



Hunter College Pre-Law Handbook

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I. Introduction

This guide provides basic information about exploring legal careers and applying to law school. If you are considering law school, I encourage you to meet with me. Using my legal background and expertise in law school admissions, I provide the following information and services for students and alumni:

- Information about law school and the legal profession, including how to research legal careers
- Advice on course selection and preparation for law school
- Insight on applying to law-related internships and how to prepare for the interview process
- Guidance on the law school application process, including school selection, extensive review of resumes and personal statements through serial drafting, and framing your application.
- Referral to activities, programs, and resources at Hunter and beyond that will increase knowledge of the legal profession and of the law school admissions process
- Advocacy for students interested in the legal profession

For an appointment to discuss your plans and interests, please call (212) 772-4882 to speak with a scheduler. Please feel free to contact me either by phone or e-mail as noted below with quick questions.

In addition, to get started exploring your law school interest, you may want to:

- Check out the Hunter Pre-Law website at www.hunter.cuny.edu/prelaw/
- Sign up for the Pre-Law Listserv, to receive news via e-mail of upcoming events that may be of interest to you (instructions on the welcome page of the website)
- Reach out to the Hunter Pre-Law Society on Facebook

I look forward to meeting you soon.

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II. The Hunter College Pre-Law Program

The Hunter College Pre-Law Program brings together a number of opportunities designed to prepare students for law school, including alumni mentoring, special internships, informational forums, one-on-one and small-group advising, enrichment activities, student clubs, and skill-building courses.

The Hunter College Pre-Law Program serves as a supplement to students' core liberal arts studies, offering students exposure and insight into the practice of law. It is a conscious choice that the program does not incorporate a "major". U.S. law schools want to teach students the law; a strong liberal arts background – with appropriately developed analytical thinking, critical reading, writing, oral communication, and research skills – is the best preparation for graduate legal study. Thus, Hunter's program provides students with insight into the law school admissions process and legal careers, rigorous academic training and skills to succeed in law school, and accessible advising support throughout their undergraduate careers at Hunter, but especially during the application process.

The program was instituted by President Jennifer Raab in 2005, and subsequently developed with a Board of Advisors from notable law firms in New York City including Cravath, Swaine & Moore; Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison; Frankfurt, Kurnit, Klein & Selz; Seeger Weiss; Morrison & Foerster; and Anderson, Kill & Olick.

The program offers many opportunities for our students including:

A. Moot Court Class

Moot Court is a one credit Intersession course that simulates the appellate court setting. Students become knowledgeable about existing legal controversies, prepare legal briefs, and present a case before a mock judicial panel. By learning to read cases, draft briefs, and make oral arguments, students gain insight into court-based decision making, as well as the role of lawyers and judges within the process. Registration for the course is by permission only. Thereafter, students have the opportunity to compete in local Moot Court scrimmages, such as the John Jay Tournament usually held at Fordham Law School. Students should contact the Pre-Law Advising Office during November if this class is of interest.

B. Mentoring

Through programming sponsored by the Pre-Law Advising Office and the Pre-Law Society, students have frequent occasion for contact with Hunter alumni who are part of New York City's rich and diverse legal community. Be sure to sign up for Hunter's Pre-Law Listserv (instructions online on the Pre-Law website) for information about events and opportunities to meet with Hunter's alumni attorneys. Events have included roundtable discussions addressing issues in banking law, employment law, personal injury law, criminal law, as well as panels on:

- International Careers in Law
- Intellectual Property and Media Law
- Lawyering as General or Corporate Counsel
- Public Interest Law

Our annual "Careers in Law Day" allows students to mingle with Hunter alumni and friends who are practicing attorneys. This casual, cocktail party type event gives students the opportunity to learn more about the contexts in which lawyers work – such as private sector, non-profit, and government settings –

and also about particular areas of specialization. We also use this end of year capstone event to celebrate the law school acceptances of our seniors and recent graduates.

In addition, there is also a formal year-long mentoring program at Hunter that includes many attorneys. Applications are generally submitted in April for the following year. If you are interested, contact the Pre-Law Advising Office.

C. LSAT Preparation

The generosity of Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson has enabled Hunter to sponsor a special discounted LSAT preparatory program. This extended class begins in the spring term and provides students with comprehensive instruction, though a combination of a skill-building workshop and guided self study prior to the intensive summer component of the course. If you are interested in taking advantage of this opportunity, speak with the Pre-Law Advising Office, preferably before the end of the fall term.

D. Internships

A law-related internship can be a great way to explore the legal profession, develop contacts, learn new skills, and gain work experience. Becoming familiar with legal work may provide you with some insight and direction, and when you apply to law school, help you write a more focused and interesting personal statement.

1. Paid Summer Internship Program

Through the Pre-Law Advising Office, Hunter encourages students to apply for paid summer internships at a number of prestigious law firms in Manhattan. These internships are competitive. Firms usually seek sophomores and juniors with excellent grades who have demonstrated interest in attending law school. For information on how to apply, speak to the Pre-Law Advisor early in the spring semester.

2. Julie Ross and Mark Ladner Fellowship for Public Interest Law

The Julie Ross and Mark Ladner Summer Fellowship in Public Interest Law provides a current Hunter student or recent alum the possibility to explore public service through a law-related summer internship at a public interest or government organization. The amount of fellowship awarded varies depending upon the length of the internship and financial need. Prior awards have been used for activities such as an internship with a New York State Supreme Court Judge, and the production of a handbook for youths aging out of foster care. If you are interested in applying for the coming summer, please plan to speak with the Pre-Law Advisor by February.

3. Other Internship Opportunities

Additional internship opportunities at law-related government and non-profit organizations are also available to students during the academic school year and summer session through the coordinated efforts of Career Development Services and Pre-Law Advising. Occasionally these are paid or include a stipend. Recent placements at such offices have included:

- AALDEF (Asian American Legal Defense Fund)
- Chambers of Judge Price (Bronx Criminal Court)
- Catholic Charities (Immigration Law)
- New York Corporation Counsel (New York City's lawyers)
- The Office of the Attorney General of the State of New York
- New York Civil Liberties Union

Internships can sometimes be done for credit as part of a course or as an independent study as discussed below in the "Preparing for Law School" section of this handbook. For information on internships and application procedures, contact Hunter's internship coordinator, Paula Wicklow at pwicklow@hunter.cuny.edu, and watch the Pre-Law Listserv for additional internship positions that may become available through Pre-Law Advising.

E. Admissions Panels and Events

The Pre-Law Program sponsors a number of forums and workshops each year to provide students with information on law school admissions and law school life. Typical programming includes:

- Guidelines for Applying to Law School
- Group Trip to the Law School Admission Council Forum (at which more than 100 schools are generally represented) at the New York Hilton
- Law School Admissions Panel
- Building Credit and Financing Law School
- Tips for Law School Success

Keep an eye on the Pre-Law Listserv and the Hunter Gatherer for announcements about these informative events.

F. Distinguished Speaker Series

Hunter periodically sponsors lectures by notable members of the New York legal community to provide students with valuable insight into current legal issues of the day and complex historical moments. Recent presentations have featured a debate between noted alumni, Sheila Birnbaum, partner at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, and Christopher Seeger, founding partner at Seeger Weiss, regarding the desirability of federal tort reform, as well as a discussion by Philip Lacovara about his role with the Watergate Special Prosecutor's Office. These are among our most exciting events, and we eagerly anticipate more such lectures in semesters to come.

G. Hunter Pre-Law Society

The Hunter Pre-Law Society is a student club that serves as a conduit for a collective pre-law student voice at Hunter. The club is dedicated to promoting the academic success of Hunter's pre-law students. It takes an active role in planning and initiating Pre-Law programming. The group facilitates trips, events, and study assistance and serves as a forum for expression of different opinions on current legal and public affairs. Students have found taking on a leadership role in the club to be both fun and useful. You can contact the Hunter Pre-Law Society at hunterprelawsociety@gmail.com. The club also maintains a Facebook page.

H. Hunter Mock Trial Club

In this student run club, students compete against other schools in local scrimmages though a simulated trial setting. Participants build communication skills, evaluate case law, and learn about the rules of evidence and trial procedure. This fun team-based activity also builds collegiality among pre-law students, who compete in groups of 6-10 students. The e-mail address for the group is moc-usg@hunter.cuny.edu.

