an engineering professor in addition to her or his English professor.

Students who haven't done so well will have a harder time. If you cannot get three solid recommendations from full professors, consider an employer, a visiting professor, or an adjunct professor. Know, though, that the further outside the professor pool you go, the more you'll have to educate the recommender as to what you need. Even an employer will need to speak to your academic skills as much as possible and describe your job skills in academic language. Do not assume that just because an employer is high profile in the legal community that s/he will know how to write this type of recommendation. You must tell them.

What should go in the information packet I give to my recommenders? Consider including the following in your recommender packet. More is generally better.

- unofficial copy of your transcript - highlight overall gpa and grade(s) for course(s) with that instructor
- exams, papers, projects, or other work you did in the instructor's course(s)
- any papers or projects you are particularly proud of and which you consider representative of
- your academic work, regardless of which course (or employment) you did them in
- draft of personal statement - if it isn't the final version, mark it boldly as "draft"
- resume
- written narrative about why you want to go to law school
- drafts of any additional essays you may include with your applications
- anything else you think the recommender would find helpful

Use your judgment on this. Clearly, you don't want to highlight a poor GPA. You don't want to include a dozen papers or projects from other classes. You don't want to offend a professor by acting like he/she doesn't know how to write a recommendation.

What does "educate the recommenders" mean? In addition to giving your recommenders the set of guidelines you'll receive from your pre-law advisor, urge them to explain the content of the course or courses, or the work done in the workplace, and its value, as well as your good grasp of that content. It'll give them a chance to brag about themselves and add some detail to the recommendation. Advise them to mention in some detail the work you actually did: "Mary Jones wrote a 25-page term paper analyzing the interplay of form and content in Henry Fielding's Tom Jones." Advise them, if they can do it favorably, to compare you with your peers: "Ms. Jones' work stood out in her class of forty students and I consider her to be among the top 5% of all students I've encountered in my 13 years of teaching."

If you are part of an honors program, or if you have taken a particularly rigorous course of study, or if your major is impacted and only accepts a small number of applicants, or if you have a major with a low curve, thus making your gpa look artificially low, have your recommender explain all that in some detail. All of that information will have much more credence coming from the recommender and not from you, but the recommender may not know to include it without your assistance.

A Dean's Suggestions to Faculty for Reference Letters
by Professor Richard Badger, Assistant Dean, University of Chicago Law School

I read each recommendation with three questions in mind:

1. How well does the writer know the applicant and the applicant's academic record?
2. What does the writer have to say about the applicant's abilities and characteristics, which are important for success in law school and the profession?
3. In the final analysis, how enthusiastic is the writer's support for the candidate's admission to this particular law school?

The answers to these questions are obviously interrelated, but for the purpose of this memorandum it may be helpful to deal with them individually.

Most letters of recommendation will partially describe how well the writer knows the applicant. They usually contain brief descriptions of the size and number of courses in which the writer has worked with the student.

Often absent, however, is a description of the kinds of formats in which the writer has seen the student perform. For example, did the student write a short answer examination at the end of the course or were there a number of papers to complete? Did the writer see the student respond in class on a regular basis? How much informal contact was there with the student out of class? I will generally assume the larger the class and the larger the institution, the less familiar the reference will be with the applicant. This assumption is frequently incorrect but I will not realize it unless that is made clear.

Writers will often say, "Mary's academic record speaks for itself." This, unfortunately, is not true unless I am familiar with the particular academic program. In short, all applicants with a 3.8 grade point average are not judged as being equal.

Some students have taken more challenging courses than others. Some faculty are more demanding than others. Our Admissions Committee may not be aware of which courses are graduate level courses or which are part of the Honors Program. All applicants to Chicago are asked to supply academic references with copies of their full transcript so that those who write may comment, to the extent they can, on the quality of the overall academic record.

There may be little to distinguish between the abilities and characteristics, which law schools look for in comparison with those characteristics, which other graduate academic programs seek. Legal education and the legal profession, however, do emphasize some skills over others and the following comments may help writers who are not familiar with those distinctions.

Language is the lawyers working tool and the best law students are those who have the ability to write and speak with precision, fluency and economy. Not only must the student be able to communicate his or her own thoughts, but he or she must have the ability to read and listen carefully with an eye and ear for fine points and subtle distinctions.

Legal education demands well developed analytical skills and the ability to juggle multiple variables. Legal reasoning at one time or another involves deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning and reasoning by analogy. The best students can think independently, have the ability to cut through to the essentials and can distinguish the relevant from the extraneous.

Contrary to what many believe about law school, there are a few clear and distinct rules. A tolerance for this ambiguity and the ability to recognize exceptions and qualifications, which may modify general rules and characteristics of successful law students. In short, a reference should consider whether an applicant is likely to be stimulated or frustrated by questions where there are no "correct" answers.

