

Law School Advising Guide

Bates Center for

PURPOSEFUL | **WORK**

146 Wood Street • Lewiston, ME 04240

Phone: 207.786-6232 • **Fax:** 207.786-6126

E-mail: purposefulwork@bates.edu

Web: www.bates.edu/purposeful-work/law

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Introduction

This Handbook was prepared with the assistance of the Northeast Association of Pre-Law Advisors (NAPLA), and with their permission to restructure and distribute this document to students.

The *NAPLA Pre-Law Guide* is based on Cornell University's *Legal Careers Guide*, which was used by permission of Cornell Career Services. NAPLA would like to acknowledge the following schools for their contributions to the *Guide*: Binghamton University, Boston College, Boston University, Bucknell University, Columbia University, Duke University, Northeastern University, Princeton University, and Texas A & M University. The Law School Admission Council provided information on study abroad transcripts, and the Financial Aid section is based on the "Financial Aid Toolkit" developed by the Pre-Law Advisors National Council (PLANC).

Exploring Your Interest in Law

A **Juris Doctor**, or J.D., allows one to choose from among a wide-range of law-related careers and can open doors to careers in government, business, higher education, communications, and numerous other fields. Law school graduates are administrators, teachers, librarians, and business managers as well as advocates, judges, and politicians.

The law can be a rewarding profession. At its best, legal practice challenges the intellect, demanding the exercise of reason and judgment. The ethics of the profession require attorneys to promote justice, fairness, and morality; thus, legal employment can bring particular satisfaction to those who seek to work, within the law, to eradicate social injustice.

The realities of a legal career also usually include long hours working on nights and weekends, and being on call 24/7. There are significant differences in career choices lawyers make, from public interest law and government law to private practice in a firm. The range in starting salaries alone can exceed \$100,000. Many law graduates have hefty monthly loan payments from financing their legal educations and this can certainly affect their career choices.

REALITIES OF LABOR MARKET

Before beginning the application process, consider carefully if a law degree is right for you. Given the significant decline in employment opportunities and the expense of a legal education, it is imperative that you become well-informed before making a final decision. There are a number of ways you can explore the field of law:

- Speak with Anthony McGee, the Pre-law Advisor at Bates. You can make an appointment even if you have not done much thinking about this. This service is available for Bates students and alumni from all class years.
- Subscribe to the pre-law listserv to receive information about law-related events and opportunities by sending an email to Prelaw@groups.bates.edu
- Take stock of the skills you enjoy using. Many lawyers are called upon to use their skills in communication, writing, reasoning, critical thinking, analysis, research, problem solving, advocacy, helping others, and persuasion on a regular basis.
- Create a profile Handshake (www.bates.joinhandshake.com) so that you can search for and receive emails from Bates Center for Purposeful Work about law-related internships, jobs, workshops and events. If you are an alumnus/alumna, register for a Handshake account.
- Attend panels and information sessions to learn about various career options. These sessions are listed on the News/Upcoming Events page of the Pre-law site and also on the Handshake Calendar.
- Participate in a law-related job shadow with a Bates alum or parent through the [Job Shadow Program](#).
- Intern with a law-firm or law-related organizational opportunities are available through Handshake and the Harvard Center for Community Partnerships.

- Conduct informational interviews to learn about the legal professions. Speak with lawyers who are family members, family friends, or Bates Alumni and Parents. To locate alumni, create a linked in account and search www.linkedin.com/alumni. You will want to find out:

- * What lawyers do in a typical work day
- * Personal attributes needed to be successful in a legal career
- * Satisfactions and dissatisfactions of the field
- * Impact of a legal career on personal lives

For suggestions on how to conduct an informational interviewing tips, see the Bates Center for Purposeful Work Guide to Informational Interviewing available on our website.

- Familiarize yourself with current labor market information for lawyers by reading online resources such as [Law School Transparency](#).

Like most careers, what many students know about the law is based on commonly held expectations grounded in television portrayals of lawyers. Not all trial attorneys spend their days dashing to court or unmasking the killer on the witness stand. Many lawyers spend long, solitary hours in front of their computer screens. However, as in any profession or occupation, only a combination of reading, speaking with professionals in the field and trying it out through a job, internship or job shadow can yield an accurate picture of the life of a lawyer. Check out [LST Radio podcasts](#) for more information. Recognize that the skills that one person may relish using, may not be appealing to another. The question is not “Is it a great profession?” but, “Is it a great profession for YOU?”

FIRST AND SOPHOMORE YEARS

- Select a major in a field that interests you and in which you can excel academically. Focus on academics! Creating a strong academic record is critical to admission to law school.
- Begin to form relationships with professors so that they will know your work well enough to write a recommendation letter for you.
- Don't shy away from classes that encourage a great deal of writing and analysis; these are skills that are absolutely necessary for success in law school.
- Participate in at least one or two activities beyond your studies. These activities can include a part-time job, athletics, student clubs (e.g., The Pre Law Society or Moot Court) or community work and volunteering. Law admissions officers understand that it can be difficult to pursue both work and extracurricular activities. If you need to work part-time, focus on that. Your extracurricular activities will not make up for classroom success so don't spread yourself too thin.
- Sign up for a Bates Center for Purposeful Work-sponsored job shadow through the Job Shadow Program. Details announced on [Handshake](#) in September.
- Stay up to date on opportunities offered. Join the prelaw listserv. Subscribe by emailing prelaw@groups.bates.edu
- Attend the Boston Law Fair on September 15th, 2018 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
- Attend Bates, Bowdoin, Colby Law Day on Friday, Sept. 28th from 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm at the University of Maine School of Law in Portland. Transportation is provided. See [News and Upcoming Events](#) for info.
- Attend the Grad School & Professional Fair on October 3rd from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Gray Cage and meet law school admission representatives.
- Attend the roadshow to Suffolk Law School, November 15th from 2:30 pm to 8:30 pm-see details on Handshake.

