

# **Pre-Law Handbook**



**Washington University  
College of Arts and Sciences**

**2002-2003**

## Introduction

This handbook is primarily for seniors and others who are applying to law school this year. It should also be very useful for juniors and younger students who are looking ahead toward the time they complete their applications.

The book does not address the fundamental question of whether law school and a career in law is a good choice for the reader. Although the question is vitally important, this issue is very much an individual matter that does not lend itself to discussion in a book of this kind. I am happy to have individual discussions on this subject. Please call Kirsten Slaughter, Coordinator of Preprofessional Programs in the College Office at 935-6897, and schedule an appointment if you would like to discuss your plans. Legal education and a career in law can be very challenging and satisfying, but law school is not for everyone!

Throughout the book you will see quotations like the one in the shaded box below:

*“[Law school] is hard, it is frustrating, it is designed to break you down and then build you up so you think like a lawyer. It is not fun, but there are good parts and if you know how you want to use [a legal education], it is worth it.”* Georgetown 2L

These are from students at a variety of law schools who were surveyed during the last few years. Each received her/his undergraduate degree at Washington University. The designation “1L,” “2L,” or “3L” connotes first, second or third year law student, respectively. These law students provided lots of useful advice for me to pass on to you, and I am grateful to them.

I hope you will keep this handbook and refer to it during the application and decision-making process. If you wish to suggest improvements for future editions, I would welcome hearing them. Good luck!

Sara L. Johnson

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## Academic Preparation

The **two most important factors** law schools consider in deciding whom to admit are the **undergraduate grade point average** (taking into consideration the quality of the undergraduate institution and the course of study) and the **score on the LSAT**. (The LSAT is a four-hour timed exam, usually taken at the end of the junior year or the beginning of the senior year. More on the LSAT later -- see page 4.) There is no better preparation for law school than taking tough undergraduate courses and doing well in them. Creating the undergraduate academic record starts in the first semester of the first year. It is important to get settled academically and make your academic work your highest priority from the beginning.

Select a **major** (or majors) in an area that interests you, and do well. Many law school applicants have majors in political science, English, history, economics, or philosophy, but law schools also welcome those with majors in science, engineering, the arts, or business. A technical or scientific background can be very helpful for lawyers who specialize in environmental issues or patent law, for example.

*“The great thing about law school is that you can bring any academic background and apply the law to it. I would, however, suggest at least introductory courses in economics, political science, and ethics.”* Georgetown 2L

Look for **courses that require lots of writing** and **courses that train you to think analytically**. If your major is in an artistic, scientific, or technical discipline, use your elective opportunities to acquire strong reading and writing skills. Take advanced composition classes and upper level classes that require significant written work. Don't shy away from courses with essay final exams. Law school grades are often based on a single three hour essay exam – so learning how to write clearly under time pressure is a valuable skill. If your major field emphasizes lots of reading and writing, then be sure to take electives that sharpen your analytical, logical, and problem-solving skills. You should know how to take apart a problem or an argument and put it back together. Philosophy, economics, math, science, and statistics courses provide good opportunities to develop these skills. Minimize your use of pass-fail grading.

*“A broad liberal arts series of courses is the best way to prepare.”* Duke 3L

Do not focus exclusively on **law-related courses**. It's fine to take some of these as an opportunity to test your level of interest, but save law study for law school and use your undergraduate years as a time to acquire a very broad education.

Learning a **foreign language** and **studying abroad** are wonderful opportunities to pursue during your undergraduate years. The law, like everything else, deals increasingly with global concerns, and the ability to communicate in a language other than English can be very valuable. Studying abroad is often a student's most memorable college experience. However, do not choose to study abroad if your motivation is solely to enhance your chances of admission to law school – it won't make that much difference to the law schools.

If you are eligible, consider completing an honors thesis in your major field. In addition to graduating with Latin honors (*summa cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, etc.), you will have the opportunity to work closely with a faculty member to conduct original research and create a significant piece of writing.

*“[An honors thesis is] a good opportunity to work on your critical reasoning and writing skills, develop a close relationship with a professor, and learn how to tackle large projects in small pieces. All three of these are good preparation for law school.”*  
Harvard 1L

Develop your **computer skills** -- at least word processing, and preferably on-line research or something like it. Much legal research is done on-line today, and you will have an easier time in law school if the first year legal research and writing course is NOT your first exposure to using the computer.

