



Thinking About Law School?

**Pre-Law Guide for Saint Mary's Students
2017—2018**

Career Crossings Office

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Career Crossings
Office

career passion, life vocation ❖

Why Law School?

Law school is not for everyone and understanding your motivation to go to law school is very important. Are you interested in helping others? Do you have a genuine fascination with law and society? Would you like to emulate the district attorney on *Law and Order*? Are you seeking a variety of career opportunities? Would you enjoy independence and autonomy in owning your own practice? Are you interested in the power of having a law degree? Are you being pressured by family to attend? Or, perhaps you are unsure of what you want to do when you graduate?

It is likely that if you choose to go to law school because of the perceived lifestyle, income level, or simply because you are not sure where you are heading in your life, you may be setting yourself up for failure. This failure could take on many forms including lack of motivation to follow through on law school applications, dropping or failing out of law school, dissatisfaction with your career choice, and burnout in the profession.

Before making the decision to go on to law school, check your motivations, research the realities of law school and the profession, talk with the pre-law advisors at Saint Mary's, and consult with your faculty, family, and friends. Going to law school requires a **MAJOR** time and financial commitment!

Go Now or Go Later?

When considering law school, there is no one single path to get you there. Some students choose to go on to law school immediately following graduation from Saint Mary's, while others may be accomplished professionals seeking advancement or a career change. This choice is critical and should not be taken lightly. One of the best ways to discern this is by talking directly with those who can provide you with both perspectives. Before you begin the process of applying or ruling out law school immediately following graduation, do your research by talking with as many lawyers as you can. By gathering the necessary first-hand information and experience of those practicing law, you will be able to make a well-informed decision about going now or going later.

Financing Your Legal Education

According to the Law School Admission Council (LSAC), the cost of attending law school could exceed \$150,000. Tuition can range from a few thousand dollars per year to several tens of thousands of dollars per year. Approximately 80% of law school students rely on loans to pay for their education, although some scholarships, grants, and fellowships may be available from the law schools. For eligible students, some may be offered federal work-study for part-time employment in the second and third years of law school, but the expectation is that first-year students would concentrate fully on schoolwork.

For more information, logon to the LSAC website to watch a few video clips on financing your legal education at <http://www.lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/financial-aid-overview>.

Scholarship Websites

Most law schools offer their own scholarships, but there are many federally-funded and private scholarships available. These websites provide links to some of those scholarships:

- ◆ <https://www.lsac.org/jd/financing-law-school/financial-aid-websites>
- ◆ <http://law.nd.edu/admissions/cost-of-attendance-and-financial-assistance/financial-support/scholarships/external-scholarship-database/>
- ◆ <http://www.law.yale.edu/admissions/outsidescholarships.htm>
- ◆ <http://www.fastweb.com>

Qualities of Successful Law School Applicants

According to the American Bar Association (ABA), the following core values and skills are critical to your success as a law school applicant and student:

- ◆ Analytic/Problem Solving Skills
- ◆ Critical Reading Abilities
- ◆ Writing Skills
- ◆ Oral Communication/Listening Abilities
- ◆ General Research Skills
- ◆ Task Organization/Management Skills
- ◆ Public Service and Promotion of Justice

The ABA also recommends a general knowledge of the following:

- ◆ A broad understanding of history, including the various factors (social, political, economic, and cultural) that have influenced the development of our society in the United States.
- ◆ A fundamental understanding of political thought and of the contemporary American political system.
- ◆ Some basic mathematical and financial skills, such as an understanding of basic pre-calculus mathematics and an ability to analyze financial data.
- ◆ A basic understanding of human behavior and social interaction.
- ◆ An understanding of diverse cultures within and beyond the U.S., of international institutions and issues, of world events, and of the increasing interdependence of the nations and communities within our world.

Preparing for Law School

When preparing for law school, four main areas will affect your success in applying to law school: course selection, grades you earn, extracurricular activities you participate in, and your LSAT score.

