LAW SCHOOL: DECIDING WHERE TO APPLY

Which Law School? : The decision of which law school to attend can be more complicated than the decision to apply to law school. The best advice on how to select a law school is to choose the school that is best for you, which involves researching the different schools and deciding what your priorities are. You need to determine what you are looking for in law schools: a certain specialty, location, reputation, small student/faculty ratio, cost, job placement after graduation.

If possible, visit the schools you are considering. Although most schools do not include a formal interview as part of the admission process, many admission officers will be happy to meet with you. Many of them will arrange for campus tours, class visits, financial aid appointments and other guidance.

Location - Is the law school located in a geographic area you prefer? How important is the geographic location to you? Is the law school on a campus? In a city? In a college town? Adjacent to other schools? In what way does the location matter to you?

Size - Do you prefer a large (1,000 or greater) student body, an intermediate (600-1,000) student body, or a small (600 or less) student body? The advantages of larger schools are a greater number of course offerings and diversified interests within the faculty, while in small law schools there is usually greater contact with the faculty and a more relaxed ambiance within the student body.

Character of the Law School - Is the institution characterized as a national, state or regional law school? Where and in which jobs are the alumni working? Pay particular attention to the job placement patterns of the law schools if geographic location is important to you.

Student Body - Any professional program is competitive. Some law schools are very competitive and have student bodies which are vocationally oriented and grade conscious. Others are less competitive and possess student bodies which might be classified as “more supportive”. Some students react well to a very competitive atmosphere while others do their best work and feel more comfortable in a supportive atmosphere. In order to find out about the student body of a law school, you may want to visit the school and talk to both faculty and the students. If possible, sit in on a few classes and mix with the law students after the class.

Law School Faculty - What is the strength of the faculty of a particular law school? What is the faculty/student ratio? The bulletin of the law school will list the faculty along with their professional activities, publications, etc. Is the faculty relatively diverse in terms of gender, ethnic background, race, degrees in other fields, and breadth of experience?

The Library – Chances are you will spend more time in the Library than anywhere else while in law school. There are several factors to consider when assessing a law school library: quality of its resources, cataloging methods, access to electronic database, participation in library
networks for information retrieval, facilities, sufficient space or cartels to study, quality and accessibility of library's professional staff, and the hours the library is available to students.

**Areas of Strength in the Law School** - Some applicants have an area of the law in which they are particularly interested - international law, environmental law, tax law, patent law, etc. If so, students should examine law school literature closely to find those which have faculty and curricular expertise in their areas of particular interest.

**Cost of Legal Education** - Somewhere along the line, money will rear its ugly head! Most applicants will need to consider the total cost for three years of study. This estimate should include tuition, room and board, fees and expenses, insurance, travel to and from law school while classes are in session, as well as travel to and from home for vacations and during the summer breaks, etc.

**A Word about Rankings**: There are various reports which rank the ABA accredited law schools but these rankings can be deceiving and it would be naïve for a student to debate whether Harvard is better than Yale. They are both excellent and, perhaps more importantly, they are both different. It would be better for the student to look at the differences with a goal of selecting the institution that best meets his or her needs.

On average, graduates of highly regarded schools will receive more job offers at higher salaries then their counter parts at lesser known schools. Reputation of the school may very well have an impact on one’s entry into the legal profession. However, people will have useful and successful careers because of their abilities and performance on the job. While reputation or prestige may be a factor it should not be the only consideration when deciding which school to attend.

**Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools** - This book of law school facts and figures includes information on all ABA-approved schools in the country. Most schools’ information includes a grid that enables you to see the admission decisions broken down by GPA/LSAT score combinations. This book is available for purchase from Law School Admissions Council (www.lsac.org) or the UNR bookstore.

**How Many Schools Should I Apply To?** That is up to you. It is best to choose a range of schools that fit your personal criteria. A standard number of schools to apply to is 8-10.

**How do I get an application?** Almost all law schools’ applications are available online at their website. Also, all LSDAS registrants with LSAC online accounts have free access to electronic applications for all ABA-approved law schools. The LSACD allows you to attach your personal statements, resumes, and other written information electronically.

**Talk with Law School Recruiters Directly at Law Fairs** – The 11th annual UNR Professional & Graduate School Fair will be September 17, 2009, and Locations of Regional Law School Forums are available on the LSAC website, at http://www.lsac.org/choosing/law-school-recruitment-forums.asp

For Additional Information:
www.unr.edu/advising-center