

PRE-LAW

Contrary to common belief, “pre-law” is not a major at the undergraduate level. Rather, it describes a student intending to apply to law school. Pre-law students major in every field from political science to English to engineering. In fact, the Association of American Law Schools recommends no specific major or courses for pre-law students, but instead “stresses the development of basic skills and insights considered essential for the attainment of legal competence. These include perception and skill in the use of the English language and a critical understanding of the development of creative powers of thinking, reasoning and analysis.” UC Davis Pre-Law Advising thus recommends that you not necessarily choose a major traditionally considered to be “pre-law,” but rather consider a major that: 1) you enjoy, 2) you can do well in, 3) is useful even if you do not attend law school and 4) will complement your law degree.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING LAW SCHOOL? WHEN DO YOU APPLY?

Most law schools require that applicants have graduated from a four-year college or university with at least a bachelor's degree. Law school admission committees make their decisions based on four primary criteria: GPA, LSAT score, personal statement and two or three letters of recommendation. When you apply to law school, you will apply through Law School Data Assembly Service (LSDAS), a central application service, and have your transcripts sent there. LSDAS standardizes grades across all schools.

Your GPA and LSAT scores indicate whether you can succeed academically in law school. Yet schools also want to build a diverse, interesting, motivated, active and involved group of individuals within their academic communities. The only way to communicate uniqueness is through your personal statement and letters of recommendation. It is important to be an active community participant at the undergraduate level and commit yourself to a cause, as long as it does not negatively impact your GPA. You should also establish relationships with your professors, because you will need at least one academic letter of recommendation.

WHAT KINDS OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE IN LAW?

Law school graduates can be found in many areas including criminal law, consumer law, labor law, high technology law, immigration law, international law, public interest law, patent law, biotechnology law, civil liberties law, government work, corporate law, community law, environmental law, the judiciary, business and teaching. There are also legal opportunities available to those interested in paralegal work, court reporting or legal administration. Many of these areas do not require a law degree, but other certification may be available.

WHERE CAN YOU GET UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE IN LAW?

To find out more about the work lawyers actually do, students can participate in the internship program offered at Davis. UC Davis undergraduates intern for private attorneys, government agencies and public interest groups handling civil and criminal matters. Students usually work 10-15 hours per week and may receive credit.

WHAT DOES THE PRE-LAW ADVISING OFFICE DO?

Pre-Law Advising at UC Davis is staffed by one full-time adviser and two part-time law student advisers. These advisers are available to help students with the decision to attend law school, select schools, prepare for law school, apply, take the LSAT, write the personal statement or they advise on other concerns. Seminars and workshops are also offered during the school year. An annual law school fair, Law School Information Day, is held each November.

The Career and Graduate School Resource Center in 160 South Silo has catalogs from law schools, sample applications, computers to explore schools online and other resource information. A pre-law information sheet is available, with general information for pre-law students. You may also want to visit the Advising Services Web site at advisingservices.ucdavis.edu. Select the Law Advising link for additional information and other documents that you can download and print. Also be sure to sign up on the pre-law list service so you can receive e-mail notifications about informational programs, updates, internships, jobs and more. Feel free to write or call the pre-law adviser at (530) 752-4475 if you have any questions.

UC DAVIS SCHOOL OF LAW

Established in 1965, King Hall School of Law is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools. The School's teaching methods combine the best features of traditional legal education with modern techniques for giving students practical legal experience. The three-year curriculum includes strong programs in trial and appellate advocacy and substantial opportunities for clinical experience in addition to traditional academic and professional courses.

THE STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Unlike many law schools, Davis strives to keep classes small; for this reason, the largest classroom has no more than 110 seats. Some classes exceed 80 students while others have a dozen or less. Approximately 580 students comprise the UC Davis School of Law. Davis law students are characterized by diversity and superior academic achievement. A significant number of students are from groups traditionally underrepresented in the lawyer population. Students come from cities throughout California and the nation. A significant number have earned graduate degrees, traveled extensively or have significant work experience.

The law faculty is balanced in age, teaching experience and professional practice. Many faculty members have spent substantial time in legal practice.

THE PROGRAM OF STUDY

During the critical first year of law study, Davis students receive extra personal attention. Each student takes one of the major first-year courses in a small class of about 30-35. Upper-class tutors aid the professors in providing individual help and guidance.

Although there is little choice of subject matter during the first year of law study, the second- and third-year programs are entirely elective. Through courses, seminars, clinicals, electives and individual studies, the student may emphasize any area of interest. Second- and third-year students may engage in clinical work under the supervision of a faculty member in cooperation with practicing attorneys.

The Moot Court Program teaches the skills of appellate advocacy and is a central part of the school's educational program. Student teams are given a hypothetical law case; they research the legal problems, write briefs and present oral arguments as part of their first-year legal research and writing course.

The trial practice program provides students an opportunity to conduct a criminal or civil trial from start to finish. Students develop their case for trial through discovery of evidence and pre-trial motions. The case is tried before a jury selected from the UC Davis community.

REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR ADMISSION TO THE UC DAVIS SCHOOL OF LAW

Applicants pursuing admission to the School of Law for the degree of Juris Doctor must evidence a record of high caliber that demonstrates qualification for the study of law. A bachelor's degree must have been earned prior to the time the applicant begins work in the school.

The admissions committee seeks students of demonstrated academic ability, as evidenced by many factors, including LSAT scores and undergraduate GPA. With approximately 3,800 applicants competing to be one of 190 in an entering class, the admissions committee must also look beyond the LSAT and GPA for special qualities in its applicants. The committee seeks students of diverse backgrounds. Consideration is given to advanced degrees or studies, economic factors, significant work experience and extracurricular and community activities during and after college years. The growth and maturity of the applicants and their commitment to the study of law are other key considerations.

QUESTIONS?

Pre-Law Advising:

University of California, 160 South Silo, One Shields Ave., Davis, California 95616-8508
(530) 752-4475, advisingservices.ucdavis.edu/advising/law

Undergraduate Internships:

Internships and Career Center, University of California, 2nd Floor South Hall, One Shields Ave., Davis, California 95616-8500
(530) 752-2855, icc.ucdavis.edu

School of Law Admissions Information:

Office of Admission, School of Law, University of California, 115 King Hall, Davis, California 95616-5201
(530) 752-6477, lawadmissions@ucdavis.edu, www.law.ucdavis.edu

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