Selecting Courses

Law schools consider applicants from **ALL MAJORS**, so the major you select is not as important as choosing courses that help you develop the critical core values and skills recommended by the ABA (see above). Some courses to consider that cover an area of law include:

- ◆ Financial Success Strategies for Women (BUAD 240)*
- ◆ Personal Income Tax (BUAD 304)
- ◆ Business Law I (BUAD 344)
- ◆ Advanced Topics in Income Tax (BUAD 404)
- ◆ Business Law II (BUAD 444)
- ◆ Art and Entertainment Law (COMM 383)**
- ◆ Mass Communication Law (COMM 384)
- ◆ Philosophy of Law (PHIL 355)
- ◆ Model UN (POSC 290)
- ◆ Introduction to American Law (POSC 307)
- ◆ Gender and Law (SOC 330)
- ◆ Crime and Society (SOC 373)

You should always consult with your faculty advisor on a recommended course of study that will fit your interests and academic requirements. Some of these courses have prerequisites. You can also check the schedule of classes to see if these courses will be taught in the upcoming semester.

**Sophia Certified; fulfills LO1: Professional Arts and LO2: Women's Voices*

***Sophia Certified; fulfills LO1: Professional Arts*

Earning the Grades

Law schools use your GPA as an indicator of your academic performance and it will affect your ability to be admitted and your choices when it comes to law school. You can major in **ANY** discipline, but you will want to choose a field of study which you can excel and get high grades in to earn the highest GPA possible. GPA is not the only deciding factor with law schools admissions, but it is very important.

Participating in Internships, Clubs, and Volunteering

Whether you pursue law school or not, your participation in experiential activities outside the classroom is critical to marketing yourself to potential employers and graduate or professional schools. You will want to seek out internships that provide you with experience in your field of interest, volunteer with legal aid clinics or other similar agencies, get involved in campus clubs and organizations, participate in mock trials and similar programs that introduce you to the field of law, and network with as many lawyers as possible. This will help set you up for success in applying to law school or if you decide to pursue other opportunities.

Performing Very Well on the LSAT

Just as with earning good grades, getting a good score on the LSAT (at least 150 or above) is just as important. The LSAT is used by law schools as another measure of your academic excellence, knowledge, and reasoning and logic skills. The CCO offers several books available for check out (see below) that are helpful for self-study. It is recommended that you sign up to take the free LSAT preparation test offered by Kaplan to get a realistic assessment of your strengths and weaknesses as it relates to the LSAT. From here, you can decide if self-study will be sufficient or if you might need additional tutoring or to take a course. The CCO recommends Kaplan (www.kaplan.com), Princeton Review (www.princetonreview.com), and NextStep Test Prep (www.nextsteptestprep.com). LSAT tutoring and courses can be very expensive, but for some students it may be well worth the investment.

Paying for the LSAT

LSAC offers fee waivers for students who are eligible. Check out their website for information on this. In addition, some law schools may offer to reimbursement for the LSAT if you apply to their programs. This may be helpful way to have your LSAT fee covered.

Attending Law School Fairs and Networking

Before committing to a law school, be sure to attend **AT LEAST** one law school fair. Notre Dame hosts a fair each year in September. Other fairs are hosted throughout the year by various law schools. It's important to talk to and meet with as many law school admissions representatives as well as lawyers. They will give you helpful suggestions on how to be competitive in the application process and what you can expect within the profession itself. Many of these opportunities are posted on the LSAC website at www.lsac.org.

Practice Types and Specializations

According to CampusAccess.com, law careers can take on many forms and be categorized into these practice types:

- ◆ **Private Practice:** working alone or with partners in a firm to provide legal services to clients; some lawyers specialize in one or more practice areas while others engage in general practice.
- ◆ **Public Interest Law:** serve low-income individuals, marginalized groups and social causes; practitioners may work for advocacy groups, legal aid clinics and other organizations with the goal of advancing an interest of the public.
- ◆ **Government Counsel:** governments hire lawyers for legal advice and representation; lawyers directly employed by the government may work for ministries, and government agencies.
- ◆ **Corporate Counsel:** corporations can employ lawyers as in-house counsel; an in-house counsel works for a single company to advise on legal matters related to its business activities.
- ◆ **Academia:** colleges, universities, and educational institutions hire law school graduates to teach and conduct research.

Within the law profession, there are various types of lawyers and areas of specialization including, but not limited to:

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| ◆ Administrative (Governmental Agencies) | ◆ International |
| ◆ Civil Litigation | ◆ Joint J.D. Program (i.e., J.D./MBA, J.D./MA, J.D./MPP, J.D./Ph.D.) |
| ◆ Constitutional (Federal Government) | ◆ Labor and Employment |
| ◆ Corporate and Commercial | ◆ Real Estate |
| ◆ Criminal | ◆ Securities |
| ◆ Environmental | ◆ Tax |
| ◆ Family | ◆ Other Areas: Antitrust, Entertainment, Health, Municipal, Sports |
| ◆ Immigration | |
| ◆ Intellectual Property | |

Current Job Market and Starting Salaries

The reality is that law school is very demanding and legal careers are even more demanding! You will be working very long hours, including weekends and even holidays. The job outlook and salaries vary between the types of law practiced, specializations, and geographic locations. Researching and understanding the outcomes of law school can help you compare your expectations to the realities of the job market for lawyers, which can help you make an informed decision about attending law school.