III. Exploring Your Interest in Law

A. The J.D. Degree and What Law Schools Teach

The degree lawyers earn is the J.D. (Juris Doctor). The J.D. is similar to other graduate degrees in that it requires a rigorous course of study in a competitive environment. Law schools confer the J.D. after three years of full-time study. Part-time J.D. programs take longer or include summer study. Law schools generally require entering students already to have a bachelor's degree; the schools accept applicants from a wide variety of majors, and seek students who have well-developed writing, reading, analytic and research skills. It is advisable for students who intend to apply to law school to take a broad range of courses which develop and demonstrate these skills. Most law schools (there are a few exceptions) accept students for fall admission only. They begin to consider applicants in early fall for admission to the class that will enter the following fall.

Law school provides generalist training. During the first year, all students are required to take certain courses, typically including: contracts, torts, property, criminal law, civil procedure and legal writing. Constitutional law and corporations are often also required or recommended. In the second and third years, students can generally choose all or most of their courses. Courses offered by law schools include: administrative law, civil litigation, commercial law, evidence, family law, tax, professional responsibility, trusts and estates and international law as well as many others. While many schools offer special programs in a particular area of legal practice (such as international law, intellectual property, corporate governance, etc.), students are not necessarily required to select an area of specialization.

Review the "Thinking About Law School" section of the website of the Law School Admission Council (LSAC.org), a useful source of information on law school and legal careers, for a brief description of the law school curriculum. For more specific information about requirements at individual schools, course offerings, and special programs, refer to law school websites and publications.

B. What Lawyers Do

Lawyers work in a variety of practice areas and environments. Many lawyers develop expertise in a specialized area of law such as corporate and securities law, criminal law, environmental law, family law, health law, intellectual property law, international law, or tax law. Furthermore, the orientation of legal practice can generally vary between transactional, planning, and litigation work within these fields.

Choosing a specialization does not necessarily mandate the type of environment in which you will work. For example, you can practice corporate or tax law on your own, or in a large firm, in a government agency or a corporate headquarters. Work environments vary as does the nature of legal work. The 2008 edition of the *ABA/LSAC Official Guide* reports that 72.9% of American lawyers are in private practice, most in small offices, 8.2% work for the government, 9.5% work for private associations and industries, 1.1% work for legal aid or as public defenders, and 1% work in legal education.

The work of an attorney has heavily academic orientation. While law practice is diverse, there are some core tasks to being an attorney which include: drafting documents; reading cases; analyzing legal and policy issues; performing statutory and case research; synthesizing large amounts of material into a coherent whole; communicating effectively in speech and writing; advising clients; and advocating and effectively negotiating on a client's behalf based on situations circumscribed by the law.

The LSAC website also provides a useful discussion of what lawyers do in the section entitled “Lawyers and Their Skills”.

C. Is Law School the Right Choice for Me?

Going to law school and getting a J.D. can lead to a challenging and satisfying career. Keep in mind, though, that attending law school is a big investment of time and money. Law students commonly take on substantial debt to finance their graduate education. Preparing for and succeeding in law school requires rigorous study; practicing law also requires very hard work, and often, long hours. For these reasons, consider carefully the decision to apply to law school.

- **Know yourself:** Finding a satisfying career is work that demands both career exploration and self-exploration. Researching career paths and knowing yourself – including your values, strengths, weaknesses, and interests – will set you on the road to success, whether that means attending graduate or professional school or gaining employment experience. Everybody has passions and abilities. If you don't know yet what yours are, and/or are daunted by the prospect of seeking out options and information in the working world, visit Career Development Services on the eighth floor of Hunter East for advice on the process of exploring and developing a career.
- **Know what the profession offers:** Take the time to explore the legal profession and address whether you should go to law school prior to applying. Ask yourself, “Why law school?” “What do I hope to do as a lawyer?” Familiarity with options in the legal profession and types of legal practice will help you decide whether and where to apply, and how best to use your legal education for career advancement. Educate yourself: for example, be aware of the cost of public and private law schools and of the average salaries of lawyers in various fields in the location where you intend to work. While you are researching law and legal careers, look into other types of graduate programs as well to explore the range of options. If your goal is to help people, look into helping professions such as social work. If you would like to manage a program or non-profit organization, explore graduate programs and career opportunities in public and business administration.
- **Weigh the costs and benefits:** Many students wonder whether they should attend law school if they are unsure of their desire to practice law. A law degree may open the door to a variety of opportunities; law practice is diverse, and law school provides training and skills that may prove useful in a variety of law-related employment settings. For these reasons, students may see attending law school as a way to keep options open, a practical way of extending ones education, while not committing to a narrow field. Other common motivations for attending law school are a desire to please parents or other family members, help people, earn money and enjoy prestige. While any of these considerations may be a legitimate factor in the decision to go to law school, it is advisable to consider what legal work actually involves and to have a realistic sense of the opportunities typically open to law school graduates. If you want to use your law degree in a non-legal environment, it is advisable to have a clear picture of how legal education fits in with a career path in the areas in which

you are interested; **career and placement offices at law schools are geared primarily to placing students in legal jobs.**

The best advice on law school is taken from career services professionals at law schools who help their students and graduates who are seeking employment. They maintain that those most likely to develop satisfying careers have done their research beforehand, and are familiar with the realities of the legal profession. They stress the importance of proactively exploring careers and making career choices before law school, and continuing to do so during law school to find the niche right for you.

D. Resources for Researching Legal Careers

Pre-Law Website: Check out the “Resources” page for links to helpful websites and relevant books on reserve in Hunter’s library. This information is also included in the Appendix below.

Pre-Law Advisor: Schedule an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor by calling (212) 772-4882. It is never too soon to meet. A first conversation can center on your goals and motivation for going to law school, as well as how to prepare.

Law School Admissions Council (LSAC): Familiarize yourself with legal education, the law school admissions process, and legal careers by going to www.LSAC.org, the website of the Law School Admissions Council. LSAC sponsors a large law school **forum** each fall here in New York, where over 100 schools are represented. Check the website at www.LSAC.org for dates.

Pre-Law Listserv: Join Hunter’s Pre-Law Listserv (PRELAW-L) to receive e-mail notice of law-related programs and opportunities throughout the year. To subscribe to the list, go to hunter.listserv.cuny.edu and select “Click here to view or search online list archives”. Scroll down and click on “PRELAW-L”, then follow the link to “subscribe or unsubscribe”.

Pre-Law Events: Attend panels and information sessions held at Hunter. These include discussions with law students, Hunter alumni who are lawyers, and law school admission officers.

Career Development Office: Visit Career Development Services in 805 Hunter East. Speak with a career counselor, take some interest assessment tests, and visit their library.

Experience: Consider work as a paralegal or intern in a law firm, legal department of a government agency or private company, a prosecutor’s or public defender’s office, or a non-profit legal organization.

Talk to Lawyers: To learn about the legal profession, conduct informal interviews of friends, family and alumni who are or have been lawyers. Find out why they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their work.

Tap into Law Schools: Contact a law school admissions office to arrange to visit a class for first-year students. Many law schools schedule open houses and other programs for prospective students. Check law school web sites for information. Remember that when you make contact, the law schools are checking you out, as you are checking them out.

Visit Courtrooms: If you are interested in being in the courtroom, visit courts to observe trials and other proceedings. This will give you a chance to see litigators and judges in action.

American Bar Association (ABA): Read through the Career Counsel section of the ABA web page, in particular the summary list of legal practice specializations and associated articles, located at <http://www.abanet.org/careercounsel/archive.html> to gain greater insight into what lawyers do in different legal practice areas.

The Official Guide to Legal Specialties: This book, published by the National Association for Law Placement, reviews major practice areas. It is included among the holdings in the Hunter library, as noted in the Appendix at the end of this guide.

Hunter Pre-Law Society: Talk to other students who have interests similar to yours, and can offer you insight into their own experiences, such as internships. The Hunter Pre-Law Society is on Facebook, and also holds periodic meetings.

IV. Preparing for Law School

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 “pre-law major” and unlike medical school, there are no specific educational requirements for entrance into law school. Law schools seek students with intellectual ability, well-developed thinking and writing skills, a strong work ethic and leadership potential. Use your time at Hunter to develop your own voice, get a sense of what kinds of intellectual pursuits motivate you, and establish a professional presence by being active in the community and building a compelling resume. It is also helpful to keep abreast of current events by reading the New York Times or Wall Street Journal – be a person of the world.