*“Take classes that make you think. If you're going to be studying law for three years, spend undergrad taking non-law classes which interest you . . . try to be as well rounded as possible. Pre-law classes don't help once you get to law school. The classes you'll regret not taking are Shakespeare or philosophy or art history or psychology.”*  
University of Chicago 3L

## Internships and Extracurriculars

Use internship opportunities to test your interest in law and to gain some experience in different workplace settings. Well-chosen internships can help you learn what kind of working environments you like, and whether law practice or other law-related work appeals to you. It's just as important to determine what you don't like as it is to determine what you do like. Investigate internship possibilities in the Career Center.

*"An internship with a legal aid firm really showed me the reality of practicing law – the good, the bad, etc. It also provided me with some contacts that have been very helpful."*  
Tulane 2L

As with study abroad, choose an internship for its value to you, not because you think it will enhance your chances of being admitted to law school. How much will a law-related internship mean to the law schools? One admissions dean's answer: "As much as it meant to you."

*"Working in a law firm over summers gave me some rudimentary understanding of what was in store, but nothing substantive. I think that working in either business or government would probably be more helpful."* Columbia 2L

Extracurricular endeavors can help you develop organizational, leadership and public speaking skills that are valuable to law students and lawyers. Law school admission officials are very interested in applicants who have made a serious commitment to one or more activities and have taken on significant responsibilities within organizations.

*"[Legal] employers are very interested in extracurriculars, especially those exhibiting leadership skills and initiative."* Harvard Law School alumnus

## The LSAT and LSDAS

The LSAT score is very important to law school admissions officers. A 1997 study by the American Bar Association reported that most law schools weight the LSAT between 55 and 65 percent, and the undergraduate GPA 45 to 55 percent, of the “index scores” they use to make an initial sort of applicant files.

*“Take an LSAT prep course -- the better your score, the better chance you have of getting a scholarship!”* Washington University 1L

The test consists of five 35-minute timed multiple choice sections: one on reading comprehension, one on analytical thinking, two on logical reasoning, and a fifth “experimental” section. There is also a section that seeks a writing sample. **Careful preparation** for the test is essential. **Plan to take it just once and give it your best effort!** How you prepare (by taking a test prep class or working on your own) is up to you, but do not take the test without lots of practice. There is no substitute for taking previously used, real LSAT exams (available from Law Services or the test prep providers) under realistic, timed conditions. Do not register for and take the actual LSAT for “practice,” since all of your scores within a five year period are reported to the law schools, and most law schools average multiple scores.

*“[An] LSAT prep course taught me the importance of practicing for exams to become familiar with material and work on strategies -- also helped with time management.”*  
Fordham 1L

**June after the junior year** is probably the **best time to take the test** for those planning to apply to law schools as seniors. You will have your score before the summer is over, and you can develop your list of schools to which to apply very early in the fall. A good **second choice** is to take the LSAT in the **fall of the senior year** (September or October), which still allows applications to be filed well before the deadlines. The last realistic opportunity to take the test for those applying as seniors is December. Those planning to work or pursue other interests between college and law school (often a very good idea – see below) can put the test off a bit.

*“[A commercial LSAT prep course] made me less nervous and more confident about taking it. I don’t think it helped too much with my score though.”* Boston University 2L

The Law School Data Assembly Service, or **LSDAS**, prepares a report of your academic record for the law schools to which you apply. The law schools contact LSDAS directly for the report. An LSDAS subscription lasts for 12 months, so you should subscribe in the summer or early fall of the academic year in which you plan to apply.

The report includes copies of transcripts of your undergraduate, graduate, and professional school study. If you have taken college-level courses at another institution (e.g. summer school) you must arrange to have that institution's transcripts sent to LSDAS. ***It is your responsibility to ask each college or university you have attended to furnish these transcripts to LSDAS.*** The Study Abroad Office can assist you with transcripts from work completed on study abroad programs. Follow all instructions in the LSAT/LSDAS registration and information book carefully.