JUNIOR YEAR

- Take upper-level courses in departments outside of your major.
- Participate in Bates Center for Purposeful Work-sponsored presentations and

workshops.

- Visit a law school while students are on campus.
- Schedule a preliminary conference with Anthony McGee to discuss your plans for test preparation and application schedule.
- Attend Bates, Bowdoin & Colby Law Day on Friday, Sept. 29 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at

University of Maine School of Law in Portland. Transportation is provided. See [New and Upcoming Events](#) for info.

- Attend the Boston Law Fair on September 15th, 2018 from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
- Attend Bates, Bowdoin, Colby Law Day on Friday, Sept. 28th from 2:00 pm to 4:30 pm at the University of Maine School of Law in Portland. Transportation is provided. See [News and Upcoming Events](#) for info.
- Attend the Grad School & Professional Fair on October 3rd from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Gray Cage and meet law school admission representatives.
- Attend the roadshow to Suffolk Law School, November 15th from 2:30 pm to 8:30 pm-see details on Handshake.
- Develop an LSAT preparation strategy including dedicated study time and practice exams. Ideally, you should have 2 - 4 months to prepare.
- Access LSAC's Khan Academy Official LSAT Prep Course- IT IS FREE!!!!
- Speak with those whom you would like to write recommendations and/or evaluations; provide recommenders with sufficient information to write detailed letters.

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

- Prepare a resume. This will be helpful to recommendation writers and will be useful in organizing application answers and essays. A resume should be included with your application.
- Prepare a draft of your personal statement and ask Anthony McGee to review it.
- If you intend to apply for financial aid, obtain your credit report from www.annualcreditreport.com and address any errors or omissions with the credit bureaus.
- Compile a list of all your current debts and estimate your monthly payments during law school. Accesslex.org has tools to help.
- Begin your search for grants and scholarships. Be sure to request a copy of your credit report if you will be borrowing money.

SENIOR YEAR/YEAR BEFORE ENTERING LAW SCHOOL

- Register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) with the [LSAC](#). Have transcripts

from all undergraduate institutions you have attended sent to the LSAC.

- Research law schools which meet your selection criteria.
- Re-take the LSAT no later than December/January if you do not feel that you gave it your best shot on your first go-round, or if you think it is likely you can improve your score to make you more competitive for more selective schools or merit scholarships (typically 75%ile of a given school's applicant pool).

- Request recommendations and/or evaluations from faculty members and others if you have not already done so. Provide recommenders with the CAS forms along with sufficient information to write detailed letters.
- Complete the FAFSA as soon as you can. If you will be filing an income tax return, do that as soon as you can after January 1.
- If you have not already done so, draft and revise your personal statement.
- Schedule an appointment with Anthony McGee to review your personal statement.
- Meet with Anthony McGee to discuss your plans and application strategy.
- Obtain current financial aid information for each school to which you will apply.
- Research grant and scholarship opportunities.
- Determine whether additional scholarship applications or letters of recommendation will be necessary for chosen law schools.
- Make sure your LSAC Academic Summary is correct.
- Make arrangements to have Dean's Certification sent to schools that require it by contacting Dean Carl Steidel.
- Complete and submit your applications. Admissions are on a rolling basis.
- Take the LSAT in December/January if you are retaking the test.
- Check with schools to make sure your files are complete
- Meet with Anthony McGee to assess your options as you learn schools' decisions.
- Receive financial aid offers. If you have special concerns or situations, discuss these with the law school. Examine the net costs and benefits of attending schools where you have been admitted. Discuss actual housing costs with law students at individual schools.
- Take appropriate action on acceptances, wait-list status, and financial aid packages.
- Pay your first law school deposit. Once you have selected your law school, submit your loan application(s) and finalize your housing arrangements.

- Before leaving campus, have a final transcript sent to the law school you plan to attend and/or to any schools still considering your application.
- Make sure Bates Center for Purposeful Work has your new permanent (non-Bates) email address.

Preparing for Law School

Admissions committees look at a variety of factors and trends in your academic record in an attempt to predict how you will perform in law school. There is no “pre-law major” and unlike medical school, there are no specific educational requirements for entrance into law school.

Develop research, analysis, and writing skills

Law schools are interested in your ability to do rigorous **analytical research**, to **write well**, **present information**, and to **persuade**. Take courses that will develop these skills. The [American Bar Association](#) website offers an overview of the skills and values important to preparing for a legal education and a career in law.

Law-related classes may allow you to get a feel for law as a general subject, but they do not usually cover the material in the same depth nor embody the intensity and rigor of law school. Therefore, they are not necessarily accurate indicators of your ability to succeed in the study of law or whether you will enjoy it.

Select a Major

Choose a **major that interests you**. Admissions offices are not particularly interested in your major, but they are interested in how well you did in the discipline(s) you chose to pursue. A double major will not necessarily increase your chances of admission.

While specific coursework may be helpful in corporate law, environmental law or intellectual property, a JD is a generalist’s degree, and applicants come from widely diverse academic backgrounds. One exception is certain areas of patent law which may require an undergraduate degree or required coursework in one of the specified fields of science, engineering, or technology.

Compile an impressive record

A **solid GPA**—particularly within your major—is expected, but a willingness to go beyond requirements demonstrates an intellectual curiosity that would be advantageous in the study of law. Academic excellence reflects discipline and abilities, though the variety and depth of your coursework will also be seriously considered by admissions committees as evidence of your interests and motivation.

In general, **lecture courses** provide a good foundation for further instruction, while **seminars** allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend more specific ideas. Smaller classes give you the opportunity to interact with faculty. Get to know faculty whom you might later ask for recommendations; make yourself stand out as an individual by attending office hours, asking questions in class, and conducting research with faculty.

