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# Introduction

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The *Legal Careers Guide* provides information to help you determine if a career in law is right for you, to aid you in preparing as an undergraduate for legal study, and to assist you in applying to law school. The *Guide* is designed to help you at each step of the process by providing accurate and up-to-date information.

We would like to express our appreciation to Kristine Goggan, Senior Administrative Assistant, Cornell Career Services, for her assistance in producing the *Guide*.

Jane Levy, Coordinator  
Prelaw Advisory Network

# Deciding on a Career in Law

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A J.D., Juris Doctor, can lead to a wide range of law-related careers and can open doors to careers in government, business, higher education, communications, and numerous other fields. There is little doubt that the study and practice of law can be intellectually stimulating; the most basic functions of the legal profession call daily upon reasoning, analytical, and communication skills. The possibility of effecting social change, setting legal precedent, and defending basic human rights attracts many who are dedicated to making a positive impact on the lives of people they serve. And, an expectation of prestige and high salaries is also a consideration in deciding on a legal career.

The realities of working in the legal profession, however, should be fully explored before reaching a decision. Hours can be very long and often include weekends. Legal work can require spending considerable time in tedious, painstaking research and repetitive administrative tasks. Depending on the type of law practiced and the location, salaries may not meet expectations. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate both advantages and disadvantages in making this important decision.

## Exploring Your Interest

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Before beginning the application process, then, consider carefully if a law degree is right for you. Your decision should not be made by default because you are not sure what else to do. There are a number of ways you can explore the field of law:

- Register to receive e-mails about law-related programs and opportunities by completing a brief Student Profile at [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu).
- Talk with a career counselor and take some interest assessment tests at Cornell Career Services (CCS) in 103 Barnes Hall, or, G55 Goldwin Smith if you are an Arts and Sciences student, to determine if your personality, values, and interests are aligned with what is required in the legal profession.
- Conduct research on legal careers using resources at Career Services in Barnes Hall.
- Investigate online resources that provide information on legal careers, law schools, and other law-related topics through the Cornell Career Services website.
- Participate in Cornell's Extern Program to shadow Cornell alumni in their workplaces over winter break, and in a similar program for first-year students, FRESH, that takes place during spring break.
- Intern with a law firm or law-related organization to gain exposure to the field and to experience the work environment.
- Conduct information interviews to learn about the legal profession. Talk with lawyers who are family members, family friends, or Cornell alumni. The Career Contact Network, accessible through the CCS home page at [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu), is an online resource that puts you in touch with alumni who volunteer to answer questions and provide career advice to students via e-mail. Inquire about:
  - \* 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

- Speak with lawyers who became dissatisfied and left the field.
- Discuss the law school experience with current law students and sit in on a class or two. You can arrange to visit Cornell Law School by calling the Admissions Office at 255-5141.
- Take a position as a paralegal or legal assistant in a law firm or work in a law-related organization before applying to law school to confirm your interest in the field. No special training is required, and Cornell Career Services can assist you in your job search. Many Cornellians who eventually go to law school take time off first.

## Realities of a Legal Career

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An important step in making a decision is to note the differences between commonly held expectations and the reality of legal practice. For example, significant social changes will most likely occur through politics or the nation's lower courts, processes which require a great deal of time, patience, and persistence. The overall employment rate was up slightly from the previous year, and the market for new lawyers continues to be competitive for those seeking positions in cities and firms that are in high demand. Employment statistics for the class of 2007 law graduates, based on responses from 40,416 (92% of all graduates) reveal the following<sup>1</sup>:

- The average starting salary was \$86,396; the median salary was \$65,750.
- About 11% of salaries reported were at or below \$40,000.
- Salaries of more than \$75,000 accounted for nearly 43% of salaries reported.
- Approximately 56% of the class chose private practice in law firms.
- About 27% took positions in public service, including judicial clerkships, government agencies, and public interest organizations.
- Graduates entering business accounted for about 14%.
- Approximately 23% of graduates were employed in positions for which bar passage is not required.

While a corporate lawyer may earn \$135,000 the first year in a private firm, he/she may also work twelve hours a day, six or seven days a week. Most of those interested in public interest law can expect a starting salary around \$45,000. Although there is certainly personal satisfaction to be derived from representing underprivileged clients, the debt most law students accumulate may significantly influence an eventual choice of specialization.

If after careful consideration of the realities of a law career you are committed to the prospect of a career that will require you to think logically, critically, and creatively; to address some of the major social issues that confront our times; and to play a part in shaping legal institutions and codes that influence the future, then becoming a lawyer may very well prove to be a rewarding and fulfilling career choice for you.

<sup>1</sup>NALP-The Association for Legal Career Professionals' *Jobs & J.D.'s: Employment and Salaries of New Law Graduates—Class of 2007*.

# Preparing for Law School

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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 "prelaw major," and unlike medical school, there are no specific educational requirements for entrance into law school. Your curriculum should provide a diverse background; choose classes that challenge your ability to think and reason logically, that require you to research subjects thoroughly and write extensively, and that sharpen your ability to analyze material. Developing your research and organizational skills as an undergraduate will benefit you in law school.

## Developing Skills

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The following disciplines can help develop skills that are necessary in law school and will serve a future lawyer well:

- Social sciences offer insight into human behavior, social processes, and institutions. Courses which give you a better understanding of diverse cultures will help prepare you for a legal career.
- English and communication courses are forums for improving written and oral expression.
- Mathematics and philosophy classes provide background in logic and reasoning, as well as problem-solving skills.
- Physical sciences require systematic analysis of evidence and inductive reasoning.

Law-related classes may allow you to get a feel for law as a general subject, but they neither cover the material in the same depth nor embody the intensity and rigor of law school; therefore, they are not especially accurate indicators of your ability to succeed in the study of law or whether you will enjoy it.

## Selecting a Major

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Choose a major that interests you and double major if you like, but be aware that this is not necessarily a positive factor in the admissions process. Though most law students do not "major" in specific areas—typically specialization occurs in law firms or other legal environments following law school—there are areas of law you may want to prepare for as an undergraduate. For example, if you are considering a career in patent or intellectual property law, you may want to major in engineering or science. Natural resources can provide a good background for environmental law. Learning one or more languages and taking courses in international studies will help lay the groundwork for a career in international law. Courses in economics, business, and accounting are useful in the areas of corporate and tax law.