LSDAS will compute a GPA for you that includes the results of *all* academic work reported. Trends in your grades – both positive and negative – will be evident. **Check the LSDAS report carefully** when you receive your subscription confirmation letter. *These reports are prepared by human beings, and mistakes do occur. Contact Law Services and let them know about any errors, even those in your favor.*

You may wish to check the “**Candidate Referral Service**” box (question 12 on the registration form). This will result in certain biographical, academic, and LSAT data being forwarded to law schools that request it. Some schools may then invite you to apply, perhaps even waiving the application fee. Similarly, please check “yes” in the box seeking authorization of release of data to the undergraduate pre-law advisor (question 19). Individual LSAT data are not released to anyone, but having it in an aggregated form helps our pre-law advising program considerably.

*“The best way to get in shape for the LSAT is to practice reading, reading quickly, and trusting your instincts. It’s all about confidence, and the best way to be confident is to practice taking tests.”* Northwestern 1L

At the end of the fall semester, ask the Registrar to send in your **fall grades** if you want to have them considered. LSDAS will add the new material and generate updated reports to the law schools to which you have applied.

If you are unable to pay the fees for the LSAT and LSDAS, complete the **fee waiver application** that is available from Law Services. We have a few copies in the College Office.

*“I bought one of those big fat books and studied on my own. Paying for the classes is only worthwhile if you don’t have the discipline to study on your own. And if you don’t have the discipline to study on your own, you might not be prepared for law school anyway.”* St. John’s 1L

## Waiting Until After Graduation to Apply to Law School

Many undergraduates consider taking some time between college and law school to work, earn a master's or Ph.D., or pursue a fellowship, community service (e.g. Teach for America, AmeriCorps, or the Peace Corps), or travel opportunity. Considering such options is a wise idea. Waiting a year or more after finishing college to apply is a popular option; at least half of the first year class at most law schools will be people who have been out of college for one year or more.

*“Advise students that law school is not just a continuation of college. It is an extremely high stress and intense environment. Make sure that students will be ready to work.”*  
Cardozo 1L

What follows are some **arguments, pro and con**, on this issue.

Some reasons to wait to apply:

- You will have time to gain some added experience, self-confidence, and maturity.
- You can become more confident about law school and becoming a lawyer.
- Your senior year grades will be included in the GPA calculation.
- You'll likely be a more interesting law school applicant.
- Full-time work experience may make you more attractive to legal employers.

*“Once you begin law school, your life will be the law. Spend some time working at a corporation, or a store, or travel around the country. Glimpses of real life are few and far between at law school. The happiest law students I know are those who worked and traveled before they began.”* Northwestern 1L

Some reasons to go directly on to law school:

- You are absolutely sure you want to become a lawyer, and you want to get an immediate start on your career.
- You believe you may develop a loss of academic momentum by waiting.
- You do not wish to begin repaying educational loans accrued during your undergraduate education.

*“Students who took time off and used it constructively seem to be more heavily recruited by employers because of their experiences outside of school. On the other hand, by not taking time off I feel I was more prepared and comfortable with the workload and time commitment necessary for studying.” Emory 1L*

In the spring of 1998, I sent a **survey** to 250 Washington University alumni who were then in law school. I asked each person whether the respondent went immediately to law school from college or took time off, and whether the respondent felt he/she had made the right decision. Here are the results from the 103 responses I received:

- 29% of the respondents went straight from college to law school and had no regrets;
- 15% went straight through but wished in hindsight that they had taken a break;
- 56% waited a year or more after graduating from college to begin law school and had no regrets;
- NO ONE -- not a single respondent -- took time off between college and law school and regretted it.

I have continued to talk with our alumni about this issue, and to this day I have never found anyone who pursued other interests before starting law school who had regrets.

My advice: if you find yourself thinking about taking a break from school to work, pursue service opportunities, or travel before starting law school, listen to those signals and heed them. Law school is a rigorous experience, and the first year is crucial! It is very important to be ready, enthusiastic, and prepared.