A. Course Selection: Develop Research, Analysis, and Writing Skills

The lack of a required set of courses sometimes frustrates students who are looking for a clear roadmap that will lead to a legal degree. However, this flexibility allows students to study what they enjoy, and students are more likely to do well in those subjects. Take courses which will help you hone the skills which will eventually be important to you as a law student. Such “lawyering” skills include:

- analytical thinking
- problem solving
- critical reading
- writing
- persuasion
- oral communication and presentation
- research
- task organization and management

As long as you develop these skills, you can major in virtually any subject. Most law schools prefer you to take a wide range of undergraduate courses and receive a broad education rather than focus on law courses.

When choosing courses, keep in mind:

- Take writing intensive courses that will cultivate your writing skills. Many liberal arts courses such as Literature or History will require you to engage in reasoned argument, to develop a persuasive writing style.

- When you read for courses (and for pleasure), practice being a critical reader. Identify the argument being presented, supporting evidence, and faulty reasoning.
- Courses in logic, such as Introduction to Logic (Philosophy 103), can be helpful in preparing for the LSAT; math can be useful as well. Look for courses that will strengthen your analytical and critical thinking skills.
- There are a number of legally-related courses available that may help you assess your interest in law and provide you with some useful background. In the Political Science Department, offerings include: American Legal System, Women and the Law, Law of Privacy, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, and International Law. The Economics Department offers a series of business law courses. There are also law-related courses in Philosophy, Computer Science, and Film and Media Studies. Note, however, that while law-related classes may allow you to get a feel for law as a general subject, they neither cover the material in the same depth nor embody the intensity and rigor of law school.
- The Political Science Department and the Urban Studies Department offer opportunities for internships relating to law and public policy. The Public Service Scholars Program also offers placements.
- In order to be admitted to the Patent Bar (lawyers who work in the very specialized area of obtaining patents), an undergraduate degree or other training in a scientific or technical area is required. If you know that you are interested in a specific area of legal practice, find out if lawyers in that area use knowledge from a particular field. Alumni mentors can be helpful here.
- The Intersession Moot Court course – offered through the Political Science Department – is a good opportunity to hone your public speaking abilities. Involvement with the student Mock Trial club will help you build your oral communication skills as well.
- General exposure to Economics and Finance will be useful to students who are interested in practicing law in a corporate environment.

The law schools also look to see that you take **progressively more challenging courses** as you move through your college years. Freshmen and Sophomores should by all means start with introductory courses, but your transcript should reflect more advanced work in your junior and senior years.

Also consider that while lecture courses provide a good foundation for further instruction, **seminars** will allow you to present, discuss, critique, and defend more specific ideas. Smaller classes give you the opportunity to get to know faculty whom you might later ask for recommendations.

B. Select a Major You Enjoy

Choose a major that interests you, in an area where you excel. Admissions offices are not particularly interested in your major, but they are interested in how well you did in the discipline(s) you chose to pursue. A double major is not necessarily a positive factor in the admissions process.

While specific coursework may later prove helpful in corporate law, environmental law or intellectual property, a J.D. is a generalist's degree, and applicants come from widely diverse academic backgrounds.

C. Compile an Impressive Record

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. **Do consider writing a thesis in your major department, and aim to graduate with honors.**

Familiarize yourself with and take advantage of opportunities for academic support at Hunter. If you are having trouble earning the grades that you want, ask for help. Go to professors' office hours and find out how you should go about researching and writing that paper (this will also help you to get to know a professor whom you may later ask for a recommendation); seek tutoring; and/or speak with an academic advisor. Be aware that the Credentials Assembly Service (CAS, discussed below) calculates GPA according to its own criteria: **CAS will consider a grade of NC (no credit) a failing grade.** In terms of protecting your GPA, it is preferable to withdraw from a course early with a W than to receive a final grade of NC, D or F.

D. Pursue 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; they do not have to be directly related to law. Over time, get involved in more depth in fewer activities. Take initiative and show leadership.

The “education” section of your resume will take up only a few inches of the page. Use your activities outside of your formal classes to **establish a professional presence** and build the rest of your resume so that it demonstrates your interests.

E. Cultivate Support

You will eventually need letters of recommendation when you apply to law school. The best person to ask for a recommendation is a faculty member who knows you well and can provide specific information about your character and abilities. Do not become intimidated by professors. Writing letters is part of their job and at some time someone did the same for them. If they know you, and you have done well in their classes, they usually find this a pleasure.

Work to establish relationships with professors throughout your college years. Be sure to speak up in class. Take some seminars or courses with a small class size. If there is a professor whom you particularly respect and enjoy, take more than one class with him or her. Attend a professor's office hours to get help, or ask questions about course lectures and readings. Show your interest in the material by discussing potential paper topics, reviewing a paper you wrote or asking about related courses and research opportunities within the department and about outside internships. Ask for advice and discuss your future study and career plans.

It is best to ask for a letter from a professor who can provide detailed and specific information about you. Do not wait until you are in the midst of applying to schools! **Ask professors for letters of reference while you are in contact, even if you are in your sophomore or junior year.** At Hunter there are many adjunct faculty members who may move between institutions, so this is very important. **For more information about requesting letters of recommendation, please refer to the discussion about “Letters of Recommendation” in the “Applying to Law School” section of this guide, below.**

F. Stay Informed About Current Events

Regardless of which courses you select, take the initiative to educate yourself by **reading, on a regular basis, a national newspaper such as the Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, or the Financial Times**. This will serve to make you a more informed person, and provide you with context for your liberal arts studies. Be aware of issues that are of interest to you, and be able to discuss them in an informed way. Developing and knowing your own voice will give you the tools and material to write your graduate school application essays. In addition, the op-ed pages of these newspapers are about the same length a reading passage for the LSAT (more on this below), and a simple way to build your critical reading skills over time.

G. Anticipate and Prepare for the Law School Admission Test

The Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) is the standardized test for law school admission. The LSAT is designed to provide law school admissions committees with a common measure of applicants' aptitude for legal study. The test is a rigorous exam consisting of five multiple choice sections, each thirty-five minutes in length, and one writing sample:

- **2 Logical Reasoning Sections** in which you read a short passage and answer questions about the arguments presented. Questions test your ability to identify assumptions, analyze the structure of arguments and draw logical conclusions.
- **1 Reading Comprehension Section** in which you read complex essays on various topics. Questions test your understanding, by asking you to identify themes and to draw inferences about facts and theories presented.
- **1 Analytical Reasoning Section** in which you are presented with a scenario that gives you information about a structure of relationships (such as groups, sequences, or spatial relations). You will need to manipulate information, often through diagramming, and draw conclusions about the given relationships.
- **1 Experimental Section**, which may be any of the above. Results on this section are not scored, but you are not told which section is experimental.
- **1 Writing Sample**, which is not scored, but copies are sent to schools where you apply.

Scores are computed on a scale of 120 to 180, based on the number of correctly answered questions. There is no penalty for incorrect answers, so guessing is advantageous.

The test is offered four times each year: February, June, Fall (the date shifts between September and October) and December. Begin planning for the LSAT the year before you wish to apply to law school.

The optimal time to take the exam is **no later than June of your junior year**. The **February** following Intersession during your junior year is a good time in the Hunter schedule to take the LSAT in anticipation of applying the following fall. Taking the test in late September/early October of your senior year will also allow you to apply by November 1 – the date by which you ideally want to submit applications – but be aware that taking the exam during the fall while you are filling out applications and studying for classes during your senior year will be a juggle.

1. How Long Do I Need to Study for the LSAT?

Plan to study intensely for the LSAT. It is a good idea to assess yourself early on by becoming familiar with the LSAT, reviewing a few practice exams, and then taking and scoring a timed released exam. **(Never take a reported LSAT for practice, however!)** Figure out in what areas you need to improve to reach your target score, and develop a study plan.

Taking an LSAT preparation course is highly recommended both to teach you test-taking techniques and structure your study, but be aware, that a 2-3 month course is probably not enough. **It is not atypical to need 8 months or more to reach one's maximum potential score; some students need 120 hours of studying to first make progress.** If you plan to apply to law school in the fall of your senior year, you should be studying for the LSAT by the fall of your junior year. **The summer before your junior year is not too soon to start.**

A typical strategy is to study begin studying on your own with a commercial guide such as the PowerScore Bible, and then take a test preparatory course prior to the **LSAT offered in either February or June of your junior year.** If you are not ready by the June exam date, you can study over the summer for the exam that is administered in early fall, but see other timing considerations below, under the “Applying to Law School” section of this booklet. The best study schedule for you depends on your activities and commitments. Think about what schedule is right for you.