Pursue Activities

Law schools will be interested in your extracurricular **activities**, **leadership** experience, **summer jobs**, **internships**, and **public service** since they seek well-rounded candidates for admission. Select activities that interest you; they do not have to be directly related to law. Over time, get involved in more depth in fewer activities. Take initiative and show leadership. If you are an athlete, or must work part-time to cover expenses during college, leaving little time for extracurricular, make sure this is evident from your law school application. Include the number of hours worked.

Determining Where to Apply

With over 200 accredited law schools in the United States, how do you decide where to apply and ultimately where to attend? Begin by assembling a list of law schools based on the criteria that are important to you, and then revise your choices according to your chances of admission.

Do not let the search for "long shots, good chances, and sure things" govern your selection process. Selecting schools carefully will help reduce the time and expense of applying to an excessive number of schools.

Criteria for Selection

Where do you plan to practice? Two thirds of law school graduates do not leave the state where they attended law school. Although graduates of a few highly selective law schools do take jobs all across the country, most law graduates take advantage of law school connections and name-recognition in their job search. So, rather than focusing mainly on a school's ranking (and there are problems with only relying on U.S. News & World report—more on that later), there are other factors that may be important to consider.

What type of practice interests you? If you know the practice area and your desired location, you can then research where those employers go to recruit graduating law students or summer clerks.

Other factors to consider:

Location: Is the school in an urban area or in a suburban/rural setting? Is it part of a university or independent? Are there other graduate schools nearby? Is the school in a place you would want to spend three years and where you would be willing to work following graduation, depending on employment opportunities?

Faculty/Classes: What are the academic and experiential backgrounds of faculty? How accessible are they? What is the faculty-student ratio, the number of full-time vs. adjunct faculty, and the number of female and faculty from underrepresented groups? How many students are in each course? Are classes taught in the Socratic Method or lecture?

Facilities and Resources: Is the school affiliated with a university? Do students have access to courses from a range of academic disciplines to supplement their legal curriculum? Is the library large enough to accommodate holdings and permit students to conduct research and study? How helpful is the library staff? How available are online databases such as Lexis and Westlaw? How does the school utilize technology in its curriculum and services? In general, do the facilities provide a comfortable learning environment? Are all the first year courses taught in the same classroom? What is the physical environment of the school? Can you imagine spending most of your waking hours for the next few years there?

Student Body: What is the size of the entering class? What does the admissions profile tell you about the student body? Is the student body from diverse backgrounds? Where did students study as undergraduates and what are their geographic backgrounds? Is there diversity in interests and personal/cultural backgrounds? What is the overall atmosphere—are students friendly or overly competitive? Is there much interaction with fellow students outside the classroom? Do most students live on campus, or commute to school?

Special Programs: What courses are available in specialized areas? What joint degree programs

of interest to you are available? What are the opportunities for practical experience, including clinics, internships, etc.? Can you “write on” to law reviews in addition to being selected based on class rank? What specialized institutes, journals, or organizations exist in your areas of interest? Does the school demonstrate a commitment to diverse student interests and backgrounds?

Career Center: What advising and resources are available to help you find a job? Is career counseling available? How many employers recruit at the law school and who are they? What percentage of the class has positions at graduation? In what types of positions and geographic areas are they employed? What is the percentage of graduates holding judicial clerkships? What assistance is given to students not interested in working in law firms? What is the bar passage rate for recent graduates? How involved are alumni in career activities? What services, if any, are available to alumni needing career assistance?

Student Life: Is housing provided for first-year students? If not, does the school offer assistance in locating off-campus housing? Is the school located in a safe area? What is the cost of living? What types of cultural opportunities are there? Does the school provide recreational facilities? What is the general ambiance?

Costs: What are tuition, housing, and transportation costs? Is financial aid exclusively need-based, or are merit scholarships available? Does the school offer a loan forgiveness program for public interest lawyers? What is the average debt burden for graduates from this school?

There are ways to **minimize your cost** of attending law school and to keep down the debt you incur. Apply to schools where you will be in the top part of the applicant pool; schools may give you a merit scholarship to attract you. Also, public schools are usually less expensive, and even if you are not a resident of a state in which a school is located, you can sometimes pay in-state tuition after your first year.

Reputation

A number of factors contribute to a school’s reputation, including faculty, facilities, career services, and the reputation of the parent university. Though a number of law-school rankings are available, most factors evaluated are not quantifiable, and therefore you should not perceive the rankings as accurate or definitive. REMEMBER: Although a school’s perceived “ranking” will often determine what employment opportunities are available to its graduates, not every practice area requires that an attorney graduate from a top- ranked law school. If you wish to pursue a federal court clerkship or become an associate at a very large or highly selective law firm, as a general rule, you need to attend a highly ranked school, or graduate near the very top of your graduating class at a less-selective law school. Otherwise, you would do well to consult with attorneys in practice in areas in which you could see yourself. Find out where most attorneys in their field attended law school and what the labor market is like.

Selectivity at law schools, however, is one factor that can be quantified; you can gauge a school's relative selectivity by comparing the number of applicants accepted to the overall number of applications. Two resources that will help you determine your competitiveness for schools are Law School Transparency’s Law School Admission Reports and the Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law. These can be found at <http://www.lstscorereports.com/>; https://officialguide.lsac.org/release/OfficialGuide_Default.aspx

For a more detailed discussion of law school reputation and the process for evaluating schools, refer to the Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools. Go to: <http://officialguide.lsac.org>.

Non-Traditional Alternatives

Evening divisions and part-time programs make it possible for students to work and study law simultaneously, earning a J.D. in four years. A few schools on the quarter system allow students to enter **mid-year**. **Summer entry** and/or **summer courses** can accelerate the degree program from three to two-and-a-half calendar years. Some law schools have created **summer trial programs**, which allow applicants to prove themselves capable of legal study in time for fall entrance.