*“The first semester is all-important. The high-paying summer jobs, law review, class rank . . . a great first semester pays off like nothing I’ve ever seen before. . . . be prepared to read 6 - 8 hours a day, no exaggeration.” Case Western Reserve 2L*

## Where to Apply?

Most Washington University seniors apply to eight to ten law schools. A few apply to only four or five, and some apply to as many as fifteen. In general, you should choose a **minimum** of one or two “dream” or “reach” schools (where your odds of being admitted are less than 30%), two or three where your chances of admission look at least reasonable, and one or two “safe” schools (where your chances of admission exceed 75%). Be sure you would be willing to attend your safe schools -- do research beforehand.

*“Look at what the schools offer, and don’t just concentrate on the name. Don’t get me wrong, the name and reputation are very important. I know this being in a city with seven law schools. However, each school offers something different than the others.”*  
Chicago-Kent 3L

There are many **resources** available to you to help you calculate your realistic chances of being admitted at various law schools:

- *The ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*, available for \$24.00 from Law Services, in bookstores, and free via the LSAC website (<http://lsac.org>). The on-line version includes a feature under which you can enter your own LSAT/GPA figures and find the likelihood of your admission to individual law schools;
- *Law School Admission Profiles* published by the Midwest Association of Pre-Law Advisors, free and available in the College of Arts and Sciences Office;
- the *Boston College Locator*, free and available on-line at [http://www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/svp/carct/matrix.html](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/svp/carct/matrix.html). This website includes links to the law schools’ home pages.

These resources provide lots of data to help you make good choices about where to apply.

Consider **geography** in your decision, because you are likely to develop contacts for potential careers in the area in which you are attending law school. However, don’t let geography be the single controlling factor unless you have strong personal reasons for staying in a particular region. Consider schools that will meet your needs in several parts of the country. Obviously, the greater the national reputation of the law school, the less geography matters.

Also consider **cost** in your selection of schools. Public institutions tend to be less expensive than private institutions (especially in states where you are a resident or could become one), and some private schools are generous with merit scholarships. Don’t let yourself end up with a set of choices that are all unaffordable.

## Completing the Applications

When you complete the actual law school applications, do them very carefully. Type, print very neatly, or use the LSACD, which allows you to complete your applications on your personal computer and print them. **PROOFREAD EVERYTHING CAREFULLY.** Follow all instructions to the letter. Leave nothing blank -- if a question is inapplicable to you, put “not applicable” in the space provided. Do not sign the application until you are sure you understand all aspects of the application.

Look at the questions that seek a written statement and then tailor your answer to the question -- don't assume that one statement will suffice for every school to which you are applying. By all means, don't send a personal statement to Law School “X” explaining why Law School “Y” is a great fit for you by mistake.

Disclose any past “troubles,” including **academic problems, discipline problems, arrests, convictions** -- anything the application seeks. These sorts of incidents will not automatically bar your admission to law school. The law schools are looking carefully to see whether you have taken responsibility for your actions and how you have responded to negative consequences. If you don't disclose them on the applications, they may catch up with you somewhere else in the application process, triggering a misconduct inquiry. When you are ready to graduate from law school, the bar of the state in which you wish to practice will conduct a very detailed review of your past and something may pop up then, causing you to have to explain not only the arrest or academic suspension, but also the failure to disclose it during the application process. Please see me personally if you have any questions at all about these questions on the applications.

It is a good idea to include a **resume** (one page preferred) that outlines your academic accomplishments, activities, work experience and other competencies in one place. Do not, however, fail to answer questions on the application itself by noting “see enclosed resume” -- answer the question AND include the resume.

*“Although application fees are expensive, my strategy was that with a 3.7 and 164, I had a 25% chance to get into several schools . . . I applied to five schools within that range and got into two of them. It's kind of like playing the odds. I figured that hopefully, at least one of those schools would accept me.”* Michigan 1L

**Apply early!** Some law schools follow an “early notification” schedule, and it is to your advantage to get some feedback early. Try to have all your **applications complete by Thanksgiving** so that your file is considered while most of the seats in the class are still available, and to maximize your chances for merit-based scholarships.

## The Personal Statement

In many ways, the personal statement is the only part of the application that is completely within your present control. While an outstanding personal statement will not compensate for a poor GPA or a low LSAT score, it might help you to stand out from other applicants with similar “numbers.”