According to the National Association for Law Placement's *2010 Public Sector and Public Interest Attorney Salary Survey*, median salaries for the class of 2010 law school graduates were:

Public Sector/Public Interest:

- ◆ \$42,000 for Civil Legal Services
- ◆ \$45,000 for Public Interest Organizations
- ◆ \$47,500 for Public Defenders
- ◆ \$50,000 for Local Prosecuting Attorneys

Private Practice Law Firms:

- ◆ \$80,000 for <50 lawyers
- ◆ \$95,000 for 51 – 100 lawyers
- ◆ \$105,000 for 101 – 250 lawyers
- ◆ \$125,000 for 251 – 500 lawyers
- ◆ \$135,000 for 501+ lawyers

According to NALP's Employment Report and Salary Survey for the Class of 2010, 87.4% of law school graduates reported being employed. Of these graduates, 68.4% were employed in positions requiring the passage of the Bar Exam. The breakdown of employer types included:

- ◆ 50.9% in Private Practice (dropped 5% from 2009)
- ◆ 15.1% in Business (up by nearly 5% from 2009)
- ◆ 28.8% in Public Service (up almost 3% from 2009)
- ◆ 3.7% in Academic
- ◆ 1.5% Employer Type Unknown

Top Law Schools for 2017 (U.S News and World Report)

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|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Yale University | 6. New York University |
| 2. Stanford University | 7. University of Pennsylvania |
| 3. Harvard University | 8. University of Michigan—Ann Arbor (tied with UV) |
| 4. University of Chicago | 9. University of Virginia (tied with UM) |
| 5. Columbia University | 10. Duke University |

(Additional rankings at <https://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/law-rankings>.)

Keep in mind that rankings are not the only measure of a great law school! It is important for you to choose a law school that is going to be a good fit for you: academically, environmentally, geographically, and financially. Boston College has developed a law school locator that allows you view law schools that might consider your application based on your GPA and LSAT score. To view this matrix, visit <http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/research.html>.

Law Schools Attended by Saint Mary's Graduates (2007—2016)

- ◆ American University Washington College of Law
- ◆ Ave Maria School of Law
- ◆ Barry University Dwayne O. Andreas School of Law
- ◆ Catholic University of America
- ◆ California Western School of Law
- ◆ Chicago-Kent College of Law
- ◆ Cleveland-Marshall College of Law
- ◆ DePaul University College of Law
- ◆ Florida International University College of Law
- ◆ Fordham University School of Law
- ◆ George Washington University Law School
- ◆ Indiana University School of Law (Bloomington)
- ◆ Indiana University School of Law (Indianapolis)
- ◆ John Marshall Law School
- ◆ Loyola University Chicago School of Law
- ◆ Marquette University Law School
- ◆ Michigan State University College of Law
- ◆ Notre Dame Law School
- ◆ Saint Mary's University School of Law
- ◆ Seattle University School of Law
- ◆ Seton Hall University of Law
- ◆ Southwestern Law School
- ◆ Stetson University College of Law
- ◆ Suffolk University Law School
- ◆ The Ohio State University—Moritz College of Law
- ◆ Thomas M. Cooley Law School
- ◆ Tulane University Law School
- ◆ University of Colorado Law School
- ◆ University of Dayton School of Law
- ◆ University of Denver Sturm College of Law
- ◆ University of Georgia School of Law
- ◆ University of Kentucky College of Law
- ◆ University of Maine School of Law
- ◆ University of Maryland School of Law
- ◆ University of Michigan
- ◆ University of Missouri School of Law
- ◆ University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law
- ◆ University of Pittsburgh School of Law
- ◆ University of Richmond School of Law
- ◆ University of Toledo College of Law
- ◆ Valparaiso University School of Law
- ◆ Vermont Law School
- ◆ Wayne State University Law School
- ◆ Western Michigan University Cooley Law School

