

# UIS CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

## LAW SCHOOL PREPARATION TIMELINE

This timeline serves as a general guideline for ways to prepare for graduate and/or professional school during your undergraduate career. Depending on each person's unique academic and career goals, the order and information of the steps given may vary. For a more comprehensive plan of preparing for graduate and/or professional school, consult a career counselor at the UIS Career Development Center.

### First Year

- ◆ Talk to Upperclassmen. Ask them:
  - What are the general requirements?
  - What are some prerequisite courses?
  - Which professors should you take classes with?
  - Does this program/major make a good fit for you?
  - What are some mistakes they made that you can avoid?
  - Throughout your undergraduate career, it is important to network not only with others in your classes, but professors and other professionals in the field. Join student clubs and community organizations whenever you can to gain valuable connections and experience! Also, consider memberships to organizations as most have student discounts!
- ◆ Start taking general requirements and prerequisites:
  - Meet with an academic advisor and faculty members to arrange a class schedule that will prepare you for higher level classes and graduate school.
- ◆ Start thinking about an undergraduate major:
  - Talk to a Career Counselor at the Career Development Center.
  - Legal Studies, Pre-Law, and Political Studies are typical options.
  - Don't rule out other majors, they can be supplemented with elective coursework.
- ◆ Begin volunteering and/or looking for a part-time job or internship where you can learn valuable skills to benefit your law profession. Getting a better sense of the field and networking to build new relationships is essential to a successful career!
  - This will allow you to get your foot in the door with different organizations.
  - Maintain a strong professional relationship with people who could write you recommendation letters and serve as references.
  - Working with professionals in this field will allow you to learn some of their personal experiences in the field. They can also inform you on grad school options and answer questions that you may have.
  - Even if you do not get a job or opportunity you apply for, keep in contact with the people. You never know when something may arise!
  - Conduct informational interviews with professionals in the field to gain their insight and advice on the field!

### Second Year

- ◆ Choose an undergraduate major:
  - Complete the appropriate paperwork through Records and Registration.

- In a professional manner, follow-up to make sure the paperwork was processed.
- Consider what area(s) of law you want to pursue (i.e. family, immigration, labor, etc.).
- ◆ Research law schools
  - Which degree do you need?
    - J.D. – are they accredited?
    - Dual Degree? Is it offered there?
  - What location? What's the job market like there?
  - Evaluate the size of the school.
  - Research tuition cost.
  - When considering different options for graduate school, also think about online degree options and programs that allow you to earn a Master's degree while pursuing your Doctorate. Do not rule out certificate programs as well, as these can serve for specialty areas within your career field. Be sure to consider all of your possibilities with your career counselor!
- ◆ Start thinking about the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test):
  - Look through the application online at LSAC.org.
  - Learn what prep courses are offered for the LSAT. The Career Development Center offers an online preparation course for the LSAT! Contact us for more information!
  - Look into other preparatory resources, such as guides.
- ◆ Find a pre-law advisor to guide you along the process of preparing for law school and a law related career.
  - Talk to faculty and academic advisors, professors in and outside of your department, Upperclassmen, and the Career Development Center.

### **Summer Before Third Year**

- ◆ Further explore the legal field:
  - Stay up to date on current legislation and topics.
  - Conduct Exploratory/Informational Interviews:
    - Talk to Professors who have law degrees.
    - Talk to fellow volunteers in the legal field.
    - Talk to recent alumni of your school going to law school.

### **Third Year**

- ◆ Continue researching law schools:
  - Narrow down your choices and discuss with friends, family, and your Career Counselor.
  - Call, write, or email schools to request catalogs and other information.
- ◆ Start visiting law schools to get a feel for the campus, students, and classes.
- ◆ Determine what area(s) of law you want to pursue (i.e. family, immigration, labor, etc.).
  - Consider and decide on a specific program with your career counselor and others.
- ◆ Find out the requirements of the schools and programs you are considering:
  - LSAT scores.
  - Other Tests? Dates?.
  - Application Deadlines.

- Early Decision.
- Transcript and course requirements/prerequisites.
- ◆ Start preparing for the LSAT:
  - Get your hands on some prep materials and sign up for the LSAT preparation course offered through the Career Development Center.
  - Start studying in your free time!
- ◆ Register for the LSAT:
  - Take it as early as possible to allow time to retake it, if necessary!
  - Schedule your test 60-90 days prior to taking it, allowing time to prepare.
  - Find testing locations near you.
  - Find out how/where you'll receive your scores.
  - Consider the scheduling, rescheduling, and other costs.

### **Summer after Third Year**

- ◆ Condense your list of law schools you plan to apply to:
  - Rethink your choices based on your LSAT score.
  - Reevaluate your needs and preferences.
- ◆ Start the application process:
  - Request Letters of Recommendation.
    - ◆ Look to your network of contacts within the legal field.
    - ◆ Ask past employers or fellow volunteers.
    - ◆ Ask professors within the legal studies department or your major.
    - ◆ Start your personal statement and stop by the Career Development Center for assistance.
  - Register for the LSDAS:
    - ◆ The LSDAS helps law schools standardize their application processes.
    - ◆ For a small fee, they compile your transcripts and LSAT scores and send them to schools you're applying for.
    - ◆ Many schools require you to use this, a few do not. Research the application processes of the schools you want to apply for.
- ◆ Register for a second LSAT if necessary:
  - Your career counselor can help you answer questions like:
    - ◆ When should I retake the test?
    - ◆ How can I decide if my score is good enough?
    - ◆ Should I retake the test to try and get a higher score?

### **Fourth Year**

- ◆ Finalize your Applications and Career Portfolio:
  - Complete your LSDAS report.
  - Update your resume and receive feedback from the Career Development Center.
  - Finalize your letters of reference and follow the instructions of the school for submission instructions.
  - Polish up your personal statement and receive feedback from the Career Development Center.

- Make sure everything is complete before it's mailed and that you have followed instructed completely!
- Send applications in and contact schools to confirm completion.
- ◆ Send your updated transcripts to law schools you are still interested in.
- ◆ Complete and submit your financial aid forms.
- ◆ Schedule and prepare for interviews:
  - Schedule a mock interview at the Career Development Center.
  - Use the Perfect Interview program on the Career Development Center's website.
- ◆ Evaluate offers of acceptance:
  - Consider financial aid offers.
  - Send a letter of acceptance to the school you will attend.
  - Send letters of rejection to the other schools.

### **Resources**

Accredited Law Schools

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

Grad School Research

<http://www.ilrg.com/rankings/law/list.php/>

<http://www.top-law-schools.com/profiles.html/>

Test Prep Sites

<http://www.lsat-center.com/lsat-page1.html>

<http://www.princetonreview.com/>

<http://www.kaptest.com/law>

LSDAS Registration

<http://www.lsac.org>

Test Registration

<http://www.lsac.org/>

What Degree Do I Need?

<http://www.lawschoolbible.com/what-is-a-juris-doctor.htm>

<http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/series/CurrentLegalIssues/?view=usa>

<http://www.law.com/>

<http://www.findlaw.com/>