The personal statement is important both in its **substance** and its **presentation**. It warrants numerous drafts. Show it to people you trust and ask for their comments. Take it to the Writing Center and ask for a critique. Listen carefully to all of the comments you receive, but accept only the advice that makes sense to you.

Here are some **thought-starters** on writing the personal statement from Don Asher, a nationally recognized expert on graduate school admissions who has spoken at several Junior Weekends:

- Has a course, independent research project, or other academic experience ignited your intellectual passion?
- Have you overcome serious adversity in your life?
- What is unusual or unique about you?
- Have you ever received encouraging words from a professor, employer or other person that are relevant? What were they? How did they influence your choices?

Answer each question by making a list and then take time to develop the thoughts fully. Here is a list of “do’s and don’ts” that I have developed after listening to lots of law school admissions deans and directors talk about how they read personal statements:

### **DO:**

- Answer the specific question, if one is asked
- Let the reader know who you are – this is usually the only opportunity you have to “get beyond the numbers”
- Be truthful, specific and accurate
- Write about something you know and are comfortable with
- Write about adversity overcome, but emphasize the overcoming, not the adversity
- Focus rather narrowly . . . zero in on a subject and cover it well
- Write about attributes, achievements and intellectual passions
- Keep the writing style conventional

- Make sure any supplemental statements are just as good as the personal statement
- Keep to the prescribed length; if none is given, keep to two pages
- Double space and leave adequate margins
- Put your name and SSN on each page
- Proofread carefully! Make spelling, punctuation, and grammar perfect

### **DON'T:**

- Try to write what you think the law school “wants to hear”
- Summarize your experiences chronologically – let your resume do that
- Apologize . . . if you need to explain something, it is usually better to do so in a separate statement
- Criticize the LSAT
- Strain to appear unique – not everyone can make themselves appear unique
- Use contrived formats . . . e.g. your obituary, a summation to the jury on why you should be admitted, Q & A format
- Use long quotations – if you use them at all, keep them short and be sure they are relevant
- Philosophize about the role of law in society, or other lofty topics
- Focus on another person, even if that person has been the most influential person in your life
- Send videos, senior theses, etc. unless they are requested . . . “The thickness of the file is *inversely* related to the quality,” according to one admission officer

There are several books on reserve in Olin Library that may help you get started writing the personal statement. A list of these books is included in Appendix A. Additional copies of the list and a few other books are available in the College Office.

## Letters of Recommendation

Like the personal statement, strong letters of recommendation can make a positive difference in situations where your GPA and LSAT score put you in the middle of the group applying to a given law school. Seek a **minimum of two letters from faculty members who know you well**. If you believe you can get a strong letter from a third or fourth faculty member, someone else on campus, an employer, or an internship supervisor, request it as well.

The best and most persuasive recommendation letters are written by faculty members who can comment in some detail on your **intellectual capacity**, your **writing skills**, your **motivation**, and your **overall academic experience** here. You can enhance the chances of getting such a detailed letter by letting faculty members get to know you. Participate in class. Use office hours to discuss material you don't understand fully. Take a second class with a professor from whom you learned a great deal. **A strong and detailed letter from a junior faculty member who knows you and your abilities well is better than a terse letter from a senior faculty member or dignitary who does not know you well and cannot comment in detail on your skills and attributes.**

Ask for these letters early -- **give the writers plenty of time**. Give the letter writers the **tools** they need to write a thorough, personal letter, including a copy of your resume, an unofficial transcript, a copy of significant written work completed in the letter writer's class, and anything else that might help him/her supply details in the letter.

The College Office maintains a free **recommendation letter service** for law school applicants (seniors and alumni). Pick up several **Washington University recommendation forms** from 205 South Brookings. (A sample is in Appendix B.) Fill out the top (waiver) portion of the form, and give it to each letter writer at the time you request the letter. Then the writer can simply forward one original letter, on letterhead, to our office with the recommendation form. When you have decided where to apply, complete the Recommendation Letter Transmittal form (see Appendix C for a sample) and submit it to Kirsten Slaughter in the College Office. She will take care of duplicating and forwarding the letters to your law schools. Letters are kept on file here for five years, and they may only be used for law school applications.