## Compiling an Impressive Record

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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. The key to compiling an impressive transcript is to challenge yourself by taking classes at increasingly difficult levels and studying diverse subject areas. Taking courses on

a pass/fail basis might encourage you to explore subjects or levels of instruction you might otherwise avoid for fear of a low grade; keep in mind, however, that taking a number of courses pass/fail may be perceived negatively. While grades earned during study abroad are not calculated into your GPA for law school, admissions committees will see your study abroad transcript.

In general, lecture courses provide a good foundation for further instruction, while seminars allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend more specific ideas. Seminars also give you the opportunity to interact with faculty. It can be difficult at a large university such as Cornell to identify faculty members who can write detailed and substantive letters of recommendation in support of your application to graduate or professional school. 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.

## **Other 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, not those you think will impress admissions committees. However, do not devote so much time to your activities that you sacrifice your GPA, which is far more important in the admissions process than activities.

# Determining Where to Apply

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With 200 accredited law schools in the United States, how do you decide where to apply and ultimately where to attend? It will be important to balance factors that address your personal preferences with those that affect your chances of admission. Do not let the search for "long shots, good chances, and sure things" govern your selection process. Begin by assembling a list of law schools based on criteria that are important to you, then revise your choices according to your chances of admission. This systematic approach should help limit frustration and confusion during the process of applying to law school. Selecting schools carefully will help reduce the time and expense of applying to an excessive number of schools.

## Criteria for Selection

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Consider the following factors and determine which are important to you:

**National/Regional Schools:** Does the school attract applicants from across the country and abroad, or are most students from the region in which the school is located? Do most students want to work throughout the country or in the school's region following graduation?

**Faculty:** 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 minority faculty?

**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 accessible are electronic databases such as Lexis and Westlaw? In general, do the facilities provide a comfortable learning environment?

**Student Body:** What is the size of the entering class? What does the admissions profile tell you about the quality of the student body? 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?

**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.? What specialized institutes, journals, or organizations exist in your areas of interest? Does the school demonstrate a commitment to women and minorities through special programs?

**Career Services:** 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?

**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? Is the location rural or urban? What is the cost of living? What types of cultural opportunities are there? Does the school provide recreational facilities?

**Costs:** What are tuition, housing, and transportation costs? Is financial aid exclusively need-based, or are merit scholarships available?

## Reputation ---

The issue most often discussed by prospective law students, yet the most difficult to define, is reputation. A number of factors contribute to a school's reputation, including faculty, facilities, career services, reputation of the parent university, etc. 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. Selectivity at law schools, however, is one factor which can be quantified; you can gauge a school's relative selectivity by comparing the number of applicants accepted to the overall number of applications. The *Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools* contains charts and tables of recent admissions cycles at most schools, reflecting the selectivity.

Schools can be divided roughly into three groups:

- Schools with national reputations that tend to appear in various "top ten" lists. They draw students from a national pool and offer geographic mobility to graduates.
- Schools with good regional reputations that are attended primarily by students from the region, who may want to remain in the area following graduation, but who may also seek positions throughout the country.
- Local schools that draw students primarily from the immediate area who want to practice there following graduation.

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*.

## Non-Traditional Alternatives ---

You should be aware that some law schools offer alternatives to fall admission in a full-time law program. 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. And finally, some law schools have created summer trial programs, which allow borderline 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. Resources listed below are available at the Cornell Career Services Library in 103 Barnes Hall; a complete listing of the Library's prelaw holdings is appended to this Guide.

- **The *Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools 2009*** provides information on the 200 American Bar Association-approved law schools, including faculty, library resources, enrollment, bar passage, placement, 25th-75th percentile LSAT scores and GPAs. The Guide is accessible free of charge through the LSAC website at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org).
- **NALP-The Association for Legal Career Professionals** offers an online directory of law schools at [nalplawsonline.org/index.asp](http://nalplawsonline.org/index.asp).

- **Catalogs and bulletins** published and distributed by law schools are available through their websites or by contacting the schools by phone or U.S. mail. Copies are maintained as a reference in the Cornell Career Services Library.
- *The NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists 2008-2009 Edition* provides information about joint degrees, areas of emphasis without graduate degrees, treatment of multiple LSAT scores by individual schools, schools that grant one-year deferrals, bar passage rates at a number of schools, schools that award non-need-based scholarships, etc. The Book of Lists is available online at [bu.edu/cas/advising/preprof.html](http://bu.edu/cas/advising/preprof.html).
- **A wide range of information** concerning legal careers, the application process, financial aid resources, and home pages of many law schools is accessible through the Cornell Career Services home page at [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu).
- **The Boston College Online Law School Locator** at [bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/lawlocator/](http://bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/lawlocator/) helps applicants identify schools where their LSAT score and grades are most competitive for admission.

## Cornell Resources

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- **Law School Day**, held each fall, is attended by representatives of approximately 95 law schools who speak with students about their schools and admissions policies, and distribute bulletins and application materials. Visiting law school admissions officers participate in a panel discussion on the application process the afternoon prior to Law School Day.
- **The Action Report** summarizes GPAs, LSAT scores, and admissions decisions for Cornellians who have applied to law school. Information from the summary report is appended to this publication; you can obtain more detailed information by scheduling an appointment with a prelaw advisor.
- **Survey responses** of Cornellians studying at law schools across the country provide information about their experiences and offer advice to current applicants. Responses include contact information for further discussion and are available in the Career Services Library in 103 Barnes Hall.

Determine what is most important to you as you evaluate law schools and decide on a list of potential schools. Make sure your research is thorough and includes discussions with current students at law schools in which you are interested. After you complete your research and compile a list of schools, meet with a prelaw advisor to discuss schools of interest to you.

# Understanding Admissions Criteria

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Most law school admissions committees use a combination of objective and subjective criteria, described below and in the next section, to evaluate applicants.

## Objective Criteria

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**Law School Admission Test (LSAT):** Applicants take the LSAT, a half-day standardized test, during one of four test administrations 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.