The nature of legal education--large classes, commutative pressure, and substantial amounts of material to be mastered--may make some personality traits more important in law school than in other academic programs. Students will often learn as much from their classmates as from the faculty. Thus, interaction among the students is an important feature in a legal education and those who enjoy engaging in discussion in and outside of class are more likely to flourish in this atmosphere. The student who is intellectually alive and curious is more likely to sustain academic progress where there is little reinforcement between examinations.

A student must be diligent and well organized to handle large quantities of material. A well-developed sense of humor and mature attitude are particularly helpful in adjusting to the pressures, which many students will experience in law school.

Perhaps the most difficult task in reading a recommendation is interpreting the significance of such statements as "excellent," "outstanding," "highest recommendation" and "recommended without qualification." Such terms may indicate meaningful distinctions among applicants supported by the same writer but we may not be familiar with the way in which a particular reference ranks applicants. This uncertainty can be compounded where we receive a standard letter, which is submitted to a number of different law schools. Is the degree of support directed to the most selective or the least selective of the schools to which the applicant has applied? Occasionally we will know the faculty member writing the recommendation. In those situations it is generally easier to evaluate the degree of enthusiasm for a particular applicant.

It is far more often the case, however, that our most significant contact with an institution will be familiarity with its graduates who attended the Law School in recent years. Thus, a comparison of an applicant with other graduates we know from the same institution may provide us with a more accurate assessment of the applicant's potential for success at Chicago than the objective factors of the Law School Admission Test score and the undergraduate grade point average.

In weighing the overall assessment made by a reference it is also helpful to know how confident the writer is of his or her own judgment about a particular applicant.

As we are occasionally reminded by those who submit recommendations, the task of ultimately selecting the most promising students for the law school is ours and not theirs. Helpful letters, however, can make this task easier.

VII. Financing Your Legal Education

From the LSAC website
Money for law school is available in the form of scholarships, grants, work-study, and loans. Law students finance most of their education through loans, either from the federal government or private sources—often both. The amount of aid you receive and the form it takes is largely determined by the law schools; therefore, the law schools to which you are applying should be your primary source of information. This site can give you answers to some basic questions you may be asking yourself now: What does the process of securing financial aid involve? How is eligibility for financial aid determined? What goes into a financial aid package? What can I do ahead of time to improve my chances of getting financial aid?

Best Bets: The single best source of information about financing a legal education is the financial aid office of any LSAC-member law school. The financial aid office at each school can provide information about how students at that particular institution typically finance their law school education. Information about private scholarships, application procedures, and alternative loan sources is available through the Internet.

The cost of a three-year law school education could exceed $150,000. Law schools will determine the student expense budget for you. Roughly 80 percent of law school students rely on education loans as their largest source of financial aid for law school. Loans from governmental and private sources at low and moderate interest rates are available to qualified students. Both federal and private loans are based on the law school's estimate of your need

and the overall cost of attendance. Credit history is a factor for private loans. Students must have good credit to be approved for most private loans. Typically, the lowest interest rates are associated with federal loans; private education loans are available at higher rates. Institutional loans may be available from the school. Scholarships, grants, and fellowships exist, but are limited. Some students are offered part-time employment through the federal work-study program in their second and third year of law school. First-year students are expected to concentrate fully on school work. Most admissions agree trying to work during the first year of law school is sure path to an unmanageable workload and flunking out of law school.

Financial Aid Resources

- www.aals.org
  (Association of American Law Schools)

- www.ed.gov
  (U.S. Department of Education)

- www.fafsa.ed.gov
  (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

- www.finaid.org
  (The Smart Student™ Guide to Financial Aid)

- www.nalp.org
  (National Association for Law Placement)

- www.idealist.org (National Association for Public Interest Law)

Keep in mind that the law school itself is the primary source of information regarding money for legal education.

Financial Aid Options

Scholarships and Grants
A scholarship or grant is an award that does not have to be repaid. It may be given on the basis of need or merit, or in recognition of a special talent. Most scholarships are conferred by individual law schools. Some individual organizations may also have scholarships to offer. Among them are local bar associations; fraternities, sororities, and other social clubs; religious or business organizations; and veterans' groups. You will have to take the initiative in researching these possible scholarship resources. A number of companies offer tuition reimbursement benefits to their employees and to their employees' dependents as well.

Federal Loans
Most law schools participate in the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP), which includes the Stafford loans. Students borrow Stafford loans through banks or other lenders. A number of schools now provide federal loans from the U.S. Treasury through the Federal Direct Student Loan Program (FDSLP), which includes Ford loans. Under this program, you will not be borrowing federal loans through a bank. Your loans will be disbursed directly by the law school financial aid office. Because federal programs are subject to regulation changes, you may wish to contact the law school for further information. The terms and conditions under the FDSLP and

the FFELP may vary. Contact your financial aid administrator for the latest available information. There are three types of federal loans available to law students.