Law Services is now offering an optional recommendation letter service. *I recommend that if you are a senior requesting letters from faculty members, you use the College Office letter service instead.* We can ensure that the letters are sent (to either LSDAS or individual law schools) in a timely manner, and reviewing your faculty letters will help me to write a stronger dean's letter on your behalf when one is needed. If you are an alumna/us living in another location, the LSDAS letter service may fit your needs well.

Send your letter writers a **thank you note** after the letter has been submitted. The people who take time to write letters for you are interested in your plans, and you should let them know where you are accepted in the spring, and which law school you will attend.

## Choosing a Law School

You should consider a number of factors beyond the law school “rankings” in deciding where to enroll. For your top choices, a personal visit is critical.

*“Do not just listen to people who tell you to go to the highest ranked law school you get into. I chose a lower ranked school (though still in the top 20) because it felt right. The people and the location are really what makes a difference, because you will want to form lasting ties with your classmates, who will be your colleagues in practice.”*  
UCLA 2L

When narrowing your choices, and deciding where to visit, consider the checklist below:

- Re-read the school’s **publications** carefully.
- Consider where the **faculty** were trained and their areas of expertise.
- Consider **faculty depth**, and **advanced degree programs** available. (If you are seriously interested in intellectual property law, for example, a school with four faculty members who teach in this area and an advanced (LLM) degree program in IP law should receive your careful consideration. Some law schools will have just one faculty member who specializes in this area.)
- Look for a bright and diverse **student body**. Legal education is highly dependent upon discussion and argument with fellow students, and you will learn best in a setting where the other students bring intellectual strengths and diverse experiences to the classroom.
- Consider what **journals** are available for students to work on. A school with three student-edited journals may offer you a better chance of participating than one with a single law review. The same can be said of **moot court** programs.
- Consider **clinical opportunities** -- if you want to be a criminal lawyer, for example, will you have the opportunity to get out of the library and work on real cases with real clients under the supervision of attorneys BEFORE you become licensed to practice?
- Consider **cost** as well -- how much debt are you willing to incur to become a lawyer? Figure out what you would need to borrow to finance your education at each school. What will the monthly payments be like? How will they affect your lifestyle when you finish law school? What kind of job do you want when you finish law school? Find out if there are part-time work opportunities for second and third year students.

## Law School Visits

When you visit a law school, remember that **you are looking for a place to continue your education AND a strong professional placement service** -- law school is a professional program, and you should expect your law school to assist you in finding a suitable position in the legal field upon your graduation.

To assess what the educational experience at a given law school will be like, try to do the following:

- Sit in on some **classes**. Stop in the lounge and **talk to students and faculty**. The quality of your fellow students is very important. Try to discern whether you will be challenged and stretched intellectually, but also whether you will feel comfortable.
- Look at the **library and computing facilities** -- these will become very familiar to you. Law students spend countless hours in the library. Are the facilities large enough for the student body? Are they comfortable and well lit? Are they open at the times you will want to use them?
- Talk to the administrators you will rely on -- e.g. the **dean of students** and the **financial aid administrator**. Do they seem knowledgeable and supportive?
- Ask about **clinics, journals, and moot court** -- find out how students are chosen and whether everyone who wants to participate is able to do so.
- Think about where you will live. Ask about **housing**, and be sure you will be able to live safely and within reasonable commuting distance if you are not in campus housing.

*“The best advice I got was to actually visit the schools I was seriously considering attending. Nothing in a book can describe the essential ‘feel’ of a law school.”*  
Vanderbilt 1L

To get a sense of the law school’s professional placement record, visit the **Career Office**. Ask about the following:

- What sorts of positions do graduates take? What starting salaries do they earn? Where do they locate?
- Look at interview sign-up sheets -- see which employers come to visit the law school to interview students.
- How do those in the top 10% of the class do, and how do those in the middle and lower thirds do in terms of finding jobs? Everyone can’t finish in the top 10%, and you will want to know what your prospects are if you don’t do as well as you hope.

## Financing Law School

Law school is an expensive investment. It would not be difficult to incur a cost of \$120,000 for a three year legal education – tuition alone is \$25-30,000 at many private institutions. Books, housing, food, and personal expenses add up.

