

## Pre-Law Advising

### Basic Information

While Babson does not have a formal pre-law program, we do offer a law concentration. We believe that a Babson education – whether a student has concentrated in law or not – is good preparation for law school and for a legal career. The law faculty is always willing to help students with the process of deciding whether law school may be for them and with the application process.

In thinking about law school, you'll need to do some research. The process itself involves finding the right mix of schools for you, registering, preparing, and taking the LSAT, preparing your application, and then hopefully, deciding where you want to go and how to pay for it. The best place to start your search is the web site of the [Law School Admission Council \(LSAC\)](#). If you're serious about law school, you'll be spending a lot of time at this site.

### Is Law School Right for Me?

Law school is only partially a path to a specific career. Many graduates become attorneys in private practice. Other graduates work as attorneys for corporations or government agencies. Still others work in the business functions at corporations or in investment banking. Others use their legal education to go into politics, and still others use their degrees in social or political activism. If law school is what you are thinking about, how do you find out if it's the right path for you? After all, it's three years of hard work and generally an expensive investment. It's better to know before you go.

There are lots of ways to find out. Talk to people who are lawyers now. Find out what they do, and whether they are happy doing it. Talk to law school admissions offices. Take tours of law schools and ask to sit in on a law school class. Babson's CCD has lists of alumni contacts who are currently lawyers.

### Preparing for Law School

There is no prescribed course of study or set of majors that are expected from undergraduates. Law students come from all majors. A Babson education will be very useful in law school, as you'll have a practical understanding of the way the world of commerce works. You need not make the law concentration your course of action as preparation for law school -- major in whatever you like the best. If you do that, you'll be happy and your GPA will reflect your level of interest in your major subject. [The American Bar Association](#) has an official statement on [Preparation for Legal Education](#) that you may find useful.

Internships in law firms are not easy for undergraduates to find, as most firms prefer to hire law students. However, some corporate law departments hire interns, as do some small law practices. You'll likely be doing non-legal work, but you'll see how the offices actually work and what lawyers there do. You should also consider internships with politicians or for government agencies, both at the state and federal levels. Another possibility is interning for an advocacy organization. While the work is often unpaid, the experience of working toward social or political change can be invaluable.

Should you work for a few years before going to law school, or go straight from college? The answer depends on your skills, interests, and needs. Many law students work for a few years before applying to law school. Sometimes, the added maturity and skill gained from working will really help you succeed in law school. Sometimes the financial stability really helps. Other students have the focus, drive, and motivation to go for three more years of study directly from their undergraduate education.

### Finding the Right Law School

There are about 200 law schools in the United States, so narrowing the choices is an early task for every applicant. You can use several criteria to narrow your search.

- **Accreditation.** The American Bar Association is the accrediting agencies for law schools in the U.S. Accreditation makes a difference. If you go to an unaccredited law school, you may have some difficulty taking the bar exam when you finish. Unaccredited schools usually arrange for students to be able to take the exam in the school's home state; however, should you want or need to take the exam in other

states, those states may or may not recognize your degree. The [LSAC](#) site has a downloadable guide to all the accredited law schools in the U.S. and Canada.