Publications and Online Resources

There are a number of resources designed to help you research and evaluate law schools. Two essential resources you will want to use include the following:

- Law School Transparency – is a non-profit organization with a website that allows you to compare law schools on data about admissions and employment; learn about what the practice of law is like from lawyers on their weekly podcast; and prepare yourself with financial worksheets to better understand the cost of attending law school.
- **ABA • LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools 2011** provides information on the 195 American Bar Association-approved law schools, including faculty, library resources, enrollment, bar passage, placement, 25th-75th percentile LSAT scores and GPAs. Go to: <http://officialguide.lsac.org>

After you complete your research and compile a list of schools, meet with the pre-law advisor to discuss schools of interest to you and to get a reality check on your competitiveness for them.

Understanding Admissions Criteria

Objective Criteria

Law schools consider the objective criteria, the GPA and LSAT score, the factors that most accurately predict how applicants will perform in their first year. However, numbers alone are not the sole basis by which law schools decide on admission. There is no substitute for an individual session with your pre-law advisor. Call Bates Center for Purposeful Work if you would like to schedule an appointment.

Law School Admission Test (LSAT): Applicants take the LSAT, a half-day standardized test, during one of four test administrations (this will be increased to 6 beginning in 2018) offered annually by the Law School Admission Council. Scores, which range from 120 to 180, are used by most law schools as a common measurement of potential for success in law school. Since law school applications have declined almost 40% in the last 5 years, nationally, it is important to make sure that you are looking at **CURRENT** statistics regarding LSAT and GPAs—it has been more of an applicant's market recently.

Undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA): Applicants submit transcripts to the Law School Credential Assembly Service (CAS), which converts grades to a cumulative grade point average using a set of consistent values. The GPA offers admissions committees another numerical basis for comparing applicants.

Applicant Index: Many law schools ask the CAS to combine applicants' LSAT scores and

GPA's with weighted constants to produce a single number which can be used to assess and compare potential for doing well.

Subjective Criteria

Subjective criteria are the factors law schools consider in addition to GPA's and LSAT scores:

Personal Statement: Applicants submit a personal statement as part of the application process for almost all law schools. Admissions committees look for a concise, detailed, well-written statement revealing the applicant's individuality. They want to learn from the statement who the applicant is, what makes him/her qualified to study at their law schools, and how the student will contribute to the diversity and strength of the class.

Letters of Recommendation: Most law schools require applicants to submit letters of recommendation from professors or employers to gain a different perspective on the applicant's academic strength and personal qualities. Admissions officers find most helpful specific examples of applicants' motivation and intellectual curiosity, an assessment of communication skills, and a comparison with peers.

Experience: This factor includes undergraduate curricular and extracurricular activities, internships, part-time and full-time work experience. Include a resume in your application materials that demonstrates your skills and abilities and how you will contribute to the diversity and strength of the class.

Most law schools have a goal to increase participation in the legal profession by underrepresented groups. State schools may reserve seats for state residents. Review websites of schools to learn about their selection criteria, and you may want to contact schools about your specific questions.

Applying to Law School

After reaching the decision to pursue a law degree, you will want to file a strong and complete application to increase your chances for admission. The first step in the application process will be to **meet with Anthony McGee, your pre-law advisor**, who can help you create a strategy for maximizing your chances for success. Please call 207-786-6232 to schedule an appointment. If you are not within easy driving distance, you may schedule a phone appointment with her.

Students and alumni abroad may email their questions [to amcgee@bates.edu](mailto:amcgee@bates.edu), or connect via Skype. PLEASE NOTE: During the busiest time of year (October –December) it is not usually possible to receive a same-day appointment due to high volume. Please plan accordingly and schedule an appointment ahead of time. **If you would like any documents reviewed, please email them at least two days in advance of your appointment so that they can be reviewed with care.**

Next, you should open an online account with the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) by registering at LSAC.org. LSAC is comprised of the 205 American Bar Association-approved law schools in the U.S. and 15 Canadian law schools, and was founded to coordinate and facilitate the process of applying to law school.

Be aware that applying to law school is not inexpensive. Basic costs include:

- Credential Assembly Service (CAS) registration fee

- LSAT registration fee

- Law School Reports
- Application fees (per school)

You might need to add other costs such as LSAT preparation, travel to visit law schools, etc.

LSAC offers fee waivers for those with a demonstrated inability to pay for essential parts of the application. The waivers cover two LSATs per testing year); the Credential Assembly Service (CAS) registration, including a total of four Law School Reports and the Letter of Recommendation Service; and, a copy of *The Official LSAT SuperPrep II*. You will apply online directly through LSAC. The fee waiver will be valid for up to two years. More information is available by contacting your pre-law advisor or from lsac.org.

Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and the Graduate Record Exam (GRE)

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is accepted for admission to all American Bar Association-approved law schools. The LSAT is currently administered six times per year by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC). Detailed test information—dates, sites, registration forms, fees, and deadlines is available online at LSAC.org.

As of July 2018, twenty three law schools are accepting GRE scores. Those schools are: Brigham Young University Law School, Brooklyn Law, Columbia Law, Cornell Law, Florida State University College of Law, George Washington Law School, Georgetown Law, Harvard Law School, Illinois Institute of Technology College of Law, John Marshall Law School, New York University Law, Northwestern University School of Law, Pace University School of Law, Texas A&M School of Law, University of Arizona College of Law, University of California, Los Angeles School of Law, University of Hawaii School of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School, University of Southern California Law School, Wake Forest School of Law, Washington University School of Law and Yeshiva University Cardozo School of Law.

Be aware that test sites can fill quickly, especially in or around major cities. It is advisable to register several months in advance of a test date so that you can take the test in a convenient location.