Do not be discouraged! Not enough time to study? This can be true if you work and are in school and/or have family obligations. Consider postponing until you complete school so you can achieve your best score. Many students do this while taking jobs in fields that can affirm or support career plans.

2. Register Early

Register for the test early so you can take the exam at the center of your choice. It is a good idea to find out (from other students) which test centers are comfortable and well-proctored. Should you choose to put off taking the exam, you can reschedule your test date for a small fee.

3. Can I Retake the Test?

Yes, but your goal is to take this test only once, when you know you are ready. You can retake the LSAT but there is a limit to how many times you can take it within a given period of time. Multiple scores are provided to law schools, as well as an average score. Due to recent policy changes by the ABA (American Bar Association), some schools will consider the higher score. Many schools continue to average scores.

Student scores do not usually improve significantly in subsequent exams, unless there was a substantial reason for not performing well the first time (such as illness). In general, a good strategy is to prepare thoroughly before your first exam, and go with your first score. If you do not believe your score is representative of your abilities, however – for example, you were scoring considerably higher on practice tests – you may want to consider retaking the test. Speak with the Pre-Law Advisor if you find yourself in this situation.

If you are registered for a test but feel you are not fully prepared or in a frame of mind to perform well, it may be **better not to take the test.** Conversely, if you are aware that a test has not gone well – for example, you inaccurately bubbled in an entire section and did not have time to go back to fix the error – it might be advisable to void your score. The window for voiding your score after an exam is only a few

days; let the Pre-Law Advisor know immediately if you are contemplating voiding your score.

Where to Find Sample Tests:

- Download sample questions and explanations and a complete sample test from www.LSAC.org. The LSAC site also contains some tips about studying for the LSAT.
- LSAC sells books that contain released LSAT exams. You can order these from LSAC online or by phone. They are available in some bookstores.
- Some test preparation companies (Princeton Review and Kaplan) offer **free** scored and timed practice tests for anyone who would like to sit for them. Check out their websites for information and take advantage of their free services.
- There are released exams in the test preparation books on reserve in Hunter's library (see Appendix).

Study Options

- **Commercial Courses.** Preparatory classroom courses structure study, allow feedback from teachers, provide easy access to study materials, and include timed practice tests. A variety of commercial are courses available, widely ranging in price. Shop around – compare prices, amount of class-time, out-of-class resources, number of simulated exams, and level of feedback from teachers. Consult with the Pre-Law Advisor for information on test preparation programs and discounts for Hunter students.

There is a specially designed, reasonably-priced course available to Hunter students and alumni. The extended course provides students with a “jump start” at the beginning of the spring semester, followed by guided self-study and a traditional intensive summer component. Entry into the summer component alone may be possible on a space-available basis. Be sure to watch the Pre-Law Listerv for information, and speak with the Pre-Law Advisor if you are interested.

- **Study Books.** Commercially available guides can be a good first step in test preparation and can prepare you to make the most of a test preparation course. Study guides allow for flexibility (you can study anywhere, anytime) but require discipline and do not provide teacher feedback. Many guides contain explanations to help you learn how to attack the questions and understand why you got a question wrong. Some guides include CDs containing additional study materials. A popular study guide is the **PowerScore** series, which is on reserve in Hunter's library (see Appendix below).
- **Actual LSAT Tests.** There is no better way to test your understanding and progress than to complete old exams. Over 40 actual LSAT exams are available for purchase on the LSAC website or are included as study materials provided by test preparation companies. Do timed practice tests and do them again. Spend time going over the exams that you take and understand your errors. **You will improve not by just doing the exams, but by reviewing them, identifying why a mistake was made.**

- **Tutoring.** Private tutoring can be very expensive but does allow for extensive, personalized feedback. Sometimes a few tutoring sessions in an area of difficulty can be useful.
- **Study Groups:** Look for friends or colleagues in the Pre-Law Society who can help you review old exams. This can make the process more fun and help structure your studying.

V. Understanding Law School Admissions Criteria

Once you determine that you are law school bound, get ready for some very stiff competition. As noted above, law schools seek students with intellectual ability, well-developed thinking and writing skills, a strong work ethic and leadership potential. To assess your academic strength and personal qualities, admissions officers will look to your grades as an undergraduate (from all colleges you attended), your score on the Law School Admission Test, LSAT, your recommendations, resume, and personal statement and other required essays.

Materials reviewed by the admissions committees include:

- **GPA and LSAT:** Grades in college and score on the LSAT are the most significant factors in law school admissions. **Grades and scores also impact decisions on funding. Much financial support for law school is based on merit, as opposed to need.**
- **Letters of Recommendation:** Many law schools request two **academic** letters of recommendation and will accept more including those from employers and others who have supervised your work.
- **Personal Statement:** Law schools rarely interview candidates for admission. Thus, your personal statement is an important element of the application.
- **Resume:** Extracurricular activities, employment and internship experiences can help make you stand out from the crowd. Law schools value leadership so that demonstrating leadership ability in an area (it need not be law-related) is preferable to becoming involved in a large number of activities. Law-related activities may help you explore the legal profession and write a more focused personal statement for law school. Avoid becoming so involved in activities or work that you do not devote enough time to studying -- remember GPA is a crucial factor here.
- **Personal/Diversity Factors:** Factors such as race, socioeconomic background, and personal background can influence admissions decisions.

VI. Determining Where to Apply

A. Which schools are likely to accept me?

Your GPA and LSAT score are key indicators of where you are likely to be admitted. Apply to several schools within each of three categories: those in your competitive range, several “reaches”, and several “safety schools.” The more broadly you apply, the more options are likely to be open to you once you receive acceptances and rejections. Further, offers of financial aid can vary widely. **It is not excessive to apply to ten or more schools.** Keep an open mind, and if possible consider schools that are out of state to increase your options.

To identify schools in these different categories, consult the *Official Guide to ABA Law Schools* available on the LSAC website, and the Boston College Law School Locator available at <http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/lawlocator.html>.

Once you have identified these schools, take the opportunity to investigate further, consulting various sources of information about law schools:

- Visit law school websites, an invaluable source on special programs, centers and fellowships. For example Brooklyn Law School has a Center for International Business Law to which admitted students may apply to be fellows; Hofstra has a family law program and fellowship; and NYU has a fellowship in international law.
- Attend **LSAC's New York Forum in early fall** where admission officers from law schools throughout the country are available to answer questions. For information on the forum visit their website at LSAC.org. LatinoJustice PRLDEF (the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund) holds a law school forum for minority students. For information go to latinojustice.org.
- Speak with law students and recent law school graduates. Many law schools have formal and/or informal programs for prospective students so that you can visit while school is in session. Take the time to hang out with and speak to students. The school should feel like a "good fit" to you. Speak to friends or Hunter alumni who attended the law schools in which you are interested.
- Law school admissions offices are usually happy to connect admitted students to their students who are Hunter alumni. Additionally, Hunter's Pre-Law Advisor can put you in touch with Hunter alumni at or from various law schools.

B. Other Factors to Consider

When researching schools think about what is important to you as you consider the following factors:

- location (urban, suburban)
- class size and diversity
- placement rates: What percentage of students are employed in legal positions six months after graduation?
- Placement types: In what types of jobs are students placed, and in what locations?
- special programs offered
- quality and accessibility of faculty
- opportunities for clinical work/externships while in law school
- student organizations
- academic support services
- facilities and resources
- cost

C. Alternative Programs

There are options for obtaining a J.D. that vary from three year, full-time law school programs. These include night and part-time programs, programs with a May or January start date, and conditional acceptance programs (which require you to attend and succeed in law school courses prior to admittance).

Admissions criteria for alternative programs can be somewhat less competitive. If your “numbers” are not quite within the range of a school you are interested in attending, investigate whether the school has a night, part-time or conditional acceptance program. It is sometimes possible to start in a night or part-time program and then transfer to the full-time program. *The Law School Book of Lists* (see Appendix below) is a good source for identifying schools with alternative programs. The Pre-Law Advisor is also available to discuss alternatives with you.

