

College of Arts and Sciences

PRELAW STUDIES

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The Field: The University of Rhode Island provides a broad range of courses and services that are appropriate for students who are considering law school. Students who plan to pursue admission to law school should consult a Prelaw Advisor as soon as possible after arriving at the University and obtain our Prelaw Checklist, as well as look at publications of the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) and at the LSAC website (www.lsac.org). Since law school admission requires no particular undergraduate curriculum or courses, prelaw advisors and the LSAC encourage students to choose their majors according to their own individual intellectual interests. The University provides students with prelaw advising, counseling, assistance in preparing law school applications, scheduling of interviews with law school recruiters, and Law School Admission Test preparation. The University, in conjunction with state agencies and local lawyers, also provides internship opportunities in law firms and legal departments such as the Attorney General's Office and the Public Defender's Office.

Curriculum: There are no specific "Prelaw" requirements for admission to law school, aside from the B.A. or B.S. degree in the student's major. The Law School Admissions Council and the Association of American Law Schools, which supervise law school admissions and accreditation, recommend that students acquire a broad based education and possess excellent reading, writing, and analytical skills. Students are encouraged to seek out courses which place heavy emphasis on reading and writing. In addition, it is wise to take classes which prepare a student for alternative careers should he/she decide not to attend law school. While there are many law related courses at the University

which may be of interest to law school-bound students, none of these should be considered a prerequisite or even an aid to law school admission. On the other hand, some of these courses may help a student determine whether they are really interested in the law.

Options: Since there are no specific course requirements, the options for study are as broad as one's imagination. Prelaw students have pursued undergraduate degrees in the sciences, language, business, political science, history, engineering, pharmacy, English, art, economics, theater and any other major offered at the University. Furthermore, many have gone on for graduate degrees in their major fields prior to going to law school. As the law school curriculum is geared toward general private practice and the bar exam, specialization within law often depends on what a student has done as an undergraduate or graduate student in a field other than law.

Career Opportunities: Career opportunities in law change rapidly. There are more lawyers than ever before, and over 40,000 students are graduating from accredited law schools every year. While this may mean a reduction in job opportunities, changes in the way legal services are administered generate new possibilities. A law degree is a good solid background for many careers in business and government. Even though such a career may not specifically require a law degree, the degree may give the student an advantage over others not possessing the degree. For information about legal careers and about law school recruitment, contact a Prelaw Advisor and Career Services and join the Prelaw Society.

For What Are Law Schools Looking?

Admission into law school depends on the applicant's undergraduate or graduate grades, academic references, and performance on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT). Students who wish to attend law school in the fall of the year following their college graduation should plan to take the LSAT in June before or October during their senior year. Law schools do not encourage January admissions or transfers from other law schools. Students should set aside time to take a prep course and/or do extensive preparation for the LSAT. Law schools also attempt to get a diverse class. Students with interesting extracurricular, internship, work or life experiences may attract the favorable attention of an admissions committee.

Further Studies: Standard law school programs normally take three years of full-time study to complete. Part-time, usually evening programs, are available at some law schools, most often located in large cities. Part-time programs generally provide for completion of law studies in four years. For those students who are not interested in a three or four year law school program, paralegal training prepares students to work as a legal assistant, under the supervision of a lawyer. Paralegal training programs are anywhere from three months to one year in length.

It is recommended that Prelaw students pursue a curriculum that provides an opportunity for graduate study or employment in a field other than law, in the event that a career in law is no longer desired, or in the event that a student is not admitted to law school. Furthermore, graduate studies in political science, public administration, labor relationships, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, communication studies, business, law enforcement, marine affairs, social work, and many other fields, give students the opportunity to study the nature, application and functioning of the legal system from a perspective other than that taught in law school.

The Prelaw Society: The Prelaw Society brings in recruiters, holds discussions, organizes speakers, and shows films of interest to those planning a career in law. There is also a Prelaw

Society email discussion list, (LAWURI) that provides prelaw information, discussions among students and notices of law-related activities. Please contact Professor Rothstein to be added to this list. On the 2nd floor of Washburn Hall, there is a Prelaw Center containing legal and prelaw materials, computer access to law and prelaw websites, law school bulletins and a conference/study room.

For more information, contact the Prelaw Advising Coordinator:

Professor Lawrence Rothstein (noted above)