The **optimal time** to take the exam is when you have the time to study for it! As long as you have your test score by the fall or by December of the application cycle, you will have time to consider your options. If you take the December LSAT, you will need to make sure that the rest of your application materials are ready to send because you will not have a lot of time to complete the application.

The LSAT is designed to provide law school admissions committees with a common measure of applicants' **aptitude for legal study**. The test consists of five multiple choice sections, each thirty-five minutes in length:

- 1) one reading comprehension section
- 2) one analytical reasoning section
- 3) two logical reasoning sections
- 4) one experimental test question section (notscored)

A 35-minute **writing sample** at the end of the test is also not scored; copies of the writing sample

are sent to schools where you apply.

Your score is computed on a **scale of 120 to 180**, based on the number of questions you answer correctly; there is no deduction or penalty for incorrect answers, so it is advantageous to guess if you do not have time to answer a question.

Begin your preparation with **LSAC's free materials** and then assess your progress. There are a

variety of test preparation materials and books available to you. LSAC is entering into a partnership with Kahn Academy to make free LSAT test prep available. No matter how you prepare for the exam, it is extremely important to set aside time each day in the weeks leading up to the exam to study and practice for the test. Inadequate preparation may result in a disappointing score and cause you to rethink your plans. If you feel you would benefit from a more structured program of study, you may want to consider taking a commercial test preparation course.

Commercial courses are expensive and the quality of instruction can be uneven, so it is important to learn **who** will be teaching the course and what materials will be used. Talk with others who have taken the LSAT to learn from their experience, especially concerning the effectiveness of courses you may be considering. Such courses can be helpful in motivating you to study and in building your confidence. Test prep courses may be offered on-line or in person. Please note: the “live” courses are not usually taught on the Bates campus and will require travel to another site, possibly in Portland. Sometimes test preparation companies distribute vouchers for a free course to pre-law advisors. Availability of any such vouchers will be announced on the prelaw listserv or you may ask Anthony McGee if any are available. To subscribe to the prelaw listserv, send an email to amcgee@bates.edu.

If you are registered for a test but feel you are not fully prepared or in a frame of mind to perform well, it may be **better not to take the test**; law schools will not view your absence on the test date negatively. Plan to be **well-prepared** and to take the test only once, but if you do not believe your score is representative of your abilities, for example, you were scoring considerably higher on practice tests, you may want to consider retaking the test.

Law schools are required to **report the highest** of multiple scores of students in their entering class to the American Bar Association. Those scores are then reported to organizations such as the Law School Admission Council for use in their online and print information.

Schools vary, however, in how they consider multiple LSAT scores in making admissions decisions. Though many schools use the higher/highest score in reaching decisions, some of the more competitive schools use the average of multiple scores unless there is a compelling reason to use the higher score.

Most schools welcome an **addendum** explaining the point difference in scores, including any extenuating circumstances and a history of performance on standardized tests. LSAC will report the results of all LSATs you have taken within **five years**; however, you may find some schools willing to consider only scores received within a three- or four-year period.

As of August 2017, Harvard and Arizona State Law Schools accept either the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the LSAT. Both Northwestern University and Georgetown Law Schools have announced their intentions to accept the GRE as well beginning in the 2018-19 admission cycle. The publisher, Educational Testing Services (“ETS”), has an informative website providing information, test registration, and test preparation materials. The Math and Statistics Workshop usually offers free test prep for the Math portion of the GRE each semester. Please contact them for more information. **GRE test prep with Vince Kotchian** is a course offered through Lynda.com which prepares students for the analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning sections of the exam, and includes GRE practice questions, sample essay prompts, and test-taking advice. (Current Bates students have free access to Lynda.com. Login using your Bates credentials.)

GRE Test registration costs \$205. A GRE test fee reduction is available for the test fees for 1 GRE revised General Test and/or 1 GRE Subject Test. Please review the qualifying criteria and then speak with the Bates Student Financial Services Office to complete a GRE Fee Reduction Certificate. Note: Do this far in advance of registering as it can take four weeks to receive your fee reduction after filing the certificate. The GRE is a computer-based test with sections measuring Verbal and Quantitative Reasoning and Analytical Writing. The test is offered throughout the year at test centers around the world. The closest test center to the Bates campus is Prometric Testing Center, 20 Atlantic Place (corner Foden Road and Darling Avenue), South Portland, ME (207-775-5812). Test takers with disabilities or health-related needs may request accommodation which must be approved prior to testing.

Credential Assembly Service (CAS)

The law school application process is streamlined by LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS) which allows applicants to have all transcripts and letters of sent only once to LSAC. LSAC organizes and analyzes applicant information in a way that allows law schools to compare academic records from undergraduate schools that use different grading systems.

Register for the CAS at least four to six weeks **BEFORE** your application deadlines as it can take that long to process transcripts, letters of recommendation and other information LSAC provides to law schools. It currently costs \$175 to register which is good for 5 years. The fee covers:

- transcript summarization
- creation of your law school report (see below),
- letter of recommendation processing, and
- electronic application processing for all ABA-approved law schools

The Credential Assembly Service (CAS) creates your law school report by combining

- an academic summary report;
- LSAT score(s) and writing sample(s);
- copies of all undergraduate, graduate, and law/professional school transcripts—you cannot send in your transcripts to LSAC yourself: you must request them from the institution where you studied and follow the LSAC process for doing so; and
- letters of recommendation

Note: Your law school report will not be released until you pay for CAS, add your institutions, have a reportable LSAT score on file, and all transcripts and required letters of recommendation (LORs) are received.

In order for law school reports to be sent, they must be requested directly by the law schools to which you apply. LSAC charges you \$30 for each law school report that is requested.

The Application

You will apply through the LSAC online application process which allows you to enter common information only once; you then complete each school's individual application and submit your

applications electronically.