VIII. Applying to Law School

After reaching the decision to pursue a law degree, you will want to file a strong and complete application, and time the submission appropriately to increase your chances for admission.

Keep in mind that Applications should be submitted as **early as possible** in the fall of the year prior to starting law school. For best consideration, submit applications by **November 1**, and in any event, do not delay past Thanksgiving. Admission generally occurs on a rolling basis, so the process becomes more competitive if you apply later. Once you have been rejected, it can become more difficult to gain entry in future application cycles.

The first step in the application process will be to **meet with your Pre-Law Advisor**, who can help you create a strategy for maximizing your chances for success.

Next you should open an **online account** with the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) at LSAC.org. LSAC is comprised of the 195 American Bar Association-approved law schools in the U.S. and 15 Canadian law schools, and was founded to coordinate and facilitate the process of applying to law school.

Be aware that applying to law school is not inexpensive. Basic costs include:

- LSAT registration fee
- CAS registration fee (Another service through LSAC.org, which is explained below)
- Law School Reports (one report per school applied to)
- Application fees (per school applied to)

LSAC offers **fee waivers** for those with a demonstrated inability to pay for essential parts of the application. The waivers cover two LSATs per testing year (June through February); CAS registration, including a total of four CAS Law School Reports; and, a copy of *The Official LSAT SuperPrep*.

A. Law School Admission Test (LSAT)

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is required for admission to all American Bar Association-approved law schools. Suggestions for preparing for the test are noted above.

The **February** following Intersession during your junior year is a good time in the Hunter schedule to take the LSAT in anticipation of applying the following fall. Ideally, plan to take the exam **no later than June of your junior year**. Taking the test in late September/early October of your senior year will also allow you to apply by November 1 – the date by which you want to submit applications – but be aware that taking the exam during the fall while you are filling out applications and studying for classes during your senior year will be a juggle.

As noted above, if you are registered for a test but feel you are not fully prepared or in a frame of mind to perform well, it may be **better not to take the test**. Plan to be **well-prepared** and to take the test only once. 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. See above discussion in “Preparing for Law School”.

Law schools are required to report the higher/highest of multiple scores of students in their entering class to the American Bar Association. Those scores are then reported to organizations such as the Law School Admission Council for use in their online and print information.

Schools vary, however, in how they consider multiple LSAT scores in making admissions decisions. Though some schools use the higher/highest score in reaching decisions, many of the more competitive schools use the average of multiple scores unless there is a compelling reason to use the higher/highest score.

LSAC will report the results of all LSATs you have taken within five years; however, **you may find some schools willing to consider only scores received within a three-year period.**

B. Credentials Assembly Service (CAS)

The Credentials Assembly Service (CAS), part of the Law School Admissions Council which also administers the LSAT, serves as the national clearinghouse for law school admissions. Law schools use this service to centralize and facilitate the law school application process. CAS submits a report to each school you apply to. The report contains:

- copies of all undergraduate, graduate and professional school transcripts
- a summary of the transcripts, with a CAS-calculated GPA
- LSAT score(s) and a copy of LSAT writing sample(s)
- letters of recommendation

You will need to **register** on-line at LSAC.org for the CAS service, and then send **transcript request forms**, available through CAS, to each university that has granted you academic credit.

If you enrolled in a study abroad program sponsored by your home institution, and the courses along with grades and credits using your home institution’s grading system are recorded on your official transcript, you will not need to send an additional transcript reflecting the study abroad grades/credits. Those grades will be calculated into both the home institution’s GPA and the overall GPA.

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-sponsor of the study abroad program send a transcript directly to CAS. List the U.S. or Canadian institution on your CAS 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.

C. The Application

There are several options for submitting applications to law schools. You can apply to any ABA-approved law school through the CAS electronic application, which streamlines the process by allowing you to enter common information only once; you then complete each school's individual application and submit your applications electronically.

You can also complete applications located on schools' websites, or call the schools to request hard-copy applications. Addresses and phone numbers of admissions offices are provided on schools' websites.

Given the convenience of the CAS application process, almost all students opt to apply electronically through CAS.

Completing the application forms is a fairly straightforward process. Schools will be seeking basic information about you, including your academic background, extracurricular activities, and employment history. Make sure that you complete the forms with extra care; your work should **be meticulous**.

Be **truthful and forthright** as you complete the applications. Later, once you graduate from law school, your application will be released to the bar examiners of the state where you apply for entry to the bar (i.e. seeking permission to practice law.)

If prompted, or if the application does not adequately give you space to detail your work history, enclose a **resume** with your application. Be sure to respond to **all** of the questions on the application even if you think that the resume speaks to the information requested.

D. Personal Statement and Additional Essays

The personal statement is an essay required by most law schools as part of the application. The essay should be about **two double-spaced pages** (unless the application provides different instructions). The personal statement provides you with the opportunity to present yourself without being boastful. Let your reader know how you are unique and why you would be an interesting addition to the law school class. Keep in mind that **the personal statement serves as a writing sample, as well as a proxy for an interview**.

This is a highly crafted essay. It takes most applicants numerous drafts just to pin down their ideas, before they turn to wordsmithing. Give yourself enough time to let your ideas develop. The brevity of the statement makes it challenging.

Remember that not all schools will ask you the same question, or phrase their prompt in the same way. **Be sure to answer the prompt which is provided to you.** You may need to "customize" your statement for the different schools to which you are applying.

1. Make It Interesting

- If you have a great story to tell about your life, tell it. For example, recounting your experience overcoming a certain hardship or as an immigrant can make an interesting personal statement.
- Think about two or three formative experiences, beliefs or events and how these have affected the way you think about the world. These might be a memory from travel, your growth as an athlete, your passion for an activity, or your reflections on an experience significant to you.
- You do not have to write about why you want to go to law school. If you decide to write about your motivation to attend law school, make sure that your background and experience support your assertions. A well-focused reason for applying can be helpful, particularly if you are applying to a specialized program.
- Be yourself. There is no winning formula for writing a personal statement but successful essays tend to be honest and specific. Ask yourself: Would an admissions officer know me better after reading the statement?

2. Use Resources

- The Pre-Law Advisor will help you frame your ideas, and give you feedback as you craft your essay.
- Hunter's Writing Center, 416 Thomas Hunter Hall, (212) 772-4212 is another valuable resource.
- Certain departments also have writing fellows to help support students' efforts in the application process. Check with your major department.
- Get feedback from people who can give you constructive criticism and who know you well, such as mentors, including professors to whom you are close, as well as family members who have insight into your growth and experiences.

3. Edit

- The essay should be carefully structured. Make sure that you have strong transitions between paragraphs, and that you address the points you mention in your introduction and in topic sentences.
- Your grammar and punctuation should be flawless.
- Check spelling.
- Put your essay away for a few days, then edit again. See where you can eliminate repetitive sections and better explain or develop ideas that are not clear.

4. "Optional" Essays

Schools will frequently request additional essays such as a diversity statement, or an explanation as to why you are interested in their particular school. It is advisable to respond to these essays even if they are denoted as "optional". It is a signal to the admission committee that you are truly committed to the school when you address all the questions in the application.

E. Letters of Recommendation

Law schools have many more applicants than they can admit. Recommendations provide admissions officers with a more personal sense of who you are than either your LSAT score or your GPA. A good letter will provide the reader with insight into your personality such as your work ethic, your diligence, your ability to be organized and your capabilities as a student. Your recommenders should provide very specific information about your academic interests, abilities and personal qualities.

1. Whom To Ask for a Recommendation

Many law schools ask for **two** letters of recommendation. Law schools tend to value highly recommendations **based on your academic work** so that it is preferable to obtain two **letters from professors**. Consider asking professors who gave you an excellent grade, encouraged you, and/or with whom you have developed a relationship. You may want to submit a third letter from an employer, program director, administrator, religious, or community leader who has seen you demonstrate commitment, great effort, or leadership.

Ask people who know you to write a letter, rather than someone with a “big name” whom you do not know well. Law schools are much more impressed by a letter from a professor that contains specific information about you, than by general statements of your excellence by a congressman or state judge. Letter writers should be strong advocates for you. Discuss your goals with a potential recommender to get a sense of his/her level of support. If you are unsure of his/her enthusiasm, you can ask whether he/she knows you well enough to write a **strong** letter on your behalf.