Eighty percent of law students rely on loans as their primary source of financing for their education. The median debt level for recent law school graduates was \$80,000, while the median annual salary for the same graduates was \$49,000. Think carefully about how much debt you are willing to assume, and what salary you will need to earn to pay back your loans.

*“I wish I had sought financial advice. I borrowed every dime to pay for law school and am now facing repayment upon graduation.”* American University 3L

The law schools to which you apply should be your primary source of information about the availability of funds. In general, you will be considered independent of your family for the purposes of determining **federal aid eligibility**. However, law schools will likely require parental income information in order to determine eligibility for institutional scholarships and loans.

Start the financial aid application process in December. File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (**FAFSA**) as soon as you can. (Copies are available in the Student Financial Services Office and on-line.) If you plan to apply for aid from the law schools themselves, submit those applications as early as possible to be considered for scholarship money. Each school has its own forms and deadlines -- be sure you submit the right materials. If you are unsatisfied with the package offered you, ask whether there is an appeal process, and if so, use it.

*“I think the best advice I received was to limit my debt to a minimum.”* Washington University 2L

If you have current indebtedness, get some **financial counseling**. Save as much money as you can before you begin law school. Pay off any outstanding consumer debt. **Maintain a good credit record.**

*“It is likely that you will be working for little or no pay the first summer – save your money so you can take a job you want, even working for free.”* UCLA 2L

More information on financing a legal education can be found in a brochure published by the Law School Admission Council, available in the College Office.

## **Conclusion**

A career in law can be wonderfully fulfilling. It helps if you know yourself well and if you make good choices about the next phase of your education and your career preparation. Now you know more about some of the important decisions you will need to make, and about the nuts and bolts of the application process. Let us know how we can be of help to you. Good luck!

## **Appendix A**

### **Books of Interest to Pre-Law Students**

## **Books of Interest to Pre-law Students**

These books can be found on 24-hour reserve at the Reserve Desk in Olin Library.  
Look up the call number and then request the book

### **Choosing a Legal Career; Getting into Law School; and Excelling Once You Get There**

*Essays That Worked for Law Schools* (Curry, 1988)

A collection of personal essays submitted with law school applications. The sample essays and the interview with an admissions officer may stimulate your own thinking and writing.

*From Here to Attorney -- The Ultimate Guide to Excelling in Law School and Launching Your Legal Career* (Arnett, Coon and DiGeronimo, 1993)

Written by three young lawyers who did very well in law school at UCLA and UC - Davis. Contains lots of good advice on applying and choosing a law school, but is aimed mainly at achieving success as a law student.

*Full Disclosure: Do You Really Want to be A Lawyer?* (Bell, ed., 1992)

A collection of essays describing the law school experience, joint degrees, Myers-Briggs profiles among lawyers, issues of interest to women and minorities in law, and different types of law practice, e.g. law firm, sole practice, corporate counsel, litigation, business law.

*Getting Into Law School Today* (Martinson and Waldherr, 1994)

A “nuts and bolts” approach to the application process. Includes good sections on the admissions process overall, how to target schools for applications, and the LSAT. Has an excellent section on writing the personal statement.

*How to Get Into the Right Law School* (Lermack, 1997)

Written by Bradley University’s pre-law advisor, this book discusses undergraduate preparation (academic and extracurricular), the application process, choosing law schools for applications, the personal statement and other topics.

*How to Get Into the Top Law Schools* (Montauk, 2001)

The most comprehensive book on the market concerning the admission process. Contains extensive interviews with admission deans at NYU, Penn, Texas, Northwestern, Duke, Columbia, Michigan, etc.

*Law School Confidential* (Miller, 2000)

Excellent resource for deciding whether to apply to law school, getting through the application process, and – most important – excelling in law school and in the job search process.

*Looking at Law School* (Gillers, ed., 1997)

A series of essays written mostly by law professors, covering the decision to go to law school, the law school experience (with special sections on women, racial and ethnic minorities and lesbians and gay men), and the law school curriculum.

*My First Year As A Lawyer*, (Simenhoff, ed., 1994)

A collection of 18 essays by new lawyers describing life and work in a wide variety of settings.

*One L* (Turow, 1977)

Scott Turow's classic on his own experience as a first year law student at Harvard Law School.

