

Advising for Pre-Law Students

While pre-law advising does not take the place of your regular ACES or faculty advisor, it should complement faculty advising in your chosen major. Starting your junior year, work with both your faculty advisor and the pre-law advisor to develop a short-term plan, including class choices and internships, that maximizes your long-term options (law school admissions).

There is no “pre-law major” here at UConn or at most other universities. In fact, law schools admit a wide variety of majors, and you should choose a major based on your interests and talents. It is not true that students interested in law school should major in political science, English, or history. Law schools regularly accept students who majored in nursing, engineering, biology, chemistry, and the fine arts. Your major will not keep you out of law school.

Take classes that will challenge you. Law schools will examine your transcript, and taking the minimum number of upper-division classes reflects poorly on your application. It will not help you to inflate your GPA with lower-division classes.

It cannot be stressed enough that your grades do matter in law school admissions. It is very important that you keep your grades up throughout your undergraduate career. There is no “cut-off” at most law schools; you will not automatically be denied or granted admission based on your GPA. However, your grades are a significant part of the admissions process. Law schools do consider an upward trajectory in your grades if your freshman year was not your best academically. Law school admissions committees also understand that some schools, and some majors, grade “harder” than other schools and majors.

While extracurricular activities are important in the admissions process at law schools, your extracurriculars should not demand so much of your time that they negatively impact your grades. Like choosing a major, you should choose extracurricular activities based on your interests and talents. Leadership is important, and you will naturally rise to a leadership position if you are involved in an activity you care about.

The best advice is to follow your interests, explore your options, and maintain a solid GPA. Do not let your planned career in the law determine your choices. Becoming a well-rounded person is a critically important part of your undergraduate career, and is the best preparation for law school.

Advising for transfers from Junior and Community Colleges

Congratulations, and welcome to UConn. Your pre-law advising will depend on when in your college career you are transferring here to UConn. While the LSAC will calculate a GPA based on all your undergraduate grades, most law schools will not consider your junior college or community college grades when reviewing your file. Therefore, it is of the highest importance you maintain a strong GPA while at UConn. A high GPA is not enough; you should take classes that will challenge you while you are here at UConn. Law schools scrutinize the perceived difficulty of your classes as well as your GPA during your time at UConn.

Transfers with Freshman and Sophomore Status at UConn: Choose a major. Maintain your GPA. Reach your personal best. You have plenty of time at UConn to compute a GPA for law schools.

Transfers with Junior or Senior Status: Because law school admissions committees will review your UConn transcript in detail, it is very important you have taken enough classes at UConn to calculate your GPA. Many admissions committees are reluctant to admit students with only a community college transcript, and in competitive admissions, this may disqualify you from being considered. If this is the situation, take the time to make yourself a competitive applicant by applying to law school after you have graduated.

PRE-LAW TIMELINE

FRESHMAN YEAR

Build rapport with your professors and supervisors for future recommendation letters. Build rapport with people with whom you share common interests or strengths; “big” names are only impressive if they really know you.

Explore majors that interest you; there are no “pre-law” majors. Students with fine arts, drama, engineering, and nursing backgrounds are as qualified to go to law school as political science and English majors!

Think about why you want to become a lawyer. Lawyers work long hours, often in high-stress situations. Very few lawyers make a lot of money. Explore other options that may bring you closer to your goals; such as the Peace Corp or Americorp, or graduate work in business (MBA), public policy (MPA), social work (MSW), education, or diplomacy.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

If you haven’t done so during freshman year, select a major that you are interested in – **there are no pre-law required courses or majors.**

Look into courses in logic (generally offered by the philosophy department), critical thinking and writing, and game theory (generally offered by math or political science departments) to help you develop the skills necessary to do well on the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test).

Explore the legal field – conduct informational interviews, volunteer/intern in legal settings. Talk to lawyers. Contact Career Services or Alumni Affairs to set up informational interviews with alumni who practice law.

Continue to build rapport with professors and supervisors for future recommendation letters.

JUNIOR YEAR

Study for the LSATs. You can’t cram for the LSAT’s; they require months of study and practice. To do your personal best on the LSAT, **you need to take 12-15 full, timed LSAT’s.** Untimed practice questions alone do not improve performance. You can only take the LSAT three times over two years, and some schools average your LSAT score (although most take your highest score).

Learn about current legal issues. Continue to explore the legal field through informational interviews and internships.

Take the LSAT in June. <http://www.lsac.org/LSAT/TheLSAT-menu.asp>

Review the Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools book. Research and, if possible, visit law schools.

<http://www.abanet.org/legaled/approvedlawschools/approved.html>

<http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/grad/law/search>

Review the law school range locator after you receive your LSAT score @

http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/meta-elements/pdf/Range_finder_2008-20.pdf **or**

<http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/lawlocator/match.html>

Speak to 2-3 people about writing you a letter of recommendation for law school. You should plan on giving each person you ask for a recommendation **2 months** to prepare, write, and send your rec's to LSDAS. Choose people who can speak to your strengths and really know you. Law schools are less impressed with big names that write generic recommendations than detailed, positive recommendations by people who know you well.

SUMMER BEFORE SENIOR YEAR

Obtain school applications online or by calling/writing the admissions office.

Start to write your personal statement/essay. Plan on having it reviewed by several people you trust. Don't be sensitive; a tough critique is more likely to produce a strong essay.

Complete your essay(s) by the end of the summer. Prepare any supplemental essays explaining irregularities in your transcript.

SENIOR YEAR

Take LSAT if you haven't done so already; LSAT is offered in September, December, February and June. The December administration is often that last one accepted by law school for that admission year. <http://www.lsac.org/AboutLawSchool/AboutLawSchool-menu.asp>

Obtain school applications online, or write/call the admissions office for paper applications.

Register with the Law School Credential Assembly Service (LSDAS). LSDAS is required for most ABA-accredited law schools. <http://www.lsac.org/AboutLawSchool/AboutLawSchool-menu.asp>

Have recommendation letters sent to the LSDAS. Most law school require recommendations to be sent through LSDAS. It is best NOT to request access to your recommendations; many law schools will disregard recommendations when applicants request access to the recommendation.

Have personal statement/essay critiqued and completed.

Research and visit law schools, develop your application strategy.

Send in applications **mid-late fall** (Most schools are on a rolling admissions process, but you should confirm deadlines with each school). Often, students have better luck if they submit their applications early in the admissions process.

Research financial aid options. Submit your FAFSA, and explore grants and scholarships specific to the law schools where you are admitted.

SPRING SEMESTER—SENIOR YEAR and POST-GRADUATION SUMMER

Make decisions regarding your acceptances and/or other plans outside of attending law school.

Take care of any life issues that may complicate your first year of law school. Find a quiet, trustworthy roommate, pay off your bills, arrange care for dependants.

Update the Careers Office staff and your advisors on the status of your applications.

Write thank you notes to your advisors and recommendation writers, update them on your status.

Research pre-orientation programs offered by your law school, as well as any supplemental pre-law programs (LawBoost, Law Preview) that interest you.

Do any pre-law reading recommended by your law school. While pre-law reading is **not** necessary, you may find it interesting.