2. When to Ask

As noted in the “Preparing for Law School” section of this guide, you can request letters at any time during your college years. Even if you are not sure that you will be applying to law school, it is advisable to have letters on file. If you have done well in a class and have a good relationship with a professor, ask for a recommendation while you are still in contact. This is particularly important if you will be applying after you graduate because it may be difficult to contact professors down the road.

If you have already registered with CAS, you can use their Letter of Recommendation Service. Your CAS account will be good for **five years** after you initiate the account. If you take the LSAT thereafter, the clock on CAS “resets”. Given the long time horizon of CAS, if you are planning to apply to law school in the fall, it is a good idea to set up your CAS account during your **junior year (at about the time you register for the LSAT)**.

Be sure to request recommendation letters well in advance of your target date for completion of your law school applications. For professors with whom you are not then taking a class, consider requesting letters of recommendation during the spring term of your junior year, before the frenzy of end-of-term papers and exams. Keep in mind that your letter may not be the only one that a professor has been asked to write; many students will be asking for recommendations when school resumes in the fall.

If you will not be applying to law school for some time and have not registered with CAS, you can store letters with an electronic credentials service such as Interfolio, which has become commonplace in academic circles. You can find out more about Interfolio at interfolio.com.

3. How To Ask for a Recommendation

Your recommender will be able to write a more detailed letter if you provide him/her with helpful information. **Make an appointment** with the writer, or if that is not possible, make the request by letter. It is preferable to avoid asking for a letter after class, on the phone, or via e-mail. You are requesting that the letter writer spend some time addressing your needs, and it is appropriate for you to put aside time to sit down with the professor as a sign of respect.

Once your professor has agreed to write on your behalf, submit the following to him/her in one packet:

- a cover letter (expressing thanks) and discussing your experience with the professor including coursework and/or research, a list of schools to which you are applying, and the deadline for submission of the letter
- your resume
- a draft of your personal statement (if you have one)
- copies of your work in the course (excellent papers or exams with the professor's comments will help a professor write a specific letter)
- **a recommendation form from CAS** if the letter is being sent to their Letter of Recommendation Service
- stamped addressed envelopes
- an updated transcript
- a copy of **Letter Writing Guidelines** available on the Pre-Law website under "Forms"

On the recommendation form, waive your right of access since you may find writers unwilling to write letters if applicants have access to them, and some admissions committee members may discount disclosed letters.

F. Dean's Certification Form and Dean's Letter

1. What are the Dean's Certification Form and Dean's Letter?

Some law schools require submission of a Dean's Certification which asks college(s) whether a law school applicant has been subject to disciplinary action or academic probation.

Most law schools (with the exception of Brooklyn, Stanford, UConn, and a few others) do not require a Dean's Certification form as part of the application package unless there has been prior disciplinary action or academic probation. You need to read the application carefully to determine when this form will be required. It is common for law schools to request Dean Certification forms after you have been admitted. These forms are processed through the Pre-Law Advisory office, as discussed below in the "Instructions" section.

For candidates who have issues relating to discipline or academic performance, the Dean's Certification Form with an accompanying letter is frequently required as part of the law school application. The letter also gives Hunter an opportunity to support your application. The Pre-Law office can provide you with a letter that explains aspects of your academic program, highlights strengths, notes significant extracurricular activities and outside employment, and explains any extenuating circumstances that affected your academic performance.

If you have attended undergraduate institutions other than Hunter, you may need to obtain Dean's Certification Forms or letters from those schools as well.

2. Disclosure Issues

Applicants who have had academic difficulties or have a record of violation of college rules should inform the Pre-Law Advisor. After discussing the circumstances with the applicant, the Pre-Law Advisor can assist in writing an **"addendum"** to law school applications about situations that require explanation.

If there is a criminal or disciplinary violation in your background, it is advisable to disclose the facts when you apply to law school since failing to do so can have serious consequences. If not disclosed at this time, the facts may surface when you apply for admission to a state bar.

3. Instructions: Dean's Certification Form and Dean's Letter

Hunter does not use the forms provided by the law schools in their applications. **The Pre-Law office uses its own standard form** which is accepted by the law schools. The Dean's Certification form is available on the Pre-Law website under "Forms".

For students who have not had academic difficulties (such as probation) and who do not have a disciplinary record that needs to be explained, please use the **express** method:

1. Complete Part A of the Hunter College Dean's Certification Form for each school that has required this form. Please also be sure to sign the form, provide your contact information, and indicate which school should receive the form.
2. Include **stamped** letter-sized envelopes, addressed to the law school(s).
3. Bring or mail these materials to the Elise Jaffe, Pre-Law Advisor, Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, Room 1134 East, New York, NY 10065.
4. Kindly include all Dean Certification forms to be completed on your behalf in **one packet**.
5. Please allow **five (5) business days** for your form to be processed, following **receipt**. Information must be obtained from other offices at Hunter. Given the volume of requests received, it is not necessarily possible to expedite requests.

If you have had academic difficulties or have a disciplinary record that requires explanation, you will need a detailed letter. Please:

1. Complete the Pre-Law Questionnaire and Waiver Form (available on the Pre-Law website under "Forms"), and attach your resume and personal statement for law school. It is also helpful (but optional) for you to request that copies of letters of recommendation be sent to Pre-Law Advising.
2. Make an appointment with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss the Dean's Letter. These matters can be handled by phone if you are an alumnus who does not reside in the New York City metropolitan area.
3. Follow all other directions in the section above for the express method, but please allow **ten (10) business days** after all requested materials have been received and reviewed in consultation with you, for the letter to be sent out on your behalf.

Dean's certifications and letters are sent directly from Hunter to individual law schools. It is the **applicant's responsibility to follow up** with the law schools to make sure the forms are received in a timely manner once the forms are sent from Hunter.

G. Filing Your Applications: Timing, Organization, & Strategy

1. Timing

Create a timeline of what needs to be done. Aim to complete applications by **November 1**, or at the latest, Thanksgiving. The deadlines on the applications may specify a date in the spring, but be aware that most schools review applications as they come in, and have a “**rolling admissions policy**.” Submitting your applications early will likely help you in the admissions process. If you opt to take the December LSAT (which is not recommended), you should aim to complete all other parts of your application by early December so that your applications will be complete as soon as your score becomes available.

Several law schools have Early Access or Early Assurance programs with application deadlines from Mid-October to early December. Students admitted under these programs are not required to enroll. On the other hand, some schools offer Early Decision programs under which an offer of admission *is* binding. Be aware that applying under a binding early decision program may give you a slight competitive edge, but will not allow you to compare financial aid offers from different schools.

Remember that once you have submitted an application, there may be a lag of two to three weeks while the law school requests and waits for a CAS report.

Note that if your applications are not complete until late in the admissions cycle, i.e. after January, you may be placing yourself at a significant disadvantage. Also consider that it can become more difficult to gain admission to a law school in a future cycle once you have been rejected.

2. Organization

Use this **checklist** to ensure you are completing all parts of the application:

- Register for and take the LSAT.
- Register for CAS.
- Request Transcripts.
- Request Recommendation Letters.
- Request Dean’s Certification Forms/Letters, as applicable.
- Submit Applications to law schools, including all appropriate essays and resume if requested.
- **Follow-up** to make certain that all materials were received on time.

Remember that your file is not complete until **all parts** of the (1) application, including the (2) recommendation letters, (3) Dean’s Certification/Letter (if required), and (4) CAS report have been received by the law school.

3. Winning Strategies:

- Start early.
- Make realistic choices on schools.

- Read carefully the information provided by schools.
- Follow directions.
- Use the electronic application process on the LSAC website.
- Be meticulous in completing the applications.
- Provide complete and accurate responses.
- Print out copies of your applications when you review them, rather than reviewing them on-line.
- Make copies of your final completed applications.
- Submit fees with your applications.
- Respect deadlines.
- **Follow-up** to confirm all materials have been received.

H. Taking Time Off

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 junior and senior years 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 students, your highest grades will come later in your undergraduate education.
- You may feel like you need a “break” from school before diving in to the rigorous commitment of law school.
- You may have other demands in your life – such as family concerns or financial matters – that you need to set in order, so that you can be focused and successful when you start law school.

VIII. Considering Admissions Decisions

Applicants are informed by e-mail or letter 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 may 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.

A. Enhancing Your Application

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 you will attend if accepted.