**Undergraduate Grade Point Average (GPA):** Applicants submit undergraduate transcripts to the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), 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 LSDAS to combine applicants' LSAT scores and GPAs with weighted constants to produce a single number which can be used to assess and compare potential for doing well.

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. Some schools weight these factors equally in the admissions process, others give either the LSAT or the GPA somewhat greater weight. It is important to remember, however, that most law schools do not make admissions decisions solely on the basis of objective criteria. Subjective criteria, listed below, take on importance once applicants' GPAs and LSAT scores qualify them for closer scrutiny.

## Subjective Criteria

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**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 and what makes him/her qualified to study at their law schools.

**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 may encompass a wide range of pursuits—from undergraduate curricular and extracurricular activities, to internships, to full-time work experience, etc.—which demonstrate that the applicant has skills and abilities relevant to the study of law and will contribute to the diversity and strength of the class.

There are, of course, other factors that may be used to evaluate applicants, depending on the policies of individual schools. For example, most law schools have minority recruitment programs to increase minority participation in the legal profession, and some 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 concerns.

# Applying to Law School

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The previous section described criteria used by law schools to evaluate applicants. This section revisits those criteria from a different perspective, spelling out in greater detail what you as an applicant should do to file a strong and complete application.

## Law School Admission Test (LSAT)

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The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission to all American Bar Association-approved law schools. The test is administered four times per year by the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) and is offered in October and December at Cornell. Detailed test information—dates, sites, registration forms, fees, and deadlines—and registration is available online through the LSAC website at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org), and information is included in the *LSAT/LSDas Information Book*, available at Cornell Career Services in Barnes Hall.

It is advisable to take the LSAT during the summer or fall of the year you apply, though scores from the December administration will reach law schools in time to meet application deadlines at all schools. Taking the test in October will allow you to see your LSAT score before applying by early November. If you take the December test, plan to submit at least some applications around the time of the test; you can then submit additional applications after you learn your LSAT score.

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 (not scored)

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

In general, LSAT questions attempt to measure your ability to read complex material accurately and critically, and process information effectively to draw logical, reliable conclusions. The LSAT does not test you on a specific body of knowledge; instead, it evaluates your ability to use skills relevant to the study and practice of law, skills that you likely already possess. You should, however, practice to develop those skills further and to familiarize yourself with the types of questions asked. It is, in fact, essential to spend adequate time in preparation since your score can improve significantly. Using multiple strategies to prepare has proved to be most effective.

The best approach is to work through examples and explanations carefully, then take actual disclosed tests under simulated conditions, observing time limits. A new online LSAT familiarization tool, LSAT ItemWise, will allow you to enhance your preparation by understanding the three types of questions and learning why your answers to test practice questions are right or wrong. Information on how to obtain LSAT ItemWise and previously administered tests is available online at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org) and is contained in the *LSAT/LSDas Information Book*. Commercial books are also available and can be used as supplements to LSAC materials; since commercial book publishers cannot legally use copyrighted test materials, their questions tend to be inferior, sometimes misleading or outdated.

Begin your preparation with LSAC materials and then assess your progress. 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.

If you are registered for a test but feel you are not fully prepared or in a frame of mind to perform well, it is probably 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. However, 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. The American Bar Association, whose policy had previously encouraged schools to use the average of multiple scores as the best indicator of ability to succeed in law school and required that schools report the average, has now removed those guidelines. Schools can use the highest LSAT score in making admissions decisions and must report the highest score. It seems likely that most law schools will not average scores in the future, though some more competitive schools may continue to do so.

If you register for the LSAT online and therefore have an online account, all correspondence from LSAC, including reporting of your LSAT score, will be sent electronically. (An additional fee of \$25 will be charged for you to receive LSAC correspondence by mail.) You will receive a score report from LSAC approximately three weeks after the test, which includes your score (on a scale of 120-180), your percentile ranking, and if the test is disclosed, a copy of the test questions, a list of responses, a copy of the answer sheet, and a score conversion table.

Fee waivers for the LSAT and other essential applicant services are available for applicants with a demonstrated inability to pay for them. Use the online fee-waiver application at the [lsac.org](http://lsac.org) website, or obtain an application at Cornell Career Services in 103 Barnes Hall.

## **Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS)**

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In order to centralize and standardize objective application information—GPAs and LSAT scores—ABA-approved law schools require applicants to subscribe to the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). The Service 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 LSDAS online at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org); the LSDAS subscription continues for five years. It is not necessary to register for the LSAT and the LSDAS at the same time. Once you have registered, send or take transcript request forms, available online, to each college or university from which you have earned academic credit.

If you enrolled in the Cornell-Nepal Study Program, the Cornell-in-Rome Program, any Cornell Summer Program, or the Industrial and Labor Relations Program in Geneva or with University College Dublin, you do not need a separate transcript for this study abroad work. The grades and credits for this coursework will be listed on your Cornell transcript, and will be treated as Cornell work when your transcript is summarized by LSAC.

If you enrolled in an EDUCO Program (Emory, Duke, and Cornell in Paris), or the Michigan-Cornell-Penn Program in Seville, LSAC will include only the grades and credits earned on the U.S. grading scale when summarizing your Cornell transcript. Courses graded on a foreign scale are considered "transfer" work. As such, a separate transcript is required only if the total amount of this foreign transfer work exceeds the equivalent of one year of U.S. work. In most cases, for these

programs you will not be required to submit a foreign transcript to LSAC, as the total amount of foreign work completed will likely be one year or less.

If you enrolled in a study abroad program sponsored by another U.S. or Canadian college or university, in addition to your home institution's transcript, you must have the college or university sponsoring the study abroad program send a transcript directly to LSDAS. List the U.S. or Canadian institution on your LSDAS registration under "other institutions attended." If the grades and credits appear on the sponsoring school's transcript, using the school's grading scale, then those grades will be calculated into both the sponsoring school's GPA and the overall GPA, but not into your home institution's GPA, as this is "transfer" work.

If you directly enrolled in one or more foreign institutions, and the total amount of work is the equivalent of one year or less, do not list the foreign institution when you register for the LSDAS, and do not ask the foreign institution to send a transcript to LSAC. You may, however, be required to list your attendance at such institutions on your applications to law schools.