- (Subsidized) Federal Stafford and Ford Loan. Available in subsidized Federal Stafford or Ford Loans to students who meet the need criteria.* Interest is paid by the federal government while you are enrolled in school at least half time. You must begin repaying the loan six months after you graduate, withdraw, or drop below half time. You can obtain an application from any lender that participates in the federal loan program, or from any law school.

- (Unsubsidized) Federal Stafford and Ford Loan

- Federal Perkins Loan. This loan is available to students at some schools. Each student's award is determined by the school based on information obtained from the FAFSA.

- *Private Loans*
  Private loans are approved on the basis of a student's credit. Lenders will analyze your credit report before approving a private loan. Some offer pre-qualification services by phone or on the Internet. If you have a poor credit history, you may be denied a loan. If there is a mistake on your credit report—and there are often mistakes—you will want adequate time to correct the error. It would be wise to clear up errors or other discrepancies before you apply for a private loan.

It's good to review your report and have a handle of the information if for no other reason than to verify its accuracy. Order your report through companies such as Experian (888.397.3742; www.experian.com, Equifax (800.685.1111; www.equifax.com, or Trans Union 800.916.8800; www.transuniion.com).

Federal Work-Study
Federal work-study is a program that provides funding for students to work part time during the school year and full time during the summer months

1. Start the financial aid process in December to be well in advance of the school's particular filing deadline. You cannot wait until *after* you receive admission offers to begin the planning process. Don't plan on working during your first year of law school! The workload will be too intense to hold down a job.

2. Obtain the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from www.fafsa.ed.gov. FAFSA is a need-analysis tool developed by the U.S. Department of Education. As the name implies, there is no charge for the collection and processing of data or the delivery of financial aid through this form.

- When completing the FAFSA form, you will designate the names and school codes of all law schools to which you are applying. Information on school codes is available from any law school financial aid office or at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

- The FAFSA form asks for information about your income, assets, and other financial resources. Be sure to answer, "yes" to the question: Will you be working on a degree beyond the bachelor's degree? All graduate/professional students are considered independent of their parents for the federal loan programs.

3. Prepare your federal income tax returns as early as possible after the first of the year. Most schools will want to see a copy of your actual tax return, so be sure to keep a photocopy for your files. The FAFSA requires information that is derived directly from your tax return. While information packets (including the FAFSA) may be available from some law school financial aid offices in the fall, applications cannot be filed until after January 1. (They will be returned to you if received before the first of the year.) However, you can file any time after the first of the year—*the earlier the better.*

4. The law schools to which you apply will determine your eligibility for federal financial aid. The amount offered by each law school will vary, and each student's financial need will be assessed individually because costs vary from school to school.

5. Once you determine the school that you will attend, you may begin the federal loan application process.

Contact the financial aid office of the law schools to which you are applying. Some schools may require you to submit information in addition to the FAFSA. You may be asked to complete an institutional financial aid application or an additional form from another agency such as Need Access or CSS Profiles. It is important to know which schools require additional information. Many schools have very early filing deadlines.

THE JOB OUTLOOK FOR LAWYERS

Expect stiff competition for jobs. Opportunities vary from place to place and among legal disciplines. Lawyers wishing to set up private practice will likely do better in smaller towns, free from the competition and pressure of the big-name firms. According to the Career Advancement Management report published by the University of Michigan, there is actually a shortage of attorneys in small-town America, especially the mid-west. Increasingly law grads are using their training to secure positions in tangentially-related fields such as real estate or investment banking or alternative careers in social justice, activism and policy reform. On all fronts competition will remain keen. There will be increased demand in the fields of health care, intellectual property, venture capital, energy, elder, antitrust and environmental law. Concurrently, various businesses may provide services related to these areas that were once relegated only to lawyers, thereby diluting opportunities for some attorneys.

In tandem with shrinking employment opportunities (at least traditional ones) some law schools in 2012 have actually begun reducing the size of their inbound classes, an historic move among colleges of law.

VIII. Third Year Admissions Timeline

This timeline is for applicants who plan to attend law school the fall after graduating from New College. For admission at other times, the schedule should be adjusted accordingly.

THIRD YEAR

September	Attend a Law School Forum sponsored by Law Services. The closest forum is in Atlanta.
	Take an LSAT diagnostic test online or by using materials available in the Career Center in PME.
	Attend on campus information sessions by law school admissions representatives.
March-April	Prepare for and register for the June LSAT (registration deadlines are usually one month prior to the test date).
June	Take the LSAT.
July	Receive your LSAT score.
June-August	Visit law schools you would most like to attend. Collect law school catalogs, applications and financial aid information.
August-September	Register with LSDAS.
	Have official transcript(s) sent to LSDAS using the transcript forms in the LSDT/LSDAS information booklet. Please release information to New College in the LSDAS system so we can monitor the progress of law school students. Information is always confidential and never shared in any manner that could identify the person releasing score and school details.