- 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 recommendation** from a professor or employer; generally, however, the total number of your recommendation letters should not exceed four.
- If you have not already done so, **visit** the law school to demonstrate your strong interest; contact the admissions office to arrange for a tour and to sit in on a class or two. Some admissions officers will agree to meet with applicants, but generally these discussions are not evaluative.

Contact your Pre-Law Advisor for discussion of these strategies.

B. Making a Decision

Visit the law schools when deciding among schools that have accepted you. Take tours and attend classes, make an effort to meet faculty and staff, and speak with students to get their view on factors important to you, such as accessibility of faculty, competitiveness of students, and career services. Follow up with a thank-you letter to the admissions office stating what impressed you about the school.

Talking with students/alumni at schools of interest about their experience can be helpful in reaching your decision. Contact the schools to inquire about speaking with current students and whether they have an alumni network you can access.

Cost and financial aid awards also need to be considered when making a decision. 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 more extensive opportunities after graduation. Large firms focus their recruiting efforts at these schools, and salaries of graduates tend to be higher. However, a scholarship offer from a less prestigious school can give you substantial career freedom after graduation, particularly if you are interested in pursuing a not-for-profit career, and if minimizing your debt load is a priority.

Schools that accept you will probably ask for a **deposit** to hold a space for you. 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 your Pre-Law Advisor who can help you weigh your options.

Once you have reached a final decision on which school you will attend, notify schools that accepted you so that they can offer your place to someone else.

C. Reapplying Later

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. You might want to reconsider and revise 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.

IX. Financing Law School: A Brief Overview

While there is some scholarship and grant money available for law school, most students rely on **loans** from the government or private lenders to finance part of their legal education. Spend wisely while you are an undergraduate, and make sure that you develop a **clean credit record** because you may need good credit to obtain loans for law school. It is advisable to verify that the information contained in reports on your credit history is correct. Under federal law, free credit reports may be obtained through annualcreditreport.com.

It is also important to think about your career plans after law school. If you are interested in a career in government or public interest law, your salary may be insufficient to repay a large amount of debt. Try to minimize your debt by exploring **state-funded schools** (locally this includes Rutgers and CUNY Law – but also consider schools outside the region to maximize your opportunities), and those where you may receive a **merit scholarship**. Look into law schools which have an **LRAP** program (loan repayment assistance program for graduates working in public interest law). There is also a relatively new **Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program** which provides for loan forgiveness for individuals working in a public service organization after ten years of payments on particular loans.

Law school financial aid offices themselves are good sources of information on funding and on procedures for applying for aid. Being a good consumer will work to your long-term advantage. Consider the interest rates, loan fees, and back-end terms of the loan program before deciding on a lender. For instance, although the rate of interest on a government Stafford loan is fixed, back-end terms (such as discounts for on-time payments) may vary between lenders.

A good rule of thumb: Borrow only what you need, and not more. While in school, live frugally, to keep your debt low and your monthly repayment amount manageable once you graduate and enter repayment status.

A. Applying for Financial Aid

- Apply for financial aid early. Do not wait until you have received offers of admission to begin filing forms. File the forms required by the school along with your law school applications or as soon as possible. You need not have been admitted to a school to apply for financial aid there.
- Follow carefully each school's instructions for applying for aid as procedures differ. Many schools have their own financial aid applications or want you to submit a form from a central processor.
- You will need to file a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The FAFSA cannot be filed until after January 1st. The FAFSA asks for income information for the preceding year; you can estimate the amount for yourself and/or your family if the federal tax return(s) is not yet complete. Some schools will ask you to provide information relating to your parents.
- Prepare your income tax returns as soon as possible and ask your parents/guardians/spouse to do so as well because you may need to provide copies of their tax returns.

- Do contact the financial aid offices of law schools for information on their procedures. You can also discuss any special circumstances that impact your application for aid, such as unusual situations or expenses.

B. Loan Types

There are several types of loans available from the federal government, as well as private lenders. Helpful websites on financial aid and scholarships are listed below in this section.

- **Subsidized Federal Stafford Loan:** This is a need-based loan. Students able to demonstrate need may borrow up to \$8,500 per year. The federal government pays interest on the loan while the borrower is a student.
- **Unsubsidized Federal Stafford Loan:** This loan is not based on financial need. Students may pay the interest on these unsubsidized loans while in school or request that the interest be deferred and capitalized (added to the principal balance).

Note: The maximum Federal Stafford Loan amount graduate and professional students can borrow per year is \$20,500 for subsidized and unsubsidized amounts combined.

- **Graduate PLUS Loan Program:** Interest is not subsidized while students are in school.
- **Private Loans:** Private lenders may charge higher interest rates than does the federal government. 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 along with Graduate PLUS Loans, which are regulated by the federal government and typically have lower interest rates.

C. Financial Aid Information Resources

The LSAC.org website is a good place to start educating yourself about how to finance law school. Presentations about financing law school are also usually made at the law school forum sponsored by LSAC and held in New York City each fall.

- lsac.org/financing: Financial aid for law school
- fafsa.ed.gov: Free Application for Federal Student Aid (subsidized and unsubsidized loans)
- studentaid.ed.gov/guide: Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid is a comprehensive resource on student financial aid from the U.S. Department of Education
- AnnualCreditReport.com: Free annual credit report
- accessgroup.org/Student-Loans/learn-about-loans/wise-borrower-tutorial.htm: Personal finance and other financial aid information
- equaljusticeworks.org/resources/student-debt-relief: Information on public interest law programs and law school loan repayment assistance programs (LRAP)
- finaid.org: Student guide to financial aid

- fastweb.com: Financial aid search engine
- planc.org Prelaw Advisors National Council

D. Grant Information and Opportunities

A number of useful websites are noted below. Also see the Appendix for websites of groups focused on expanding the diversity of the legal profession.

- hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/scholarships/grantsguide: Hunter Grants Guide for financing graduate study
- mcca.com/: Minority Corporate Counsel Association scholarships for legal study
- abanet.org/fje/losfpage.html: ABA Legal Opportunity Scholarship Fund provides students with financial assistance to attend law school, in an effort to increase diversity in the profession.
- law.fordham.edu/financial-aid/financialaid.htm: Fordham Law Financial Aid scholarship listing (select “External resources”, and then “Outside Scholarships”)

X: Legal Career Timeline

Freshman and Sophomore Years

- ❑ Select a major in a field that both interests you and allows you to excel academically.
- ❑ Cultivate relationships with professors, lecturers, and TAs so that they will know your work well enough to serve as your recommenders in the future.
- ❑ Meet one-on-one with the Pre-Law Advisor to discuss your interests. Attend group information sessions with other Freshmen and Sophomores.
- ❑ Explore career options by seeking jobs, internships, or volunteer positions in legal or law-related environments.
- ❑ Sign up for the Pre-Law Listerv and participate in publicized Pre-Law activities.
- ❑ Take increasingly challenging courses during your academic career.
- ❑ Read either the Wall Street Journal or the New York Times each day. Not only will this help to keep you informed, but the op-ed page is particularly good training for the reading comprehension section of the LSAT. Critical reading skills must be developed over time.
- ❑ If a professor writes you a recommendation for an internship or other position, consider “banking” the recommendation with an on-line credentials service such as Interfolio, so the letter can be updated later.

Summer Before Your Junior Year

- ❑ Take a free diagnostic LSAT through a commercial test-preparation service in order to assess your “baseline” score. Begin preparing for the LSAT, familiarizing yourself with the format and gauging your progress. Consider if and when you should take a commercial preparatory course.
- ❑ Plan to take the test no later than June of your junior year. The **February** following Intersession during your junior year is a good time in the Hunter schedule to take the LSAT in anticipation of applying the following fall. There is **no need to panic** if you will not take the LSAT before the fall term of your senior year, but recognize that simultaneously studying for the LSAT, filling out applications, and studying for classes will be a juggle.

Junior Year

- ❑ Meet with the Pre-Law Advisor to assess your academic, extracurricular, and work experiences and to discuss the application process.
- ❑ Begin to familiarize yourself with law schools and attend the New York City LSAC Forum, held in the fall.
- ❑ Engage in rigorous LSAT preparation, completing the exam no **later than June**.
- ❑ Before the end of spring semester, register for the Credential Assembly Service (CAS), and approach professors about writing letters of recommendation for you for law school. Be sure to make contact with professors before the summer break begins. Your professors will need a special form from CAS in order to submit a recommendation on your behalf.
- ❑ In late spring, attend a Personal Statement Workshop sponsored by the Pre-Law Advising Office.