Be sure to verify the accuracy of your Cornell transcript via Bear Access. Official transcripts will be sent to the LSDAS for analysis; therefore, it is not necessary to send transcripts directly to law schools. Once your LSAT score is available, the LSDAS prepares a law school report that will be requested by law schools upon receipt of your application. The report will include the following:

- a year-by-year grade and credit summary
- photocopies of all your transcripts
- your GPA for each academic year, your degree (Cornell) GPA, and your cumulative GPA reflecting work at other institutions you have attended
- a description of your overall grade distribution
- the mean LSAT score and GPA of students at your undergraduate school who have subscribed to the LSDAS and your percentile graduation rank among those students
- up to 12 LSAT scores, including cancellations and absences
- an average LSAT score, if you have more than one score on file
- copies of your LSAT writing sample

The LSDAS report may also include an applicant index described in the previous section. LSAT scores are reported by LSAC for approximately five years following test administrations. Some law schools, however, will require that a score be obtained within a few years prior to applying; information about requirements is available from the schools.

## **The Application**

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There are several options for submitting applications to law schools. You can apply to any ABA-approved law school through the LSDAS electronic applications at the LSAC website. While not a common application, electronic applications allow you to enter common information requested by law schools to which you are applying, and the information is entered in applications of schools to which you are applying. You will then respond to school-specific questions. Using electronic applications, which you can either submit electronically, or print and send through U.S. mail, enables you to begin applications even if you haven't made final decisions on schools, for example, prior to receiving your LSAT score. Information you enter will be saved each time you work on your applications.

You can also complete applications located on the websites of law schools or call the schools to request hard-copy applications. Addresses and phone numbers of admissions offices are provided in the *Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*. Request applications from schools of any possible interest so that if your list of schools changes, perhaps because your LSAT score is higher or lower than you anticipated, you won't have to wait to receive applications.

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. Many schools will also ask for the names of your recommenders, the date(s) on which you took (or plan to take) the LSAT, your intention to apply for financial aid, and any criminal convictions on your record. 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. It is a good idea to enclose a resume with your application, but do not use it as a substitute for responding to questions on the applications. If you apply using hard copy applications and find you need additional space, use separate sheets of paper and label each page clearly.

## **Personal Statement**

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With the exception of a few law schools, interviews are not part of the application process, primarily because of the large number of applicants and the limitations of staff time. In lieu of evaluative interviews, personal statements requested by most law schools 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.

Some schools ask a specific question or suggest a topic for the statement, but most leave the theme open-ended. Your statement should not merely reiterate what is on your resume, but instead should highlight and expand upon what has been particularly important in your life. It is fairly common to write a single basic statement, then adapt it to fulfill the requirements of several schools. The best approach is to focus on one or two, but not more than three topics. Limiting the scope of your statement prevents it from becoming a laundry list of activities, diluting your strengths and your impact. Select significant events or experiences in your life that demonstrate growth or change, persistence, and your distinctive qualities, then elaborate on those.

Personal statements are typically two, double-spaced pages, though you may find that some schools will give more latitude in the length. 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 serious, honest, and sincere, and the tone should be confident and positive; any negative information you feel compelled or 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. Rather than explicitly stating your strengths, let the reader draw inferences from descriptions of your accomplishments.

Do not title your statement, risk humor that may fall flat, include quotes, focus exclusively on another person, write a treatise on a legal issue, or speculate at length on your career in law. Be

sure to get feedback from objective readers, people who will give you constructive criticism without fear of hurting your feelings.

## Letters of Recommendation

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Most law schools request that one or two letters of recommendation be submitted on behalf of applicants. If letters are not required, it is a good idea, nonetheless, to submit them. Admissions committees will be seeking information not provided elsewhere in the applications. Recommendation letters should include concrete examples of intellectual strength, analytical ability, research skills, maturity, 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. 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 renowned professor who barely knows you.

Unless you have been in the work force a few years, letters from people outside academia often carry considerably less weight, since they are unable to address the topic of greatest interest to admissions committees: your academic potential. Law schools are generally less impressed with letters from well-known politicians, state supreme court justices, etc., since the letters tend to be effusive and contain little concrete, substantive information; frequently the letters are not written by the individuals, but rather by people on their staffs. If you would like to submit additional letters even though a school asks for only one or two, this should be fine. Three letters will be acceptable at most schools, and four should be considered the absolute maximum.

Approach potential 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?" If the answer is yes, provide sufficient information about your background to assist him/her in writing a detailed letter:

- a cover sheet describing your academic relationship, 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
- recommendation forms from the lsac.org website or from the law schools
- stamped envelopes addressed to the LSAC or to the schools
- a list of dates when recommendations are due

Also, be sure to discuss waiving your right of access to the letters. You may want to waive your right since you could encounter writers unwilling to write letters if applicants have access to them, and some admissions committee members may discount disclosed letters. Since you may not have access to letters, be sure your recommenders are enthusiastic about writing letters for you; if you sense any hesitation, even if he/she agrees, thank the person but do not follow through.

If you learn your application is not complete by about a month before a deadline, call the school to see if your letters of recommendation have arrived. Immediately contact those writers who have not sent letters yet and 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.

The Law School Data Assembly Service offers a recommendation service. Recommenders send letters directly to the LSDAS, which then forwards up to four letters to law schools to which you are applying. Applicants are able to direct their letters to specific schools based on each school's desire to receive a certain number of letters and on the applicant's desire to target letters to individual schools. Information about the service can be found online at the LSAC website at [lsac.org](http://lsac.org) and in the *LSAT/LSDAS Information Book*. Letters will be stored for five years from the time you register for LSDAS or from the time you take the LSAT, whichever comes last.

If it is possible that you will be applying to law school in the future, but are not certain, you may want to establish a credentials file (online at [interfolio.com](http://interfolio.com)) to maintain letters of recommendation and other documents.

A dean's certification is required by some law schools to confirm that applicants have not been involved in academic or disciplinary transgressions as undergraduates. The certification is generally a formality handled by a designated university official such as an academic advising dean or registrar, in consultation with those offices responsible for judicial administration on campus. A list of Cornell officials responsible for dean's certifications is appended in "Prelaw Services at Cornell."