The LSAC called this “FlexApp” which is not the same as the undergraduate “common application.” Each law school may include school-specific information requirements in addition to the many standard FlexApp questions.

Completing application forms is a fairly straightforward process. Schools will be seeking basic information about you, including your academic background, extracurricular activities, and employment history. You may be asked to list other schools to which you are applying; responding to this question and/or indicating an interest in financial aid will not affect your chances for admission.

Be **truthful and forthright** as you complete the applications. Enclose a resume with your application, but be sure to respond to *all* of the questions on the applications. **It is better to disclose information about disciplinary proceedings or encounters with law enforcement, than to try to figure out whether you absolutely have to disclose the information. With a few exceptions, most of the events disclosed will not be the sort to prevent someone from enrolling in law school. However, an omission in disclosure, discovered at the stage when someone has graduate from law school and is applying for bar admission (required to practice law) could keep someone from ever using their law license for failing to disclose on their law school application. If you have questions, see your prelaw advisor.**

Personal Statements

Personal statements are requested by most law schools and provide the opportunity to go beyond the objective aspects of the application to discuss who you are and what is important to you.

Schools will be seeking information about your **background, personal qualities and leadership skills**, and motivation to learn what is unique about you and what distinguishes you from other candidates with similar GPAs and LSAT scores.

Your goal, then, will be to write a **concise, detailed statement** establishing yourself as an individual. An interesting and personal discussion about yourself, one that reveals your personality and character, will help you come alive to the admissions committee.

Personal statements are typically **two double-spaced pages**, though you may find that some schools will give more latitude. If schools don’t provide guidelines on length, it’s advisable to submit a statement that’s approximately two pages in length. A few schools will limit the number of words permitted and you should abide by their guidelines.

Proofread carefully, as any typographical or grammatical errors will detract from the favorable impression the statement might otherwise make. **Do not use large words in an attempt to impress readers; instead, use simple language correctly**, and rely on well-organized, interesting content to make an impression.

Your statement should be **honest and sincere**, and the tone should be **confident** and positive; any negative information about your candidacy you are required to discuss should be addressed in other parts of the application or in an **addendum**.

Law schools will be looking for evidence that you can write a coherent statement. Follow general **guidelines for writing essays**: there should be introductory and concluding paragraphs; each

paragraph should begin with a topic sentence; and there should be a clear line of development through the statement. Ideas should be supported with concrete examples. Your pre-law advisor is available to review your statement with you. Please schedule an appointment and submit any documents you wish to have her review at least three days prior to your appointment.

Letters of Recommendation

Most law schools request that **one or two letters** of recommendation be submitted on behalf of applicants. Recommendation letters should include concrete examples of **intellectual strength, judgment, motivation, and leadership**, along with an appraisal of **communication skills** and a **comparison to peers**. Letters written by members of the **academic community** carry the most weight, since they can address your performance in an academic setting and discuss your potential for success in law school. Law schools value letters that address a student's **writing, class participation, research and analytical skills**, and other **academic abilities**. They are especially interested in a professor's assessment of a student, as compared to other students he or she has taught over the years.

At least one letter should be from a professor in your undergraduate **major**, if possible. As you consider whom to ask, remember that it is better to have an in-depth letter from a teaching assistant or lecturer with whom you worked closely than to have a cursory letter from a professor who barely knows you.

Letters from **people outside academia** may carry less weight, since they may be unable to address the topic of greatest interest to admissions committees: your academic potential. However, if you have been in the work force a couple of years or more, letters from supervisors can be helpful.

You can submit additional letters even though a school asks for only one or two. Three letters will be acceptable at most schools and four is usually the maximum.

Make an appointment to meet with letter writers well in advance of the application deadline. Ask them, "Do you feel you know my work well enough to write a positive letter on behalf of my application to law school?" Provide information about your background to assist him/her in writing a detailed letter:

- a cover sheet describing your academic experience, including courses you have taken, research you have conducted, your experience as a TA, etc.
- a copy of your transcript
- a draft of your personal statement (if available)
- a resume
- copies of exams or papers written in his/her class
- a list of dates when recommendations are due

Waive your right of access since you may find writers unwilling to write letters if applicants have access to them, and some admissions committee members may discount disclosed letters.

If you have not been notified that your application is complete by about one month before a deadline, check your LSAC account to see if your letters of recommendation have arrived. Speak with those writers who have not sent letters yet to remind them politely of the approaching deadline. After you have received decisions, send thank-you letters to your recommenders, and let them know where you have been accepted and where you intend to enroll.

From your LSAC.org account, you can assign your letters of recommendation to specific law schools according to their requirements. Your LORs will be sent as part of your law school report to the law schools to which you apply. The LOR service is part of LSAC's Credential Assembly Service.

Follow these steps:

- Name your recommenders to create a form to send to each recommender.
- Write a description to guide you in assigning letters to law schools. For example, a letter that you plan to send to multiple schools might be called “for all law schools.” A letter intended for one specific school could be described as “for X law school.” A letter for schools with certain specialized programs could be described as “for schools with health law programs.”
- Assign each letter to the school(s) to which you want it sent. Once you’ve done this you will submit your request online to LSAC. Your recommender will receive an email requesting them to upload a letter for you. Also, LSAC accepts paper letters of recommendation from recommenders who will need to create an account on LSAC’s website. Instructions will be in the e-mail that LSAC sends to the recommender.
- Print a completed LOR form by clicking on the letter description link under My LORs and Recommenders, and give it to each recommender.
- Have your recommender send the LOR form to LSAC with the signed letter of recommendation, or email it after creating an account.

Dean’s Certifications

A **dean’s certification (or letter/clearance)** is required by some law schools to confirm that applicants have not been involved in academic or disciplinary transgressions as undergraduates.