- **Geography.** The practice of law operates on a state-by-state basis, so if you know where you want to be when you are done with school, generally, that's the place to go to school. The top law schools are all well-recognized nationally, but second, third and fourth tier schools are more narrowly known. On the other hand, some of these schools may be the best place to start your career in a particular city or state.
- **Reputation.** The better the reputation of a law school, the easier it will be for you to start your career after graduation. Hiring Committees tend to want to employ people who went to schools they know and respect-often this means the schools they went to. There are many ways to get a sense of a school's reputation. One is to ask lawyers who are doing the kind of work you think you might like to do. Another is to consult one or more of the ranking systems. All are widely criticized, but they may be helpful as one source of information about a school.
- **Specialties.** Law schools provide all students with a general education, good across a variety of career paths. However, some schools have national reputations in specific areas of study. Sometimes a school that is not generally well-known will be very widely respected in a particular area. In New England, for example, [Vermont Law School](#) has an excellent reputation for environmental law, while [Franklin Pierce](#) (which is in the process of merging with the University of New Hampshire) is quite well known for its intellectual property work.
- **Cost.** Law school can be really expensive. Depending on your financial situation, you may have to factor in the cost of a law school in your selection process. In some states, the state universities have excellent law schools that charge reasonable tuition. Other states, such as Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, have no publicly-supported law schools.
- **Curriculum.** As you start to narrow your search, examine the courses available at each potential law school. Does the school have courses in the subjects you are interested in? Does the school allow you to take a course at another school in the university? Does it offer a joint degree program if you are interested in one? Can you study abroad over a summer or even a semester (if this is something that interests you)?
- **Will I get in?** This question may narrow your search considerably. Law schools generally use a matrix of grade point average and LSAT score as a screening device for applicants. If your GPA and LSAT don't give you a chance of getting in, it's generally not worth applying. You can find the grid for specific law schools at each school's admission site, or at the [LSAC](#) web site.

Unfortunately, there's no substitute for research in selecting possible law schools. One of the best ways to gather information about law schools is to attend a Law School Forum. The [LSAC](#) web site has the details. Plan to go. There will be informational seminars on applying to law schools, financing schools, and choosing schools. Admissions reps from many law schools will be there, handing out information and answering questions.

In choosing your target law schools, think about the time-honored strategy of having a stretch school, reasonable bets, and a safety school. You may decide there is one particular school you'd like to attend, or even that if you don't get in to your top choices, you'd rather wait a year or two and try again. However, the trade off between the schools you want, and the ones you think would want you is an important part of the process.

When you've done your own assessment, come see one of the law faculty who are happy to talk this over with you, and may know of a school you haven't yet considered.

### **Taking the LSAT**

The LSAT is a key component to the process of going to law school. Unlike the SAT test, the LSAT is a one-time event for most people. Law schools tend to average the scores of multiple attempts, so you get one chance to do as well as you can.

If you want to go to law school, you will need to take the LSAT no later than December of the prior year. You may also take the test in October or June for admission for the following September. Most full-time programs

start only in September, so these deadlines are important. Find the deadlines, registration requirements, test dates, locations, and preparation information at the [LSAC](#) web site. Take the sample tests available there.

You should prepare to take this test. Some people prepare by using the information available at the [LSAC](#) and commercial review books available in bookstores. This is the minimum you should do. If you are disciplined and diligent, it works. If you need more motivation or help, there are several test preparation companies happy to help for a price. [Kaplan](#) is the best known review course, but [Princeton Review](#) also runs well-respected review courses.

### **The Application Process**

Once you've narrowed down your list, you can begin the application process. There are several steps, all of which involve the LSAC:

- Register for the LSAT
- Register for the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). This is a central point for the collection of transcripts, scores, and some recommendations.
- Consider whether you want to use the common electronic application.
- Get the applications from your target law schools. Note the requirements of each application and the deadlines carefully. It might be good to make a checklist so you know when the parts are done.
- Get the data to the LSDAS.
- *Ask early for recommendations*-this process can take a while. Ask people who know you and hopefully have good things to say about you.
- Get to work on your essays. Make sure you have at least one other person read them before you send them. The writing center can help, as can faculty advisors.
- Get those applications done on time. They should be perfect-this is your chance to sell yourself to the law school.

### **Other Interesting Links**

- The Internet Legal Resource Guide's [Pre Law Student Services](#) page.
- The Canadian Law Deans have an excellent web site linking the on-line services of [Canadian Law Schools](#). The [LSAC](#) also has a guide to Canadian law schools.
- Topics featured on FindLaw - Student Channel (<http://stu.findlaw.com/student/index.html>) include the following: Considering Law School, Financing Law School, Admissions, Discussion Groups and Pre-Law Organizations.
- The [Boston College Online Law School Locator](#) lists the 25th-75th percentile LSAT scores and GPA ranges of students at accredited law schools.
- Review *Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly*(<http://www.masslaw.com>) for current information around the legal studies industry.

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