## Filing Your Application

Cornellians apply to an average of twelve law schools if they are seniors and eight if they are alumni. There is no hard and fast rule about how many schools you should apply to; your decision should be based on how strong a candidate you are, how realistic your choices are, how much time and money (most schools require an application fee) you have to spend on applications, etc. In general, it is advisable to apply to one or two schools where it is almost certain you will be accepted, several schools where you have a good chance of being admitted, and a couple of schools you would very much like to attend, but where your chances for admission are not especially good. Be sure to apply to a sufficient number to ensure that you will be admitted to at least one school you would like to attend.

While some law schools offer early decision or early action programs that have deadlines as early as mid-October, most schools review applications on a rolling basis beginning in late November or early December. Given the current highly competitive admissions process, you should try to submit your applications by early November, if possible. Submitting your applications then can be a slight advantage at many schools. Remember that your file is not complete until all parts, including the recommendation letters and LSDAS report, have been received by law schools. If you are taking the December LSAT, plan to submit your applications by early December, even though your file will not be complete until your LSAT score is available in early January.

Here are some additional strategies for applying to law school:

- Start early.
- Make realistic choices on schools.
- Read carefully information provided by schools online or in hard copy.
- Follow directions.
- 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.

## Taking Time Off

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Before going to law school, you may want to wait a year or two, or even longer; many Cornellians who eventually attend law school do not go immediately. Taking some time before entering 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 Cornell students, your highest grades will come later in your undergraduate education.
- Many Cornellians benefit from taking a respite following four challenging years at Cornell before entering law school.
- You will have the opportunity to confirm your interest in law by working as a paralegal or legal assistant, or in another position in a law-related field, while at the same time gaining professional experience that may benefit you following graduation from law school.

# Considering Admissions Decisions

Since the timetable for reviewing applications and informing applicants of decisions varies from school to school, notification of decisions can come any time from December to May or even later. Applicants are informed by e-mail or letters of the schools' decisions; candidates are either accepted, denied, or wait-listed, which means the applicant is considered a desirable candidate and may be admitted later.

Law schools often 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.

## Enhancing Your Application

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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 if accepted you will attend.
- If you are a senior, inform the school of accomplishments since you applied, for example, that you have completed your honors thesis or you were accepted into Phi Beta Kappa.
- If you are currently working, describe your professional responsibilities and other worthwhile activities in which you are engaged; include an updated resume.
- Send an additional letter of recommendation from a professor or employer; however, the total number of your recommendation letters should not exceed four.
- Visit the law school to demonstrate your strong interest; contact the admissions office to arrange a tour and sit in on a class. Some admissions officers will agree to meet with applicants, but generally these discussions are not evaluative.

## Making a Decision

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Visiting law schools can be invaluable when deciding among schools that have accepted you. In addition to taking tours of the schools and attending classes, make an effort to meet faculty and staff, and speak with a number of 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. If you are not able to visit, refer to the survey responses of Cornell alumni who have attended law schools that are maintained in the Cornell Career Services Library. You may also want to ask admissions offices to identify Cornell alumni at their school whom you can speak with.

Cost and financial aid awards also need to be considered when making a decision. Some law schools are relative bargains because they are state schools or private schools with low tuition that may be located in areas where the cost of living is relatively inexpensive. You may receive a sizable scholarship as part of your financial package from a school attempting to attract you. 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 school 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 better opportunities after graduation. Large firms focus their recruiting efforts at these schools, and salaries of graduates tend to be higher. Of course, you should balance the factors important to you with those concerning prestige and opportunities. Ultimately, it will be most important to decide what is the best school for you and where you can thrive as a law student. How you perform in law school is a significant factor in determining where you work following graduation.

Schools that accept you typically ask for a deposit to hold a space for you in the class. Deposits may be due before you hear from all schools. Contact schools that accept you to explain your situation and ask if they would be willing to extend the deposit deadline. Also, consult with a prelaw advisor who can help you weigh your options. Once you have reached a final decision on which school you will attend, notify other schools that accepted you so that they can offer your place to someone else.

## **Reapplying Later**

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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 revising 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.

# Financing Law School

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Law school is an important investment in your future. Consider the financial aid process as seriously as you do the law school application process. 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. If you are considering a career in government or public interest law, investigate loan repayment assistance programs (LRAPs) that help law school graduates repay their education debt.

## Sources of Funds

### *Personal Savings/Family Support*

If possible, set aside your own funds to help pay for law school. Talk with family members about whether they can help with law school expenses. Some students choose to live at home during law school to avoid paying rent.

### *Federal Loans*

Many students rely primarily on federal loan programs to finance law school. Total federal aid is available to cover (but not exceed) the law school's student expense budget, which includes tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, transportation, and other expenses. Because you are applying for graduate study, you are considered independent of your parents for these loans.

Some law schools participate in the Ford Direct Loan Program, through which the U.S. Department of Education is the lender. At other law schools, you will choose a lender to obtain the federal Stafford or Grad PLUS loans. The following federal loans are available to law students. (See [studentaid.ed.gov](http://studentaid.ed.gov) for further information.)

- **(Subsidized) Federal Stafford and Direct (Ford) Loan.** Up to \$8,500 a year is available to students who meet the need criteria. Interest is paid by the federal government while you are enrolled at least half-time.
- **(Unsubsidized) Federal Stafford and Direct (Ford) Loan.** In combination with the subsidized loan, a student may borrow up to a combined total of \$20,500 in subsidized and unsubsidized loans.
- **Graduate PLUS Loans for Law Students.** Law students whose credit record is good may be eligible for these loans. Many law students are choosing Graduate PLUS instead of private loans to cover their remaining financial need beyond the \$20,500 available through Stafford loans.
- **Federal Perkins Loans.** These low interest loans are available at some law schools. Each student's award is determined by the school, based on information obtained from the FAFSA (see How to Apply for Financial Aid).