The certification form should go to Dean Carl Steidel for completion. If you have any concerns or questions about this portion of your application, please speak with your pre-law advisor.

Submitting Your Applications

Remember that your law school admission file is not complete until all parts, including the recommendation letters and LSAC or LSAT report, have been received by law schools. It is up to you to verify that all of your application materials are received before the deadline.

Here are some additional **strategies** for applying to law school:

- Start early. Work on your personal statement the summer before you intend to apply. Contact potential recommendation letter writers over the summer as well.
- Make realistic choices about schools and start filling in application forms online even before you take or receive your LSAT results.
- Read carefully information provided by schools.
- Follow directions. Succeeding in law school is in part based upon your ability to pay attention to details. You will be judged on your ability to do so starting now.
- Print copies of your applications to use as drafts.
- Provide complete and accurate responses.
- Make copies of your completed applications.
- Submit fees with your applications.
- Respect deadlines and be strategic about your timing. Although with rolling admissions, it may be better to apply earlier in the cycle, if you are going to retake the LSAT, or are near the top of

the applicant pool in terms of objective data at a particular school, you will be able to apply closer to a school's deadline. However, schools may run out of financial aid, so if you are applying for aid, do not wait to do so until the last minute. If your application is held rather than accepted or rejected, make sure to update the admissions office with any new information: first semester grades, the completion of your thesis, a merit-based award or honor. If you are in doubt. Contact your pre-law advisor.

Taking Time between College and Law School

Most Bates graduates who attend law school apply one to three years after they have graduated from college. Taking some time before applying to law school can be advantageous for several reasons:

- You will be able to devote more time and energy during your senior year to your academics rather than to preparation for the LSAT and time-consuming law school applications.
- When you apply to law school, your entire academic record will be available to law schools, not just six or seven semesters; if you are like most students, Your highest grades will come later in your undergraduate education.
- Gaining some work experience may help you focus your interests and make an informed decision about law school.
- You may become a more attractive candidate with a few years of experience using the skills that are employed in the practice of law such as critical thinking, research, and analysis.

Considering Admissions Decisions

Candidates are usually either accepted, denied, or wait-listed, which means the applicant is considered a desirable candidate and may be admitted later. Law schools may place applicants on "**hold**" or "**reserve**" prior to reaching a decision and frequently notify candidates of this status. Applications of those on hold or reserve are reconsidered at a later date, usually before the files of those who have been wait-listed. If you are placed on hold or reserve, you should call the school and ask them exactly what this status means and what, if anything, you may do to change the status to an acceptance.

What to do if you are Wait-Listed

There are several things you can do to improve your chances of admission if you are on reserve or have been wait-listed:

- **Write a letter** to the director of admissions to inform him/her of your strong interest in the school and to provide an update on your activities since you submitted your application.
- If the school is your **first choice**, state that you will attend if accepted.

- If you are a senior, inform the school of **accomplishments** since you applied, for example, that you have completed your thesis or you received an award at Commencement or other notable accomplishments.
- If you are currently **working**, describe your professional responsibilities and other relevant activities in which you are engaged; include an updated resume.
- Send an **additional recommendation** from a professor or employer
- **Visit** the law school to demonstrate your strong interest; contact the admissions office to arrange for a tour and to sit in on a class or two. Some admissions officers will agree to meet with applicants, but generally these discussions are not evaluative.

Contact your pre-law advisor for additional strategies and tactics.

Making a Decision

Visit the law schools when deciding among schools that have accepted you. Take tours and attend classes, make an effort to meet faculty and staff, and speak with students to get their perspective on factors important to you, such as accessibility of faculty, competitiveness of students, career services, assistance of library personnel, etc. Follow up with a thank-you letter to the admissions office stating what impressed you about the school.

Speak with Bates alumni who are currently studying at or have attended the law schools to which you have been admitted. Use www.linkedin.com/alumni to locate them or contact your pre-law advisor.

Talking with students/alumni at schools of interest about their experience can be helpful in reaching your decision. Contact the schools to inquire about speaking with current students and whether they have an alumni network you can access.

Cost and financial aid awards also need to be considered when making a decision. If you will be entering law school with debt accumulated as an undergraduate, financial factors can play an even greater role in your decision.

If you are deciding between a schools that is highly regarded and one that interests you but is less prestigious, keep in mind that more highly ranked schools will, **in general**, provide more employment opportunities after graduation. However, rankings do not tell the whole story—**you need to know information about the hiring practices in the geographic area and type of practice which interests you.** [Law School Transparency](#) is an excellent source of employment information. You can select a school and look at Jobs data and other data as well. Schools that accept you will probably ask for a **deposit** to hold a space for you. Deposits may be due before you hear from all schools. If this is a financial burden for you, contact schools that accept you to explain your situation and ask if they would be willing to extend the deposit deadline. Also, consult with your pre-law advisor who can help you weigh your options.

Once you have reached a final decision on which school you will attend, notify schools that accepted you so that they can offer your place to someone else.

Reapplying Later

If you are **not accepted** at a law school you would like to attend, consider retaking the LSAT if you feel that you can improve your score, or revise your list of schools if you decide to reapply. Working for a few years can make a difference in the admissions process and can also provide exposure to another career field that might engage your interest.

You are encouraged to refer to the Law School Admission Council's [Statement of Good Admissions and Financial Aid Practices](#), which will help you understand the practices governing the admissions and financial aid process.

Financing Law School

Law school is an important **investment** in your future. Cost can exceed \$150,000 per year at a private institution for tuition and all expenses. On average, amounts borrowed are more than \$122,000 at a private school and more than \$84,000 at a public school. Consider the financial aid process as seriously as you do the law school application process.