FOURTH YEAR

September	Check LSDAS report for accuracy.
	Attend the Law School Forum.
	Register for the October LSAT, if necessary.
	Request letters of recommendation.
Sept.-November	Write personal statement and resume.
	Submit Dean's Certification Letter to the Provost's Office.
	Complete and send applications. Keep copies of everything you send. You have an admissions advantage if your applications are sent in by mid-November. Check to see if your application file is complete.
	Check the accuracy of your current transcript on file at New College.
January	Complete and file FAFSA and financial aid applications.
	Send fall transcript.
April-June	Pay seat deposit to the school of your choice on time. Notify schools that you are declining.
	Report outcomes of your law school applications on your Baccalaureate Survey. Send final transcript.

New College Graduates and Law School Admissions, Mean LSATs

Historically speaking, New College has a very good track record of admissions to law school.

Fall 2011 is the most recent year for which law school admission data is published and released by the Law School Admission Council. When students do not release score or matriculation details to New College, those admissions may or may not be tracked or recorded. (Please release your data so we can keep better track of graduates' accomplishments!) In short, the 2011 admissions cycle proved to be another outstanding year for acceptances, with 12 of 13 applicants accepted. The number of applicants was down this year in comparison with last year when 23 applied (with 20 accepted). Nationally, applications to law school are down this year by 14% and some law schools are reducing the sizes of the classes they admit. The reduced number of New College applicants in the current applications cycle could be a reflection of the overall tightening national trend. Those who did apply submitted a total of 57 applications. Among all applicants, about half were students who had graduated from New College between 2007 and 2010, with the remaining half having graduated before 2007.

Acceptance Highlights, Fall 2011:

- On average, students submitted 4 applications each
- 18 applications were accepted
- The average LSAT score (120 – 180) was 160.1, a slight increase over last year's 159.8.

Students were accepted to: UF (3), Florida State, Oregon School of Law, University of Wisconsin, University of Miami, Mercer University, Stetson, University of California Hastings College of Law, Earle Mack School of Law at Drexel University, and Roger Williams.

Acceptance Highlights, Fall 2010:

Twenty three students applied to law school. Twenty, or 87% of the applicants, were accepted to one or more schools; only three, or 13%, were denied admission.

- 173 applications were submitted
- On average, students submitted 7.5 applications
- 20 applicants were accepted to one or more law schools
- The average LSAT score was 159.8

Students that released enrollment data to New College matriculated in fall 2010 to: Stetson University (2); Pace University; Florida Coastal School of Law; New York Law School; University of the Pacific; University of Arkansas; Georgetown; Northeastern University; University of Miami; and Florida State.

TABLE I

Admissions 2006 – 2007

Number of Applicants	Applied to:	Admissions	Matriculations	Mean LSAT
6	Boston University	1	0	161.7
1	Campbell University College of Law	1	0	
2	De Paul University	1	0	
2	Emory University	1	1	
1	Florida A & M	1	1	
9	Florida State	5	0	158.8
5	George Washington University	1	1	164.2
4	Georgetown University	1	1	
1	McGeorge School of Law	1	0	
1	New York Law School	1	0	
2	Northeastern University	1	1	
1	Ohio State University	1	0	
1	Rutgers University, Camden	1	0	
1	Rutgers University, Newark	1	0	
7	Stetson University	6	3	155.9
1	University of Alabama	1	1	
15	University of Florida	10	6	
1	University of Maine	1	0	
1	University of Minnesota	1	1	
2	University of North Carolina	2	2	
2	Wake Forest	2	0	
1	Williamete University	1	1	
Total Number of Applicants to Selected Schools	**Total Schools with One or More Admits**	**Total Admits**	**Total Matriculation**	
67	22	42	19	

Table II

Student Profiles, Applications Cycle 2006 – 2007

Graduated from New College	AOC	No. of Schools Applied To	Admitted	Matriculated	Admission Denied	Average LSAT of Applicants
2005	Social Sciences	10	Florida State			
			University of Florida	x		
2006	Sociology	6	Ohio State			
			Rutgers, Camden			
			UF	x		
2007	Economics	18	Florida State			
			UF			
			U of Minnesota	x		
			Wake Forest			
2002	Art History	4	Campbell University			
			UNC Chapel Hill	x		
			Wake Forest			
2007	Political Science	2		0	FSU	
				0	UF	
						161

(Note: Only five students in the applicant pool released profile information)

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