### *Private Loans*

Credit is an important factor in securing private loans. Interest rates, fees, and terms of repayment vary significantly. It is best to work with your law school financial aid office before making a decision about loans for law school. Beware of direct marketing from private lenders. It is possible to finance your legal education entirely through Federal Stafford and Direct Loans along

with Graduate PLUS Loans, which are regulated by the federal government and typically have lower interest rates.

### ***Grants and Scholarships***

Grants and scholarships are offered by law schools based upon criteria set by the school, which can include academic merit, financial need, ethnicity, specific talents, residency, or other qualifications. Check with each law school early in the application process for more information. Law schools may offer merit scholarships with an offer of admission to highly qualified applicants. When law schools consider your financial need, they may require family income information even if you are considered independent for tax purposes, or for federal education loans.

Some states provide limited grants for law school; there are no federal grants for law students. Certain national foundations and organizations offer grants and scholarships for law school through a competitive application process.

### ***Earnings***

The American Bar Association sets limits on the number of hours per week a first-year law student can work. After first year, many law students obtain summer employment and part-time employment during the school year. This can help reduce the amount of money borrowed.

### ***Frugality***

It is often said, "If you live like a lawyer in law school, you will live like a law student once you graduate." Frugality can be your best friend.

## **How to Apply for Financial Aid**

***Check your credit.*** If you will be using Federal Grad PLUS or private loans for law school, order a free copy of your credit report and verify the information. These loans may not be available if your credit history does not meet minimum standards.

***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.

***Complete your FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1.*** Completion of the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid available at [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov)) 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. Because the FAFSA requires tax information from the previous year, it cannot be completed before January 1. 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. You can list up to six law schools where you want reports sent and update this list with additional schools. 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. To determine your financial need, schools take the estimated contribution calculated by the federal government on your FAFSA and subtract it from the school's student expense budget.

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.

**Applying for Loans**

Once you have chosen a law school, expect to receive important additional financial information from the school. Even though you have already completed the FAFSA and law school financial aid forms, you must still apply for the loans. There are several online resources you may find helpful: [accessgroup.org/Student-Loans/learn-about-loans/wise-borrower-tutorial.htm](http://accessgroup.org/Student-Loans/learn-about-loans/wise-borrower-tutorial.htm), [finaid.org](http://finaid.org), [fastweb.com](http://fastweb.com), and for public interest law programs and law school loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP), [equaljusticeworks.org/finance](http://equaljusticeworks.org/finance).

Your law school financial aid office will help you identify the correct process for securing federal loans, and, private loans if needed. Do your homework to compare fees and repayment terms for all of your loans, using loan calculators available on financial aid websites (see below). Keep good records of all loan transactions. Borrow only what you need, and not more, to keep your debt low and your monthly repayment amount manageable.

## Appendix A

# Legal Career Checklist

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### Freshman and Sophomore Years

- ❑ Select a major in a field that both interests you and allows you to excel academically.
- ❑ Begin to form relationships with professors, lecturers, and TAs so that they will know your work well enough to serve as recommenders in the future.
- ❑ Complete a Student Profile at [career.cornell.edu](http://career.cornell.edu) to learn about law-related opportunities.
- ❑ Explore your career interests by seeking summer jobs or internships.

### Junior Year

- ❑ Meet with a prelaw advisor to assess your academic, extracurricular, and work experiences and to discuss the application process.
- ❑ Begin preparing for the LSAT; if you are ready, register for the June administration.
- ❑ Secure a summer job or internship, if possible, in a law-related field.
- ❑ Research law schools and compile a list of tentative schools.

### Senior Year (or Year Before Entering Law School)

- ❑ Decide whether to use the Law School Admission Council's electronic applications to apply, or or visit schools' websites to apply or request catalogs and application materials.
- ❑ Register for the Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS). Have transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you have attended sent to the LSDAS after verifying their accuracy.
- ❑ Make sure your LSDAS report is correct.
- ❑ Ask potential recommendation writers if they would be willing to write letters on your behalf. Provide them with the LSDAS recommendation forms or the schools' forms and sufficient information for detailed letters.
- ❑ Make arrangements to have dean's certifications sent to schools which require them.
- ❑ Attend Law School Day on September 23 and programs and workshops on the application process.
- ❑ Take the LSAT on October 4 if you did not take the test in June.
- ❑ Begin drafting and revising your personal statement.
- ❑ Meet with a prelaw advisor who will help you assess the strength of your application in relation to schools you are considering. Request a critique of your personal statement draft.
- ❑ Complete applications by early November.
- ❑ Take the LSAT on December 6 if you did not take it previously or are retaking the test.
- ❑ Check with schools to make sure your files are complete.
- ❑ Complete the FAFSA and other need analysis forms such as Need Access as well as any institutional financial aid applications as soon after January 1 as possible.
- ❑ Write a follow-up letter to schools to update your application and express your continued strong interest in the school.
- ❑ Have financial aid transcripts sent from Cornell to all schools to which you are applying.
- ❑ Meet with a prelaw advisor in the spring to assess your options as schools respond to you.
- ❑ Take appropriate action on acceptances, wait-list status, and financial aid packages.
- ❑ 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.

## Appendix B

# Prelaw Services at Cornell

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Cornell's Prelaw Advisory Network is composed of advisors who can talk with you about your interest in a legal career and advise you on the law school application process.