Keep in mind, too, that the days when graduates of a top-tier law school could safely assume that jobs with starting salaries above \$125,000 would be plentiful are over. Only 64% of 2016 law school graduates nationally are in jobs that require that they have passed the bar. Take some time to familiarize yourself with **ACTUAL** starting salaries lawyers in your preferred geographic and practice areas can expect, as well as the placement data available from the Career Center at your law school. [Law School Transparency](#) is an excellent source of employment information.

Before you apply to law school, spend money wisely and pay your bills on time to ensure a good credit record. Bad credit will affect your ability to borrow money. If possible, pay off credit cards and other consumer debt before law school.

Think about your **post-law school goals**. Salaries for lawyers vary widely, depending on the type of practice and region. **Law school debt** will claim a significant portion of your income as a lawyer.

To keep debt to a minimum, consider **state-supported law schools**, or schools that offer **merit-based aid**. Merit-based aid (grants and scholarships) is usually awarded to those applicants in the top 75%ile of a school's applicant pool. The future of the federal government's income-based repayment and public service loan repayment programs is uncertain under the current administration. Many law schools offer their own loan repayment assistance programs (LRAPs) and scholarships that require a separate application. Your eligibility for the federal repayment and loan forgiveness program as well as any program a particular school offers is something you should consider **BEFORE** deciding how to finance your legal education. An excellent source of information about the federal program is found at [Equal Justice Work's website section on Student Debt Relief](#) as well as through [AccessLex.org](#).

If you do accept merit-based aid, make sure that you understand what you have to do in order to keep your grant. There have been recent media reports of students who were awarded merit-based scholarships which required that they receive a GPA of 3.0 or above. Most law students, used to academic success in college, do not consider the possibility that their GPA would dip below a B average. However, many law schools grade on a curve, ensuring that a certain number of students, some of whom receive merit scholarships, will dip below that B average. It is essential to find out where a particular school sets its curve—the median grade.

Achieving a 3.0 at a school with a 2.9 median is easier than at a school with a 2.5 median. You may also want to find out how many others in your class have received the same offer.

Complete your federal income tax return (if you are required to file one) as soon as you can after January 1 of the year you plan to begin law school. You will need this information to complete the FAFSA (“Free Application for Federal Student Aid”). After your FAFSA is processed, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) by mail or email. On the SAR, you’ll find your Expected Family Contribution which is used to determine your federal student aid eligibility. In addition to the FAFSA, schools may require other financial aid applications for their school-based grant and/or scholarship programs.

State Aid

Many states offer assistance for graduate or professional school. Click [here](#) for a listing of state offices.

Institutional Aid

Your school may provide nearly as much of your funding as the federal government will. To find out what aid your school offers, contact the school’s financial aid office.

Other Aid

Here are some other places you should consider looking for funding:

- the reference section of your school or public library
- the Internet (there is a free scholarship search at www.FederalStudentAid.ed.gov)
- foundations, religious organizations, community organizations, local businesses, and civic groups
- organizations (including professional associations) related to your field of interest
- ethnicity-based organizations
- your employer
- your state vocational rehabilitation agency (if appropriate); a list of state agencies is at www.disabilityinfo.gov or
- http://www.workworld.org/wwwwebhelp/state_vocational_rehabilitation_vr_agencies.htm

How to Apply for Financial Aid

Check your credit if you will be using Federal Grad PLUS or private loans for law school. These loans may not be available if your credit history does not meet minimum standards. You may want to obtain a copy of your credit report so that you can track and clear up any problems. You can order your free copy from one of the major credit reporting agencies by calling 1.877.322.8228, or you can go to www.annualcreditreport.com.

Apply early for financial aid. Check each law school’s website to learn financial aid deadlines. Some schools have priority dates for submitting financial aid information; **students who apply earlier have a better opportunity to obtain limited grant money.**

Completion of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) is required for all federal student loan programs. The FAFSA also is used by some law schools to collect information for their own institutional aid.

Some schools have **separate applications** for financial aid, while others use the law school

application or the FAFSA. Schools also vary in how they distribute their own funds.

If you have **special circumstances**, provide this information to the law school financial aid office. This can be critical for law students who have been working full-time in the prior year or who have unusual medical or family expenses.

Do NOT wait to complete the FAFSA until after you are admitted to a law school.

If your **federal tax return** will not be ready until later in the spring, you can estimate prior year income on the FAFSA. Parental income is **not** considered in determining eligibility for federal loans to graduate-level students; you will be directed to skip Section III- Parental Information in the FAFSA.

Making the Decision

Once you have provided all required information, law schools can offer you a financial aid package. In deciding which law school to attend, it is important to **balance your financial considerations** with other criteria, such as reputation, location, size, faculty, programs and placement success. Compare the net of your projected costs at each school you are considering, offset by any offers of grants or scholarships from the school, to determine the amount you will need to make up through loans or personal funds. **AccessLex.org, a non-profit organization specializing in graduate student loans has some excellent resources on its website, including a loan repayment calculator which demonstrates your monthly payments based on the amount and terms of your loans and a Financial Aid Award Analyzer which allows you to calculate and compare financial aid awards from graduate schools you are considering.** These tools and more information are available at AccessLex.org.

Legal Career Resources

- **American Bar Association (ABA)** is the national organization of the legal profession. The Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar of the ABA is identified by the U. S. Department of Education as the "nationally recognized accrediting agency for professional schools of law. Visit www.americanbar.org and click on the Legal Education tab.
- **Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)** assists economically and educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school. Visit CLEO at www.cleoscholars.com
- **Law School Admission Council (LSAC)** is a nonprofit corporation comprising 210 law schools in the U.S. and Canada that provides services to the legal education community. Go to www.lsac.org for a comprehensive list of resources to help prospective students explore legal careers, consider legal education, apply to law school, and finance their law school education.
- **The Association for Legal Career Professionals (NALP)** is dedicated to facilitating legal career counseling and planning, recruitment and retention, and the professional development of law students and lawyers. Visit www.nalp.org