Summer Before Your Senior Year

- ❑ Have transcripts from all undergraduate institutions you have attended sent to CAS.
- ❑ Secure a summer job or internship in a law-related field.
- ❑ Research law schools and compile a list of tentative schools with the help of the Advising Office. Use the Law School Worksheet on the Pre-Law website under “Forms”.
- ❑ Meet with the Pre-Law Advisor to help you assess the strength of your record for the schools you are considering.
- ❑ Begin drafting your personal statement for your law school applications and discuss with the Pre-Law Advisor. Expect to write numerous drafts as you work to pin down your ideas for the essay.

Senior Year

- ❑ Meet with the Pre-Law Advisor to help you frame your applications. Work with the Pre-Law Advisor while you polish your personal statement, resume, and other required essays.
- ❑ Review your CAS report to ensure it is correct.
- ❑ Make arrangements to have Dean’s Certifications sent to schools that require them.
- ❑ You may be able to obtain fee waivers from individual school representatives at the LSAC Law School Forum.
- ❑ Complete applications by November 1, and **follow up** to make sure your files are complete.

XI. Appendix: Legal Career Resources – Organizations, Websites, Opportunities, & Library Materials

A. Law School Admissions

- **Law School Admission Council (LSAC)** provides a comprehensive bibliography of resources to help prospective law students explore legal careers, consider legal education, apply to law school, and finance their law school education. (www.lsac.org/pdfs/Resources-for-the-Prelaw-Candidate.pdf)

LSAC also provides information about the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test) and CAS (Credentials Assembly Service). It also has extensive information about exploring the legal profession, financing law school, selecting schools and diversity initiatives. (See generally www.lsac.org)

In addition, LSAC provides access the *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools*. The *Official Guide* gives four pages of information on each ABA-Approved law school. Includes information on GPA/LSAT score of admitted applicants and statistics on employment of law school grads. Information is searchable. (officialguide.lsac.org)

- **Boston College Law School Locator** is a useful tool for identifying law schools where based on your scores and grades you are most competitive for admission. (www.bc.edu/offices/careers/gradschool/law/lawlocator.html)

B. Law-Related Organizations and Websites: General

- **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 identified by the U. S. Department of Education as the "nationally recognized accrediting agency for professional schools of law. (www.abanet.org)
- **National Association for Law Placement (NALP)** is dedicated to facilitating legal career counseling and planning, recruitment and retention, and the professional development of law students and lawyers. (www.nalp.org)
- **Internet Legal Research Group (ILRG)** is a legal information website with links to many interesting sites. A comprehensive resource of the information available on the Internet concerning law and the legal profession, with links to many interesting sites. (www.ilrg.com)
- **Association of the Bar of the City of New York (ABCNY)** offers extensive programs for lawyers and sometimes offers programs of interest and open to college and law students. Check their website. (www.abcny.org)

C. Diversity: Summer Opportunities and Ongoing Programs

- **Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)** assists economically and educationally disadvantaged applicants in preparing for law school. CLEO offers a variety of programs and institutes in which Hunter students have recently participated. (www.cleoscholars.com)
- **Latino Justice/ Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF)** sponsors LAWbound in partnership with LSAC (Law School Admissions Council) to increase the number of Latinos who successfully apply to law school. It is a week-long program held in August in which students attend seminars with lawyers, judges and law professors. Participants in the program (and others) can get help year-round from programs run by PRLDEF's education division. For more information, check out their website. (latinojustice.org/legal_education)
- **Sponsors for Educational Opportunity (SEO)** supports a summer corporate law internship program directed at underrepresented minority groups. The program is open to graduating seniors and recent graduates who plan to attend law school the semester following their SEO summer. (www.seo-usa.org)
- **Training and Recruitment Initiative for Admission to Leading Law Schools (TRIALS)** sponsors a residential LSAT instruction program that helps motivated undergraduates of modest means – of any background – whose personal circumstances, self-identifications and unique perspectives might place them outside the mainstream of typical law school applicants. The program also includes a series of lectures by prominent lawyers and scholars. (trials.atfoundation.org)

D. Diversity: General

HEATH Resource Center is a national clearinghouse for persons with disabilities. (www.heath.gwu.edu)

The following organizations can provide resources and advice to minority candidates applying to law school:

- **ABA Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession** (www.abanet.org, then ABA Home > Centers > Center For Racial and Ethnic Diversity)
- **Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF)** (www.aaldef.org)
- **Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA)** (www.hnba.com)
- **NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund** (www.naacpldf.org)
- **National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)** (www.napaba.org)
- **National Black Law Student Association (NBLSA)** (www.nblsa.org)
- **Native American Rights Fund (NARF)** (www.narf.org)

E. Public Interest Law

- **Idealist** is a listing of paid and volunteer job opportunities. It is also a good source of internship positions. (www.idealist.org)
- **Equal Justice Works** offers an informative site for students exploring careers in public interest law. The organization Equal Justice Works provides a continuum of programs that begin with incoming law school students and extend into later careers in the profession. (www.equaljusticeworks.org)
- **American Bar Association Center for Pro Bono** provides a state-by-state directory of law school public interest and pro bono programs. (www.abanet.org/legalservices/probono/lawschools)

F. International Law

- **American Society of International Law** advances international law scholarship and education for international law professionals as well as for broader policy-making audiences and the public. The website provides information relating to careers in international law. (www.asil.org/resources/careers.html)

G. Library Resources

The **publications** noted below with regard to preparing for law school are available at the **reserve desk** on the second floor of Hunter's main library. You can request the book at the reserve desk by providing the call number indicated.

In addition, materials provided through **commercial testing preparation providers**, such as Kaplan and Princeton Review, are available in the Career Development Library, **Room 805 East**. These materials will enable you to "preview" their services. Additional information that the testing providers put together with regard to the application process are housed here as well.

For a **comprehensive bibliography** relating to legal careers, take a look at the PDF download, "Resources for the Prelaw Candidate" on the **LSAC website**. Go to www.LSAC.org → "Choosing a Law School" → "Resources for the Prelaw Candidate". (Note that the placement of the bibliography is not intuitive on the site.)

Law School and the Legal Profession

1. *Should You Really Be a Lawyer: The Guide to Smart Career Choices Before, During & After Law School*, by Deborah Schneider, Gary Belsky.
Call number: **KF 297 .S36 2005**
2. [International] *Serving the Public: A Job Search Guide, Volume II-International, 2005-2006*, edited by Virginia Greiman.
Call number: **Pre-Law 5**
3. *How to Get Into the Top Law Schools*, by Richard Montauk
Call number: **KF 285 .M66 2004**

4. *ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA Approved Law Schools, 2008 Edition*
Call number: **Pre-Law 3**
Note: Much of this material is available on-line in a different format through LSAC.org.
5. *The Official Guide to Legal Specialties*, by Lisa L. Abrams
Call number: **KF 297 .A758 2000**
6. *Essays That Worked for Law Schools*, by Boykin Curry
Call number: **KF 285 .E87 2003**
7. *What Can You Do With a Law Degree – A Lawyer’s Guide to Career Alternatives Inside, Outside & Around the Law*, by Deborah Arron
Call number: **KF 297 .A875 2004**
8. *Ivey Guide to Law School Admissions*, by Anna Ivey
Call number: **KF 285 .I94 2005**
9. *Legal Career Guide: From Law Student to Lawyer*, by Gary Munneke
Call number: **KF 297 .M8619 2002**
10. *NAPLA/SAPLA Book of Law School Lists, 2006-2007 Edition*, by Edward Stern and Gerald Wilson. This book, which is published jointly by two notable associations of pre-law advisors contains helpful lists of schools with regards to alternative types of programs (such as night programs and part time programs), as well as dual degree programs, programs relating to specific areas of study, and clinics.
Call number: **Pre-Law 2**
The 2009 version is available on-line at <http://www.bu.edu/cas/pdfs/undergraduate/LSAT.pdf>.

LSAT Preparation

1. *LSAT: The Big Orange Book of Real LSATs*
Call number: **Pre-Law 4**
2. *LSAT Logic Games Bible* (PowerScore Series)
Call number: **Pre-Law 6**
3. *LSAT Logical Reasoning Bible* (PowerScore Series)
Call number: **Pre-Law 7**
4. *Next 10 Actual Official LSAT Prep Tests*
Call number: **Pre-Law 1**

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