Saint Mary's Alumnae Law School Graduates and Career Paths

- ◆ Assistant Attorney General, Iowa State Govt.
- ◆ Corporate Counsel, Claire's Boutiques
- ◆ Attorney, Qwest Communications
- ◆ Law Clerk, U.S. Government
- ◆ Attorney/International Tax Consultant, Deloitte Foundation
- ◆ Assistant Professor of Legal Practice, Louisiana State University
- ◆ Partner, Jones Obenchain, LLP
- ◆ Chief Food and Drug Counsel, Kraft Foods
- ◆ Attorney-LSO Unit, Army Reserves JAG Corp.
- ◆ Law Clerk, Michigan Court of Appeals
- ◆ Attorney- Civil Rights and Family Law, Murphy, Murphy & Nugent LLC
- ◆ Counsel, California State Senate Govt.
- ◆ Legal Counsel, Rolls Royce
- ◆ Attorney, Barnes & Thornburg LLP
- ◆ Associate Circuit Judge of Criminal and Traffic, St. Louis County Circuit Court
- ◆ Assistant States Attorney, Juvenile Division, Cook County States Attorney Office
- ◆ Attorney, Axiom
- ◆ Attorney, American Medical Association
- ◆ Principal Deputy-Narcotic & Dangerous Drug Section, Washington Dept. of Justice
- ◆ Assistant Counsel/Attorney, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- ◆ Judge, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
- ◆ Staff Attorney, Community Legal Services/ Farmworker Unit/Programa Campesino
- ◆ Associate in Business Litigation, Baker & Daniels
- ◆ Executive Director, NWI Volunteer Lawyers, Inc.
- ◆ Principal & Attorney, MercerTrigiani
- ◆ Corporate Legal Staff, Coachmen Industries Inc.
- ◆ Associate Counsel, Department of Veteran's Affairs
- ◆ Defense Attorney, Cheatham, Estes and Hollman
- ◆ Sector Counsel, U.S. Border Patrol
- ◆ Senior Counsel-Environmental Litigation, International Paper Company Foundation
- ◆ Staff Director, American Bar Association
- ◆ Director of Division I, National Collegiate Athletic Association
- ◆ Associate Attorney-Healthcare, Dykama Gossett
- ◆ Attorney, Walgreens
- ◆ Attorney, Clarian Health Partners
- ◆ Judge, Cook County Circuit Court
- ◆ Chief Operating Officer/General Counsel, The Prosperity Food Group
- ◆ Criminal Law Attorney, U.S. Army
- ◆ Director, Office of Diversity & Inclusion, U.S. Office of Personnel Management
- ◆ Trust Administration Attorney, JP Morgan Chase
- ◆ Attorney, Director Comm. Legal Services, Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America, Inc.
- ◆ Directing Attorney, Appalachian Research and Defense Fund

Pre-Law Career Services for Students

The Career Crossings Office offers pre-law advising in collaboration with academic departments and faculty pre-law advisors (see Pre-Law Advisors at Saint Mary's College). The CCO can assist with:

- ◆ Choosing a major that will fit with your career goals and interests
- ◆ Providing information and resources on law-related careers, job outlooks, salaries, etc.
- ◆ Helping students find internship opportunities related to the field of law
- ◆ Assisting students with making connections to alumnae working in law professions
- ◆ Providing answers to general law school questions
- ◆ Researching law schools
- ◆ Preparing for the LSAT
- ◆ Reviewing personal statements and essays
- ◆ Researching alternative options for those interested in law professions but not attending law school immediately after graduation

To make an appointment with a counselor in the CCO, please call (574) 284-4775 or stop by the CCO in 114 Spes Unica.

You can also join the **Pre-Law Advising Email Listserv** to receive updates and information regarding law school, upcoming law school fairs, information sessions, workshops, webinars, program information, summer law programs, application fee waivers, etc. To be added, email Stacie Jeffirs at sjeffirs@saintmarys.edu.

Career Resource Center Books

The CCO's Career Resource Center (CRC) houses several books on a variety of topics related to the LSAT and applying to law school that are available for check out. The CRC is located in the CCO, 114 Spes Unica. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Additional Websites and Online Resources

- ◆ American Bar Association (ABA): www.aba.org
- ◆ DiscoverLaw.org: www.discoverlaw.org
- ◆ Law School Admission Council (LSAC): www.lsac.org
- ◆ National Association of Law Placement: www.nalp.org
- ◆ National Association of Women Lawyers: www.nawl.org
- ◆ U.S. Lawyer Associations: www.hg.org/lawfirms-assoc.html

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