|   |                              |  |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| <b>College of Agriculture and Life Sciences</b>     | <i>Prelaw Advisor</i>        | Dale Grossman, Senior Lecturer, Applied Economics and Management, 114 Warren, 255-8023; dag14@cornell.edu  |
|   | <i>Dean's Certifications</i> | Registrar, 140 Roberts, 255-2017   |
| <b>College of Architecture, Art, &amp; Planning</b> | <i>Dean's Certifications</i> | Carol Hill, Student Services, B1 Sibley, 255-6251  |
| <b>College of Arts &amp; Sciences</b>               | <i>Prelaw Advisor</i>        | To be announced. Arts and Sciences Career Services*, G55 Goldwin Smith, 255-4166   |
| <b>College of Engineering</b>                       | <i>Dean's Certifications</i> | Undergraduate Programs Office, 221 Carpenter, 255-8240   |
| <b>School of Hotel Administration</b>               | <i>Prelaw Advisor</i>        | David Sherwyn, Associate Professor, 541 Statler, 255-1711; dss18@cornell.edu   |
|   | <i>Dean's Certifications</i> | Registrar, 180 Statler, 254-2813; dre2@cornell.edu   |
| <b>College of Human Ecology</b>                     | <i>Prelaw Advisor</i>        | Deanne Maxwell, Assistant Director of Student and Career Development, 172 Martha Van Rensselaer, 255-2532  |
|   | <i>Dean's Certifications</i> | Registrar, 145 Martha Van Rensselaer, 255-2235; nereg-mailbox@cornell.edu  |
| <b>School of Industrial &amp; Labor Relations</b>   | <i>Prelaw Advisor</i>        | Laura Lewis, Director, ILR Student Services*, 101 Ives, 255-2223; lal8@cornell.edu   |
| <b>Cornell Career Services</b>                      | <i>Prelaw Advisor</i>        | Jane Levy, Senior Associate Director, 103 Barnes, 255-5296; jel2@cornell.edu   |
|   |                              | To receive e-mails on law-related programs and opportunities, complete a Student Profile at <a href="http://career.cornell.edu">career.cornell.edu</a> |

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\*Responsible for dean's certifications in College

## Appendix C

# Legal Career Resources at Cornell

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Available at the Cornell Career Services Library in 103 Barnes Hall

## Careers in Law

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- Becoming a Mediator.* Peter Lovenheim. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- Career Opportunities in Law and the Legal Industry.* Susan Echaore-McDavid. New York, New York: Checkmark Books, 2002.
- Careers in International Law.* Salli A. Swartz. Chicago, Illinois: ABA Publishing, 2008.
- Careers for Legal Eagles and Other Law and Order Types.* Blythe Camenson. New York, New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2005.
- The Insider's Guide to Law Firms.* Francis Walsh and M.B. Van Straten, eds. Boulder, Colorado: Mobius Press, 2000.
- International Public Interest Law.* Alexa Shobecoff and Teresa Bryant. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard Law School, 2002.
- Law Firms Yellow Book.* New York: Leadership Directories, Inc., 2002.
- Law and Legal Information Directory 17<sup>th</sup> Edition.* Laurie J. Fundukian, ed. Farmington Hills, Michigan: Thomas Gale, 2006.
- Mediation Career Guide: A Strategic Approach to Building a Successful Practice.* Forrest S. Mosten. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass A Wiley Company, 2001.
- NALP Directory of Legal Employers.* Washington, DC: National Association for Law Placement, Inc., 2006.
- The Official Guide to Legal Specialties.* Lisa L. Abrams. Chicago, Illinois: Harcourt Legal and Professional Publications, 2000.
- Paralegal Career Guide.* Chere B. Estrin. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, 2002.
- Paralegal Studies.* Paul D. Jordan. Albany, New York: West Thomson Learning, 2001.
- Serving the Public: A Job Search Guide Vols. I & II.* Stacy M. DeBroff, Jill P. Martyn, and Alexa Shabecoff. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Law School, 2004.
- Should You Really be a Lawyer.* Deborah Schneider and Gary Belsky. Seattle, Washington: Decision Books, 2005.
- So You Want to Be a Lawyer: A Practical Guide to Law as a Career.* Newtown, Pennsylvania: Law School Admission Council, 2003.

*Vault Guide to Labor and Employment Law Careers.* Timothy Grubb and Vera Djordjevich. New York, New York: Vault Inc., 2003.

*Vault Guide to the Top 100 Law Firms.* Brian Dalton. New York, New York: Vault Inc., 2007.

*Vault Guide to the Top Boston Law Firms.* Brook Moshan Gesser, Tyya N. Turner, and Ron Hogan. New York, New York: Vault Inc., 2003.

*Vault Guide to the Top Government and Nonprofit Legal Employers.* Marcy Lerner. New York, New York: Vault, Inc., 2003.

*Vault Guide to the Top New York Law Firms.* Brook Moshan Gesser. New York, New York: Vault Inc., 2004.

*Vault Guide to the Top Washington, DC Law Firms.* Brook Moshan Gesser. New York, New York: Vault Inc., 2004.

*Washington, DC Internships in Law and Policy 2001.* Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Career Education Institutes, 2003.

*Wetfeet.com Insider Guide-Alternative Legal Careers.* San Francisco, California: Wetfeet.com, 1999.

*What Can You Do With a Law Degree?* Deborah Aaron. Seattle, Washington: Niche Press, 2004.

## **Applying to Law School** \_\_\_\_\_

*Best 170 Law Schools.* New York, New York: The Princeton Review, Inc., 2008.

*Great Personal Statements for Law School.* Paul Bodine. New York, New York: McGraw Hill, 2006.

*How to Get into Law School.* Susan Estrich. New York, New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2004.

*How to Get Into the Top Law Schools.* Richard Montauk. Paramus, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006.

*How to Write a Winning Personal Statement for Graduate and Professional School.* Richard J. Stelzer. Princeton, New Jersey: Peterson's Guides, 1997.

*The Law School Buzz Book.* Carolyn C. Wise, ed. New York, New York: Vault, Inc., 2006

*Law School Confidential.* Robert H. Miller. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004.

*Law School Insider.* Jeremy B. Horwitz. Amherst, New York: The Lion Group, 2002.

*Law School Survival Guide.* Tamsen Valoir. USA: Booklocker.com, Inc., 2005.

*Law School Without Fear.* Helene Shapo and Marshall Shapo. New York, New York: Foundation Press, 2002.

*LSAT: The Official TriplePrep Vols. 1-3.* Newtown, Pennsylvania: Law School Admission Council, 2000.

*LSAT: The Official TriplePrep Plus with Explanations.* Newtown, Pennsylvania: Law School Admission Council, 2000.

*The NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists 2007-2008.* Edward Stern and Gerald Wilson, eds. Kaplan, Inc., 2007.

*Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools 2007 Edition.* Newtown, Pennsylvania: American Bar Association and Law School Admission Council, 2006.

*The Official LSAT PrepTest.* Newtown, Pennsylvania: Law School Admission Council, 1991-2007.