*So You Want to be a Lawyer: A Practical Guide to Law as a Career* (LSAC, 1996)

Good advice from the people who bring you the LSAT on the entire law school admission process, financial aid, the law school experience and what law practice is really like.

*Thinking About Law School: A Minority Guide* (LSAC, 1995)

This book is directed at those of African, Asian, Hispanic, and American Indian descent, and members of other minority groups who are interested in law school and a career in the law. It includes profiles of successful and happy minority lawyers. Its advice on self-assessment, finances, the application process, and choosing the right law school is excellent, and is appropriate for any law school applicant.

*What Can You Do With a Law Degree? A Lawyer's Guide to Career Alternatives Inside, Outside and Around the Law* (Arron, 1994)

A self-assessment tool for lawyers who are feeling the need to make a career change. Arron is a former litigation attorney from Seattle who left the practice to specialize in career development and provide support for lawyers who are dissatisfied. If you are unsure about whether a career in law is right for you, why not take a look at this book now, before you invest three years and thousands of dollars in law school?

## **Resource Books -- Facts and Figures About Law Schools**

*Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* (American Bar Association, Law School Admission Council, 2002)

The ABA accredits American law schools. This volume has a wealth of statistical information on faculty, curriculum, joint degree programs, enrollment, grants and scholarships awarded, and job placement for each school. The book also contains a two-page text summary on every ABA-approved law school in the United States. (Many schools publish GPA and LSAT data on the applicant group for the class that entered the previous fall, allowing you to assess your chances of whether it realistic for you to apply.) Much of the information in this book is available on the LSAC website, [www.lsac.org](http://www.lsac.org).

## **Careers in Specific Areas of the Law**

*Careers in International Law* (Janis, 2001)

*Careers in Natural Resources and Environmental Law* (Luney, 1987)

*Entertainment Law Careers* (Henslee, 1998)

*Lawful Pursuit: Careers in Public Interest Law* (Fox, 1995)

*Nonlegal Careers for Lawyers* (Menneke and Henslee, 1994)

These books are from the American Bar Association's "Career Series." Each has good basic advice about the field described, and several contain valuable "timesheet" descriptions of just exactly how practitioners in these areas spend their days.

*Guide to Education and Career Development in International Law* (Int'l Law Students Ass'n and American Society of Int'l Law, 1991)

Essays on various types of practice in the international area, and a survey on international law firms.

## **Appendix B**

### **Pre-Law Evaluation Form**

**To the Student:** Complete (please print) this waiver.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

I have requested that this appraisal form be filed by (name of recommender) \_\_\_\_\_ for use in the law school admissions process.

**For questions about the waiver, please consult the prelaw advisor.**

- I waive my right of future access to this recommendation.
- I do not waive my right of future access to this recommendation.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the Recommender:**

Please return this form and your letter to: Sara Johnson, Associate Dean  
 Prelaw Advisor  
 Campus Box 1117  
 Washington University  
 1 Brooking Drive  
 St. Louis, MO 63130-4899

I. Please rate this student in relation to others you have known or taught.

Characteristic	No Basis to Judge	Below Average (Bottom 40%)	Average (Middle 20%)	Above Average (Top 40%)	Good (Top 20%)	Unusual (Top 10%)	Outstanding (Top 5%)
Intelligence							
Independence of Thought							
Speaking Skills							
Writing Skills							
Industry and Motivation							
Leadership							
Judgement and Maturity							

II. Your attached letter (**on letterhead**) should be frank and detailed. **Brief letters in general terms are of little use to a Law School Admissions Committee.** You may wish to address the following:

- In what capacity have you known this student?
- Is the student’s record an accurate reflection of his/her abilities and potential?
- What information do you have about this student that is relevant and not likely to be available from other sources?
- What are the student’s chief attributes and deficiencies?
- How does this student compare with promising contemporaries you have known or taught?

III. Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C**

### **Recommendation Letter Transmittal Request**

**LAW SCHOOL RECOMMENDATION LETTER  
TRANSMITTAL REQUEST**

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

Please forward copies of my letters of recommendation from:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

To the following law schools:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Check if Dean's  
Certificate  
Submitted

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*For Office Use Only*

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Check if Dean's  
Certificate  
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