Choosing the Right Law School

Each student has specific features in mind when choosing a law school. Some may seek the status and prestige of a well-known, highly visible law school. Others may place greater emphasis on concerns like location, class size, distance learning, or cost. A good place to start on your road to law school is to determine which schools meet your needs. Then, you can familiarize yourself with your favorite schools’ admissions policies, application deadlines and requirements for recommendations and personal statements.

It is wise to seek admission to law schools accredited by the American Bar Association. This will ensure that your education meets the highest standards, and will greatly help your ability to compete for jobs in your new profession.

Two on-line resources that can help you get started are:
http://officialguide.lsac.org/
http://www.princetonreview.com/law/default.asp

In book form, consider: Barron’s Guide to Law Schools, 14th ed. (available at amazon.com and other retailers)

Most law schools will also require that you participate in the Law School Data Assembly System (LSDAS), where your undergraduate records are stored, standardized and disseminated to the schools where you apply. Information about registering for the LSDAS can be found at http://www.lsac.org

Navigating the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT)

The LSAT is the required admissions test for all American Bar Association-approved law schools. It is administered by the Law School Admissions Council. Test registration and preparation resources are available at the Council’s website, www.lsac.org. Other test preparation resources are commercially available and can be researched on the internet.

The LSAT measures skills that law schools consider essential to your success as a legal professional. The LSAT is a half-day standardized test that is administered four times per year throughout the world. Test dates are
usually in June, October, and December, and February. Many law schools require that the LSAT be taken by December for admission the following fall. You should determine the latest possible test date for each school you consider and make sure that you complete the LSAT in time for all deadlines.

The test consists of five, 35-minute sections of multiple choice questions covering reading comprehension, analytical reasoning, and two logical reasoning sections. Only four of the five sections are scored. In addition, there is a 35 minute writing sample given at the end of the test. This sample is not scored; however, copies will be made and distributed to each school to which you apply.

**Application Tips**

- Many law schools operate on what is known as a rolling admissions process: The school evaluates applications and informs candidates of admission decisions on a continuous basis over several months, usually beginning in late fall and extending to midsummer for waiting-list admissions.
- Typically, applications are available beginning in fall (August or September) and are due in late winter (February or March) for the following academic year. However, this may vary depending on the school you are applying to. So be sure to check the application/admissions deadlines for each school for which you apply.
- Most law schools have a variety of application requirements and deadlines that you must meet to be considered for admission. If you are applying to a number of schools, the various deadlines and requirements can be confusing. It will be helpful if you set up a detailed calendar that will remind you of what you must do, by when, to complete your applications.
- The average applicant applies to 5.3 law schools. You should be sure to place your applications at schools representing a range of admission standards. Even if you have top qualifications, you should apply to at least one safety school where you are almost certain of being admitted.

**Your Personal Statement**

Law schools want to recruit men and women who are qualified for reasons beyond grades and scores. The personal statement in your application is the place to tell the committee about yourself.

Your evaluation of actual experiences and past accomplishments has more value to the admissions committee than speculation about future accomplishments. If you have overcome a serious obstacle in your life to get where you are today, let the admissions committee know about it. A noteworthy personal experience or accomplishment may be an appropriate subject for your essay; describe the experience, and how it has affected your life and your decision to seek a career in the legal profession.

Your personal statement should also reflect the essential values and skills that you have developed. Critical skills for success in law school include analytical and problem-solving skills, critical reading and thinking, writing, listening, speaking, and researching. Many legal professionals value serving the public good, ensuring the integrity of the organizations where they work, and preserving the American legal system. Past employment and academic experiences that played a role in helping you decide to go to law school or to learn about life would also be of interest to admissions committees.

**You’re Ready to Go!**

Identifying the law schools that are right for you, planning for each school’s admissions timeline, and ensuring that you take the LSAT at a time consistent with your target schools’ admissions processes will put you on the path for a successful law school application process. Preparing well for the LSAT and carefully crafting your personal statement can help you gain admission to the school of your choice.

If you need help with your law school application or with your personal statement, contact The Career Center – we are here to serve you.