*The Official LSAT SuperPrep.* Newtown, Pennsylvania: Law School Admission Council, 2007.

*Perfect Personal Statements.* Mark Alan Stewart. New York, New York: Macmillan, 2002.

*The Ultimate Guide to Law School Admission.* Carol L. Wright. Center Valley, Pennsylvania: Marriwell Publishing, 2003.

## **Financial Aid**

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*Career Resource Guide to Grants, Scholarships and other Financial Resources.* Brad Ferguson, ed. New York, New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007. Volumes 1 and 2.

*Cash for Grad School: The Ultimate Guide to Grad School Scholarships.* Cynthia Ruiz McKee and Phillip C. McKee. New York, New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

*Directory of Financial Aids for Women 2005-2007.* Gail Ann Schlachter and R. David Weber. El Dorado Hills, California: Reference Service Press, 2005.

*Financial Aid for African Americans 2006-2008.* Gail Ann Schlachter and R. David Weber. El Dorado Hills, California: Reference Service Press, 2006.

*Financial Aid for Asian Americans 2006-2008.* Gail Ann Schlachter and R. David Weber. El Dorado Hills, California: Reference Service Press, 2006.

*Financial Aid for Native Americans 2006-2008.* Gail Ann Schlachter and R. David Weber. El Dorado Hills, California: Reference Service Press, 2006.

*Financial Aid for Hispanic Americans 2006-2008.* Gail Ann Schlachter and R. David Weber. El Dorado Hills, California: Reference Service Press, 2006.

*Foundation Grants to Individuals 15<sup>th</sup> Edition.* Phyllis Edelson, ed. New York, New York: The Foundation Center, 2006.

*Getting Money for Graduate School.* Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Thomson Peterson's, 2003.

*Graduate School Funding Handbook.* April Vahle Hamel, Mary Morris Heiberger and Julia Miller Vick. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

*The 2005 Hispanic Scholarship Directory.* National Hispanic Press Foundation. Carlsbad, California: WPR Publishing, 2005.

*Making a Difference: Scholarships for a Better World.* Weinstein, Miriam. San Anselmo, California: SageWorks Press, 2003.

*Money for Graduate Students in the Arts and Humanities.* Gail Ann Schlachter and R. David Weber. El Dorado Hills, California: Reference Service Press, 2005.

*Money for Graduate Students in the Social and Behavioral Sciences.* Gail Ann Schlachter and R. David Weber. El Dorado Hills, California: Reference Service Press, 2005.

*Scholarships, Grants and Prizes.* Lawrenceville, New Jersey: Thomson Peterson's, 2007.

## **Additional Resources**

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**Law school catalogs and bulletins**

**Survey responses** of Cornellians at law schools across the country

**Notebooks** with career information, law school rankings, and scholarship opportunities, for example, "Resources for Minority Students Considering Law"

**Boston College Law School Range Finder** (groupings of schools by LSAT and GPA medians)

## **Law-Related Organizations**

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- **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 the "nationally recognized accrediting agency for schools of law." ([abanet.org](http://abanet.org))
- **Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)** assists economically and educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school. ([abanet.org/cleo](http://abanet.org/cleo))
- **Law School Admission Council, LSAC**, is a nonprofit corporation comprising 215 U.S. and Canadian law schools that provides services to the legal education community. ([lsac.org](http://lsac.org))
- **National Association for Law Placement (NALP)** is a professional organization that provides information about placement and recruiting trends. ([nalp.org](http://nalp.org))
- **HEATH Resource Center** is a national clearing house for persons with disabilities. ([heath.gwu.edu](http://heath.gwu.edu))

## Appendix D

# 2006-2007 Action Report Summary

Data is provided by LSAC for Cornellians (seniors and alumni) who applied to law school for admission in 2007. The complete report is available in the Cornell Career Services Library.

|  | All Graduates | Seniors | Alumni |
|--|---------------|---------|--------|
| Total Number of Applicants                   | 587           | 192     | 395    |
| Average LSAT score                           | 160.5         | 161.5   | 160    |
| Average GPA                                  | 3.36          | 3.52    | 3.28   |
| Average Number of Applications per Applicant | 9.3           | 12.1    | 7.93   |
| Number Accepted to One or More Law Schools   | 470           | 169     | 301    |
| Average Number of Admissions per Applicant   | 3.25          | 4.52    | 2.64   |
| Number Registered at a Law School            | 396           | 157     | 239    |

## Schools to Which 95 or More Cornellians Applied

| Law School                   | Applicants | Admitted | Matriculated | Mean LSAT* | Mean GPA* |
|------------------------------|------------|----------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| American University          | 129        | 39       | 9            | 163        | 3.41      |
| Benjamin Cardozo             | 129        | 57       | 13           | 163.4      | 3.47      |
| Boston College               | 153        | 39       | 3            | 164.3      | 3.65      |
| Boston University            | 148        | 45       | 4            | 165.1      | 3.68      |
| Brooklyn Law School          | 133        | 79       | 32           | 162.3      | 3.42      |
| Columbia University          | 186        | 31       | 16           | 172.5      | 3.75      |
| Cornell University           | 229        | 70       | 16           | 166.2      | 3.61      |
| Duke University              | 147        | 50       | 5            | 170.3      | 3.73      |
| Fordham University           | 213        | 72       | 31           | 165.1      | 3.52      |
| George Washington Univ.      | 206        | 65       | 7            | 167        | 3.59      |
| Georgetown University        | 245        | 66       | 11           | 169.1      | 3.64      |
| Harvard University           | 138        | 14       | 12           | 170.4      | 3.93      |
| New York University          | 185        | 40       | 7            | 171.2      | 3.76      |
| Univ. of California-Berkeley | 125        | 18       | 4            | 170.1      | 3.8       |
| University of Chicago        | 98         | 23       | 4            | 170.7      | 3.67      |
| University of Michigan       | 133        | 28       | 8            | 167.6      | 3.72      |
| University of Pennsylvania   | 152        | 31       | 10           | 169.4      | 3.67      |
| University of Virginia       | 128        | 32       | 8            | 170        | 3.77      |

\*Mean LSATs and GPAs are provided for Cornellians who were admitted at these schools.